

MATTISON

FRANZ KLINE COAL AND STEEL

ALLENTOWN ART MUSEUM OF THE LEHIGH VALLEY

# FRANZ KLINE COAL AND STEEL

ROBERT S. MATTISON



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ROBERT S. MATTISON

with an essay by IRVING SANDLER

Allentown Art Museum of the Lehigh Valley | Pennsylvania

*For Liza*

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October 7, 2012, to January 13, 2013  
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Cover: detail from *Turin*, 1960 (figure 82). The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.  
Frontispiece: detail from *Untitled*, ca. 1958 (figure 88). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

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## PREFACE

It is with great pleasure and pride that the Allentown Art Museum of the Lehigh Valley presents this catalogue in conjunction with the astounding exhibition *Franz Kline: Coal and Steel*, shown from October 7, 2012, through January 13, 2013.

Franz Kline, a native of Pennsylvania, was one of the major figures of the American Abstract Expressionist movement, which emerged in the 1940s and 1950s. It was centered in New York City and became the most important international art manifestation of the mid-twentieth century, influencing hundreds of artists, collectors, art historians, and critics around the world. Abstract Expressionism, which included such iconic names as Jackson Pollock, Lee Krasner, Mark Rothko, Hans Hofmann, Willem and Elaine de Kooning, Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko, Robert Motherwell, Clifford Still, Helen Frankenthaler, William Bazotes, and dozens of other notable painters and sculptors, was likened to an American artistic renaissance. It has become for many people a movement that defines creative power and authority in the modern world. Abstract Expressionism took the form of unique individual artistic styles that embodied the essence of the artists' subconscious impulses, profound abstract symbolism, and very personal emotional expressions. Some critics viewed Abstract Expressionism as revolutionary, absurd or nihilistic, existential, and incomprehensible. Others saw in the art dramatic presences, overwhelming monumental color fields, physicality, and a cataclysmic energy that marked the most formidable break with tradition since Cubism.

This Franz Kline exhibition explores for the first time in depth the influences on the artist's creations resulting from his early years in the coal and steel regions of eastern Pennsylvania. The works in the exhibition, both his paintings and drawings covering the period between 1935 and 1962, demonstrate the importance that his early experiences had on his mature style. As significant from the standpoint of critical research, every single work in this exhibition can be traced directly back to Kline's studio, setting a standard for authenticity especially for Kline's works on paper.

The exhibition was several years in the making, and we wish to thank the most important figure in this effort, Dr. Robert S. Mattison, Marshall R. Metzger Professor of Art at Lafayette College. Dr. Mattison served as guest curator for this exhibition and is the author of this intriguing publication containing groundbreaking research. Dr. Mattison's

efforts in bringing this exhibition to realization have been extraordinary, and we are honored to be the venue for this presentation.

I would like to extend a particular thanks to Ms. Sue Orr, the daughter of I. David Orr, Kline's most important patron during his early years. Ms. Orr has been a very generous lender to this exhibition and an invaluable source of insights into Kline's early art. Also, I wish to give special acknowledgment to Rufus Zogbaum and the Franz Kline Estate. Rufus has been instrumental in providing key historical information on Kline's body of work. Rufus's mother, Elizabeth Ross Zogbaum (1912–2005), made important donations of Kline's works to the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. A number of those works are included in this exhibition as well as works from the Estate.

I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Diane P. Fischer, our Chief Curator; Nathan Marzen, Collections Manager; Steve Gamler, Preparator; Sofia Bakis, Coordinator for Collections and Exhibitions; Tom Edge, Assistant Preparator; and Jessica Gates, Curatorial Intern. In our Development and Marketing Division, I would like to commend Elsbeth Haymon, Director of Development and Marketing; Rhonda Hudak, Manager of Government and Foundation Relations; Sue Pease, Business Development Manager; and Chris Potash, our Marketing and Public Relations Manager. Additional acknowledgments are listed in the back of the catalogue.

A project of this magnitude and depth would not have been possible without the generous support of key sponsors. I would like to express our gratitude to the following sponsors of the *Franz Kline: Coal and Steel* exhibition and catalogue. Presenting Sponsor: Julius & Katheryn Homer Foundation; Major Sponsors: Dedalus Foundation, First Northern Bank and Trust, The Leon C. and June W. Holt Endowment; Sustaining Sponsors: The Audrey and Bernard Berman Endowment Fund, Capital Blue Cross, Lutron Electronics Co. Inc, PPL, J. B. & Kathleen Reilly Fund of the Lehigh Valley Community Foundation; Supporting Sponsors: Anonymous, Computer Management and Marketing Associates Inc., ICON, Palmerton Area Historical Society, Senior Style.

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Allentown Art Museum of the Lehigh Valley



"It just seems as though there are forms  
in some experience of your life  
that have an excitement for you."

—Franz Kline<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

The powerful black-and-white paintings and drawings created by Franz Kline (1910–62) imprint themselves on our visual memory. These works are internationally known and rank among the most forceful artistic expressions of the mid-twentieth century. They appear simultaneously megalithic and unstable, bold and explosive. Angular strokes of black pigment lock together like trusses and hold their structure against the white paint that presses all around them. Powerful marks that suggest either vertical piers or horizontal buttresses are ruptured by paint gestures that resemble splintered fragments of steel. The works embody feelings of forcefulness and unbalance.

Kline's mature abstract paintings have been portrayed frequently as emerging full-blown in the artist's celebrated 1950 first one-person exhibition of black-and-white compositions that took place at the Charles Egan Gallery in New York City. That impression has been reinforced in both earlier and more recent literature. In 1962, Elaine de Kooning wrote of Kline's sudden conversion to abstraction in 1948 or 1949 upon viewing the details of one of his representational drawings enlarged in a Bell Opticon projector at Willem de Kooning's studio.<sup>2</sup> Her account carried the weight of personal connections with the artist and to her advantage located Kline's discovery in the context of her celebrated husband. In the 1994–95 exhibition *Franz Kline: Art and the Structure of Identity*, the argument is made by Stephen C. Foster that Kline's work before 1950 deserves no consideration in relation to his mature compositions.<sup>3</sup>

In opposition to the above views, this essay and exhibition argue that Kline's early work was essential to his painting from 1950 onward. The connections can be traced in the formal evolution of Kline's smaller compositions; Kline's transition to abstraction is much more sophisticated and complex than the artist merely viewing of details of one of

1. **Self Portrait**, 1946  
Oil on canvas  
19 x 13 inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



2. Trestle Bridge, Easton, Pennsylvania  
Photograph: Robert Mattison



his drawings though a projector. Components of his earlier works like the structure of trestle bridges, the angular thrust of train tracks, the irregular geometry of coal breaker buildings, as well as old New York architecture and the curves of the human body inform the later works. Of even greater significance is the worldview presented in Kline's mature works. The dual sense of power and decay—of structure and debris—that informs these works depends partly on Kline's recollections of his experience of the anthracite country of his youth (fig. 2). While the literature on Kline sometimes says little more than he came from “the mountains and valleys of Pennsylvania,” this essay contends that Kline's early experiences of the anthracite revolution in his native Pennsylvania were essential to the formation of his art and his understanding of the modern world.<sup>4</sup> That environment became for him the increasingly important back-story of his career. It was only in his maturity that Kline realized the social complexity of the industrial revolution that surrounded him as a young individual and was able fully to express his feelings through abstract forces in his paintings and drawings (fig. 3).

In fact, Kline was raised in the midst of one of the most volatile industrial upheavals of American history. At the time of his childhood around 1917, anthracite mining was at its apex. One hundred million tons of anthracite was mined that year, much of it in the area immediately surrounding Kline's home in Lehighton, northeastern Pennsylvania.<sup>5</sup> One hundred and seventy thousand miners were employed, and one million other people were supported by the anthracite industry. Powerful coal-driven railroad trains like *Chief* and *Cardinal*, their names later used as titles for two of Kline's major abstract paintings, crisscrossed the valley powered by anthracite and moving coal shipments across dramatically tall trestle bridges to industrial sites throughout eastern America.<sup>6</sup> Much of the landscape was stripped bare and marked by great piles of

coal ready for shipment as well as black manmade mountains of culm which consisted of left-over shale and anthracite fragments. The landscape was punctuated by coal breaker buildings used to separate the coal into various sizes. These tall towers were constructed in irregular geometric configurations with coal shoots projecting diagonally from them. The remains of that industrial landscape can be seen easily today throughout the region (fig. 4).

By the time Kline was an adult, the anthracite industry had collapsed as quickly and dramatically as it had risen. In 1950, the year Kline was beginning his black-and-white canvases, production had dropped eighty percent. By 1940, three out of four miners were unemployed in the Pennsylvania towns surrounding Kline's home. The miners' unions rose up, and new emphasis was placed on harsh and brutal working conditions. In the words of one historian, “It was hard to find a street in one of those towns where at least one miner had not died.”<sup>7</sup> The landscape in these areas was devastated (fig. 5). The countryside was dominated by piles of coal, abandoned machinery, and the decaying structures of the coal breakers. The enormous powerful trains of the coal era had outlived their usefulness and were being replaced by sleek oil- and electric-powered models. Betsy Zogbaum, Kline's companion and the heir to his estate, recalled, “As a young man, Franz came to know the small coal mining towns . . . such as Coaldale, Summit Hill, Lansford and Nesquehoning. Although he developed a certain kinship to the coal region because of its proximity, Kline regarded the mining areas as desolate.”<sup>8</sup>

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Kline returned to his home in anthracite country much more frequently than is commonly known.<sup>9</sup> His companions in New York remember Kline talking constantly at the Cedar Tavern on University Place, the bar favored by New York School artists, about his heritage in coal country. Artist Conrad Marca-Relli recalled, “Pennsylvania was always in his head. His step-father was an engineer of the railroad and his father committed suicide.”<sup>10</sup> Kline's friend and fellow artist Nicolas Marsicano remembers Kline talking for hours about the coal region and sprinkling his conversation with names cryptic to outsiders.<sup>11</sup> Grace Hartigan recalls that Kline returned often to Pennsylvania and talked constantly of the coal miners. He told her that on one trip back he had descended into the mines.<sup>12</sup> Artist Ed Meneeley, who also came from Lehighton, sought out Kline because he recognized memories of that landscape in Kline's black-and-white paintings. He and Kline talked of the trains thundering through the valley



3. *Untitled*, 1950s  
Brush and black ink on wove paper,  
9¾ x 6¾ inches  
National Gallery of Art,  
Washington, D.C.  
Gift of Elisabeth R. Zogbaum  
(1998.112.5)  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

4. **Dirt Roads Around Shack**, 1960s–70s  
George Harvan  
Black & white photograph,  
11⅞ x 16⅞ inches  
Lehigh University Art Galleries—  
Museum Operation, Bethlehem,  
Pennsylvania



and of seeing the miners who returned home, black from the coal dust that covered their bodies. Meneeley felt that because of their geographical connection that he and Kline spoke a “secret language.”<sup>13</sup>

Kline named many of his paintings after coal country locations. Examples include *Bethlehem* (1959–60, Saint Louis Museum of Art, fig. 6), *Hazleton* (1957, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles), *Delaware Gap* (1958, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.), *Lehigh V Span* (1959–60, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art), *Luzerne* (1956, private collection), *Mahoning* (1956, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York), *Pittston* (1958, private collection), *Scranton* (1960 Museum Ludwig, Cologne), and *Thorpe* (1954, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles). Kline painted *Thorpe* months after the name of the mining town was changed from Mauch Chunk to Jim Thorpe. Jim Thorpe was the great Native American athlete who won gold medals in the pentathlon and decathlon events of the 1912 Olympics. Later, Thorpe was unfairly stripped of his medals. Kline kept a picture of Jim Thorpe tacked to the wall of his studio. The athlete suited the artist’s image of the tragic hero.

In some cases Kline’s references to coal country are harder to discern. For example, the title of *Shaft* (1955, Michael and Dorothy Blankfort Collection) references mine shafts. In the case of *Shenandoah Wall*, Shenandoah is an important anthracite location to the west of Kline’s home in Panther Valley, and “wall” is the term used for a large vertical vein of anthracite coal. *Diamond* (1960, private collection) is the name of one of the most famous trains to travel through the anthracite region, and “black diamonds” was the nickname given to anthracite. These titles are not inconsequential as some of the Kline literature suggests. If Kline had not intended such powerful references, he could have easily num-

bered or lettered the paintings as did Jackson Pollock, Clyfford Still, and other artists of the New York School. Taken together, the titles of Kline’s paintings act as a code that informs the underlying content of his work.

None of this is to suggest that Kline’s abstract paintings are representations of trestle bridges, mine shafts, culm piles, or coal breaker buildings. Instead, the feelings inspired by these forms and the history that they represent were deeply embedded in Kline’s visual memory. These memories were dug out and brought to the surface in the forceful but fractured structures of the paintings and drawings executed after 1950.

While Kline’s representational works do contain important clues as to both the style and content of later paintings, they are not as successful in expressing the duality of construction and destruction that is a dominant feature of the later work. It took an abstract vocabulary to express those feelings, and once Kline discovered that vocabulary he pursued it with remarkable intensity (fig. 7). In an interview, Kline stated, “. . . if someone says, ‘that looks like a bridge’, it doesn’t bother me really. A lot of them do. . . . I like bridges. . . . I don’t have the feeling that something has to be completely non-associative as far as figure form is concerned. . . . I think if you use long lines they become—what could they be? The only things they could be is either highways or architecture or bridges.”<sup>14</sup>

Kline’s early experiences in coal country were a conditioning factor for his New York years. In his New York works, the forceful presence of the urban environment is combined with ambivalence about the role of human beings in that context. During his time in New York, Kline led a rootless existence as he moved from studio to studio; he lived in and painted the fringes of the city. His cityscapes are almost always devoid of people, and among his favorite themes were the elevated rail lines (El) which, like Kline’s coal-driven trains, were coming to the end of their lives. In addition, Kline often painted his studio as an empty space. In lower New York, Kline was known as a vibrant personality, but nearly every close friend recognized a deep melancholy beneath his surface warmth.



5. **Drawing**, September 1958  
Ink on paper, 10½ x 13¾ inches  
Collection of Juliet and Michael  
Rubenstein  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New  
York

## KLINE’S EARLY YEARS: SECURITY AND ALIENATION

Franz Kline was born on May 23, 1910, in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, the heart of coal country. His father, Anthony Kline, was of German background and owned together with his brothers a saloon in the city. Kline’s mother, the former Anne Rowe, was born in Cornwall, England, and came to America when she was seventeen. Kline had an older brother and younger sister and brother. The galvanizing event for the family was the





6. **Bethlehem**, 1959–60  
Oil on canvas, 62¼ x 78¼ inches  
Saint Louis Art Museum  
Given by Sam J. Levin and Audrey L. Levin (24:1992)  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

death of Kline’s father in 1917, when Franz was seven years old. Anthony Kline died of a gunshot wound. While the local newspaper called the death suicide and suggested that Anthony faced financial pressures, no weapon was found and rumors of murder persisted. Faced with the support of her four young children, Anne Kline enrolled in the nursing program at St. Luke’s Hospital, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Unable to care for her children during her training, she sent three of them (Frederick, born 1909; Louise, born 1912; and Jacques, born 1916) to the Episcopal Church Home in Jonestown, Pennsylvania located near the children’s uncle.

Franz was enrolled in Girard College in Philadelphia, a free boarding school for “white, healthy, fatherless boys.” Founded by financier Stephen Girard, the school was intended to teach a craft to “orphaned” white-male children.<sup>15</sup> At that time, when a child was accepted at Girard College, the family contractually relinquished its rights to the child. The directors of the institution were compelled by Girard’s will to “enforce every possible restraint to prevent relatives from interfering with, or withdrawing such orphan from the institution” until he reached eighteen.<sup>16</sup> The school was isolated behind a high wall and had as its main building a Greek templelike structure. It was run with unbending military precision in which every hour of the day was sched-

uled. The students were ordered to march two-by-two wherever they went on campus. The school was described by one individual who had taught there as “the coldest place I have ever been.”<sup>17</sup> Such an environment must have been distressing for the young Franz following the shock of his father’s death.

Showing an aptitude for technical courses, Kline was registered in the Elementary Industrial Program. He took mechanical drawing every day and was assigned to training in a foundry workshop which may have given him his first feeling for the machinery of the modern age. He also took a special after-hours art class. For the first three years at Girard, Franz rarely saw his family. He remained at the school including summers; three “Mother’s Days” were arranged each year for family visits. Artist Joel Le Bow remembers that Kline spoke often of being “brought up” in an orphanage.<sup>18</sup>

In March 1920, Anne Kline married Ambrose D. Snyder, a widower and foreman for the Lehigh Valley Railroad, and settled with her three other children and his children in Lehigh, Pennsylvania. Anne regarded the marriage as a business partnership and abstained from sexual relations with Snyder. Despite this fact, Snyder was a good provider and frequently took the children on excursions to the train yards where he worked. As soon as she married, Anne began to write Cheesman Herrick, the president of Girard College, informing him of her intention to withdraw Franz. For five long years, the administration of Girard College refused her pleas to return her son to his family. Given Anne’s new marital status, Kline was allowed to leave the school only during summers and holidays. Finally, in July 1925 due to Anne’s five-year letter writing campaign, Kline moved at age fifteen to his family home in Lehigh.<sup>19</sup> Later on, Kline stated, “You know I was in an orphanage for eleven years [actually eight years, 1917–25]. I was my father’s favorite son.”<sup>20</sup>

In Lehigh, Kline’s mother, who was obsessive in her desire to control her son’s future, held him back in school so that he was sixteen as a high-school freshman. Older and more mature than his classmates and a natural athlete, Kline became captain of the football team for four years and a star of the baseball team. Later, he was voted the most popular person in his class. Always an indifferent student, Kline began to take art courses at the high school. During his sophomore year, he was president of the Art Club, and in his junior year he contributed pen and ink drawings to the school yearbook. Recovering from a football injury to his knee as a high school senior, Kline began to think about going to art school and specializing in cartooning.



7. **Building Near Smoke Stack**, no date  
George Harvan  
Black & white photograph,  
11½ x 16½ inches  
Lehigh University Art Galleries—  
Museum Operation, Bethlehem,  
Pennsylvania

While Kline's life in high school was protected and largely governed by his mother, who hovered over him, he was surrounded by the physical, economic, and social crises that dominated the anthracite region. Lehighton itself was spared the worst of the crises that took place in such nearby towns as Coaldale, Hazleton, Lansford, Mauch Chunk, Nesquehoning, and Summit Hill because it was home to the railroad repair yards for the Lehigh Coal & Navigation Company, and those yards did not fail until 1954. Kline's stepfather, who was a foreman at the railroad yards, afforded his son access to the powerful trains being repaired there, and Ambrose Snyder remained employed throughout the collapse of anthracite mining. Despite his protected position, Kline could not help but witness the precipitous decline in industry and accompanying social misery that was gathering force around him. The year Kline returned to Lehighton, 1925, saw the longest strike by mine workers in United States' history. The strike lasted one hundred and seventy days and was accompanied by significant violence. Elizabeth Zogbaum recalled that Kline talked about these strikes. During the Great Railroad Strike of 1922, when Franz returned home for the summer, Ambrose Snyder broke the picket lines. Police accompanied him home for security. Kline remembered that when the family moved through the house, they ducked before the windows because stones were being thrown at them by the strikers. One night a bomb filled with dynamite was hurled through the window but did not explode.<sup>21</sup>

Kline returned to these memories as a mature person, and they profoundly affected his art. The fact that such memories resurfaced as an adult is supported by recent behavioral research concerning "autobiographical memory." In an expanding body of literature, the term "autobiographical memory" is used by behavioral psychologists to analyze the frequent tendency of test cases to recall powerful childhood memories. According to David C. Rubin, a researcher in this field and leader of a ten-year study, "Adolescence and early adulthood are special times for memory encoding. There is solid evidence that people recall a disproportionate number of autobiographical memories from that period when they are asked to recall important events, or recall vivid memories, or recall the first event that comes to mind when they are cued by a word [or image]."<sup>22</sup> In addition, Rubin concluded that the struggle to understand the meaning of an event further increases its "memorability," and that these memories are key elements in "*identity formation*."<sup>23</sup> When Kline sought to define himself as a mature artist and to set out his view of the era in which he lived, the dramatic images of his youth in anthracite country became central to him and were embodied as powerful opposing forces of his mature paintings.

The manner in which Kline drew on these memories has parallels to the way that other New York School artists used personal history to define their art. For Arshile Gorky, his Armenian heritage was among the primary features in his work. As other examples, Jackson Pollock



**8. Coal Cars Moving Up and Down Tracks, 1949–55**  
George Harvan  
Black & white photograph  
11½ x 16½ inches  
Lehigh University Art Galleries—  
Museum Operation, Bethlehem,  
Pennsylvania

referred repeatedly to his birth in the expanses of Cody, Wyoming, as a source for the scale of his paintings, and Clyfford Still emphasized the connection of his art to the rugged plains of North Dakota.

## ANTHRACITE MINING HISTORY

In 1820 the first regular shipment of 365 tons of anthracite coal took place from Panther Valley, near Kline's future home. In the view of one prominent historian, that event marked the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in America.<sup>24</sup> Anthracite is a hard coal that burns hotter and with less residue than softer coals like bitumen. Thus, it was more efficient for both industrial power and domestic heating and was highly desirable. Anthracite was also more difficult to mine. Unlike bitumen, which could be surface mined, anthracite existed in deep vertical veins that had to be worked by lone miners in pitch-black tunnels cut far below the earth's surface.

