

Abstract Expressionism

Art & Design

New York in the 1940s and 50s, and the two very different halves of it.

The first American movement to lead internationally, roughly 1943 to 1960. It set large-scale abstraction and the act of painting against European figuration and social realism.

PERIOD

about 1943 to 1960

CENTRE

New York

- Gestural: Pollock, de Kooning, Krasner, Kline.
- Colour field: Rothko, Newman, Still, Frankenthaler.
- Scale is the argument: the canvas exceeds the body.
- Pollock poured onto unstretched canvas from 1947.
- Greenberg's criticism made flatness the criterion.
- Promoted abroad during the Cold War as free expression.

LOOK FOR IT

Rothko wanted his canvases hung low and viewed from about 45 cm away.

Contested: how far the CIA's cultural programme shaped the movement's international reach is still argued by historians.