



100

A History of Modern and Contemporary Art

YEARS

100

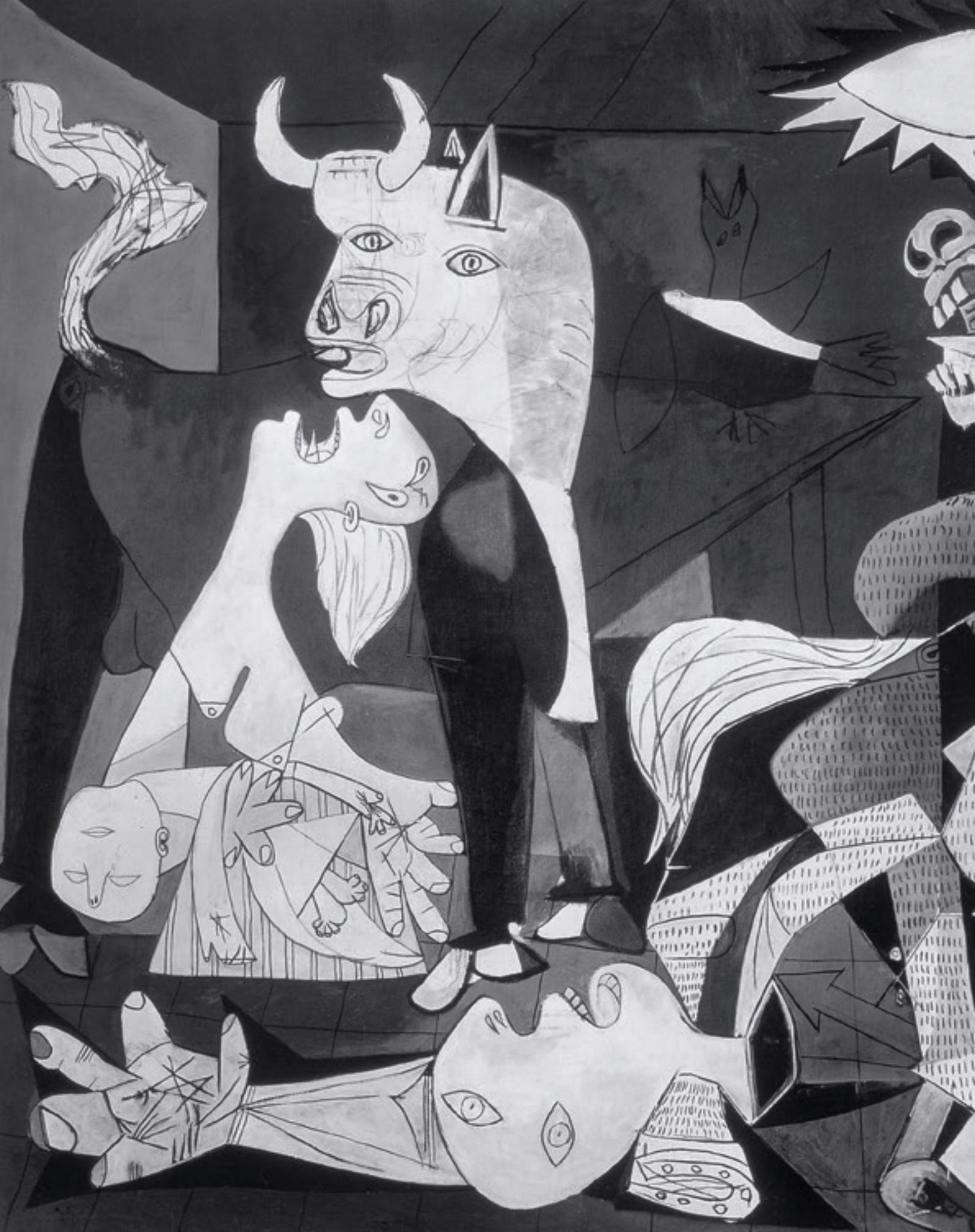
ART-

WORKS

ÁGNES BERECS

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# 1919

## MARCEL DUCHAMP *L.H.O.O.Q. Mona Lisa*

In 1919, Marcel Duchamp purchased an inexpensive chromolithograph of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, penciled in a goatee and mustache, and added an abbreviated caption that in French reads "she has a hot ass," or as he suggested in a 1961 interview, "there is a fire down below."