The Lehigh Coal & Navigation Company, the powerhouse organization for coal mining and shipping in Panther Valley, was founded in 1824 and by the 1830s that company was shipping two hundred thousand tons of coal per year and transforming American industry.<sup>25</sup> Portions of the initials for the company may be seen on the coal car in a Kline drawing (fig. 23). As mentioned earlier, by 1917 when Kline was seven years old, a remarkable one hundred million tons of anthracite was being mined in America.<sup>26</sup> In northeastern Pennsylvania, the anthracite was called "black diamonds," and it occupied a legendary status for all associated with it (fig. 8). Anthracite mining brought prosperity to the area. By 1870 Mauch Chunk, a coal town to which Kline liked to bring his visitors, had the highest mean per-capita income of any city in America.<sup>27</sup>



References to trains abound in both Kline's figurative and abstract works. Built to transport the anthracite, America's railroads had their origin in Pennsylvania's coal region.<sup>28</sup> Later, powerful trains, generating more than four thousand horsepower and themselves powered by anthracite, were required to move the coal across mountainous terrain. They moved across huge trestle bridges, the intersecting steel beams of which have resonance with the "X" patterns in Kline's abstract paintings. The barren landscape was punctuated by culm piles that reached over one hundred feet in height, and coal breakers, which featured irregular geometry and diagonal ramps, were remembered in the angular brushstrokes of Kline's paintings. Wilkes-Barre, where Kline was born, became the center for the coal corporations with twenty-four coal companies headquartered there. The center for train maintenance and the largest roundhouse in northeastern Pennsylvania for switching train lines were located in Lehigh, where Kline grew up. As mentioned earlier, Kline's stepfather was a supervisor of the roundhouse.

The anthracite miners were the tragic heroes of Kline's youth, and Kline may have partly modeled his view of the artist as a heroic but lonely outsider on their lives. While the anthracite industry experienced a technological revolution, the method of extracting hard coal from the ground remained an individual process requiring extreme physical and mental endurance. Because anthracite seams were vertical and pitched up to 2,000 feet beneath the surface, anthracite miners worked alone with primitive tools in nearly totally black conditions digging narrow tunnels, called breasts, into the veins of anthracite (fig. 9). With a combination of fatalism and pride, their world was sometimes called "working in a black hell."<sup>29</sup> They emerged from each day's labor totally black, and one thinks of the dominance of black in Kline's art. Deep in the mine



9. **Bottom of Mine Chute No. 9 Mine, Landsford**, no date  
George Harvan  
Gelatin silver print, 11 x 14 inches  
Lehigh University Art Galleries  
—Museum Operation, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania



shafts, ponderous wooden doors controlled the airflow into the lower mine and thus were keys to survival. A number of Kline paintings that contain heavy rectangular configurations and use "door" in their titles may refer to these life-saving structures rather than simply studio doors as the Kline literature suggests.

Not only was Kline surrounded by anthracite mining at its apex, he witnessed, as an adult, its rapid and nearly total collapse. The catastrophic decline which began in the late 1920s was due to a combination of factors. These included the increasing use of more easily mined bitumen for home heating and the accompanying rise of natural gas and oil as energy sources. These alternative sources became common just as the overall economy slowed during the Great Depression. The response of the mining unions to slowdowns in production was a series of strikes. These strikes further harmed the industry. By 1938 American anthracite production had dropped to less than half of its 1917 peak.<sup>30</sup> In 1949 production fell another 20 percent in one year and by 1953 production had dropped another 30 percent. In 1954 the Lehigh Coal & Navigation Company ceased operation in response to an almost extinct market.

Evidence now indicates that during the 1940s Kline made several trips per month to visit his family in Pennsylvania. On these visits, he saw legions of unemployed miners and vacant homes. Small businesses that depended on patronage by the miners failed. In some areas of northeastern Pennsylvania entire towns were abandoned. The breakers fell silent and train service to the area became much less frequent. By the early 1950s, the region had the lowest per-capita income in Pennsylvania and one of the lowest in the northeast. A quarter of the region, or 484 square miles, had been environmentally damaged by mining operations. Deforestation and stream pollution was extensive. So in a few short decades, Kline witnessed not only the full power of a modern industry but its precipitous collapse (fig. 10).

10. **Hazelton**, 1957  
Oil on canvas, 41¼ x 78 inches  
The Museum of Contemporary Art,  
Los Angeles. The Panza Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate  
/ Artists Rights Society (ARS),  
New York





## PENNSYLVANIA LANDSCAPE AND INDUSTRY

In 1943, Kline won the S. J. Wallace Truman Prize at the 117th Annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design for his painting *Palmer-ton, PA* of 1941 (fig. 11). The award represents the first official recognitions of Kline's art. In *The New York Times* lead art critic Edward Alden Jewell cited the work, "Of the several landscapes thus honored, those by Henry Glasser and Franz Kline are perhaps the most pleasurable."<sup>31</sup> Since that time, much of the Kline literature has treated the work as a bucolic landscape.<sup>32</sup> An alternative reading was suggested by David Anfam, one of the most acute writers on Kline, when he called the work "a zigzag jumble."<sup>33</sup> In fact, the industrial desolation of this scene goes far beyond Anfam's insight. By the 1940s, when Kline created this painting, the landscape surrounding Palmerton had been compromised by the largest zinc smelting operation in the eastern United States. The tawny yellow color of Kline's painting is not the "golden glow" found in America's Hudson River School art of the mid-nineteenth century; it results from a landscape in which the vegetation has been reduced by zinc smelting operations, and the yellow tone is a product of the sulfuric acid residue that covered the entire valley.<sup>34</sup> Between 1898 and 1980 the smelting operations in Palmerton produced five hundred tons of sulfuric acid per day. The New Jersey Zinc company performed due diligence in collection of the residue, which was 95 percent efficient, but there remained twenty-five tons of emissions per day. The resulting deforestation can be seen even today in the valley surrounding Palmerton. At the same time, the New Jersey Zinc Company employed hundreds of workers. The company designed and constructed Palmerton as one of the first company-built cities in the state. Zinc is the essential ingredient for such necessary industrial products as automobile tires, die cast alloys, paints, galvanized metals, and shell casings during the war years. So the zinc operations in Palmerton brought the positive and negative sides of industrial development into sharp focus.

Detail, *Palmer-ton, PA*





11. **Palmerton, PA**, 1941  
Oil on canvas, 21 x 27½ inches  
Smithsonian American Art Museum,  
Museum purchase. (1980.52)  
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Kline's *Palmerton, PA* clearly shows a barren landscape yet one filled with industrial activity. The rugged, irregular paint handling provides a visual equivalent for the rawness of the rocky terrain. To the upper left, factory buildings appear, although these are not the zinc plant, which is beyond view. Ramshackle workers' houses are situated next to the factory buildings. The irregular, patched together houses, which suggest the unstable angular strokes in Kline's later abstract paintings, will appear in several other representational works. To the right side in the distance one can see the onion domes of the Greek Catholic churches of SS. Peter and Paul and St. Vladimir in the approximate positions that they stand today. Beginning in the 1860s the majority of workers who poured into the industrial areas to work coal and zinc were from the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Czarist Russia. They included Poles, Ukrainians, Slovaks, and Serbians who were primarily of the Eastern Catholic faith. They were met with suspicion by the native born inhabitants and called generally Slavs, but for Kline the churches represented the diversity of labor in the area.<sup>35</sup>

*Palmerton, PA* is a composite and partly imaginary view. The valley is not as narrow as Kline depicts it and does not zigzag in the manner of the painting. There is no trestle bridge in the center. Instead, the

bridge represented is the Lehigh Gap Bridge, which Kline relocated to a central position in the painting. At the height of its use around the time of this painting, the Lehigh Gap Bridge had two hundred locomotives per day pass over it. Those locomotives both polluted the environment and represented commerce. The foreground of *Palmerton, PA* features a train that powers through the valley with authoritative confidence. It is the forerunner of powerful trains, first represented and then suggested abstractly, in Kline's drawings and paintings. The jagged pattern of the ravinelike valley and the vertical beams of the bridge act as visual barriers.<sup>36</sup> The eye moves through the work in an uncomfortable, jarring manner. The vertical bars of the bridge arrest the viewer's visual progress. All of this creates a restless energy later found throughout Kline's art.

*Palmerton, PA* stands in stark contrast, as Kline certainly recognized, to the romantic tendency of American landscape painting to show the enduring character of the natural world, even when technology is present. Jasper Cropsey's *Starrucca Viaduct, Pennsylvania* of 1865 (fig. 12) is an example. The work depicts a glorious view across the golden fall foliage of the Starrucca Valley. In the background the curve of the stone viaduct, the latest in industrial engineering, complements the natural curve of the valley. A locomotive travels along the viaduct too far in the distance to disturb the peace of the foreground scene. The steam from the locomotive merges seamlessly with the clouds floating through the sky. Two figures in the foreground observe the wonders of nature and technology that have become one.

12. **Starrucca Viaduct, Pennsylvania**, 1865  
Jasper Francis Cropsey (American, 1823–1900)  
Oil on canvas, 22¾ x 36¾ inches  
Toledo Museum of Art (Toledo, Ohio)  
Purchased with funds from the  
Florence Scott Libbey Bequest in  
Memory of her Father, Maurice A.  
Scott, 1947.58.  
Photo Credit: Photography  
Incorporated, Toledo





A sharp contrast to Cropsey's vision is found in George Inness's *Lackawanna Valley* circa 1855 (fig. 13). This painting, which Kline certainly knew, is particularly germane to *Palmerton, PA*. Like Kline, Inness had a deep interest in trains as harbingers of a new world, and they appear in many of his paintings. Commissioned by the first president of the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad, *Lackawanna Valley* was intended to feature the company's new roundhouse; Kline's stepfather managed the roundhouse in Lehighton. Unlike Cropsey's painting, Inness's work does not present a view of nature undisturbed by technology. In it, the landscape has been taken over by the roundhouse and the town of Scranton in the distance. To one side of the roundhouse, Inness placed a church spire partly obscured by smoke from five different factory smoke stacks. Combined with the smoke from the train, these emissions, not natural climate, are responsible for the overall haze in the picture.

Leaving the roundhouse, the train steams aggressively toward the contemplative figure in the foreground, as does the train in Kline's painting. Rather than a view of wilderness in the Cropsey painting, the foreground of the Inness work is dominated by ugly blackened stumps of felled trees. The art historian Frances K. Pohl noted, "Inness places so many tree stumps in such a prominent position in the painting certainly to suggest his awareness of the massive destruction of forests necessitated by the construction of railways."<sup>37</sup> Like Inness's *Lacka-*

13. **The Lackawanna Valley**, ca. 1856  
George Inness  
Oil on canvas, 33 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 50 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches  
Courtesy National Gallery of Art,  
Washington, D.C.  
Gift of Mrs. Huttleston (1945.4.1)



*wanna Valley*, Kline's *Palmerton, PA* suggests simultaneously the artist's fascination with the power of modern industry and his realization of its destructive forces. Kline's personal history in anthracite coal country made this conflict essential to his worldview.

A number of Kline's other Pennsylvania landscapes share the sensibility of *Palmerton, PA*. These paintings often depict dark winter scenes. *Lehigh River* of 1944 (fig. 14), which also won the Wallace J. Truman Prize at the National Academy of Design, depicts a raw landscape in tones of black, gray, and tan. The rough painting technique and impasto mimic the texture of the rocky landscape. The distant hill line to the right side shows an area where the trees have been burned out in preparation for mining exploration. A coal-driven train powers through the middle ground surrounded by a gray swamp. In the foreground, a small factory is perched precariously on a hillside. In the work, industrial progress is clearly a bleak affair.

Just as Kline's works are remote from most American landscapes of the nineteenth century, they are the opposite of American Regionalist painting that dominated the 1930s. Those paintings by such figures as Thomas Benton, John Steuart Curry, and Grant Wood glorify American rural life with exaggerated optimism and ornamental compositions. *PA Landscape (Lehigh River)* of 1944 (fig. 24) stands in stark contrast to

14. **Lehigh River**, 1944  
Oil on canvas, 20 x 26 inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York





15. **PA Street Scene (Pennsylvania Mining Town)**, 1947  
Oil on canvas, 15 x 19 inches  
Private Collection  
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American Regionalist painting. In the small horizontal work, the verticality of the central building and its proximity to the railroad tracks suggests that it might be a coal breaker, the buildings that were used to separate the coal from shale and to divide it into different sizes. To the left side of the painting, the train tracks end at a black cut in the hillside, which is probably a mining area. In the background to the right, a small mining town complete with onion domed churches appears. The paint handling is aggressive. The thick pigment surface has been scratched with the butt end of the brush and manipulated with Kline's fingers.<sup>38</sup> Much more than either the Hudson River School tradition or American Regionalism, this painting resembles the eccentric, moody landscapes of Ralph Albert Blakelock and the seascapes of Albert Pinkham Ryder, two of the earlier American artists that Kline most admired.<sup>39</sup>

*PA Street Scene (Pennsylvania Mining Town)* of 1947 (fig. 15) probably represents a "patch town." The patch towns were company towns wholly owned by the mining enterprises where the government allowed them to buy an entire "patch" of land. The towns featured irregular buildings often constructed from scrap lumber that canted in every direction because of the irregular construction and lack of sound foundations. One sociologist called them "a settlement of the queerest struc-

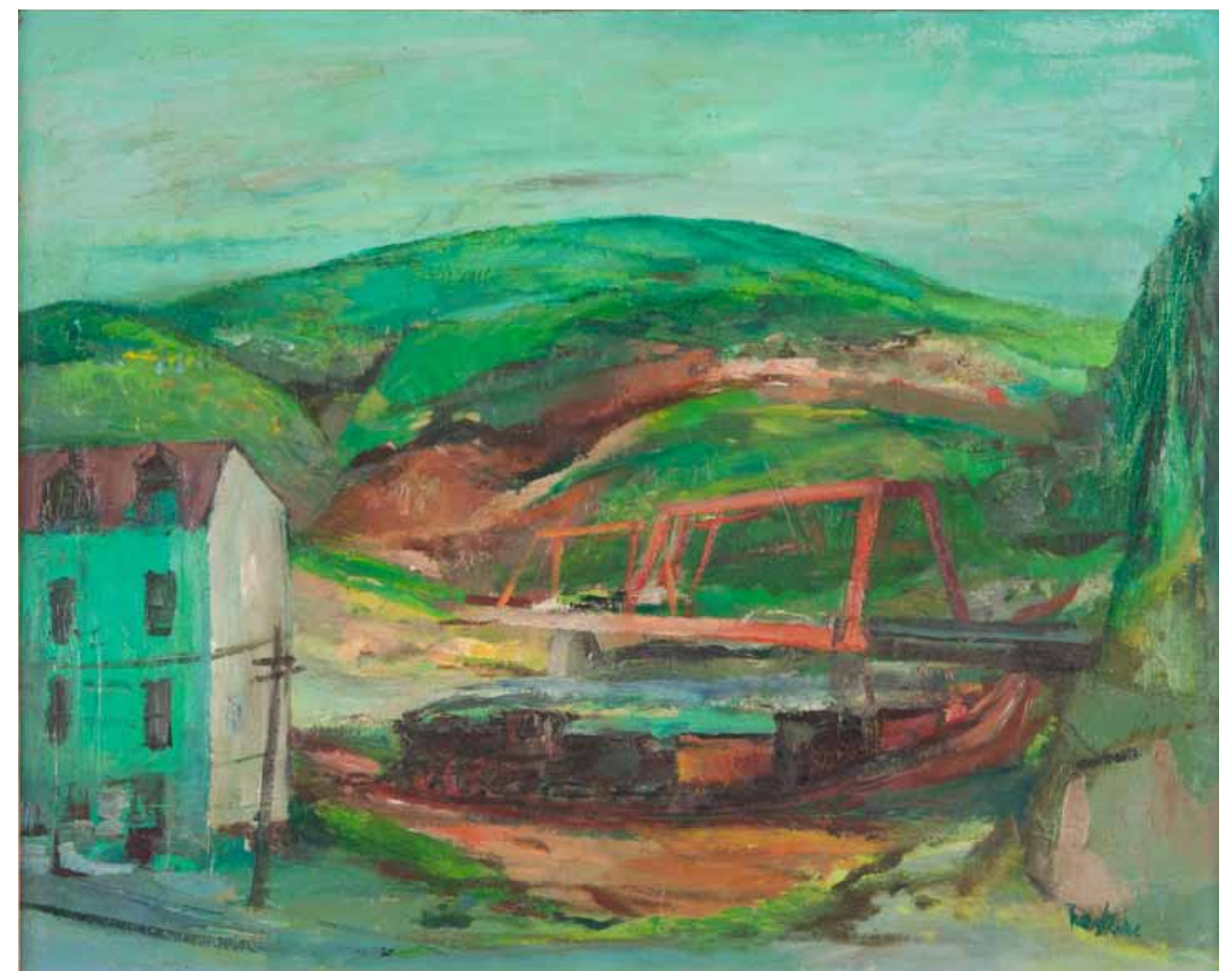
opposite: 16. **Pennsylvania Landscape**, 1948–49  
Oil on canvas, 27½ x 34 inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

tures."<sup>40</sup> Kline's painting shows these shacks as strong and proudly irregular forms that fill the picture plane. The dirty gray colors of the patch buildings—colors that appear with frequency in Kline's later abstract paintings—are offset by a dramatic red sunset. Kline certainly knew of the economic, social, and political implications of the patch towns. The patch towns insured control of the miners by the coal companies. The miners' families were made wholly dependent on the company for housing, clothing, food, and mercantile needs. Many of the mine strikes began in the patch towns.

*Pennsylvania Landscape*, 1948–49, (fig. 16) actually depicts the Lehighon-Weissport Bridge, a short distance from Kline's family home in Lehighon. A comparison of the painting to Kline's drawing of the scene, *Landscape with Lehighon-Weissport Bridge* of 1945 (fig. 17) is instructive.<sup>41</sup> In the drawing, the landscape is more spacious; the curve in the train tracks is gentle, and there is no train; the trestle bridge runs parallel to the picture plane; and the indus-



17. **Landscape with Lehighon-Weissport Bridge**, 1945  
Pencil on paper, 7½ x 9 inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York







18. *Lehigh V Span*, 1959–60  
Oil on canvas, 60¼ x 80 inches  
San Francisco Museum of Art  
Gift of the Hamilton-Wells Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

trial building is set in the distance. The drawing, in fact, represents more closely the positions of those elements when the scene is viewed today.<sup>42</sup> In the painting *Pennsylvania Landscape* Kline has compressed all the elements and created a greater tension between nature and technology. The trestle bridge thrusts toward the viewer, creating a sharp intersection with the train that steams across the picture surface. The large storage building has been moved to the foreground, which together with the hill line to the right closes in the composition. Even the colors of the work have a grating character. The landscape is an acid green, which contrasts with the rust orange of the bridge and train. The structure of the trestle bridge with its dominant diagonal lines had a powerful influence on Kline's later works as seen in *Lehigh V Span* of 1959–60 (fig. 18).

As mentioned earlier, some of the first trains brought to America were those used to transport anthracite in northeastern Pennsylvania. They both carried the hard coal and were powered by it. The fastest, largest, and most powerful American trains of the first half of the twentieth century passed through the coal region that surrounded Kline. The New Jersey Central and Lehigh Valley railroad lines traveled through Lehigh. Because Kline's father worked for the railroad, the family could travel on the trains for free, and many of the trips Kline made to and from the coal region were taken on those trains. Later, as Kline



moved from one studio to another in New York, small metal models of the anthracite trains were among the few objects he always kept with him.<sup>43</sup>

The *Black Diamond Express* was the designation given over generations to a series of trains that were the pride of the Lehigh Valley Railroad. The trains were powered by anthracite, and as stated earlier they were named “black diamond” after the nickname for that coal. The *Black Diamond Express* of Kline's era weighed almost one million pounds. It had 4,600 horsepower and traveled at one hundred miles per hour. As late as 1949–50, Kline sketched on the back of a mailing envelope *Black Diamond* (fig. 19). That sketch may have been inspired by the postcard

19. *Black Diamond*, ca. 1949–50  
Pencil on manila envelope, 8 x 11 inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

20. *NW 13 Washington J Class 605 at Shaffers Crossing Outside Roanoke*, ca. 1955  
Ogle Winston Link  
Silver print, 20 x 16 inches  
Copyright O. Winston Link Foundation,  
courtesy Robert Mann Gallery

reproduced here. Many of the most famous trains were night trains, and Kline described to fellow artist Ed Meneeley the excitement of seeing “the trains streaking through the night,” an effect made even more dramatic by their powerful headlights.<sup>44</sup> Kline's experience of these night trains roaring through the darkness is paralleled by one of the greatest train photographers, O. Winston Link (fig. 20).<sup>45</sup> *Chief* of 1950 (The Museum of Modern Art, New York), named after one of the great trains of the western route, features the thrusting diagonal forms and a black circular configuration with white core that resembles the boiler and train headlight that so fired Kline's imagination.

Kline's work *Chief (Train)* of 1942 (fig. 21) shows the artist's early fascination with trains. Despite the title given to the work at a later date, the train is actually a shunter, or switching engine. These small coal-powered locomotives were used for assembly of trains or for moving larger engines. The shunters are marked by their high cab, low hood, and







21. **Chief (Train)**, 1942  
Oil on canvas, 24 x 32 inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

small wheels; they are high torque and extremely powerful. Switching is a complex and dangerous operation, as trains cars are moved between multiple tracks to assemble the train, and Kline would have had ample opportunities to see the shunters working at the rail switches and repair facilities in Lehigh. In *Chief (Train)*, Kline set the forceful little engine in profile. Its sheer power rather than grace is emphasized.<sup>46</sup> Kline surrounded the ungainly profile of the little train with a red ground, which represents its power and the heat of its coal-burning engine.

In his pencil drawing *Railroad Station* of 1945 (fig. 22), Kline placed the train more benignly in the context of a railroad station that may be located in Mauch Chunk.<sup>47</sup> The forceful little ink drawing *Untitled-Locomotive* of 1945–47 (fig. 23) demonstrates the close relationship between Kline's representational and abstract works.<sup>48</sup> There, the train is simplified to a black mass, and the artist uses vigorous sweeping strokes of ink to suggest that it is shattering the loosely constructed grid that surrounds it. Despite the small scale of this drawing, the potency of the train is overwhelming because Kline contrasts its black massing with areas of white paper. As mentioned earlier, the train's coal car carries the fragmented initials of the Lehigh Coal & Transportation Company.



22. **Railroad Station**, 1945  
Pencil, paper mounted on paper board,  
7<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 11<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
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It is significant that Kline developed his passion for the massive anthracite-driven trains just as their usefulness was coming to an end. By the mid-1940s, the coal-powered trains were being replaced by diesel and electric models. The disappearance of these powerful trains parallels Kline's overall experience of the rise and decline of the anthracite industry. In a similar manner, when Kline moved to New York, one of his favorite motifs was the Elevated (El) Railway Lines that had reached the end of their usefulness and were being torn down.