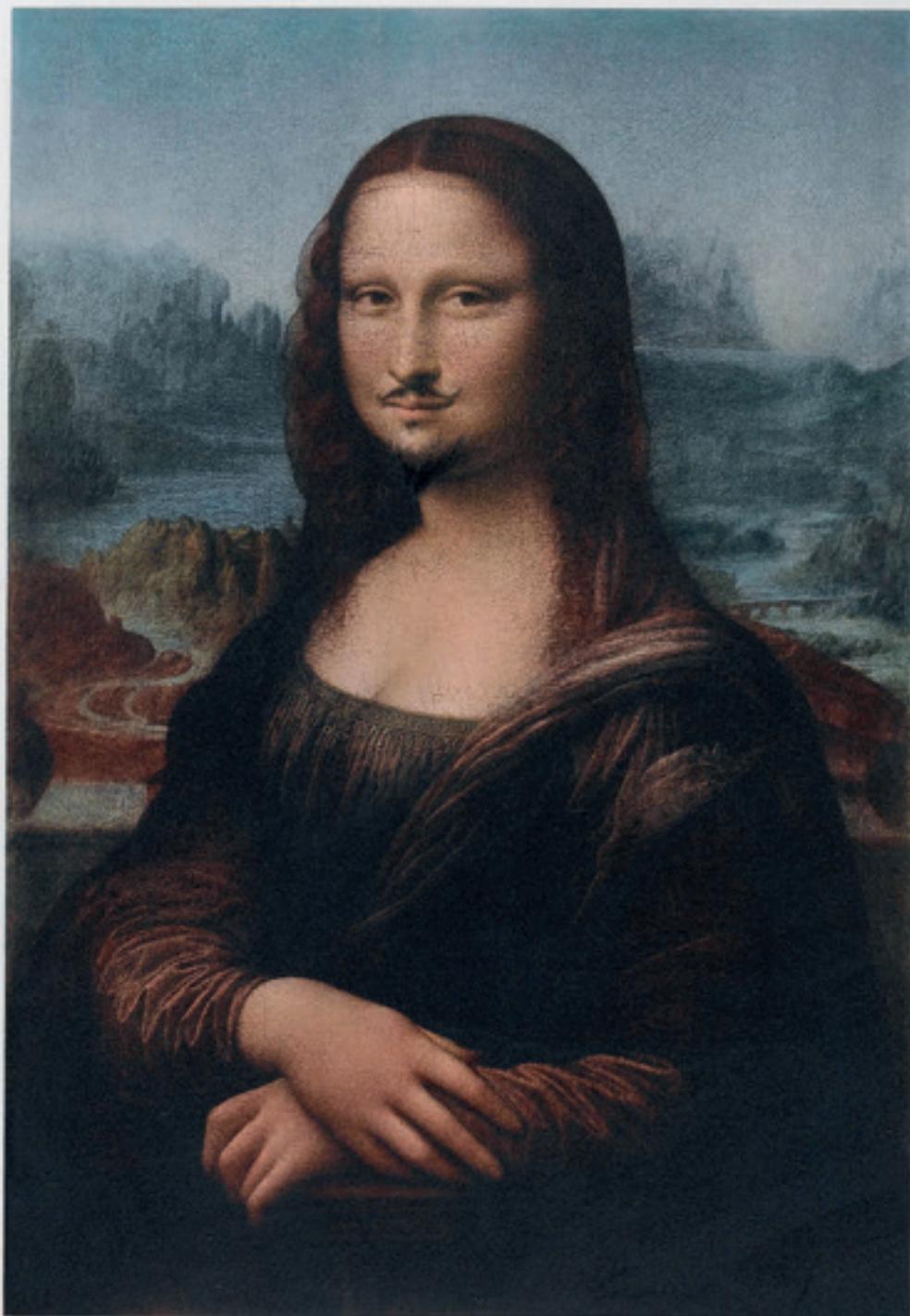
One of the first instances of appropriation in art and culture jamming, Duchamp's impish adjustment of the early sixteenth-century portrait of Francesco del Giocondo's wife expanded the model's ambiguous gender identity, presenting her as both a man in drag and a libidinous woman. Included in Duchamp's series of readymades—works such as *Bicycle Wheel* (1913) and *Fountain* (1917) that he made by taking already existing objects or images and claiming them as artworks—*L.H.O.O.Q.* is an attempt to break down the distinctions between art and life, and to rethink ideas of art, labor, aesthetics, and lack thereof at a time when the technologies of mechanical reproduction were effacing the difference between originals and copies.