23. **Untitled-Locomotive**, ca. 1945–47  
Ink double-sided on 2 ply illustration  
board, 3<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 4<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate  
/ Artists Rights Society (ARS),  
New York





24. **PA Landscape (Lehigh River)**, 1944  
 Oil on canvas, 6 x 12 inches  
 Private Collection  
 © 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



25. **Pennsylvania Landscape**, 1944  
 Ink and pastel on paper, 8½ x 11½ inches  
 Private Collection  
 © 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York





26. **Red Barn**, ca. 1944  
Oil on canvas, 14 x 17 inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



27. **Night Scene with Woodhouse**, 1944  
Woodcut on paper, 10 x 10 inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



28. **Untitled—Figures with Train**, ca. 1945  
Crayon, pastel & ink on paper, 2½ x 4½ inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



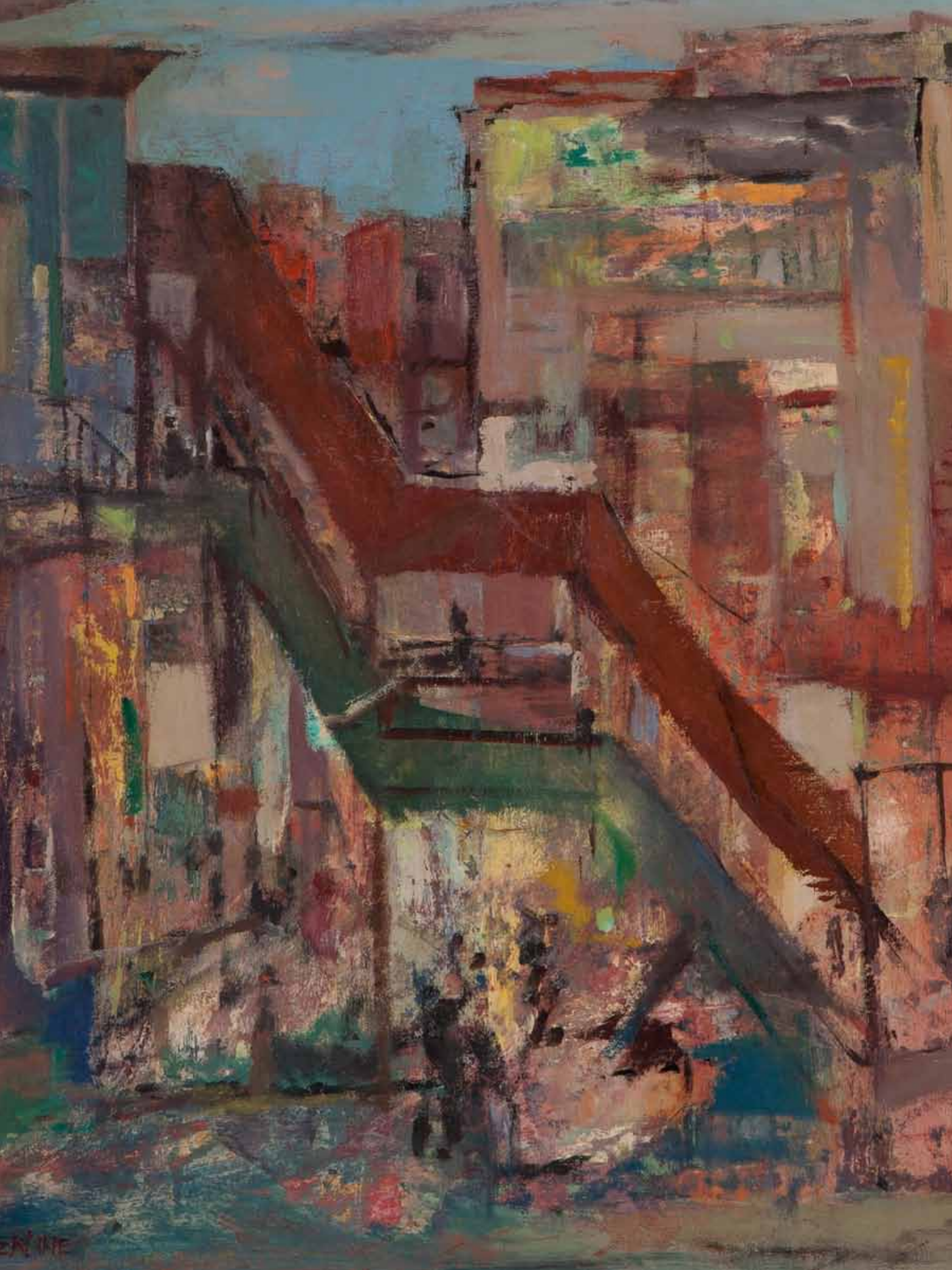
29. **House with Porch**, 1947  
Ink on paper, 14 x 11 inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York





30. **Lehighthon Mural**, 1946  
 Oil on canvas mounted on plaster, 73 x 166 inches  
 American Legion Post 314  
 Lehighthon, Pennsylvania  
 © 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York  
 Photograph by Joshua Finsel





## NEW YORK AN URBAN IDENTITY

Kline settled permanently in New York City in 1938 after a one-year trip to London, where he met his future wife, Elizabeth V. Parsons.<sup>49</sup> Once Kline moved to New York, he remained there until his death in 1962. Although, as noted above, Kline made frequent trips back to Pennsylvania, New York became his central experience of the modern world. Unlike many of the other artists of the New York School, including Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, and Philip Guston, Kline did not leave the city for any extended period of time to live and work in the countryside; he remained wedded to the urban environment.<sup>50</sup> Kline emphatically stated, “Hell, half the world wants to be like Thoreau at Walden worrying about the noise of the traffic on the way to Boston; the other half use up their lives being part of that noise. I like the second half. Right?”<sup>51</sup>

Kline lived in multiple locations during his twenty-four years in lower Manhattan. For the most part, his early years were spent in Greenwich Village near Washington Square and the later years were in the area of Union Square. Kline was a proud participant in the “downtown arts scene,” as it was then differentiated from the uptown art environment. Much of the Kline literature emphasizes his colorful personality and his participation in the night arts scene. In the earlier years, Kline was a regular at Minetta Tavern in the Village and later at Cedar Tavern with his fellow New York School artists. Kline was in fact a raconteur and was known to carry on entertaining and clever conversations about a wide variety of subjects into all hours of the night. He loved the so-called shaggy dog stories of the era. But those who knew Kline well saw another side to his personality. Beneath his extroverted exterior they sensed a tremendous loneliness, isolation, and melancholy. Ernestine Lassaw, wife of sculptor Ibram Lassaw, recalls, “He was so much fun, so lively, but then there were moments that he retreated and he seemed so desperately alone.”<sup>52</sup> Grace Hartigan remembered, “There

Detail, *Chinatown*, 1948



was always something deep below the surface that he guarded very closely.”<sup>53</sup> In fact, Kline led a transient existence in the city. During his twenty-four years there, he moved fourteen times including at least three evictions. Sometimes he moved several times during a single year.

Some of Kline’s melancholy can be attributed to the mental decline and eventual hospitalization of his wife, Elizabeth, that will be discussed below. Another aspect was his poverty during the years before 1950. But his constant movement was not just the result of his poor financial situation. His existence had a rootless character. Kline prided himself on being an outsider like the coal miners he admired. Kline’s representational cityscapes are often empty, devoid of human life. His works feature contrasting low- and high-rise buildings set on empty squares. The invigorating and the isolating aspects of modern existence simultaneously were emphasized. His friend Fred Mitchell captured this aspect of Kline in a 1991 interview:

He also liked the changes; as you look at the edges of a city, you see abrupt changes. I think it is the edges that he particularly liked . . . And everyone is excited about Battery Park and the way the whole city comes together there. And there streets converge and there are little pockets of light. When you’re in the middle of the city, you’re not quite aware of these things. But when you’re all around the edge . . . And Kline had walked all along South Street.<sup>54</sup>

The intersection of assertiveness and loneliness in Kline’s existence may have been a deeper part of his overall personality. It may be traced to the violent death of his father, to his early experiences in Pennsylvania, and to the circumstances of urban life at mid-century. For Kline, New York was place of individuation, an environment where his art could reach its fruition. At the same time, the city was an indifferent place, antithetical in some ways to human companionship. This quality of urban life was discussed by Lewis Mumford in his seminal *The City in History*, in which he laments the “here today, gone tomorrow” character of the modern city. For Mumford, the city mirrored an “image of human discontinuity.”<sup>55</sup> More recently, the art historian and critic Donald Kuspit has traced this urban dichotomy in his article “The Individual and Mass Identity in Urban Art: The New York Case.”<sup>56</sup>

Two direct predecessors for Kline’s urban art were The Eight and the American Precisionists.<sup>57</sup> Kline was aware of both groups through frequent exhibitions in New York’s galleries and because they figured in the collection of his most prominent early patron, I. David Orr. For the painters of The Eight, New York was a world in which people thrived as part of the communal group. Even in their grittiest scenes of the immigrant class, colorful individuals abound. In contrast to the vital but



disorganized city that captivated The Eight, the Precisionists showed an unpopulated environment dominated by the perfection of machine culture. The lack of human presence in Precisionist works presents the machine as an ideal rather than a potential source of alienation. Kline’s art is distinct from both these groups. His urban paintings show decay in conjunction with mechanization, and they emphasize emptiness rather than communal identity. These characteristics parallel the sense of industrial empowerment and loss that Kline must have recalled from the coal regions of Pennsylvania.

In *New York City Drawing*, 1939–40 (fig. 39), a pencil study executed shortly after Kline arrived in the city, the artist recorded a comfortable urban environment that is rarely found in his subsequent paintings. The configuration of the Village probably reminded Kline of his sojourn in London. The gently curving street is dominated by picturesque architectural details and is filled with strolling figures, automobiles, and vendors. Kline’s 1943 painting *Street Scene Greenwich Village* (fig. 31) is opposite in character. In this work, the intimate streets of the Village have been broadened and emptied by the artist. Except for

31. **Street Scene Greenwich Village**, 1943  
Oil on canvas, 20¼ x 23⅞ inches  
Courtesy of Babcock Galleries, New York  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



the nostalgic image of a horse-drawn cart, there is no activity in this late evening scene. The buildings look empty and lean in such a precarious manner that they seem about to collapse. The heavy impasto of the painting emphasizes the grittiness of the scene, and the colors are impenetrable. Blacks and dark burgundies lend the scene feelings of decay and near abandonment. If Kline's painting is compared to works by The Eight like George Bellows's *Cliff Dwellers* of 1913 or George Luks's *Street Scene (Hester Street)* of 1905 (fig. 32), the difference is palatable. Both Bellows and Luks fill their works with colorful characters while Kline empties his of community.

In 1940 Kline painted *71 West 3rd Street* (fig. 33) from the second floor rooftop of his studio. The roof could be accessed from a hallway outside of the live-in studio that Kline occupied from 1940 until 1943. This work looks over the tarred roof with its irregular sheds to taller dilapidated buildings beyond. The worn character of these buildings is reminiscent of the patch towns of Kline's youth in Pennsylvania and of the scarred and irregular abstract forms in Kline's later paintings. Kline stated, "When I look out of a window—I've always lived in the city—I don't see trees in bloom or mountain laurel. What I do see—or rather, not what I see but the feelings aroused in me by looking—is what I paint."<sup>58</sup> Kline's abandoned rooftop is opposite in character to such works as John Sloan's *Sunday, Women Drying Their Hair* of 1912, where the scene is dominated by the untutored beauty of three Irish immigrant women on a tenement rooftop.<sup>59</sup>

Kline's drawings of New York show his ability to capture the underlying structure of the city's architecture in a variety of modes. His ink drawing *Church (Our Lady of Pompeii)* of 1945 (fig. 34) may now be identified as Our Lady of Pompeii on Carmine and Bleecker streets,



32. **Street Scene (Hester Street)**, 1905  
George Benjamin Luks (American, 1867–1933)  
Oil on canvas, 25<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 35<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches  
Brooklyn Museum, Dick S. Ramsey Fund (40.339)



33. **71 West 3rd Street**, 1940  
Oil on canvas, 17 x 21 inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York





34. **Church (Our Lady of Pompeii)**, 1945  
Ink on paper, 5 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 31 $\frac{1}{16}$  inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

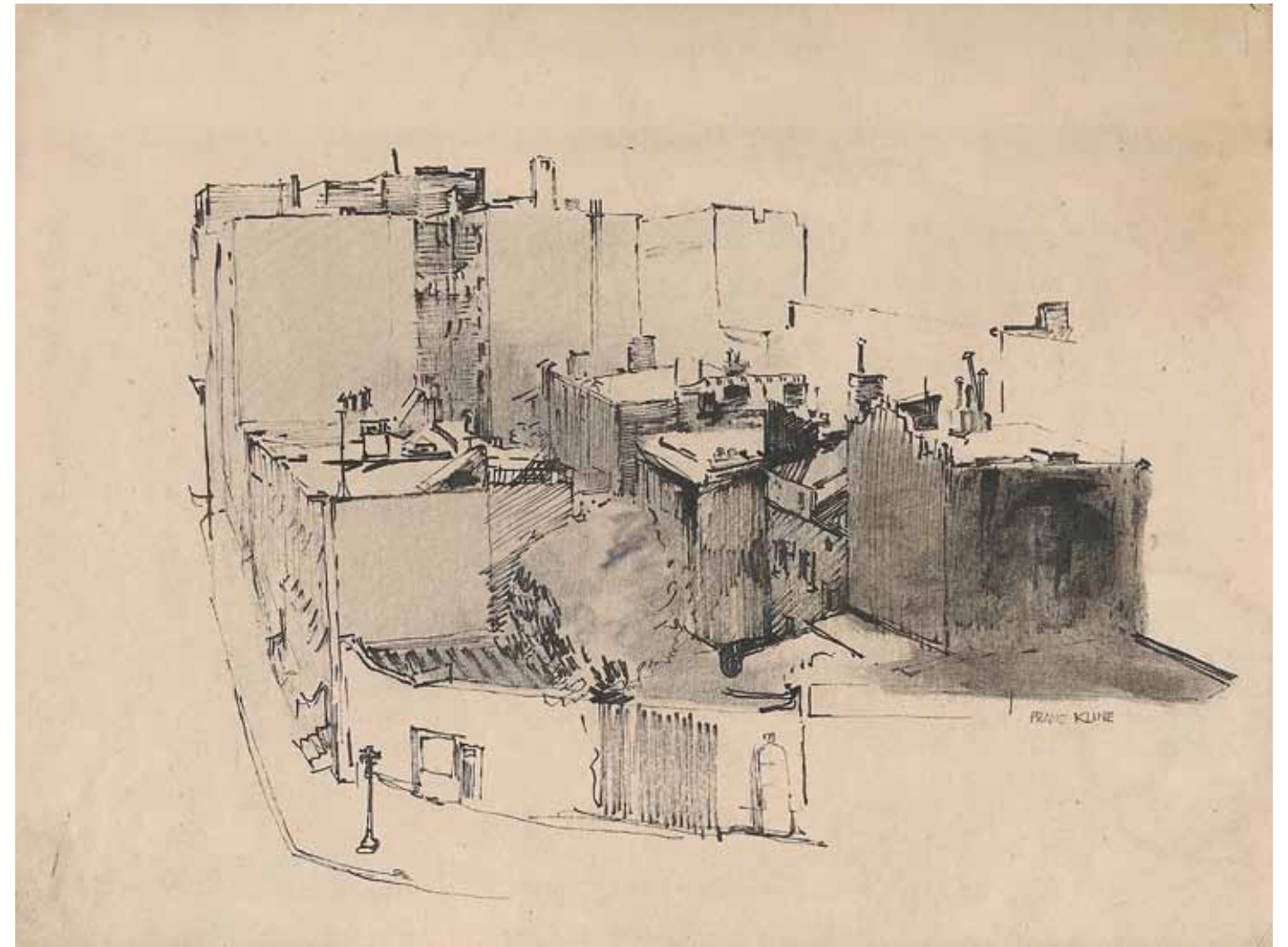
only a few blocks from Kline's studio, which was then at 150 West Fourth Street. The tower of the church is one of the tallest structures in that immediate area. As seen when one views this location, Kline has eliminated surrounding buildings and minimized the height of others so that the rectangular block body of the church dominates the drawing, and the tower thrusts unimpeded toward the upper part of the paper. The thick black strokes of ink are simultaneously irregular and forceful. They demonstrate Kline's ability to create powerfully unbalanced forms.

By contrast, Kline's *Street Scene* of 1949 (fig. 35) concerns the subtle relationship between geometric massing and value relationships. The scene may have been depicted from Kline's studio at 52 East Ninth Street, a block that was razed in the 1970s. Created in pen, pencil, and ink wash on paper, Kline's drawing carefully delineates the fascinating variety of buildings in this humble setting. Each building is defined by a unique shape and value relationship, and their dilapidated forms make them even more interesting. The entire scene is one of irregular geometric relation-

ships viewed by an extremely subtle eye. These two drawings embody two aspects of Kline's art—powerful simplification to essence and subtle refinement—that are keys to his later work. It is noteworthy that *Street Scene* was created during the early years of Kline's abstract paintings. Thus, it demonstrates the fluid relationship between his more figurative and abstract work.

A dominant theme in Kline's New York City paintings is the Elevated Railway Lines, nicknamed the El. Kline's depictions of the El stations continued his interest in technology that was fostered by his youth in anthracite country. As we have seen, Kline took a particular interest in the powerful anthracite trains just as their era was ending. Similarly, the El lines and stations were being demolished in New York at the very time Kline was depicting them. For Kline, authority and loss were core expressions of his art.

The first locomotives as elevated trains were introduced to New York around 1870.<sup>60</sup> The El lines changed the nature of urban environment. Previously the city had consisted of neighborhoods that existed in relative isolation. By 1880 most New Yorkers lived within a ten-minute walk of an El station; access to rapid transportation united the city. New companies to direct the expansion of the El lines were founded, and in 1875 the city authorized construction of the Second, Third, Sixth, and Ninth Avenue elevated lines in Manhattan. Subsequently, El lines were built in Brooklyn and Queens, and by 1930 the system transported approximately 900,000 passengers per day.<sup>61</sup> In addition



to the functional aspects of the lines, passengers recorded the thrill of being able to travel the length of Manhattan in a short time and to witness the variety of neighborhoods from an elevated viewpoint. "Dingy sweatshops, flophouses, dramatic family groups pass in succession. So, too, do scenes of great beauty: skyscrapers at dusk, glittering rivers, dwindling streets."<sup>62</sup>

On the other hand, the El lines were dirty and noisy. The tracks blocked sunlight to the streets below, and dirt fell from the passing trains. Property values were destroyed anywhere an El was constructed. The most notorious example was, of course, the Bowery, which had been a prosperous theater district. After the arrival of the El, it became New York's "Skid Row." The El lines were said to constitute "a menace to health, comfort and peaceable home life."<sup>63</sup> The construction of the subway system sounded the death knell of the El lines. The Sixth Avenue line was closed in 1938, the year Kline arrived in New York. *The New York Times* printed a reproduction of an 1878 drawing of the El line passing by the Jefferson Market Police Court, and Kline made one of his first etchings as a modification of that that drawing from the newspaper.<sup>64</sup> The Ninth Avenue El was demolished 1940–41, and the Second Avenue El was ended in 1940 to 1942, leaving only the Third Avenue El, which was closed in 1955.

35. **Street Scene**, 1949  
Pen and ink wash, pencil on paper,  
8 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 11 inches  
Collection of Spanierman Gallery, LLC  
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Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York





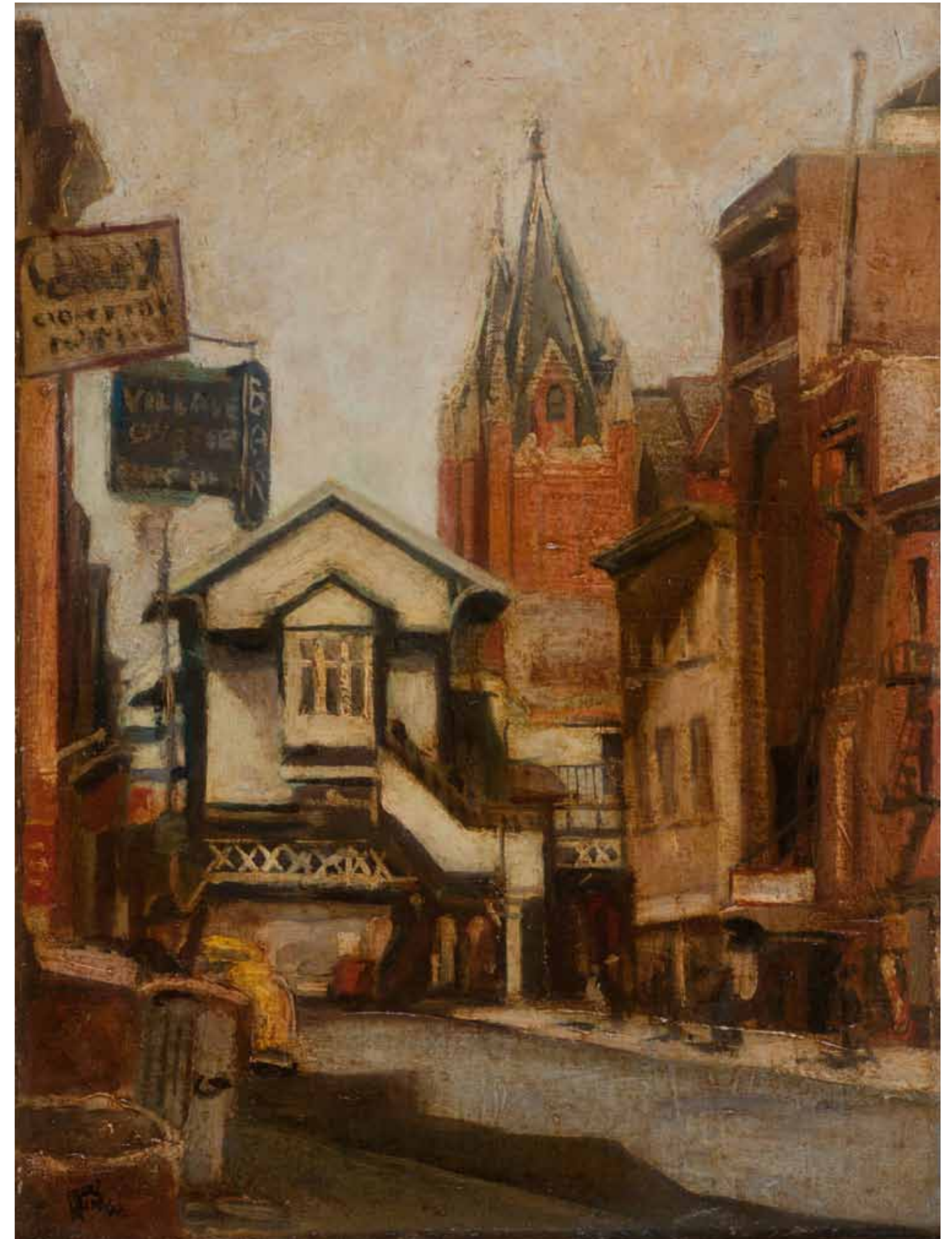
36. "El" Station, Ninth Avenue Line, Christopher and Greenwich Streets, Manhattan, June 18, 1936  
Berenice Abbott  
Gelatin silver print, 8 x 10 inches  
Photography Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

Kline's *Ninth Avenue Elevated RR Station at Christopher Street* of 1940–41 (fig. 37) probably depicts the station just after it had been closed in June 1940; it was demolished in 1941. The view is from the east toward the church of Saint Veronica, the steeple of which can be seen to the right. As in other Kline city scenes, the emptiness of the street stands out. On the abandoned street, the Christopher Street Station is central. It is stubborn, direct, and not at all graceful. The simple geometry of the station and the X-bracing of its raised iron supports are emphasized. The station is both part of the modern transportation world and dilapidated. Kline has outlined the structure in thick black brush marks to emphasize its crude, forthright character. The artist contrasted the awkward modern structure of the station with the neo-gothic church steeple behind it. If one compares Kline's painting to a Berenice Abbott photograph of the same scene (fig. 36), one can see that Kline has eliminated the decorative detailing in the station and moved the church

steeple into a prominent position to make the contrast between the two worlds they represent more evident.