*L.H.O.O.Q.* is also the result of an iconoclastic gesture committed in the spirit of Dada, the first international movement of the historical avant-garde that, in response to the savage nationalism and brutality of World War I, advocated for practices of anti-art and for the erasure of established forms of Western high culture. Active in his native France and the United States, Duchamp was associated with Dada groups both in Paris and New York, and while his mockery shares a lot with the movement's conspicuous irreverence, it is neither a simple attack on art nor is it a gratuitous Dada provocation.

By 1919, Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* had transcended its status as a nominal masterpiece of the Renaissance. Widely publicized and sensationalized by the media after it was stolen from the Louvre in 1911, the painting was reinstalled in January 1914 amid national celebration, after which its image began to proliferate in endless postcards and tourist souvenirs. In this context, Duchamp's defaced copy was a symbolic reiteration of the artwork's theft, as well as a confrontation of many kinds—an attack on the medium of painting and on classical Western art; a strike against the fetish of the venerated object; an assault on the precious property of the French Republic; and a commentary on the mass popularization and commodification of art.

Like its original model, Duchamp's *Mona Lisa* is also a cult image—copied and reissued in many variations, it remains an astute reflection on painting as representation and reproduction in the digital age.

Marcel Duchamp,  
*L.H.O.O.Q. Mona Lisa*,  
1919 (replica from 1930).  
Retouched readymade  
(reproduction of Leonardo  
da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*  
with added mustache  
and beard). Graphite on  
rotogravure, 24¼ × 19½ in.  
(61.5 × 49.5 cm). Musée  
National d'Art Moderne,  
Centre Pompidou, Paris



L.H.O.O.Q.

Marcel Duchamp (1919)

# 1926

## GEORGIA O'KEEFFE *Abstraction*

Georgia O'Keeffe's work is one of the earliest and most radical examples of abstract painting in the United States. Moderately sized and deceptively simple, *Abstraction* is part of a group of nonfigurative compositions O'Keeffe began in the mid-1920s to complement her landscapes, still lifes, and flower and skyscraper paintings.

A return to the abstract imagery of the charcoal drawings that launched her career in the mid-1910s, O'Keeffe's painting—a work about scale, volume, and color gradation—reaffirmed her 1923 statement: “I found that I could say things with colors and shapes that I couldn't say in any other way—things that I had no words for.” Painted in oil, a material she adopted in 1918 when settling in New York, *Abstraction* is built on a delicate chromatic play between gray blue and violet pink surfaces divided along a vertical axis.

The obscure imagery evokes architectonic elements, organic formations rooted in sites of nature, botanical specimens, drapery, and female anatomy. It has also been suggested that the work was originally a Lake George view painted in early summer and turned on its side. The soft, pearlescent surfaces and the V-shaped openings also recall the fissures and refined color transitions of O'Keeffe's painted irises, calla lilies, and landscapes, while the vertical format brings to mind her contemporaneous renderings of Manhattan skyscrapers. As often in O'Keeffe's work, the magnified and closely cropped subject conveys a sense of monumentality that references the framing device of photographs. A former student of Arthur Wesley Dow, known for transposing photographic compositions to canvas, O'Keeffe worked in the proximity of photographers such as her husband Alfred Stieglitz, Charles Sheeler, and Paul Strand, and often employed the visual devices of the technological medium. O'Keeffe's deeply idiosyncratic work defies labels and artistic movements and makes critical evaluations and classification of her paintings difficult. Following the interpretations proposed by her husband, her practice has often been considered a primal manifestation of feminine sensibilities, but the vigor and subtlety of paintings such as *Abstraction* undermines such widely publicized, gender-based interpretations of her work.

Striking and enigmatic, *Abstraction* was on view at O'Keeffe's solo show in January 1927 at Stieglitz's new venture, the Intimate Gallery, a rented room in Anderson Galleries' Park Avenue building. The artist's most successful exhibition to date, it secured her place in the New York art world, and as Lewis Mumford wrote in the *New Republic*, proved that “Miss O'Keeffe is perhaps the most original painter in America.”