Chatham Square is a major square in Chinatown that marks the convergence of seven streets: Bowery, East Broadway, St. James Place, Mott Street, Oliver Street, Worth Street, and Park Row. The Chatham Square El Station was the most important station for the intersection of the Second Avenue and Third Avenue lines. As mentioned earlier, the Third Avenue Elevated Line was the last to close in Manhattan, ending its service in 1955. Kline's painting *Chatham Square*, circa 1948 (fig. 44) depicts the covered entrance to the El from Park Row looking north. In his painting, Kline has focused on one section of the larger El complex, the covered entrance stair and the lower level of the El tracks. He has picked the most irregular aspect of the El's geometric structure: the X-bracing, the zigzag pattern of the covered steps, and the intersecting architecture on the street below. Kline has handled all these fractured, transparent, and overlapping planes in a manner that is indebted to Cubism. The colors of the work, which range from rust red to steel blue, further emphasize the fragmentation of the scene.

*Chatham Square* shows Kline rapidly absorbing a modernist vocabulary. By this time he was a regular at the Cedar Tavern with the other New York School artists. Conrad Marca-Relli, whom he met in 1946, was one of his closest friends at the time. Marca-Relli also had a



opposite: 37. *Ninth Avenue Elevated RR Station at Christopher Street*, 1940–41  
Oil on board  
16 x 12 inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York





38. **Chinatown**, ca. 1948  
 Oil on board, 28 x 40½ inches  
 Private Collection  
 © 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

deep fascination with the structure of urban architecture. His *Untitled* (1939, private collection), which may have influenced Kline, shows twisted and irregular architectural forms of the El station.<sup>65</sup>

Kline's painting *Chinatown* circa 1948 (fig. 38) depicts the Chatham Square Station from the easterly point of view so that the covered stairs to the El are shown in profile. *Chinatown* is one of the most richly colored works of Kline's early career. Planes of varied hues covering the full range of the spectrum bleed into one another and dissolve the architecture. The stained-glass effects of the diffused color planes suggest Kline's knowledge of American Synchromism as practiced by Stanton Macdonald Wright, Morgan Russell, and Arthur B. Frost in the years around World War I. Kline's use of color as a compositional device also parallels his Experimental Abstractions of the same years.

As a whole, Kline's urban scenes reflect simultaneously the excitement and alienation of New York. His empty streets, grimy teetering buildings, and the irregular geometry of his unused El stations embody change, which is at the heart of the city; yet change also leads to objects becoming dilapidated and unused. Kline's intuitive feeling for such gain and loss is a sensibility at the core of his later black-and-white abstractions. Kline's sensitivity to such modern forces, born from his youthful

experiences in coal country, is broadly encompassed in the economic and social theory of Creative Destruction. Originally derived from Marxist thought, the theory holds that "the effect of continuous innovation is to devalue, if not destroy, past investment and labor skills."<sup>66</sup> Based in crisis, destruction is a necessary component of invention. In 1999, sociologist and urban theorist Max Page tied this theory to urbanism in his book *The Creative Destruction of Manhattan, 1900–1940*, in which he traced New York City's constant reinvention to the destruction of its past and called this process "creative destruction."<sup>67</sup> In his later work Kline used the destruction of planned forms as a mode of invention. He elaborated on this attitude in an interview with David Sylvester:

There are moments of periods when it would be wonderful to plan something and do it and have the things only do what you planned to do, and then there are other times when the destruction of those planned things becomes interesting to you. So then, it becomes a question of destroying—of destroying the planned form.<sup>68</sup>





39. **New York City Drawing**, 1939–40  
Pencil on paper, 6 x 7 inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

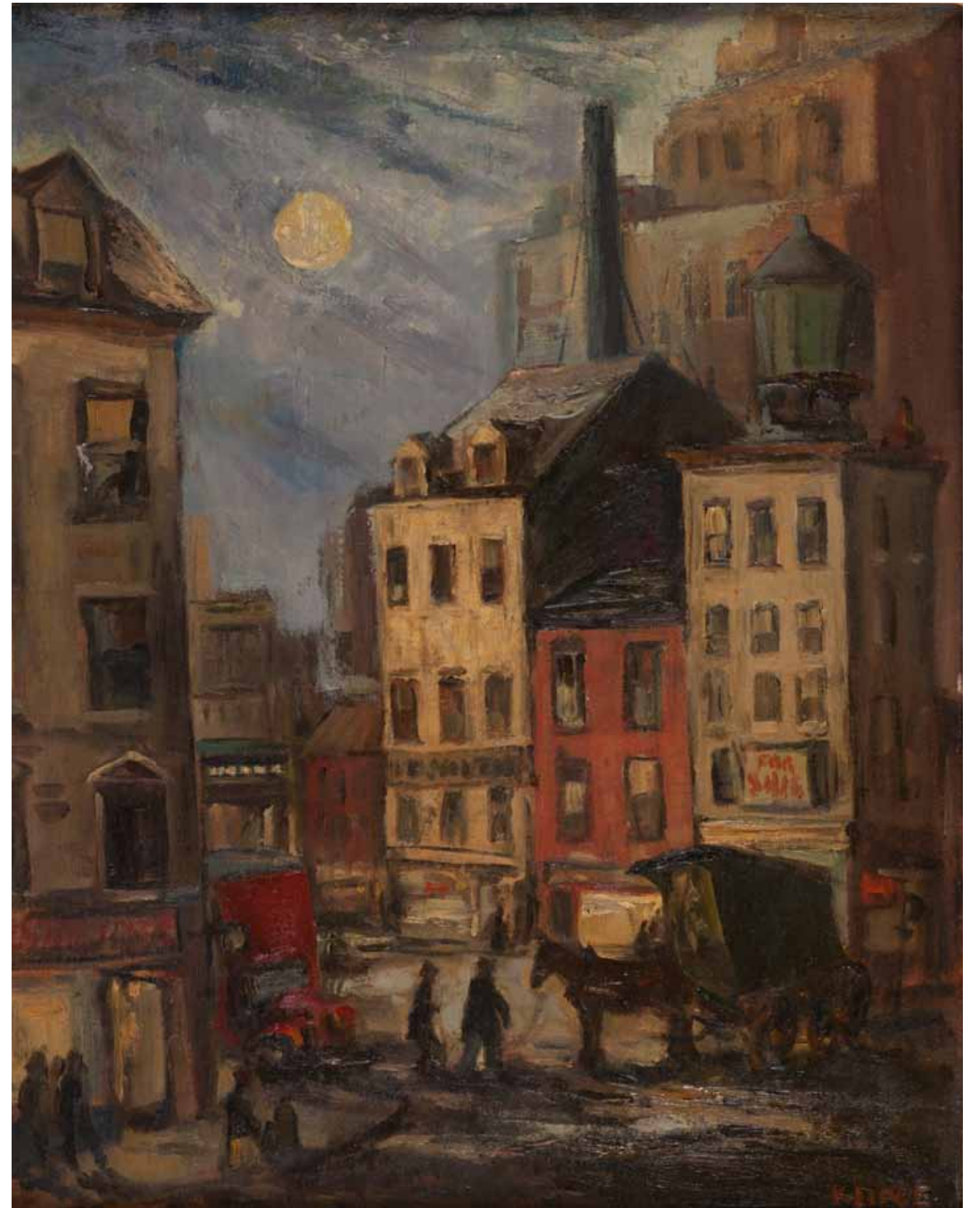


40. **New York Tenements**, ca. 1942  
Oil on canvas, 21 x 17 inches  
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Gift of Maurice  
Vanderwoude. 77.107  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York





41. **Washington Square, 1940**  
 Oil on canvas; three-fold screen between glass, 71 x 22 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches (each section)  
 Courtesy of Babcock Galleries, New York  
 © 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

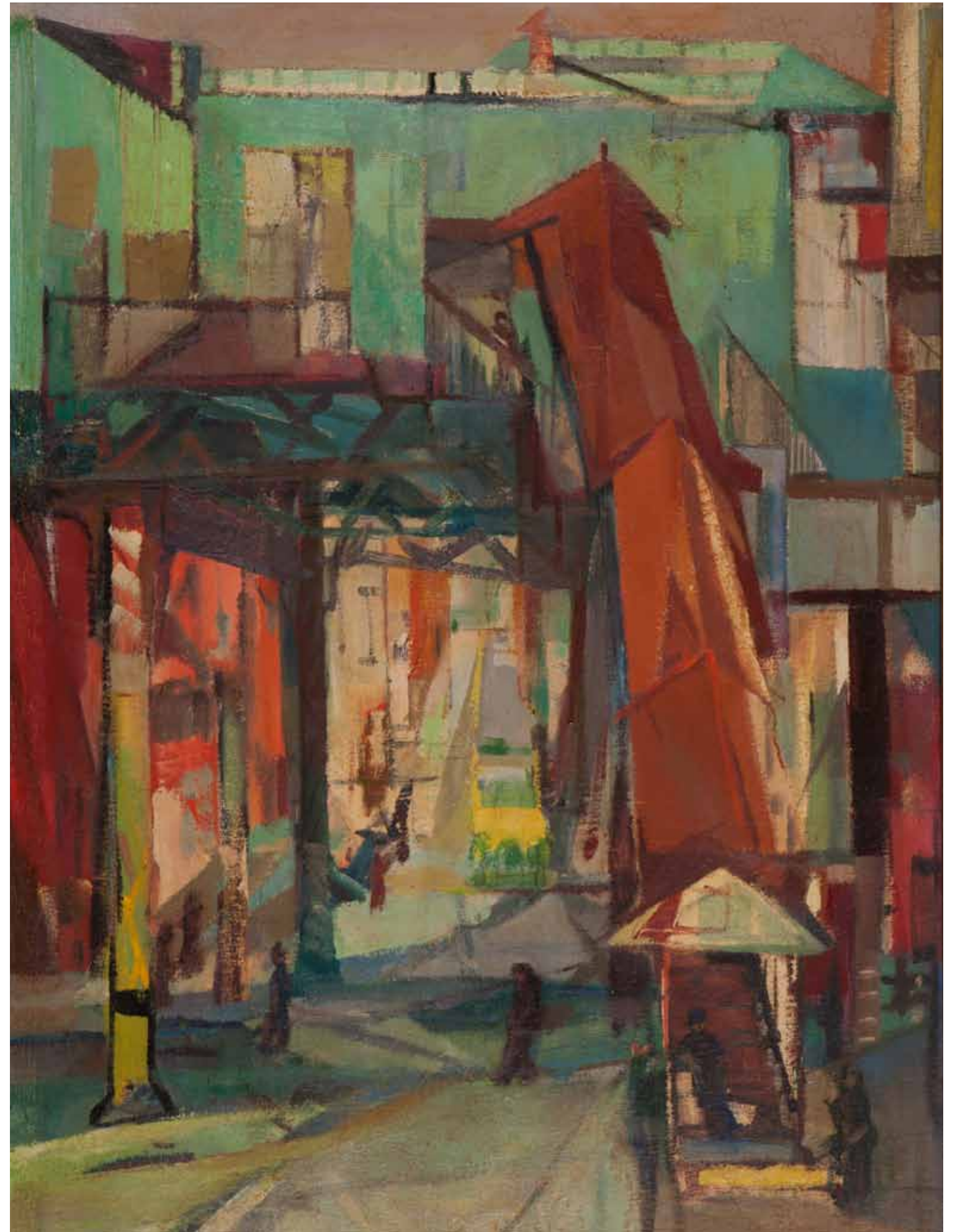


42. **Below South Ferry, 1941**  
 Oil on board, 20 x 16 inches  
 Private Collection  
 © 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York





43. **Two Studies: Chatham Square**, ca. 1948  
Pencil and colored pencil on paper, 4½ x 2½ inches each  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



44. **Chatham Square**, ca.1948  
Oil on canvas, 41 x 31 inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York





## THE STUDIO DISCOVERIES IN LONELINESS

The artist's studio is often a place of comfort and retreat. It is portrayed as such in Jan Vermeer's *Artist's Studio* (1670–75, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), where an imaginary sixteenth-century artist with his model is shown comfortably at work. Kline's studio depictions started as hospitable environments but quickly took on a mood of bleakness and isolation. Depictions of emptiness became one of the primary features in his studio paintings. As mentioned above, during his twenty-four years in New York, Kline occupied fourteen studios. Sometimes Kline lived in the studio and at other times had a separate residence. His constant movements reflected not just his poverty and resulting failure to pay the rent; Kline led a fractured existence. Just as he painted New York as if seen from the fringes, he had an inability to settle down. The suggestion of incessant and unstable motion became an essential expression in his art.

Kline was a dedicated “downtown” artist. During the days of the New York School, the artists made a distinction between those living and working in lower Manhattan, such as Kline, Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, Philip Guston, Conrad Marca-Relli, and Bradley Walker Tomlin, who led more bohemian existences, and the artists such as Robert Motherwell, Mark Rothko, Adolph Gottlieb, and Barnett Newman, who led more settled existences in uptown locations. As pointed out above, Kline's studios from the late 1930s through the mid-1940s were grouped around Washington Square in Greenwich Village, while from the late 1940s through 1962 Kline joined other of the New York School artists around 14th Street near Union Square. Among the New York School artists, Kline was the only one to paint extensively views of his studio.

*Self Portrait in Studio Interior* of 1940 (fig. 45) depicts Kline's studio on 71 West Third Street, one block south of Washington Square between Thompson Street and West Broadway. The drawing served as basis for an etching that Kline sent that year as a Christmas card. This early studio is an active place. The deep orthogonal lines of the

Detail, *Studio Interior*, 1946



45. **Self Portrait in Studio Interior**, 1940  
Pen and ink; paper mounted  
on auxiliary paper support,  
5<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 4<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
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floorboards show Kline's knowledge of Van Gogh's interior spatial constructions, and the abbreviated drawing style speaks of Kline's love of Rembrandt's graphic work. To the right side, near a coal stove, Kline stands painting at the easel with his wife, Elizabeth, behind him, and a paintbox is laid out on the floor. In the center is a drawing table on which sits his cat, Kitska. To the left is an etching press. Kline bought the press shortly after coming to New York, intending to start a print business that never materialized. A few works were created, including the powerful woodblock print *Night Scene with Woodhouse* of 1944 (fig. 27). In *Self Portrait in Studio Interior*, a rocking chair dominates the foreground. Kline acquired this rocking chair in a Bowery junkshop in 1940, and it became the most significant object in his studio depictions. It was one of the few keepsakes—like his model trains from Pennsylvania—that Kline carried from studio to studio. In Kline's early depictions of his studio, Elizabeth sat in the rocker. Later, when she was hospitalized for depression and schizophrenia, the chair was depicted empty. Sections of its curving form became one of the dominant shapes in his black-and-white abstract drawings and paintings.

Kline met his future wife, Elizabeth V. Parsons, while studying illustration at Heatherly's School of Fine Art in London in 1937. She became one of the principal subjects of his art through 1946. Elizabeth's father was a colonel attached to the War Office. She had studied ballet and had a brief career in dance. Kline met her when she was a model for Frederic Whiting's illustration class.<sup>69</sup> Elizabeth followed Kline to America, and on December 5, 1938, they were married at the Church of the Ascension, New York.

Elizabeth had had bouts of mental instability before she met Kline, a fact her family never communicated to the artist. In New York, Elizabeth moved with Kline from studio to studio, often in dire poverty. In 1945 Kline separated his living space and studio. He was painting in the studio at 148 West Fourth Street and relocated with Elizabeth to a small chauffeur's cottage on an estate in Brooklyn. Alone during the days and on most evenings, Elizabeth imagined that the apartment was haunted by soldiers from the Revolutionary War. In 1946 Elizabeth entered the Central Islip State Hospital for six months, and her deteriorating mental state required frequent hospitalizations throughout the 1940s and 1950s. She was finally released from hospital care in 1960.

During the years of Elizabeth's absence, Kline had many liaisons, but those close to Kline commented on his deep feeling of loneliness caused by her absence. By 1957 Kline had established a stable relationship with Elizabeth Ross Zogbaum, who would remain with him for the rest of his life. That year, he took a large studio at 242 West 14th Street, and he and Zogbaum purchased a house in Provincetown. But in 1960 when Elizabeth was released, Kline found her an apartment in Central Islip because of her desire to live near the hospital. He furnished the apartment and bought her a piano so she could play again.

In *Seated Woman* circa 1945 (fig. 46), Elizabeth sits backwards in a chair, leaning on its backrest. Her face is hidden in her arms, and her body forms an "S" curve countered by the straight lines of the chair. The thin, broken lines communicate movement lending the figure a restless character. In a second stage of execution, Kline has used wide brush lines to define more abstractly the major forces of the body. In *Seated*

46. **Seated Woman**, ca. 1945  
Ink on gray toned paper board,  
8<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 5<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
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*Woman* circa 1946–47 (fig. 47), the figure faces toward the viewer. Here, Kline focuses on the massing of the body and the way in which its squared-off proportions dominate the pictorial space. The angle of the figure as she leans against a chair back throws the composition off center so that the work has an unbalanced quality. As was often his habit, Kline created a black rectangle within the picture surface to closely define the perimeter of the composition. The tight composition sets up a powerful relationship between the black and white areas of the drawing. This forceful relationship between black and white is a leit-motif of his abstract works. The visual power of the drawing belies its tiny size; Kline's smaller works on paper can often achieve a visual punch that rivals his much larger paintings. In this drawing as with a number of others, Elizabeth's face is blackened with ink. When asked by prominent Kline patron I. David Orr why he eliminated her features, Kline replied, "She isn't there anymore."<sup>70</sup>

47. **Seated Woman**, ca. 1946–47  
Ink on paper, 7½ x 6½ inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

In the painting *Studio Interior* of 1946 (fig. 48), the Fourth Street studio appears abandoned. It is a dark, moody interior with a door ajar and a window showing only the blank wall of an adjacent building. As in many works from the mid-forties through the end of the decade, the rocking chair is empty and may be seen as a stand in for the absent Elizabeth. The spindle rocker has both an architectonic structure and the curves of human anatomy. It is simultaneously strong and fragile in its appearance. The stillness of the rocking chair is counteracted by the viewer's knowledge of its potential movement. But even when a rocking chair moves, the motion is futile; there is no progress from one point to another. As pictorial metaphor, the rocker parallels the decayed coal breakers of anthracite country, out-of-date steam trains, and the abandoned El stations. For Kline, the chair became a symbol for states of alienation in modern life. Reflecting a related sensibility, Kline said about his later art, "I think that there is a kind of loneliness in a lot of them which I don't think is about as the fact that I'm lonely and therefore I paint lonely pictures, but I like kind of lonely things anyhow."<sup>71</sup>

Kline's *Nude Self-Portrait* 1938 (fig. 53) shows the artist's ability to render anatomy with abbreviated and synaptic lines. His natural talent as a sketch artist was further honed by his training in London. This work, however, contains an emotional charge more profound than simply a well-rendered sketch. The agitated lines of the work express the tension inherent in Kline's personality, and they demonstrate Kline's pro-

opposite: 48. **Studio Interior**, 1946  
Oil on canvas, 18¾ x 16 inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
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49. **Untitled (Study for Elizabeth at Table)**, 1946  
Ink on paper, 4 x 4 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches  
Private Collection  
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found admiration, as mentioned above, for the graphic work of Rembrandt van Rijn.

Kline's ink drawings of interior scenes are among his most important works as predecessors to his black-and-white paintings. They are executed with an eye to finding the underlying structures, connecting those structures, and giving them dynamic linear and planar relationships. A comparison of the ink drawing *Untitled (Study for Elizabeth at Table)* of 1946 (fig. 49) with the oil painting *Elizabeth at Table* (fig. 50) highlights the success of the drawings. In the ink drawing Kline captures the figure, table, and chair in a dozen strokes. The angular direction of the figure is stabilized by the horizontal plane of the table. The chair buttresses the composition from the other side; its leg and back become part of the table. Thus a powerful set of directional forces, each integrated with the others, is created. By contrast the painting is more partitioned. Each one of the



component parts remains separate because each color area is contained by outlines. In this context, line loses its independent force. In the painting, Kline feels compelled to execute a more detailed composition; the manner in which the artist defines the planes is a form of late Synthetic Cubism. The challenge that Kline faced in the next several years was to overcome the somewhat rigid character of this painting and foster the more dynamic structure found in this drawing.

A comparison of Kline's *Untitled—Interior with Table* circa 1947 (fig. 51) and *Untitled* circa 1948 (fig. 52) shows two compositional and expressive modes with which Kline is working. Both works simplify the composition to near abstraction. *Untitled—Interior with Table* is massive and bulky despite its diminutive size. The table is tilted forward into the foreground plane. It is locked into place by an interior rectangle and the black bar to the right edge. From the left side, a broad diagonal bar holds the inner rectangle and thus the table in place. There is an irregular balance of forces securely locked together. By contrast, *Untitled* is all energy. Dynamic, angular brushstrokes with their ragged edges activate the table and chair. Kline has created two sets of inner frames for the work, compressing the space in which those brushstrokes exist and increasing the physical tension of the composition. The sweeping energy of those brushstrokes is barely contained within those frames. These two drawings establish a stylistic and emotional polarity that Kline would pursue throughout the 1950s. It is significant that during the 1950s, when Kline was creating his great black-and-white abstractions, he kept these semiabstract ink drawings tacked to his studio wall next to his large canvas. Kline's friend Dan Rice recalled that Kline would look at the early work and say, "That's the way it's supposed to be." He would then say of the later paintings, "That's almost the way it's supposed to be."<sup>72</sup>

51. **Untitled—Interior with Table**, ca. 1947  
Ink on paper, 3 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 4 $\frac{1}{16}$  inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

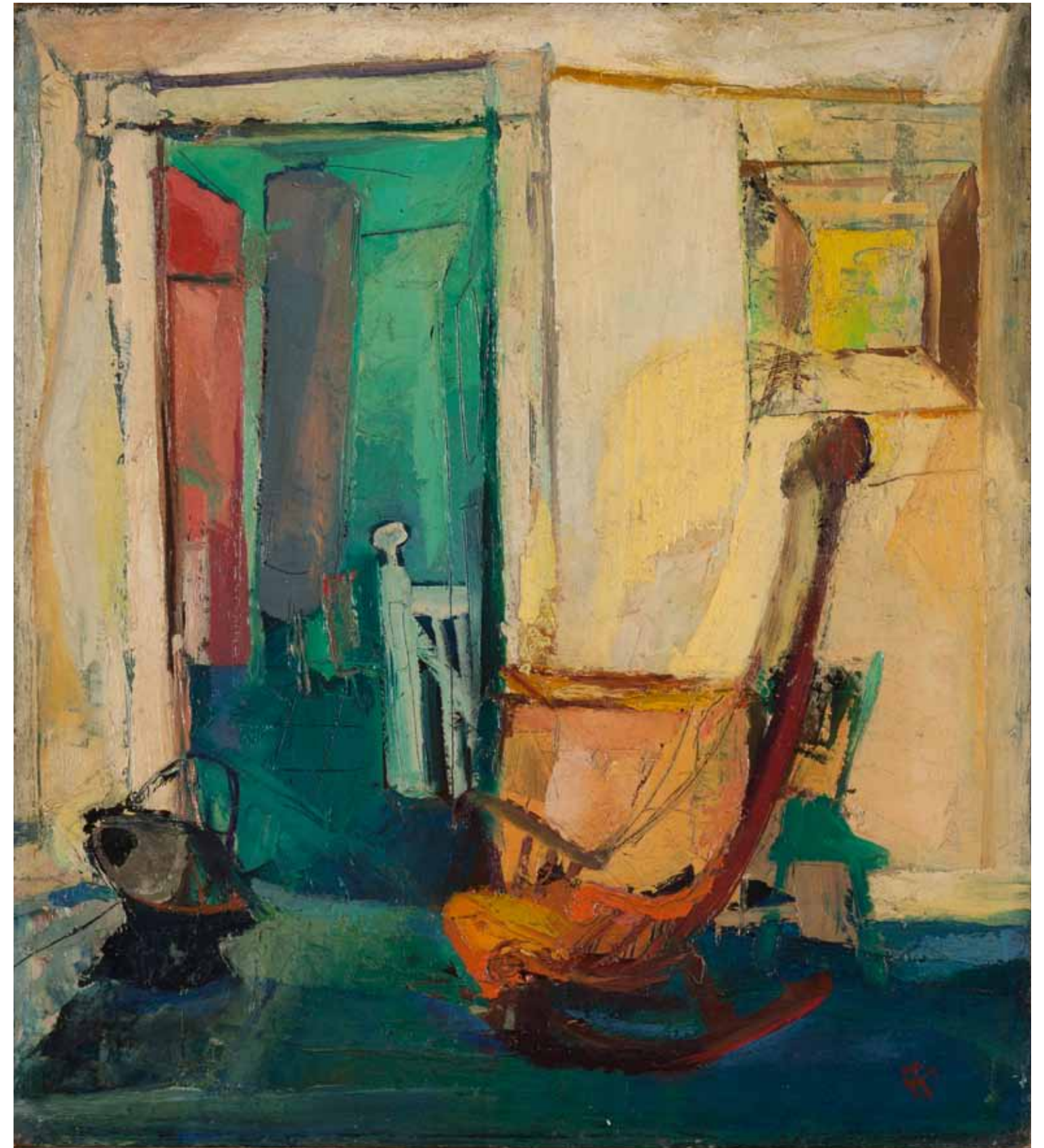
52. **Untitled**, ca. 1948  
Ink on paper, 5 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 5 $\frac{11}{16}$  inches  
Private collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
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opposite: 50. **Elizabeth at Table**, 1947  
Oil on canvas, 20 x 24 inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



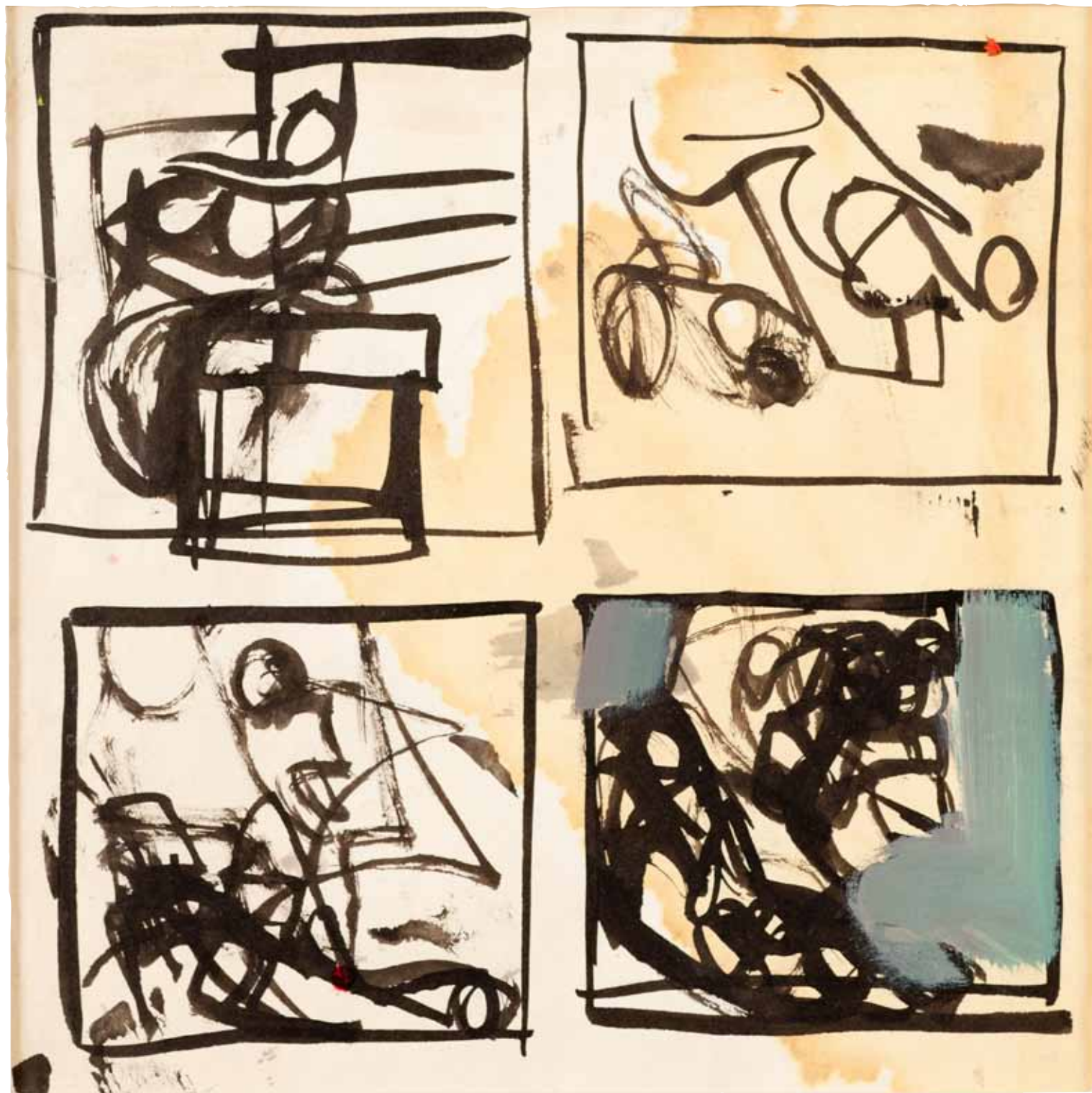


53. **Nude Self-Portrait**, 1938  
 Ink and pencil on paper,  
 11 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 8 $\frac{3}{8}$  inches  
 Collection of Michael Straus  
 © 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



54. **Studio Interior**, 1946  
 Oil on canvas, 17 x 14 inches  
 Private Collection  
 © 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York





55. **Four Studies**, ca. 1946  
Brush & ink and oil paint on paper, 7¼ x 7¼ inches  
Private Collection  
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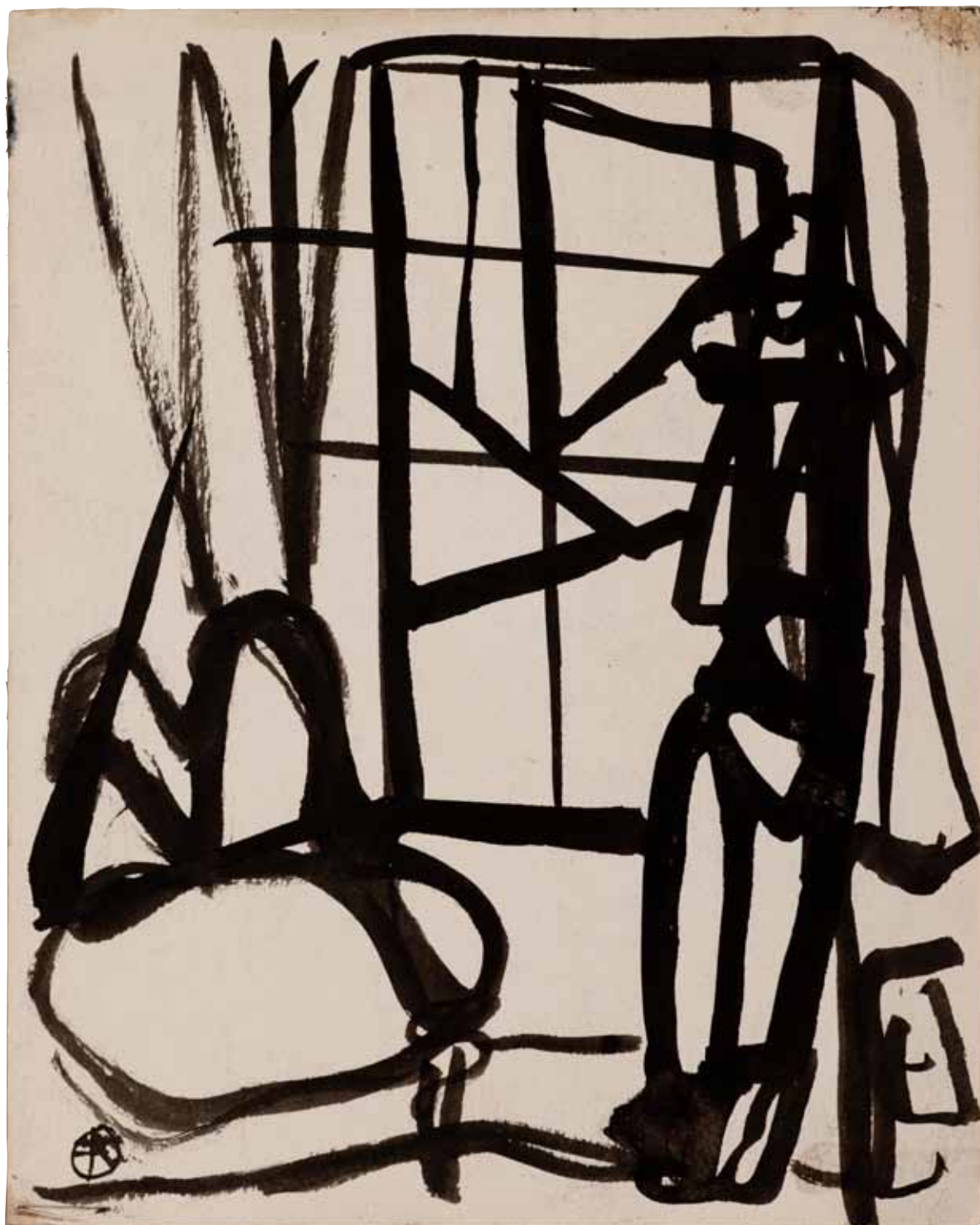


56. **Seated Woman within a Drawn Square Border**, ca. 1947  
Ink on paper, 4½ x 5¼ inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

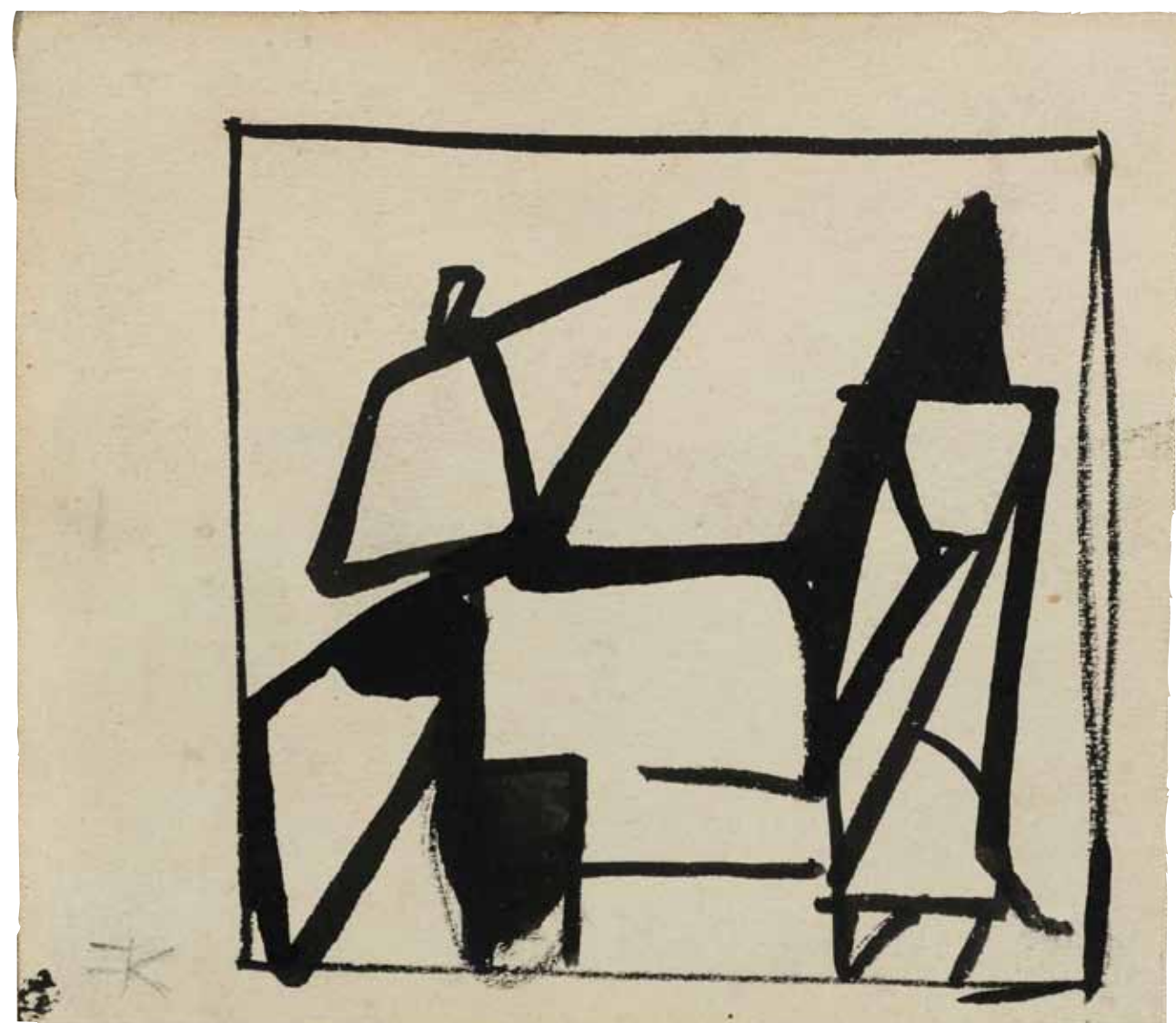


57. **Three Ink Studies-Seated Figures**, ca. 1947  
Ink on paper, left: 2¼ x 1½ inches; center: 2½ x 2 inches; right: 2½ x 1½ inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



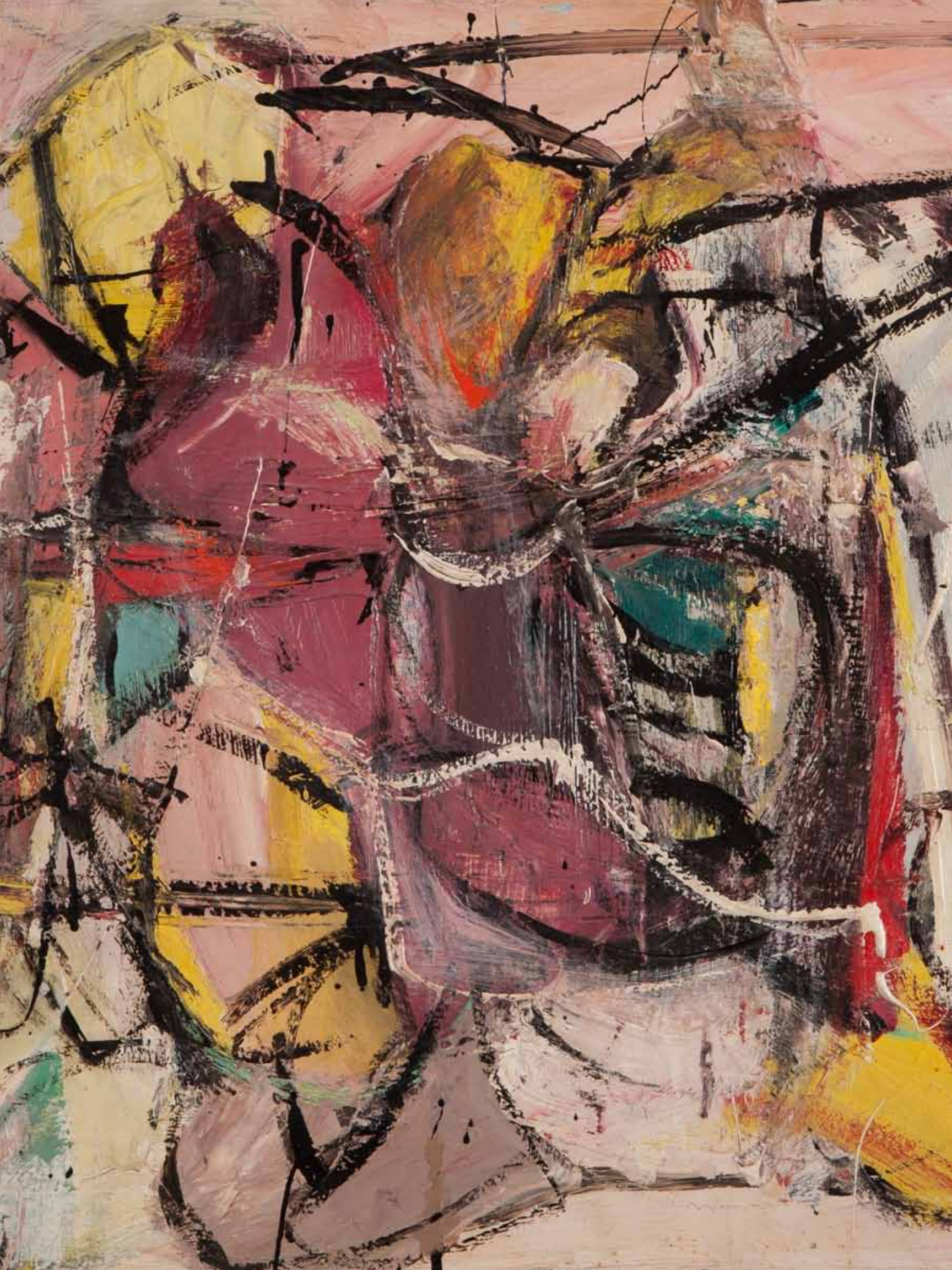


58. **Elizabeth at Window**, ca. 1946–47  
 Brush and ink on card, 6 x 4¾ inches  
 Private Collection  
 © 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



59. **Untitled**, ca. 1948  
 Ink on paper, 4¾ x 4¾ inches  
 Collection of Michael Straus  
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## EXPERIMENTAL ABSTRACTIONS

Between 1946 and 1949 Kline painted a group of works that experimented with a range of stylistic modes and made discoveries about working in a nonfigurative vein. In these works Kline tested the dispersal of forms across the surface, giving all elements equal attention; there is no singularity of image. He tried out different gestural rhythms, frequently changing the direction and velocity of brushstrokes. Kline often over-painted forms, a practice that became essential to his black-and-white abstractions. He experimented with a variety of paint techniques that ranged from applying thick impasto to allowing the paint to run in rivulets to scraping down the surface.