Georgia O'Keeffe,  
*Abstraction*, 1926. Oil on  
canvas, 30<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 18<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.  
(76.7 × 46.4 cm). Whitney  
Museum of American  
Art, New York; Purchase,  
with funds from Georgia  
O'Keeffe and by exchange  
(58.43)



# 1938

## WALKER EVANS *Subway Passengers, New York City*

“These photographs were made in the subway of New York City, during the late thirties and early forties of the twentieth century,” wrote Walker Evans’s friend James Agee in 1940. The double portrait of the bespectacled elderly lady and the middle-aged man reading the *Daily News* is among the earliest pictures Evans took of his fellow New York City subway train passengers.

The first photographer to have a solo exhibition at New York’s Museum of Modern Art, Evans launched the subway series in late 1938 after the closure of his show *American Photographs*. A candid record of the Depression-era city, *Subway Passengers* was taken on the Broadway line from midrange. Evans worked undercover, using available light and a 35 mm Contax camera concealed under his coat, the lens peeping out between the buttons and the cable shutter release hidden in his sleeve. Dark, tilted, and off-center, the furtive black-and-white picture of the two unsuspecting New Yorkers is a radical shift from his meticulously lit and framed earlier photographs. By exalting his unbridled curiosity and voyeurism to create an archive of ordinary people and everyday life, Evans explained that he was hoping to make an “anonymous and documentary and a straightforward picture of mankind.”

A transitory stage for random encounters among the greatest variety of people, the New York City subway system was a perfect location for Evans. Absentmindedly staring at the photographer across the bench, or engrossed reading the paper, commuters of all ages, genders, and social background were “in naked repose down in the subway.” Unguarded, anonymous, and vulnerable, the subjects of Evans’s double portrait are also intimate and familiar. Their poses and garments, the fur collar and the fedora that Agee called “uniforms and badges of their being,” propel imaginary narratives and present an episode of the theater of city life.

*Subway Passengers* was chosen as the cover image of *Many Are Called*, the 1966 book that featured eighty-nine of Evans’s over six hundred subway photographs. Though Evans is best remembered for his refined and carefully composed pictures of commercial signs, small-town storefronts, barbershops, roadside churches, and Alabama cotton workers, *Many Are Called* influenced generations of documentary photographers and artists such as Robert Frank, Garry Winogrand, and Stephen Shore.

Walker Evans, *Subway  
Passengers, New York City*,  
1938. Gelatin silver print,  
4<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 5<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (12.2 × 15.0 cm).  
The Metropolitan Museum  
of Art, New York; Gift of  
Arnold H. Crane, 1971  
(1971.646.18)



# 1939

## EDWARD HOPPER *New York Movie*

*New York Movie* is instantly recognizable as an Edward Hopper painting. Hopper, a quintessential New York City artist, portrayed city streets, night cafés, theaters, and people to record and mythologize the place where he spent most of his life.

*New York Movie* is based on a series of chalk and charcoal drawings that include figure studies and sketches of Broadway movie theaters such as the Palace, the Republic, the Globe, and the Strand. The meticulous preliminary research—a method Hopper also employed in his commercial illustrations and early etchings—point to his commitment to the reality of everyday life and the topography of New York City. Hopper’s documentary impulse and adoption of urban vernacular subjects was a legacy of the Ashcan School—a collective of New York artists led by his master, Robert Henri—that depicted the daily life of the rapidly growing city in the first decade of the twentieth century.

The alluringly vulgar ornamental interiors of playhouses and movie palaces are recurrent subjects in the artist’s painted and graphic work. From his 1910s commissioned film posters to his 1937 painting of *The Sheridan Theater*, Hopper, an avid moviegoer, represented the dreamworld of New York theaters and cinemas and their clients and workers. The spotlighted usherette in *New York Movie*—modeled after Josephine, the painter’s wife—also reflects his admiration for Edgar Degas, whose work often focused on the dancers, singers, and musicians of the late nineteenth-century Paris entertainment industry.

Reminiscent of a film still, *New York Movie* appears to be part of a suspenseful narrative featuring the pensive blonde and the two solitary viewers of the black-and-white film on the screen. Hopper’s dramatic treatment of chiaroscuro emulates cinematic effects: the diffused light on the left and the luminous glow on the right modulate the primary colors of the painting, enhancing the disconcerting asymmetry of the diagonally angled composition while lending a dramatic, film noir filter to the scene. For Hopper, cinema is a pictorial model, an emblem of Americana, a place of collective isolation and enchanted voyeurism, and a site of escape rituals, erotic fantasies, and longings.