Kline's *Studio Interior* of 1946 (fig. 60) contains the vestiges of figuration in its curved organic forms, but no objects are recognizable. Kline painted blue pigment around the black forms so as to minimize the figure-ground relationship. Willem de Kooning's art had a significant influence on Kline's work of this period. Kline met de Kooning in 1943 at Conrad Marca-Relli's studio on West Fourth Street and the two artists became close friends thereafter. Between 1946 and 1948 de Kooning was painting his Black Paintings which must have impressed Kline, and some of the shapes of *Studio Interior* relate to the organic forms in de Kooning's works. If Kline's works of this period are compared to de Kooning's *Light in August* (1946, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art), the differences are also apparent. De Kooning's forms are slippery and ambiguous; almost no single shape can be precisely defined. By contrast, Kline's *Studio Interior* features structural clarity. There, a gentle tension between the irregular black and blue areas is maintained precisely because each can be defined. The uncertainty and indeterminism that is the essence of de Kooning's artistic view is not found in Kline's work.<sup>73</sup>

In addition to absorbing de Kooning's art, Kline was rapidly gathering painterly information from a variety of other sources, a fact little emphasized in the Kline literature. *Untitled* of 1947 (fig. 61) features broad areas of high-colored pigment that have been applied in a fluid manner. The painting's suggestions of an imaginary landscape owe a

Detail, *Abstract in Black, Blue, Pink and Yellow*, 1948





60. **Studio Interior**, 1946  
Oil on canvas, 14½ x 17¼ inches  
Private Collection  
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debt to Arshile Gorky's work. Gorky was the contemporary artist most admired by de Kooning, and his work certainly would have played a role in de Kooning's discussions with Kline. *Abstract in Black, Blue, Pink and Yellow* of 1948 (fig. 62) is filled with energetic calligraphic strokes that rapidly change direction and velocity. The sureness of these curved strokes is related to contemporary paintings by Bradley Walker Tomlin like *Number 3* (1948, The Museum of Modern Art). Kline met Tomlin in 1947 and became close to him in the following years.<sup>74</sup>

The complicated and varied rhythms of *Abstract in Black, Blue, Pink and Yellow* also remind us of the improvisational character of jazz. Kline was a great fan of jazz, as were a number of the other New York School artists. The Five Spot was a favorite jazz club of the artists, and its walls were decorated with brochures from the openings of their exhibitions. As pointed out by the art historian April Kingsley, Kline named four paintings, including *King Oliver* and *Lester*, after famous jazz musicians.<sup>75</sup>

In 1947 Kline executed a number of works like *Untitled 1947* (fig. 63). In these drawings, interconnected patterns of black ink have been brushed and splashed across the surface. The unrevised spontaneity of these gestural works is an important stage in Kline's Experimental



61. **Untitled**, 1947  
Oil on canvas, 28 x 35 inches  
Allan Stone Collection, Courtesy of  
Allan Stone Gallery, New York  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
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Abstractions. It reveals a debt to the work of Jackson Pollock. In January of 1947 Pollock had his fourth solo exhibition at Art of This Century. The exhibition featured works from his *Sounds in the Grass* series with freely brushed webs of paint. Despite Kline's interest in Pollock's work, he never lets his paint strokes become thin enough to read as skeins. Instead, his thicker black strokes create forceful presences that push against the white paper that surrounds them. In these works Kline clearly regarded the areas of exposed white paper not as background but as a force equal to his black marks. The tension between the two elements is a key feature of his black-and-white abstractions.

The years 1946 through 1949 were ones of varied experimentation for Kline. While there is little resolution in these works, they confirmed Kline's belief in the formal and emotional power of an abstract vocabulary. The belief led him to look back on his more representational works in a new light. In those earlier works, he found forms and meanings that were the genesis of his black-and-white and color abstractions.





62. **Abstract in Black, Blue, Pink and Yellow**, 1948  
Oil on canvas, 15 x 18 inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



63. **Untitled**, 1947  
Brush and black ink on wove paper, 17 $\frac{3}{16}$  x 26 $\frac{3}{8}$  inches  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.  
Gift of Edward R. Broida (2005.142.24.a)  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York





64. **Black and White**, 1949  
 Oil on paper, 11 x 8¾ inches  
 Collection of Juliet and Michael Rubenstein  
 © 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



65. **Untitled**, 1949  
 Oil on paper, 8½ x 7 inches  
 Allan Stone Collection, Courtesy of Allan Stone Gallery, New York  
 © 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York





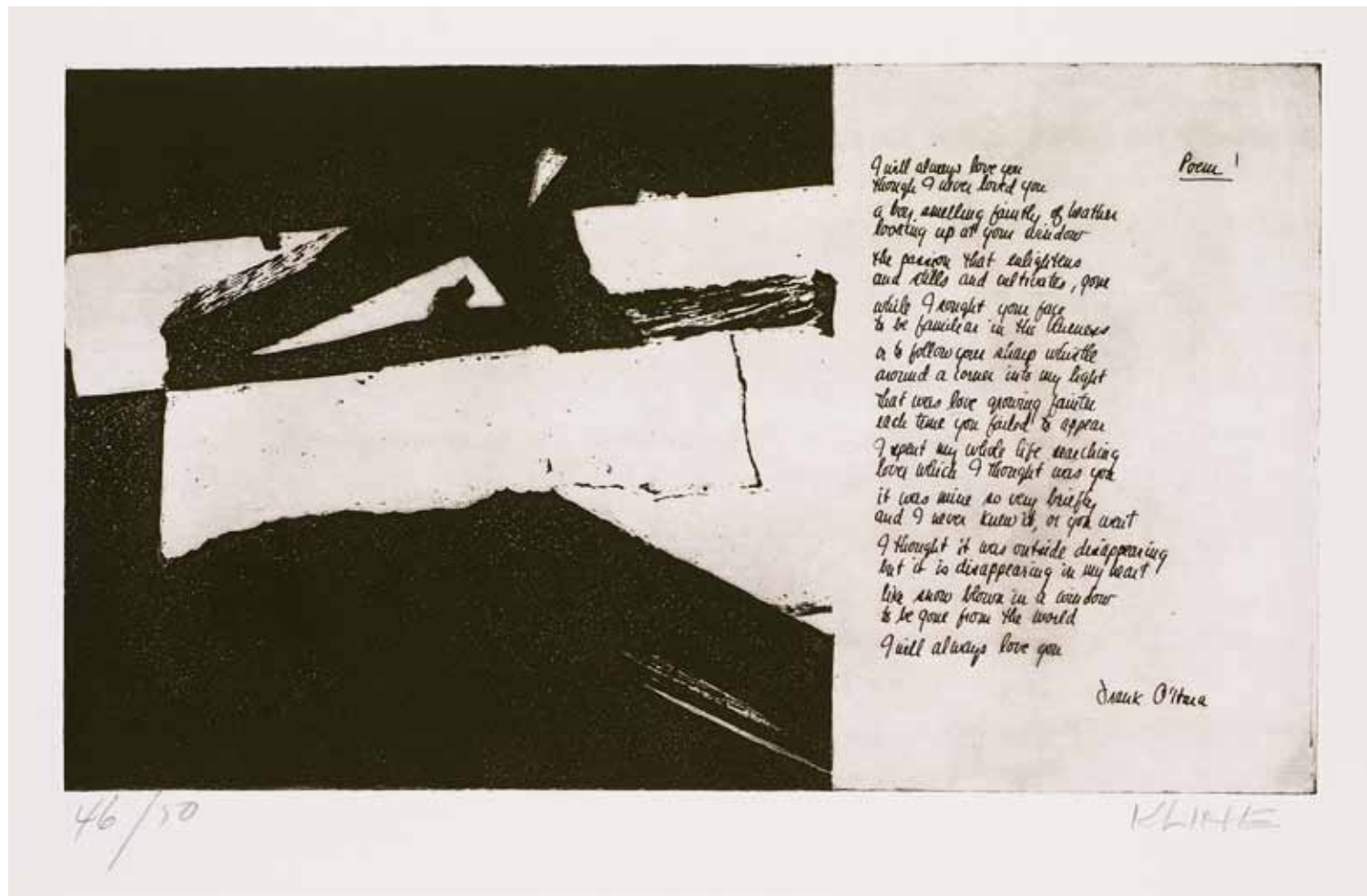
## BLACK AND WHITE AND COLOR MORE THAN ABSTRACTION

Kline's first solo exhibition was held at the Charles Egan Gallery at 63 East 57th Street from October 16 through November 4, 1950. It consisted of eleven large new black-and-white paintings. The drawings were sold separately from a portfolio case. Egan, whose family came from Pennsylvania in coal country, had opened the gallery in 1945.<sup>76</sup> His most daring exhibition until that time had been the 1948 collection of de Kooning's Black Paintings. Black-and-white painting was in the air in New York at that time. In 1950, the Kootz Gallery organized the exhibition Black and White. The American artists included in that exhibition were William Baziotes, de Kooning, Hans Hofmann, and Motherwell. Among the Europeans were Jean Dubuffet, Joan Miró, Piet Mondrian, and Pablo Picasso. Despite the interest in black-and-white painting among New York avant-garde artists, Kline's paintings were startling and had a powerful effect on fellow artists and critics. Manny Farber, art critic for *The Nation*, wrote of the works, "It is the blunt, awkward, ugly shape that counts."<sup>77</sup> For Kline's third exhibition in 1954, Lawrence Campbell wrote in *Art News*, "Kline's shriek—black and white make the loudest, most desperate shriek—is of the individual who has been forced to push his individuality to the extremes to exist at all."<sup>78</sup> For these critics, Kline clearly had pushed the forces of black and white to new limits (fig. 66).

It should be restated that Kline's focus on architectonic structures held in tension by the opposition of black and white had a powerful source in coal country. As discussed earlier, to travel through that country is to understand Kline. It is a landscape of black and white especially during the winter months. The industrial areas are still stripped bare and punctuated by great fissures cut into the land by the mining operations. Black culm piles rise against the empty horizon. Machinery is everywhere, and the black openings to the mine shafts set against white light punctuate the landscape. The monumental forms and off-center geometry of the breaker buildings with the coal shoots projecting at

Detail, *Untitled*, 1958 (fig. 75)





66. *Poem*, from *21 Etchings and Poems Portfolio*, 1951, published 1958  
 Franz Kline and Frank O'Hara  
 Etching on Rives paper, 16¼x 20 inches  
 Allentown Art Museum, The Grippe Collection, 2009. (2009.21.2.9).  
 © 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

irregular angles from them still exist. The spirit of coal country, monumental and desolate, is captured in the poetry of Jay Parini, who himself was born and raised in northeastern Pennsylvania coal country (fig. 67).

In the poem “Anthracite Country,” Parini wrote of the smoldering coal fires that still burn in the area:

The culm dump burns all night,  
 unnaturally blue, and well below heaven.  
 It smolders like moments almost forgotten,  
 the time when you said what you meant  
 too plainly and ruined your chance of love.

Refusing to dwindle, fed from within  
 like men rejected for nothing specific,  
 it lingers on the edge of town, unwatched  
 by anyone living near. The smell now  
 passes for nature. It would be missed.

Rich earth wound, glimmering  
 rubble of an age when men  
 dug marrow from the land's dark spine,  
 it resists all healing.  
 Its luminous hump cries comfortable pain.<sup>79</sup>

Kline's feeling for the black-and-white and gray character of raw industrial expanses of coal country were reinforced by his environment in New York. In *New Art City*, his study of Manhattan at mid-twentieth century, Jed Perl captures this aspect of New York:

The city generated black-and-white images that, almost immediately, became black-and-white clichés: the crazy patterning of fire escapes, which were themselves set in dialectical tension with old, brick-and-mortar buildings; the aerial tracteries of laundry lines crisscrossing backyards of the Lower East Side; the piles of tabloid papers composing a spontaneous black-and-white collage on every newsstand.<sup>80</sup>

An important component of a black-and-white sensibility in the modern age is photography. David Anfam has engaged in the most extensive and penetrating discussions of Kline's relationship to photography, particularly the work of Aaron Siskind.<sup>81</sup> Kline and Siskind had a sustained friendship. They lived near each other on East Ninth Street in 1947, and they shared Charles Egan as a dealer. Kline named a 1958 painting *Siskind* (Detroit Institute of Arts), and after Kline's death, Siskind created a series of photographs of close-up images of walls with markings on them that he designated in homage to Kline.<sup>82</sup> Anfam has also speculated on Kline's relationship to the photographs of Robert Frank. Frank photographed Kline in his studio in 1951.

The formal affinities that Kline shared with the photographers are significant. In addition to black-and-white vision, these affinities include compressed space, simplifications, off-balance compositions, an appreciation of dynamism and speed, and an interest in surface texture. More might be said of content as related to those formal affinities. The photographers that are sometimes referred to as the New York School of photography were interested in capturing the rapidity of change in the modern era.<sup>83</sup> Their works often concern the swift rise of the American industrial age and the contrast between ideal models of industry and the reality of working environments. They suggest both the constructive and desolate character of the machine age.

Walker Evans was one of the photographers of the previous generation who was most influential on such figures as Siskind

67. *Untitled*, 1961  
 Ink, pencil, and gouache on paper  
 mounted on board, 19½ x 17 inches  
 Gift from the artist to Peter Agostini  
 © 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York







68. **A Graveyard and Steel Mill in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania**, November 1935  
Walker Evans  
Gelatin silver print, 7<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches  
Metropolitan Museum of Art  
Gift of Farm Security Administration  
© 2012 Walker Evans Archive

and Frank, and Evans might be added to the role-call of the photographers that interested Kline. His works were shown frequently in New York, and he was referenced by the photographers that Kline knew. In early November of 1935, working for the Resettlement Administration, a New Deal federal agency, Evans traveled to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. There, from a hillside, he photographed modest workers' houses in opposition to the megalithic chimneys of the Bethlehem Steel Works. This contrast and the chilling emptiness of the streets have a resonance with Kline's paintings of both Pennsylvania and New York.

On the afternoon of November 8, Evans discovered Saint Michael's Cemetery and

photographed five locations, including the famous image (fig. 68) of a dramatic headstone-cross leading to workers' housing and finally to the chimneys of the steel mill. The linkage of industry, daily life, and mortality explored here might be compared to Kline's more abstract rendering of similar feelings in *Slate Cross* of 1961 (fig. 69). In a spirit that looks forward to Kline's later works, Evans called these photographs "graphic records of a complete, complex, pictorially rich modern industrial center."<sup>84</sup>

The significance of photography of this period lies in the power of the image, not scale. While Kline's large black-and-white paintings partly rely on the impact of sheer size, his smaller paintings and drawings on paper have a strong visual impact. Many of these works have remarkable capacity for visual expansion. One of Kline's great abilities was to connote magnitude on a small scale. These paintings on paper and drawings also reveal a range of experimentation that has not been discussed in the Kline literature. The works on paper show the variety of Kline's techniques as well as the careful preparation that underlies his seemingly spontaneous large-scale paintings. *Untitled* circa 1950 (fig. 83), a drawing in graphite on paper, shows the architectonic basis for much of Kline's work. Its intersection of irregular geometric lines creates a teetering structure reminiscent of the coal breakers in anthracite country as well as older buildings in New York. Pencil drawing plays a substantial role in Kline's works on paper and often provides a structural scaffolding for more freely painted gestures made in the same work. *Untitled* 1950s (fig. 70) shows an interaction between vertical and horizontal pencil lines and black gestures in oil paint. The pencil markings partition the surface and help determine the placement of the splashed gestures. If this work were translated into a large oil painting, the preliminary structure of the drawn lines would be concealed.

Collage plays an important role in Kline's art, and collage fragments appear in numerous Kline works on paper. Kline used collage

opposite: 69. **Slate Cross**, 1961  
Oil on canvas, 111<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 79 inches  
Dallas Museum of Art  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Algur H. Meadows and the Meadows Foundation Incorporated  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

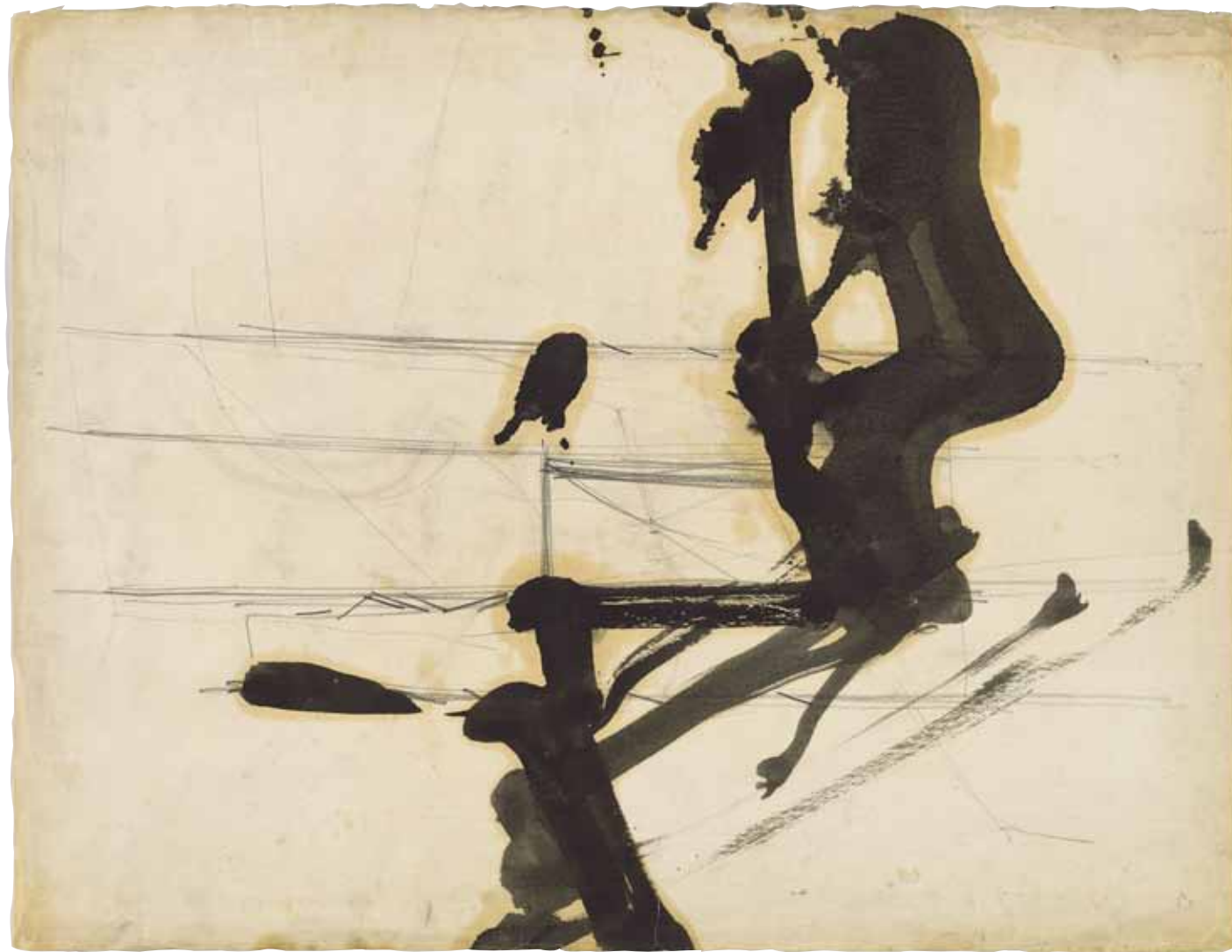




for adjustment and refinement in his compositions. It allowed the artist to make modifications, often quite subtle in the dynamic relationship between his structural elements. *Untitled* circa 1955 (fig. 71) suggests a massive mound above which is suspended a trusslike structure. Kline has added a collage element to the upper right quadrant. This fragment, which is cut on three sides and torn on the fourth, regularizes the lower edge of the uppermost brushstroke, and it covers some of the curved brush mark below it. The result is that the entire upper structure is visually held in place by the right edge of the paper. The tentative suspension of a seemingly massive construction is an important visual effect throughout Kline's art.

Other Kline works on paper feature the combination of oil paint, tempera, ink, pencil, and colored chalk on paper. In several instances, Kline tore holes in the paper to adjust the composition. Numerous examples exist of the artist folding the paper to cut off elements of the composition, and there are works where the paper has been subsequently unfolded as the artist changed his mind. There are a number of pieces in which Kline used translucent paper. He would paint on one side and then

70. *Untitled*, 1950s  
Oil and graphite on wove paper  
23 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 26 $\frac{1}{16}$  inches  
National Gallery of Art  
Gift of Elisabeth Ross Zogbaum  
(2006.67.3)  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



71. *Untitled*, ca. 1955  
Oil with paper collage on wove paper  
mounted to paperboard,  
12 $\frac{5}{16}$  x 9 $\frac{1}{8}$  inches  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.  
Gift of Edward R. Broida (2005.142.26)  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists  
Rights Society (ARS), New York

turn the paper over, using shadow of the first configuration as a starting point for the second. In a number of cases in works of the early 1950s the initial drawing on one side on the paper is figurative, and the second composition is an abstraction but based on the properties of representational drawing. All of these aspects in the works on paper point to the variety of Kline's experimentation and to the intense care that underlies the imagery in his large abstract paintings.

In the early fifties a number of Kline's abstract paintings were based on ink drawings made on telephone book pages. These works emphasize Kline's use of drawings as studies for his large canvases. The telephone book pages were chosen primarily because they had no cost to the artist, who was still very poor. It has also been suggested by the art historian Robert Goldwater that the print on the page prevented the area around the black ink strokes from being read as deep space.<sup>85</sup> Kline developed the practice of choosing one or several of the drawings and tacking them to the wall as references for his large paintings, a relationship that





72. **The Bridge**, ca. 1955  
Oil on canvas, Frame: 82 x 54½ inches  
Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts  
Institute, Utica, NY, U.S.A.  
Photo Credit: Munson-Williams-Proctor  
Arts Institute/ Art Resource, NY  
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will be explored in more detail below. Because of the fragility and deterioration of the telephone book drawings, only one, *Untitled* circa 1952 (fig. 84), has been included in this exhibition. It suggests a beam suspended across the length of the paper. The drawing connects to later horizontal compositions in several late Kline paintings such as *Washington Wall Painting* (1959, private collection) and *Andrus* (1961, A. M. Kinney, Inc. collection).

Around 1955 Kline began to experiment with more color in both his paintings and drawings. The artist had become frustrated by his reputation as a black-and-white painter.<sup>86</sup> These works reveal Kline's search for new approaches and prompt us to consider thematic and visual concerns throughout his art. First, they remind us that color is frequently an important component of Kline's "black-and-white" works. In many paintings it is partly hidden and then fights its way to the surface. Thus, it is part of the struggle between conflicting forces that characterizes Kline's art. One need only to look at *The Bridge* (fig. 72), *Buried Reds* (1953, Frederick R. Weisman Art Foundation, Los Angeles), or *C&O* (1958, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.) to confirm this aspect.<sup>87</sup> Second, the colored works remind us that Kline's art as a whole

contains more references to a shallow structural space than is commonly supposed. While Kline painted edge-to-edge in his works so as to avoid a simplistic figure/ground relationship, his paintings are never absolutely flat. Strokes of different opacity clearly overlap, and the ragged edges of brushstrokes imply recession into space. Black strokes are mixed frequently with varying amounts of white pigment so as to suggest overlap and recession, and, as mentioned above, layers of color often emerge from the underdepths of the surface. Kline's space, however, is a highly compressed space, giving the works a sense of power as compression and expansion vie with each other.

These aspects are clearly present in Kline's paintings on paper. *Untitled* 1957 (fig. 73) features forceful diagonal strokes built over areas of brown and zinc yellow pigment. The black marks create a dynamic organizing tension built on top of loosely formed color areas. In other colored works, the spatial suggestions are related landscape memories. The scrubbed surfaces of *Coal Valley* of 1957 (fig. 74) have an atmospheric quality that connects the work to landscape painting. The gray tones that squeeze out areas of blue and green recall the dark settings of



opposite: 73. **Untitled**, 1957  
Oil on paper mounted on board,  
20¾ x 15½ inches  
Allan Stone Collection, Courtesy of the  
Allan Stone Gallery, New York  
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anthracite country. *Coal Valley* might be compared to such early works by Kline as *Lehigh River* and *Pennsylvania Landscape*. Many of Kline's colored abstract works on paper feature such somber tones. They may be found in *Painting with Color* of 1958 (fig. 86), where dark green strokes struggle against an environment of deep purple and patches of white.

The industrial environment of Kline's youth was dominated by coal dust that covered all surfaces and the thick smoke that filled the atmosphere. *Untitled* circa 1960 (fig. 85) in particular demonstrates Kline's ability to create an evocative composition without the scaffolding of his characteristic brushwork. Vaguely defined areas of red and yellow fight their way to the surface through the overwhelming darkness. It is almost as if one were in a mineshaft looking toward the distant light of the outer world. Kline was certainly aware of the fellow New York School artists who were creating abstract works with landscape references during the mid-1950s. They include Helen Frankenthaler, Joan Mitchell, Philip Guston, and Milton Resnick. Many of these works, however, were brightly colored and lyrical in character. They lack the deep sobriety of Kline's paintings. Kline's *Untitled* of 1960 bears an affinity with Mark Rothko's somber paintings. Kline was also inspired by the works of Joseph Mallord William Turner, who had been one of Kline's favorite Old Master artists since his sojourn to England. Turner's works often pair industry and nature in order to evoke the underlying tensions of the modern world. Turner communicated these forces through aggressive and unconventional paint handling.

Kline's *Untitled* 1958 (fig. 75) evokes in black, white, and shades of gray a turbulent world that parallels those found in Turner's paintings. Like Turner, Kline has employed unconventional paint handling. The surface of paper mounted on board has been painted in a preliminary layer of pigment and then scraped down. Layers of wet and dry paint have been applied over this first layer with brushes and rubbed on with rags, giving an effect like belching smoke. The surface has been scratched with the brush handle, and final bold strokes of black paint highlight the raw energy of the work. This work features impermeable atmosphere. On a grand scale this visual and emotional turbulence dominates such Kline paintings of 1958 as *Siegfried* (Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh) and *Requiem* (Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo).

While Kline's smaller oil paintings rely on experiments in paint handling, his larger works required prolonged periods of execution. Kline's goal was to create the physical and emotional immediacy of these drawings in his large-scale paintings. It has long been known that Kline developed the practice of tacking one or several drawings to his studio wall to use as guides for his large paintings. His practice highlights the importance that the drawing had for him in generating ideas. As has been noted many times in the Kline literature, it also undermines the notion of pure spontaneity that early critics mistakenly read into his abstract paintings. In the New York School literature, the notion of

74. **Coal Valley, 1957**

Oil on board (and oil on paper mounted on board), 14<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 11<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches  
 Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia  
 Bequest of the Elisabeth Ross Zogbaum Revocable Trust, 2006.11

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75. **Untitled**, 1958  
Oil on paper mounted on board,  
11¼ x 15½ inches  
Allan Stone Collection, Courtesy of the  
Allan Stone Gallery, New York  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

opposite: 77. **Cross Town**, 1955  
Oil on canvas, 48 x 65 inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
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unadulterated spontaneity has been undone for a variety of artists as techniques of compositional control and revision have been discovered for many of them.

Kline's practice bears some resemblance to Old Master methods of using preliminary drawings. More significantly, however, his approach indicates how important each stroke in his paintings was for the artist. For Kline, the paintings embodied a worldview that was the core of his personality. He planned and labored over each gesture in his paintings so that each would communicate as precisely as possible that vision. It remains to examine the connection between several smaller scale works and the paintings.

The relationship between large-scale compositions and the smaller works that are termed "studies" is not simply a mechanical enlargement, as the Kline literature often suggests. Rather, the large works show that Kline has absorbed the primary meanings of the studies and intensified their signification. He has modified the "studies" to enhance their expressive content. *Study for Cross Town* of 1955 (fig. 76) has as its content the suspension of mass. In this small oil painting two monumental vertical strokes are held to the top of the painting edge by a number of thinner angular strokes that act as guy-wires locking all the elements into a

tension arrangement. The angular lines extend to three points on the edges of the canvas. To the left side of the painting two curved brushstrokes weave over these guy-wires as if hanging on them. The stress arrangement between these elements is highlighted by contrasting background colors of yellow and blue. In the large-scale painting *Cross Town* of 1955 (fig. 77) the image has been expanded to 48 x 65 inches. Colors have been eliminated, so black and white dominate. The paint is applied more thickly and the central area is denser. The center shape is also further off-plumb, so visually it suggests greater pictorial weight that must be supported. Accordingly, the guy-wires have been made more substantial. In all, the suspended tensions in the study are increased in magnitude in the final painting.

By contrast, the theme of *Study for Caboose*, 1961 (fig. 78) is stasis. The ink painting on board was identified by Kline as a study for the painting *Caboose* and given to his close friend sculptor Peter Agostini. In



76. **Study for Cross Town**, 1955  
Oil on canvas, 18 x 24½ inches  
Courtesy of Michael Klein Arts, NY  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists  
Rights Society (ARS), New York





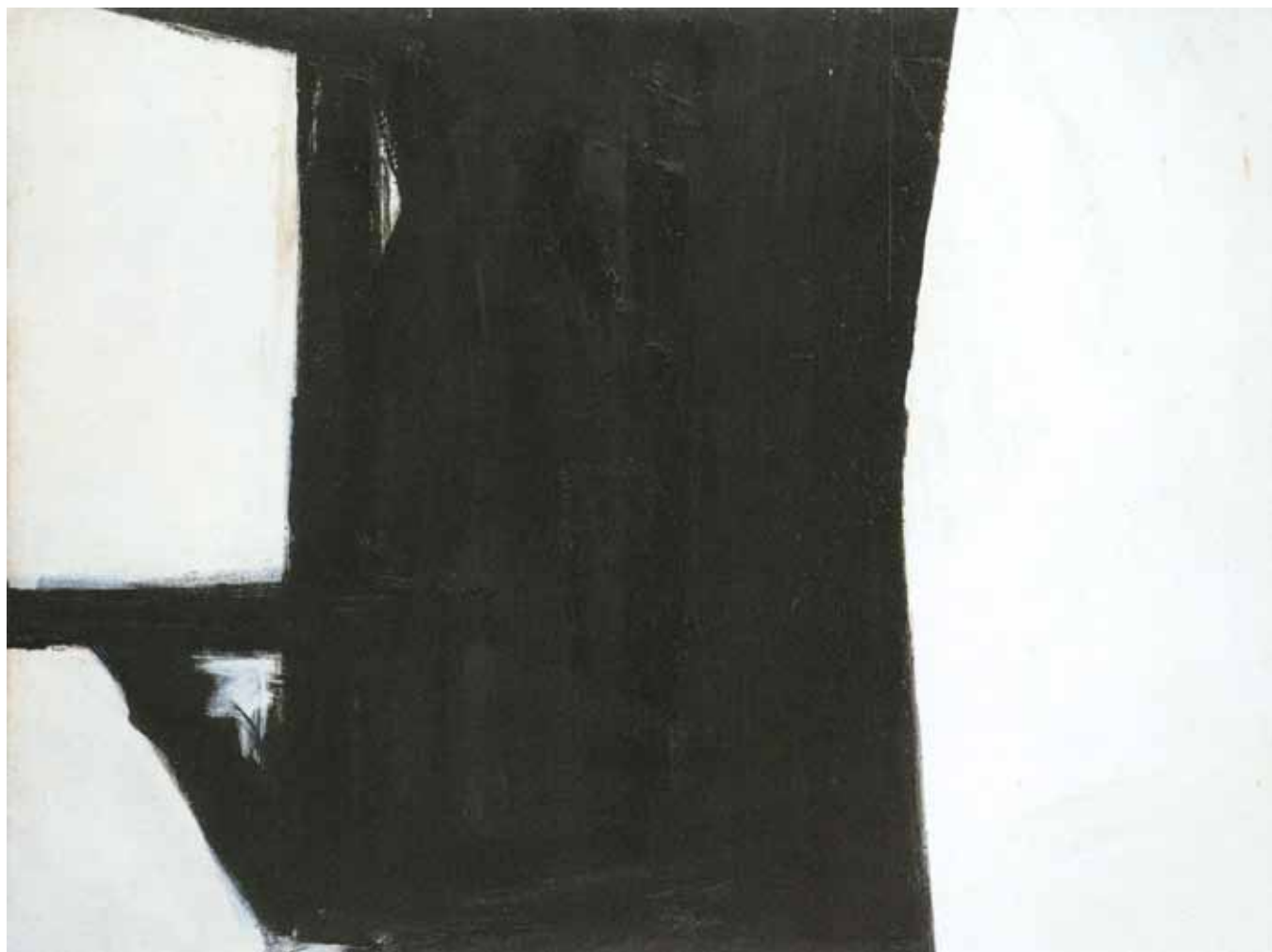


78. **Study for Caboose**, 1961  
Ink on board, 19¼ x 22 inches  
Gift from the artist to Peter Agostini  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

79. **Caboose**, 1961  
Oil and acrylic on canvas,  
109¼ x 78⅞ inches  
Private Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
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this work, a massive black shape dominates the surface. Its scale relative to the size of the drawing and its proximity to the edges communicate its solidity and immobility. At the same time, the shape is complex. Ragged brushstrokes at the bottom edge of the drawing suggest motion. The lower section looks as if forms have been piled one upon another. The black area has a fissure at its core. The fissure is intersected by a pointed vector that is repeated in reverse at the upper left corner. All of these aspects mediate the immobility of the central shape.

The large painting *Caboose* (fig. 79), approximately 109 x 78 inches, consists of a massive black form anchored in the center of the canvas by the thick white pigment surrounding it. The nearly rectangular design of the central shape in the study has been simplified. The fissure in the drawing has become a tiny crack in the painting. That chink in its armor cladding suggests even this inert mass might be subject to deformation. Despite the rock-solid stability of the central shape, forces are at work. The deformations on the right side of this block are countered by the horizontal bar with a diagonal strut bracing it from the left. One thinks of a massive piece of machinery, a solid caboose that terminates a train, or perhaps the trapezoidal shape of a coal car used to bring anthracite up from the



mines. Peter Agostini recalled, “To see Pennsylvania as he saw it, it was dark coal-diggers country.”<sup>88</sup>

*Drawing for Corinthian II* (fig. 80) concerns the speed of a collision. The title comes from Corinthian Avenue, which was the main street of the compound at Girard College, where Kline was enrolled and forced to remain after the death of his father. In the painting on paper, pairs of angular brushstrokes at the top and bottom of the works thrust across the surface. They are locked together by another diagonal that harnesses their energy. The strokes are elongated and pointed. They imply an ability to pierce anything with which they come in contact. All of these forces crash against a thin vertical pier to right of center. Although the pier is penetrated, it seems capable of sustaining the impact. The large painting *Corinthian II* (fig. 81) enhances the effect of collision. The angular brushstrokes are proportionally longer and slightly separated so that four distinct shards are apparent. The vertical pier is slightly bent. It bows under the force of the painterly impact but sustains itself in the midst of the nearly overwhelming blow. Like many of the best of Kline’s works in both his early and late periods,



80. **Drawing for Corinthian II**, 1961  
Ink and gouache on paper,  
15½ x 23¾ inches  
Leonard and Stephanie Bernheim  
Collection  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

81. **Corinthian II**, 1961  
Oil on canvas, 79⅞ x 107¼ inches  
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston  
Bequest of Caroline Wiess Law  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York







82. *Turin*, 1960  
Oil on canvas, 80 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 95 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches  
The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art,  
Kansas City, Missouri  
Gift of Mrs. Alfred B. Clark through  
the Friends of Art. F61-23  
Photo: Edward C. Robinson III  
© 2012 The Franz Kline Estate /  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

*Corinthian II* suggests the interaction of forces that are both structured and ruinous. It embodies the complexity and turmoil of its age.

Kline's monumental painting *Turin*, 1960 (fig. 82), embodies many of the forces just discussed. In the painting, Kline erects a scaffold through vertical and horizontal black brush marks. The work exhibits strength through the authority of those marks and the fact that the white areas painted around the black brushstrokes seem to lock them in place. But the scaffold is also fragile. Every paint stroke intersects its neighbor at a different and irregular angle. Strokes running to the edges of the painting do not secure the structure but suggest that its instability may extend beyond the perimeter of the work. The larger solid marks are interrupted by piercing diagonal gestures that perforate the structure. While some paint marks are opaque, others are thinly applied, and the apparent speed of their application suggests portions of the configuration are in motion. Massiveness and instability are played against each other. On one hand, *Turin* suggests some giant machine that is lurching into motion. On the

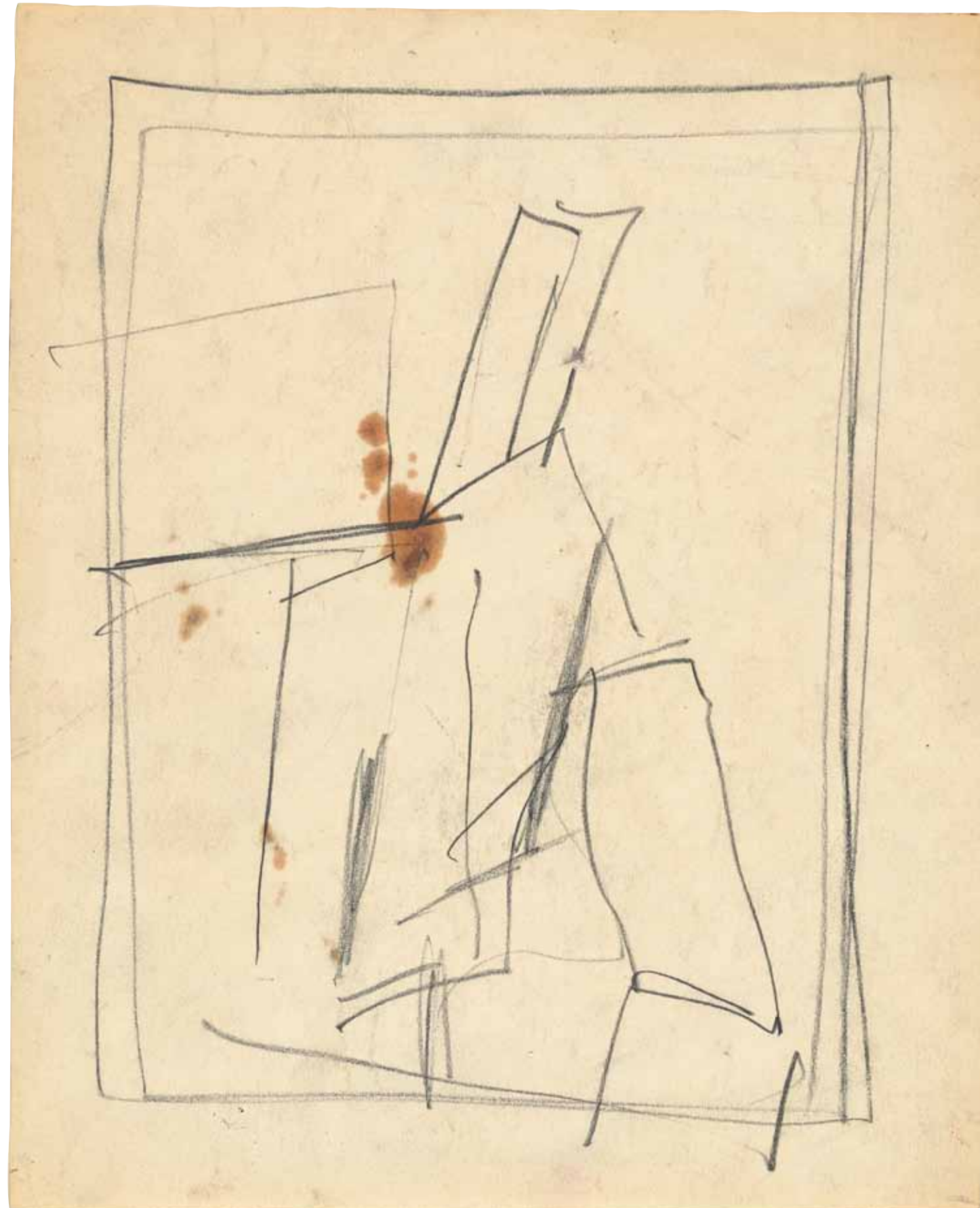
other hand, *Turin* may also look into the past. Much of Kline's work has a dynamic Baroque quality. The city of Turin features one of the most complex and motion-filled structures in Western architecture: Camillo-Guarino Guarini's cage of interlocking ribs that form the dome of the Cappella SS. Sindone, 1667–90, the building that houses the Holy Shroud of Turin.

Franz Kline differed from his colleagues in the New York School in that his background was neither located in the fantasies of Surrealism nor in the psychological world of dreams. He was neither concerned with investigating tribal art for its archetypal imagery nor alluding to pre-history. Instead, Kline was a realist. He was profoundly concerned with the physical environment that surrounded him. That world appears in his earlier representational works. To an even greater extent, it is the core of his abstract art. In the late 1940s Kline discovered that the most profound manner in which to express his view of modernity, with all its excitement and desolation, was through nonrepresentational art. In those abstract works Kline translated his deep feelings for the industrial character of his world into the physical working process of applying paint to the canvas. These works do not picture but instead literally embody the forces of creation and destruction that Kline found all around him.

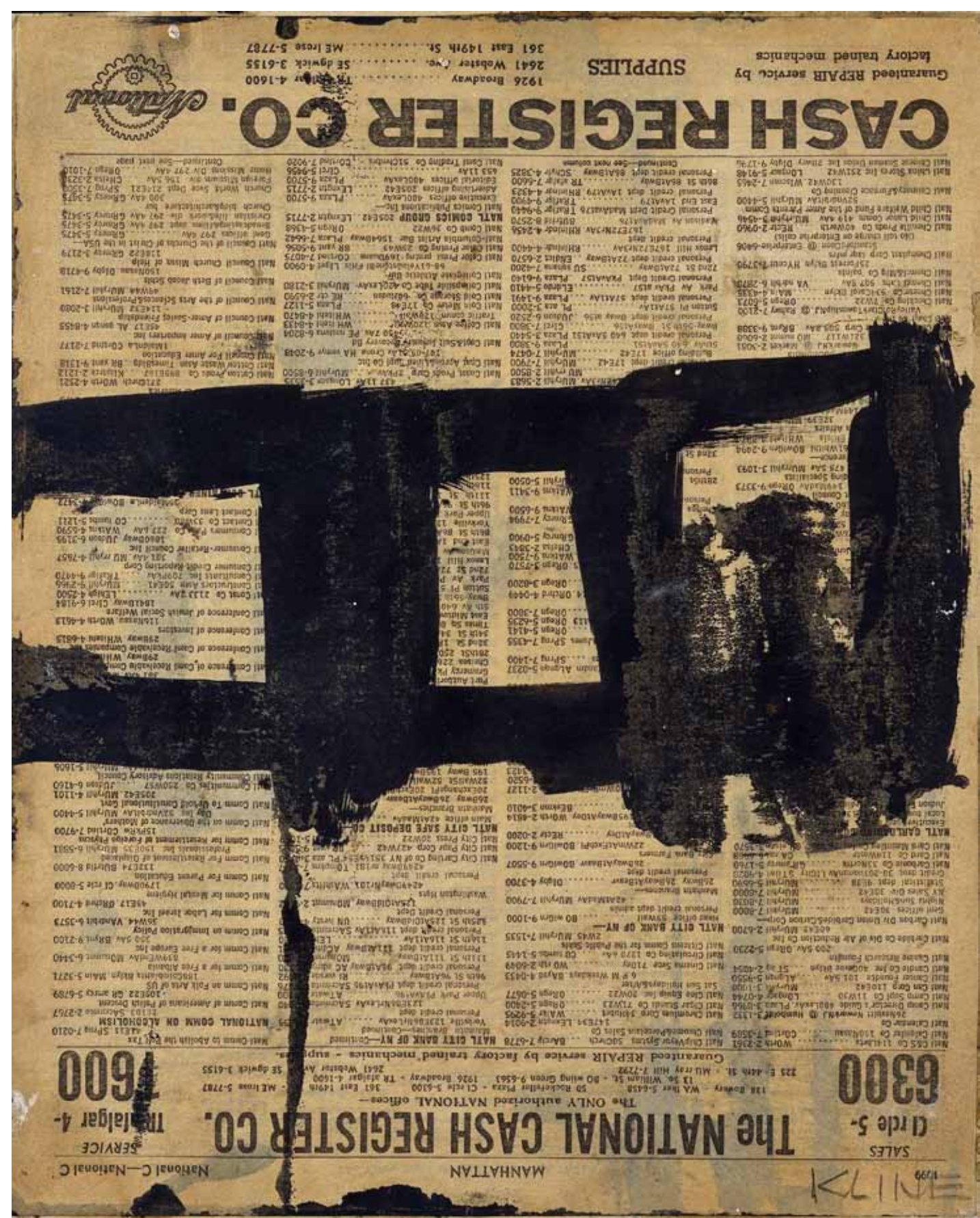
Because of this deep commitment to the modern industrial and urban world, Kline had an important influence on the next generation of artists, ones who were interested in escaping the metaphysics associated with other New York School artists and embracing the gritty character of contemporary existence. These artists include Robert Rauschenberg, who attached objects to his Combines and wished to work in the "gap between art and life," and John Chamberlain, who claimed Kline "taught him structure." The architectonic quality of Kline's work appealed particularly to sculptors, and it had a significant influence on the thrusting beams of Mark di Suvero's monumental constructions and Richard Serra's investigations of mass and gravity. The directness of Kline's works influenced Frank Stella's groundbreaking black paintings and the early work of Brice Marden. Kline's feeling for the massive but forlorn character of coal-area sites was taken up by Robert Smithson in his proposals for environmental installations in abandoned industrial areas.