“Emphatically, solidly, unashamedly American,” as the Museum of Modern Art announced during the artist’s 1933 retrospective exhibition, Hopper’s work extended the modern iconography of everyday life to the urban landscape of twentieth-century New York. By merging the real with the artificial, he staged sites, lived experiences, and social interactions in the city with a rarely seen complexity.

Edward Hopper, *New York Movie*, 1939. Oil on canvas, 32¼ × 40⅞ in. (81.9 × 101.9 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Given anonymously



# 1943

## FRIDA KAHLO

### *Diego on My Mind (Self-Portrait as Tehuana)*

Frida Kahlo's *Diego on My Mind (Self-Portrait as Tehuana)* is a powerful painting about longing, private life and identity, and is an iconic self-representation of the celebrated artist. It is also a commemoration of her devotion to her husband, Mexican muralist Diego Rivera, and to her cultural heritage.

Kahlo embarked on the painting in 1940, a tumultuous year that was marked by her brief separation from Rivera and by her participation in the International Exhibition of Surrealism in Mexico City. Painted in oil on Masonite, an inexpensive material that accentuates Kahlo's insistence on being an artist of the people, the three-quarter self-portrait is dominated by the *huipil de tapar*, also known as the *resplandor*, the ceremonial headdress of the indigenous people around the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Mexico's Oaxaca region. Known for her frequent use of traditional garments and accessories both in everyday life and in her paintings, Kahlo's sartorial choices honored the pre-Columbian folk traditions of Mexico as part of her self-fashioning.

Crowned by a posy of flowers, the artist's face is disfigured by the unlikely ornament of Rivera's portrait, a specter haunting her thoughts. The photographic, lifelike character of the double portrait is juxtaposed with the stylized web of white threads and strands of dark hair whose intersecting lines recall the veins and roots that often appear in Kahlo's work to ground her body in its surroundings. The cultivated naïveté of the painting and its merger of realistic and symbolic, descriptive and dreamlike qualities expresses Kahlo's commitment to Mexican popular culture while nodding to the works of Surrealists like René Magritte, Leonora Carrington, and Dorothea Tanning.

Surrounded by a halo of white lace, Kahlo appears radiant and imposing. By evoking the Madonnas of Western religious painting, the ex-voto images of private worship in Mexican homes, and the power of Tehuantepec's matriarchal society, she represented herself as a female deity. By linking the exotic and the esoteric, the Oaxacan headdress and the fantasy image of her husband, *Diego on My Mind* also displays her love for Rivera and her country proudly and ceremoniously.

Frida Kahlo, *Diego on My Mind (Self-Portrait as Tehuana)*, 1943. Oil on Masonite, 29<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 24 in. (76 × 61 cm). The Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection of 20th Century Mexican Art and The Vergel Foundation



# 1955

## JASPER JOHNS *Flag*

Working in New York since 1952 and frequenting the company of Robert Rauschenberg, Merce Cunningham, and John Cage, Jasper Johns departed from the painterly idioms of Abstract Expressionism and grounded his work in the banality of everyday life. Interested in “things that the mind already knows,” he transfigured commonplace objects and images such as targets, letters, numbers, and maps. Johns’s use of the promptly available design of the US flag—reminiscent of Marcel Duchamp’s readymades—undermined notions of authorship and originality. At Johns’s first solo exhibition at Leo Castelli Gallery in New York in 1958, *Flag* was labeled as neo-Dada, and after the early 1960s, it was considered a precursor of Pop art.

*Flag* is neither an image nor an object. It is a hybrid work that defies the specificity of fine art media and attests to the artistic labor invested in its making. *Flag* was built on three bedsheet-covered wooden panels. Johns attached cut and torn pieces of newsprint and cloth to the surface after dipping them into encaustic—a form of painting with hot wax—which he sealed with an additional layer of semitransparent wax. The prominent brushstrokes and the variegated, rough texture of the work only partially conceal the collage underneath, both disordering and unifying its surface.

By opting to take a symbol as his subject, Johns pointed to the intricate link between abstraction and figuration, and by picturing the US flag all over the surface, as opposed to making it appear as a figure on a ground, he confounded the relationship between a thing and its representation. Since he made the forty-eight-star banner both the subject and the object of his work, Johns suspended the viewer’s attention between the surface—the flag—and the collage underneath, as well as between the motif and the materiality of the work. The US flag has appeared repeatedly in his paintings and prints, in different scales, colors, and configurations. A meditation on the banal, mass-produced icon of nationhood proposed at the height of the McCarthy era, *Flag* questions the meaning and the power of collective identity and its symbols.

Jasper Johns, *Flag*,  
1954–55. Encaustic, oil,  
and collage on fabric  
mounted on plywood,  
three panels, 42¼ × 60⅝ in.  
(107.3 × 153.8 cm). The  
Museum of Modern Art,  
New York; Gift of Philip  
Johnson in honor of Alfred H.  
Barr Jr.



# 1956

## ROBERT FRANK

### *Store window – Washington, D.C.*

In 1956, Robert Frank shot the illuminated storefront window of a local store in Washington, DC. The nighttime take of the window display that featured a photograph of President Dwight D. Eisenhower and a truncated, tuxedo-clad male mannequin is the last picture Frank took for his groundbreaking photo book, *The Americans*.

After arriving in New York in 1947, the Swiss-born photographer worked for *Harper's Bazaar* under the tutelage of the magazine's artistic director, Alexey Brodovitch, then traveled across South America and Europe taking on freelance projects. In 1955, supported by a Guggenheim grant, Frank began a cross-country road trip to create, as he wrote in his grant application, "an observation and record of what one naturalized American finds to see in the United States that signifies the kind of civilization born here and spreading elsewhere." With an inconspicuous Leica in hand, Frank visited thirty states, shot 767 rolls of film, and spent nine months taking pictures in stores and diners, at balls and funerals, on the streets and at bus stations. The resulting book, containing only eighty-three carefully selected black-and-white photographs, was published in France in 1958, and a year later, with Jack Kerouac's foreword, in the United States. Despite its canonical place in the history of twentieth-century photography, *The Americans* was initially poorly received—Frank's coarse pictures were deemed to be incompetent and careless, and his vision of 1950s United States was perceived as inappropriately melancholy.

The off-center composition, imprecise focus, and overlapping reflections of *Store window - Washington, D.C.* share nothing with the clearly focused and readily accessible works and traditions of twentieth-century documentary photography and photojournalism. Frank's flat and strategically underdone work refused to consider the picture as a mere fact and an objective record of everyday life. By creating a complex, elusive, and poetic image, he transformed the claustrophobic display space, the awkwardly placed wires, and the human substitutes—the skewed photograph and the tailor's dummy—into a haunting scene that resembles a Surrealist stage set. The absurdity of the display and the visual difficulty of seeing what is being depicted both exposes and conceals the picture's subject, proving that Frank, as his mentor Walker Evans noted, "responded to America with many tears, some hope and his own brand of fascination." A murky spectacle of politics, masculinity, and fashion, and an uncanny public display of the store owner's allegiances and hopes, *Store window - Washington, D.C.* is a trenchant and eerie take on Cold War America.

Robert Frank, *Store window – Washington, D.C.*, 1956. Silver gelatin print, dimensions variable

# FORMAL WEAR



# 1962

## ANDY WARHOL *Campbell's Soup Cans*

As recognizable as they are salient, *Campbell's Soup Cans* are Andy Warhol's last handmade paintings and the foundational works of both his oeuvre and Pop art.

A successful commercial artist aspiring to join the small but burgeoning early 1960s New York art scene, Warhol based his paintings on magazine ads and comic strips before undertaking his Campbell's series. The canvases were his first to utilize the popular consumer object, a motif he continued to engage with in paintings and print portfolios for the rest of his life. Whether he chose the ubiquitous grocery store item out of childhood nostalgia for canned soup lunches, or for the vacant uniformity of the mass-produced good, or for his love of the label design, Warhol's paintings transformed the everyday product into his own brand and an icon of twentieth-century art.

Warhol utilized a projector to transfer the outline and the ornate label of the cans from photographs and actual soup cans allegedly purchased at his local Gristedes grocery store, and hand-stamped the label's signature bands of fleur-de-lis. By creating thirty-two canvases to represent all the then available Campbell's soup flavors, Warhol underscored the variety of consumer choices and the uniform identity of the brand. Flat, straightforward, and serial, yet uneven and obviously handmade, Warhol's paintings simultaneously emulated and disrupted the methods of mass production and the rhetoric of advertising employed to manufacture and sell their prototype. Playing on the theme of repetition and difference, sameness and uniqueness, *Campbell's Soup Cans* was Warhol's first attempt to question the significance of the endless production of images and objects and the mechanization of everyday life in postwar America.

Exhibited in the summer of 1962 at Warhol's solo show at the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles, shortly before his adoption of the silk-screen technique as his ultimate painting method, the canvases were displayed on narrow shelves and tilted against the wall like shelved products in a grocery aisle. Conceived by gallery director Irving Blum, the installation was later modified to arrange the paintings in a grid format that represented the chronological order in which the flavors were introduced. Originally intended to be separate works, they were kept together at Blum's suggestion, and apart from the Pasadena Art Museum's group exhibition, *New Painting of Common Objects*, in the fall of 1962, *Campbell's Soup Cans* have always been shown together as a whole.

Andy Warhol, *Campbell's Soup Cans*, 1962. Synthetic polymer paint. Thirty-two canvases, each 20 x 16 in. (50.8 x 40.6 cm); overall installation with 3 inches between each panel 97 x 163 in. (246.4 x 414 cm).  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York



# 1976

## WILLIAM EGGLESTON *Untitled (Yellow Café)*

William Eggleston's *Untitled (Yellow Café)* is a scene of quintessential Americana—an empty diner with green and yellow walls, Formica tables, and mix-and-match wood and vinyl chairs. Part of *Election Eve*, a series commissioned by *Rolling Stone* magazine, the color photograph was taken in late October during Jimmy Carter's 1976 presidential reelection campaign in his hometown of Plains, Georgia.

The Memphis-born Eggleston grew up on a cotton plantation in Sumner, Mississippi. A pioneer of color photography, he was inspired by Henri Cartier-Bresson, Walker Evans, Robert Frank, and by contemporaries such as Lee Friedlander and Garry Winogrand. In the late 1960s, Eggleston began photographing people, gas stations, storefronts, motel rooms, and roadside signs in Memphis and the Deep South on color film. His 1976 solo exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art emancipated color photography from its predominant commercial use and was instrumental in its institutional acceptance as a fine art medium.

Originally titled *Snack Shack, Montezuma*, Eggleston's photograph is shot diagonally against the two-tone wall whose creamy food colors of soft yellow and pistachio green are punctuated by bright nodes of dry-flower decorations. *Untitled* is a rigorously orchestrated and heavily cropped study of spatial depth and perspective, randomly angled chairs and napkin dispensers, pitted walls and luminous surfaces. By abstracting the small-town interior into large planes of richly saturated color and a competing field of natural and neon light, Eggleston rivals the visual complexity of works by Vincent van Gogh, Henri Matisse, and Mark Rothko, while resisting habitual modes of political reportage. *Untitled* is not a commentary on politics, taste, consumption habits, or interior design, but a dense, opulent, and distilled rendering of the details and textures of a place in the rural South. Eggleston might be "at war with the obvious," as he famously stated, but he is very much at ease with seeing and showing the ordinary from unexpected perspectives and in uncanny details.

A photograph in and about color that would be both unimaginable and pointless in black and white, *Untitled* was initially editioned as a dye-transfer print. The application of the labor-intensive and time-consuming chemical process of layered, three-color separations rendered the high key shades of the Georgia diner palpable and physically present. Exhibited in 1977 at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, DC, *Untitled* was included in Eggleston's first artist book along with the rest of *Election Eve*, and it was recently published as a digital pigment print.

William Eggleston, *Untitled*  
(*Yellow Café*) from *Election*  
*Eve*, 1976. Dye-transfer  
print, dimensions variable



# 1992

## JEFF KOONS *Puppy*

*Puppy* is a living sculpture of a West Highland terrier made of tens of thousands of fluorescent plants. Charming yet commanding, the oversize pet is a play on scale, taste, and the historical role of public sculptures and monuments—it comprises the formal features and conventions of a memorial without commemorating anything but sentiments.

A seminal and much-publicized figure of contemporary art, Jeff Koons frequently appropriates the banality and kitsch of the American consumer industry. Flowers and dogs are recurrent themes in his work, and he is known for his often grand and colorful paintings and sculptures that rely on the visual rhetoric of advertising, mass media, and popular culture.

Like a pet, the over forty-foot-tall canine sculpture is in constant need of maintenance, care, and attention—a vertical garden that takes up the classical horticultural tradition of shaped foliage. Supported by a stainless-steel structure bearing the weight of more than twenty tons of soil with an internal irrigation system to keep its foliage alive, *Puppy* is a living work of art and a technologically advanced construction created by computer modeling. A towering structure of pansies, peonies, marigolds, and many other multi-colored plants, the flowering fur changes every six months to reflect the changing seasons.

According to Koons, *Puppy* celebrates the affectionate relationships people maintain with domestic animals, and is a symbol of “love, warmth, and happiness” that documents and honors the pet culture of late twentieth-century consumer society. By erecting a decorative, public sculpture portraying a small terrier, Koons spoke to the millions who consider their pets as family members, and care more about their animals than fellow humans. Like the majority of Koons’s three-dimensional work, including *Statuary*, a series of stainless-steel portraits of figures such as Bob Hope and Louis XIV, or the large-scale porcelain and wood sculptures of Michael Jackson and Buster Keaton from the *Banality* series, *Puppy* is an ambiguous work hovering between an overload of cuteness and the lure of irony.

Following its 1992 debut in front of the baroque castle of Bad Arolsen in Germany, *Puppy* traveled to Sydney, Australia, then found its permanent home in Bilbao, Spain, adjacent to Frank Gehry’s Guggenheim Museum. A landmark statue and a beloved tourist attraction, *Puppy* is an emblem of Koons’s clever and often disturbing engagement with the way we live, and the things we love.

Jeff Koons, *Puppy*, 1992.  
Stainless steel, soil,  
and flowering plants,  
40 ft. 8 in. × 40 ft. 8 in. ×  
26 ft. 10 in. (12.4 × 12.4 × 8.2 m).  
Guggenheim Museum Bilbao



# 2016

## BRUCE NAUMAN *Contrapposto Studies, i through vii*

Bruce Nauman,  
*Contrapposto Studies,  
i through vii*, 2015/16.  
Seven-channel color video  
with sound, continuous  
duration. Jointly owned by  
The Museum of Modern Art,  
New York, acquired in part  
through the generosity of  
Agnes Gund; and Emanuel  
Hoffmann Foundation,  
on permanent loan to  
Öffentliche Kunstsammlung  
Basel

A seminal figure of the contemporary art world since the late 1960s, Bruce Nauman has produced sculptures, performances, films, videos, photographs, and installations that have shaped the work of generations of artists in the United States and abroad. *Contrapposto Studies, i through vii* is a monumental redux of his 1968 *Walk with Contrapposto*, a video of Nauman walking along a tall, narrow corridor in a comically exaggerated performance of contrapposto, a visual arts term that describes standing with most of the weight on one foot, causing the rest of the body to twist off the axis. The seven-channel video shows the artist nearly four decades later re-performing the posture that mimicked the dynamism of live bodies in depictions of human figures since Greek antiquity. Animating a pose associated with the static art of sculpture for the camera, Nauman brought to life the classical rhetoric of inert bodies and turned it into an absurd, burlesque-like study of stillness and kinesis, imitation and art.

The large-scale projections display the artist's moving body frontally and from profile in vertical frames positioned side by side. Accompanied by the audio recordings of ambient noises and the sound of shuffling feet, each study consists of multiple frames whose number increases as the studies progress, resulting in rows of positive and negative images of varying size. The gradual development of more and more complex frames creates the illusion of a linear plot that is counteracted by the monotonous, looped performance. Relying on the capacity of the digital medium to dissect, recombine, and multiply the image within frames, Nauman introduced horizontal splits and out-of-sync frames that show his pivoting torso sliced up and mutilated. In *Study vii*, the visually disintegrating human figure appears as a pixelated, puzzle-like image—fragmented and misaligned, the body appears in disjunctive pieces producing a disturbing yet captivating audiovisual experience.

A work that despite its possibly endless structural variations always remains the same, *Contrapposto Studies, i through vii* is a banal and deeply moving dance suite and a self-portrait series that explores the dissolution of the body through movement and time.