From a broad perspective, Franz Kline's art captures a particular moment in American history at mid-century. That moment is the beginning of our shift from a society founded on industry and engineering to one based on technology.<sup>89</sup> During Kline's era, machine culture exhibited both vitality and decay, and our industrial complexes and metropolitan environments began to reflect this changed direction. As a society, we were switching our orientation from production to consumption.<sup>90</sup> After 1960, the consumer phase of this technological, economic, and social transition became the core subject matter of Pop Art. Kline was in a unique position to feel this transition because he had witnessed the rise and decline of anthracite, one of America's most powerful industries.





83. **Untitled**, ca. 1950  
 Graphite on wove paper, 10<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 8<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches  
 National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.  
 Gift of Rufus F. Zogbaum (1998.113.14)  
 © 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



84. **Untitled**, ca. 1952  
 Ink on telephone book paper, 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 9 inches  
 Private Collection, Courtesy of McKee Gallery, New York  
 © 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York





85. **Untitled**, ca. 1960  
 Oil on paperboard, 22<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 21<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches  
 National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.  
 Gift of Elisabeth Ross Zogbaum (2006.67.4)  
 © 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



86. **Painting with Color**, 1958  
 Oil on paper mounted on canvas, 14<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 19<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches  
 Allan Stone Collection, Courtesy of the Allan Stone Gallery, New York  
 © 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York





87. **Untitled**, ca. 1958  
 Tempera on wove paper, 13 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 16 $\frac{13}{16}$  inches  
 National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.  
 Gift of Rufus F. Zogbaum (1998.113.12)  
 © 2012 The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



88. **Untitled**, ca. 1958  
 Oil on paper, 18 $\frac{13}{16}$  x 23 $\frac{13}{16}$  inches  
 National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.  
 Gift of Elisabeth R. Zogbaum ((1993.5.1)  
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# FRANZ KLINE: THE INDUSTRIAL SUBLIME

Irving Sandler

KATHARINE KUH: Do you feel that you are very much an American painter?

FRANZ KLINE: Yes, I think so. I can't imagine myself working very long in Europe or, for that matter, anywhere but New York.<sup>1</sup>

Much as I will try, it is unthinkable for me to stand off from Franz Kline's black-and-white abstractions and treat them dispassionately as a scholar should. As I recalled in my memoir, *A Sweeper-Up After Artists*, I was wandering through the Museum of Modern Art in 1952 when I chanced upon Kline's *Chief* (1950). It ushered in my life in art. What was it then in the painting that astonished and moved me? "The painting did not provide any particular pleasure or delight. Nor did I 'understand' it. I responded in another way--with my 'gut,' as it were. The painting had a sense of urgency and authenticity that gripped me. . . . It was at once surprising, familiar, and imposing. . . . *Chief* revealed to me the power of the visual in my being. It was like releasing the flood gates of seeing."<sup>2</sup>

Because of their sheer visual power, *Chief* and Kline's other black-and-white abstractions immediately commanded art world attention. They etched themselves strongly into the sensibility of the New York School in the 1950s so strongly that it was difficult then to look at any black-and-white canvas without thinking of Kline—and this despite the fact that Arshile Gorky, Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, Barnett Newman, Jackson Pollock, and Bradley Walker Tomlin had all painted black-and-white series.

In its innovative stage Abstract Expressionism can be divided into two phases. The first began around 1947, the year of the so-called breakthroughs of Pollock, Clyfford Still, and de Kooning. In 1950 a significant change occurred in the form and meaning of their paintings. It was at this critical juncture that Franz Kline's abstractions entered the stream of Abstract Expressionism.

As if in response to World War II, the mood of Pollock's, Still's, and de Kooning's painting in the first phase was marked by anxiety, ambiguity, and darkness. I have in mind Pollock's bleak, frenetic, and claustrophobic, allover, vertical images, Still's cheerless, roughly textured fields ripped apart by their jagged edges, and de Kooning's dense black paintings of ruptured anatomies—all from the late 1940s.

Around 1950 the paintings of these three innovators changed in style and mood. Pollock's and Still's canvases became expansive and grand. They embody what Walt Whitman called "that vast Something, stretching out on its own unbounded scale, unconfined." The critic Hubert Crehan summed up the change in Still's paintings: in the forties they were of "the Inferno." In the fifties, they were transported into "a kind of Paradise. [Everything] is seen under Western skies or against a limitless plateau."<sup>3</sup> In abstracting boundlessness, the essential feature of the Great Plains of the United States, Pollock and Still created an avant-garde visionary geography.

At the same time, de Kooning turned from his dark and claustrophobic abstractions to brassy paintings of women whose habitat is both the city and popular culture—one is titled *Marilyn Monroe* (1954). Thomas Hess reported, "The artist has indicated, only half jokingly, that his Women are sisters to the giant ladies (girls?) that are pasted on mailtrucks and billboards—enormous public goddesses of droll sex and earnest sales-pitches."<sup>4</sup>

Kline's epic, energy-packed black-and-white abstractions, first exhibited in 1950, rarely refer to specific subjects but are informed by memories of the coal country in northeastern Pennsylvania in which he had spent his youth, "a landscape of black and white especially during the winter months," as Robert S. Mattison commented. Even today, "the industrial areas are still stripped bare and punctuated by great fissures cut into the land by the mining operations. . . . Machinery is everywhere, and the black openings to the mine shafts set off against white light punctuate the landscape."<sup>5</sup> In their allusion to America's industrial environs, Kline's abstractions added a new and original dimension to Abstract Expressionist painting.



The industrial landscape was inbred in Kline's being, even after he moved to New York in 1938, since he made frequent visits back to Pennsylvania. When in New York, Kline painted New York's ever-changing face in a conventional realistic manner: skeletons of partly demolished or constructed buildings or the old Third Avenue Elevated Railway—the El—a favorite subject.

When in the coal region, he depicted desolate mining and manufacturing subjects shrouded in a smoky miasma. In 1941 he painted *Palmerton, PA*, in which an insignificant train in the middleground, not much larger than the horse and wagon in the foreground, traverses an industrial landscape at the edge of squalor. The following year (1942) he painted *Chief* (a title he later reused), a pathetic picture of a locomotive, hardly more impressive than a toy, and in 1946, *Lehighton Mural* (a mural for the American Legion post). As Mattison has pointed out, during the thirties and the forties Pennsylvania's coal mining and manufacturing economy was severely depressed. This depression appears to be reflected in Kline's bleak paintings.<sup>6</sup>

In New York, Kline became friendly with avant-garde artists, notably Elaine and Willem de Kooning, whose painterly painting would influence him. Around 1949 Kline enlarged some of his quick sketches, for example, of a rocking chair in his studio, in a Bell-Opticon projector. What appeared were abstractions. Elaine de Kooning wrote of his "conversion": "A four by five inch brush drawing . . . loomed in gigantic black strokes which eradicated any image."<sup>7</sup> She also wrote, "He began to work on sheets of newspaper with a three-inch housepainter's brush and black enamel. The size of the newspaper, almost immediately, was unbearably confining. Then came the six- or eight-inch brushes, the six- or eight-foot canvases, the five gallon cans of paint and the big, black images with the bulk and the force and the momentum of the old-fashioned engines that used to roar through the town where he was born."<sup>8</sup>

It is not surprising that de Kooning should have thought of trains, because she sensed (as I do) that more than any other coal country subject they were essential catalysts that had stimulated Kline's imagination. Mattison has pointed out that "The fastest, largest and most powerful American trains of the first half of the twentieth century passed through the coal region that surrounded Kline."<sup>9</sup> Kline even owned models of Lehigh Valley coal area trains.<sup>10</sup> And it is noteworthy that he titled many of his works after locomotives. The dinky engine in Kline's figurative *Chief* of 1942 is the revealing forerunner of the monumental abstractions to come.

The reference to thundering locomotives suggests a nostalgic recall of steam engines. Old-fashioned locomotives are no longer with us. But in their day they made an indelible impression on Kline and just about every other American boy, the drama of a steam engine closeup chugging into a train station—the overwhelming iron mass, the spitting steam, the piercing whistle, the enveloping smoke, the earsplitting noise, the

blazing headlights at night, and the sense of force and speed. Many of my boyhood friends dreamed of becoming engineers and controlling that awesome power.

Kline was well aware of the social and symbolic significance of the locomotive as an exemplary image of potency and speed. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the iron horse had taken hold of the public consciousness as the technological marvel of the time, the epitome of modernity and progress, indeed, "the industrial revolution incarnate."<sup>11</sup> Kline is its twentieth-century painter laureate. In contrast to the desolate earlier coal-country scenes, his bold black-and-white images celebrate America's industrial scene. He abstracted its dynamism and embodied it with an immediacy remarkable even in Abstract Expressionist painting, an immediacy enhanced by the improvisational directness of his painting. For Kline it was the experience of painting that counted above all. As he said, "I don't decide in advance that I'm going to paint a definite experience, but in the act of painting, it becomes a genuine experience for me."<sup>12</sup>

Kline's imposing images evoke the same sense of awe that you experience before modern monuments such as the Empire State Building or the Brooklyn Bridge. His abstractions are indeed metaphors of the Industrial Sublime, the counterpart of Pollock's and Still's evocation of the Prairie Sublime.

Kline's abstractions entered the stream of avant-garde painting at a time of radical stylistic changes in the work of Pollock, Still, and de Kooning. The development from inward- to outward-looking painting appears to have been related to a change in America's political stance. Memories of World War II had receded. Now the antagonists were the United States and the Soviet Union. The choices were seen as American democracy or Communist totalitarianism. It is noteworthy that American intellectuals, on the whole including hitherto leftist dissidents, not only supported America's foreign policy but called for a rapprochement with Middle America. This was the theme of a widely publicized symposium titled "Our Country and Our Culture," published in *Partisan Review* in May–June 1952. The editors and most of the contributing writers and literary critics noted that they "now regard America and its institutions in a new way" and "feel closer to their country and its culture." They had come to recognize in American democracy "an intrinsic and positive value . . . not merely a capitalist myth but a reality which must be defended against Russian totalitarianism."<sup>13</sup> Given this apparent either/or alternative, there emerged a general consensus among American intellectuals that held that the United States was the global guardian of democratic values that had to be defended and celebrated. Pollock, Still, de Kooning, and Kline too created positive images of America: the Prairie Sublime in the case of Pollock and Still, and the Industrial Sublime, in that of Kline.<sup>14</sup>



Ironically, Kline’s vision of locomotive transportation looked back to an earlier period in American history. As the twentieth century progressed, trains gave way to automobiles and trucks as the major means of transportation.<sup>15</sup> Pollock’s and Still’s visions were equally passé, based as they were on an idea of a wide-open Western frontier that no longer existed. The America depicted by the four painters had become history, although it remained very much alive in our national myth.

The actual frontier will never return, but it is likely that Kline’s trains in a new guise will rematerialize. Confronted with traffic jams that clog America’s streets and highways, there are growing calls for the rehabilitation of a transcontinental network of high-speed trains to move freight and people. Perhaps too Kline’s romance with railroads will be revived by artists to come.

Be that as it may, the tempo of modern America remains as hectic as ever. Kline relished this activity and captured it in his abstractions. As he once said, and I consider this comment the key to Kline’s outlook, “Hell, half the world wants to be like Thoreau at Walden worrying about the noise of traffic on the way to Boston; the other half use up their lives being part of the noise. I like the second half. Right?”<sup>16</sup>

# NOTES

Pages 9–95

1. David Sylvester, Interview with Franz Kline, *Living Arts*, (London) vol. 1, no. 1 (Spring 1963), 7.
2. Elaine de Kooning, *Franz Kline Memorial Exhibition* (Washington, D.C.: Washington Gallery of Modern Art, 1962), 15.
3. *Franz Kline: Art and the Structure of Identity* (Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1994).
4. The quotation is from Fielding Dawson, *An Emotional Memoir of Franz Kline* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967). The most thorough treatment of Kline’s early life and career in provided by his biographer Harry Gaugh in his doctoral dissertation *The Art of Franz Kline, 1930–1950: Figurative to Mature Abstraction* (Indiana University, 1972). Later Gaugh wrote *The Vital Gesture: Franz Kline* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1985). The book accompanied an exhibition of Kline’s works that travelled to the Cincinnati Museum of Art, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Despite Gaugh’s deep knowledge of Kline’s history, he failed to discuss his work in the context of the anthracite coal revolution. The catalog *Franz Kline: The Early Works as Signals* contained a text by Albert Boime and accompanied the exhibition of 1977 at the State University of New York, Binghamton and State University of New York, Purchase. The exhibition provided access to Kline’s early works. In the catalog essay, however, Boime states that Kline’s early works “reveal a surface content and feeling structure wholly at variance with the large abstractions [page 1].” The most significant writing on Kline has been done by David Anfam in the context of the exhibition catalogs *Franz Kline; Black and White. 1950–1962* (Houston, Menil Collection, 1994) and *Franz Kline 1910–1962* (Rivoli-Turin: Museo d’Arte Contemporanea, 2004).
5. Donald L. Miller and Richard E. Sharpless, *Kingdom of Coal: Work, Enterprise, and Ethnic Communities in the Mine Fields* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 286.
6. While Cardinal ran through Pennsylvania, Chief has been mistakenly called a Pennsylvania train. In fact, it was one of the most famous trains running on the Santa Fe Railway.
7. Richard E. Sharpless, interview with the author, September 20, 1996.
8. Elizabeth Ross Zogbaum to Rebecca Rabenhold-Finsel, no date. A manuscript by Rebecca Rabenold-Finsel and Joel Randolph Finsel, *Franz Kline Coal Country-Earliest Drawings and Prints* will be published by the Mauch Chunk Museum, Jim Thorpe, Pennsylvania in 2012.
9. During the 1940s when Kline was desperately poor, his mother would provide him with money on the condition he make weekend trips home. He hitched rides with a truck driver, Kenny Lobien who drove a route between the Garment District in Manhattan and Lehigh. Lobien remembers, “On Fridays he never had money but when he went home his mother gave him some money, and the first thing he would do on Monday is go and buy art supplies.” Finsel, op. cit.
10. Recounted in the film “Strokes of Genius: Franz Kline,” Carl Colby director, Direct Cinema, Limited, 1982.
11. Nicolas Marsicano in conversation with Harry Gaugh, May 8, 1970, recorded in Gaugh, *Vital Gesture*, 63.
12. Grace Hartigan, interview with the author, July 15, 1985.
13. Edward Meneeley, interview with the author, January 29, 2012.
14. Sylvester, op. cit., 7.
15. The boys were designated as orphans even though their mothers were alive. The racial prejudice in the school’s mission was ended during the Civil Rights era when it was picketed and Martin Luther King spoke before its walls. The reversal has been complete; currently, eighty-percent of the student body is African-American, and the school is co-educational.
16. Cheesman A. Herrick, *Stephen Girard: Founder* (Philadelphia: Girard college, 1923).
17. Sharpless interview with author, op. cit.
18. Joel Le Bow interview with the author March 8, 2012. Le Bow was Kline’s student at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia.
19. Finsel, op. cit.
20. Kline as quoted by Elizabeth V. Kline, taped interview by I. David Orr, June 10, 1967.
21. Elizabeth Ross Zogbaum to Rebecca Rabenold-Finsel, op. cit.
22. David C. Rubin and Tamara Rahhal, “Things learned in early adulthood are remembered best,” *Memory and Cognition*, vol. 26, no. 1, p. 3.
23. Rubin, op. cit., 3 and 14.
24. Miller and Sharpless, op. cit., 24.
25. Ibid., 63.
26. Thomas Dirbin and Walter Licht, *The Face of Decline: The Pennsylvania Anthracite Region in the Twentieth Century* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 40.
27. Ibid., 40; Miller and Sharpless, op. cit., 72.
28. Ibid., 52.
29. Ibid., 83.
30. Durbin and Licht, op. cit., 51.
31. Edward Alden Jewell, “The National Academy Annual,” *The New York Times*, February 21, 1943, section 2, 11.
32. Gaugh, *The Vital Gesture*, 55–56.
33. Anfam, *Black and White*, 16.
34. It is noteworthy that zinc yellow was employed by Kline in later paintings like *Zinc Door* (1961, International Minerals and Chemical Corporation) and the white used by Kline is most frequently zinc white.
35. Miller and Sharpless, op. cit., 73 and 181.
36. Boime, op. cit., 10 recognized that “the potential for energy, freedom, and expansion is denied” in the works of this period.
37. Frances K. Pohl, *Framing America: A Social History of American Art* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2002), 166. Pohl notes that over 30,000 miles of railroad track was laid in America between 1820 and 1860.
38. The two figures, tracks, and breaker appear in a small ink drawing inspired by same location, *Pennsylvania Landscape* of 1944 (fig. 25).
39. Kline had ample opportunities to study the works of Blakelock and Ryder that were in the collection of I. David Orr, his principal early patron.
40. Miller and Sharpless, op. cit., 177.
41. The work has been re-named since the discovery of its exact locale.
42. While the trestle bridge no longer exists, a car bridge is built on its foundations.
43. Dawson, op. cit., 29.
44. Meneeley interview with author, January 10, 2010.
45. O. Winston Link (1914–2001) is best known for his black-and-white night photographs that record the last days of the steam locomotive. Certainly, Kline did not know his work, but his photographs provide a vision of the trains like the one Kline must have experienced.
46. Boime completely misinterprets this work, as he does with many other early works by Kline, calling it “cute” and relating it to the children’s story of “The Little Engine That Could.” Boime, op. cit., 9.



47. The station canopy resembles an earlier design that has been replaced.

48. The drawing is double-sided with a railroad station shown on its verso.

49. In 1938, Parsons joined Kline in New York, where they were married. The best discussion of Kline's London experience is found in Gaugh, *Figurative to Mature Abstraction*, 37–81.

50. Like other artists of his generation, Kline left New York during the summers and stayed in Long Island, Black Mountain College in North Carolina, and other locations. In 1961, the year before his death, he and Betsy Zogbaum bought a summer studio/home in Provincetown, Massachusetts.

51. Frank O'Hara, "Franz Kline Talking," *Evergreen Review*, volume 2, no. 6, Fall 1958, 68.

52. Telephone interview with the author, May 31, 2012.

53. Grace Hartigan interview with the author, May 3, 1996.

54. Foster, op. cit., 20-1.

55. Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961), 451.

56. Donald Kuspit, "The Individual and Mass Identity in Urban Art: The New York Case," *Art in America* vol. 65, no. 5 (September–October 1977), 66–77. From this author's viewpoint, Kuspit divides too rigidly artists who are nurtured by the city and those who are threatened by it. Kline simultaneously reflects both tendencies.

57. The Eight was a group of artists, many of whom had been newspaper illustrators in Philadelphia, who exhibited together at the Macbeth Gallery in New York in 1908. Among the artists were George Bellows, Robert Henri, George Luks and John Sloan.

58. Selden Rodman, *Conversations with Artists* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1957), 110.

59. Kline visited John Sloan's studio in 1940.

60. *New York City Guide*, originally 1939, Federal Writers' Publications, Inc. (Reprint, New York: Octagon Books, 1970), 404-05.

61. Ibid. 404.

62. Loc. Cit., 404

63. "Reality Interests Seek Quieter Third Avenue" *The New York Times* (December 7, 1941), section 3, 5.

64. See "The Beginning of the El," *The New York Times* (December 5, 1938), section 1, 3, and "The Epic of the El" *The New York Times* (December 11, 1938), section 8, p. 2.

65. Carter Ratcliff, *Conrad Marca-Relli: City to Town* (New York: Knoedler & Company, May 5–June 29, 2011), 6.

66. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (New York: Blackwell, 1989), 105. Anfam discusses Kline's relationship to technology in the context of Leo Marx's celebrated study *The Machine in the Garden (Black and White*, page 15). While his point is taken, Marx's thesis is based on the first intrusions of the machine into pastoral settings as discussed in nineteenth-century American literature. By Kline's era, the power and destructive capabilities of the machine were well established.

67. Max Page, *The Creative Destruction of Manhattan, 1900–1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

68. Sylvester, op.cit., 7.

69. For a brief history of illustration in relationship to Kline, see Boime, op. cit., 4–7.

70. I. David Orr interview with Harry Gaugh, October 15, 1977.

71. Sylvester, op. cit., 7.

72. Foster, op. cit., 22.

73. In turn, de Kooning was influenced by Kline in his Black and White (Rome) series of oil paintings on paper of 1959.

74. In 1949 Kline built a partition in the studio space that Tomlin shared with Philip Guston on University Place.

75. April Kingsley, *The Turning Point* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 292. Kline's interest in jazz can be traced to his teenage years in Lehighton.

76. De Kooning and Kline had painted the walls of the gallery, and Isamu Noguchi did the lighting design.

77. Manny Fraber, "Reviews," *The Nation* vol. 171 (November 11, 1950), 445.

78. L[awrence] C[ampbell], "Reviews and Previews," *Art News* vol. 53 (Summer 1954), 54.

79. Jay Parini, *Anthracite Country: Poems by Jay Parini* (New York: Random House, 1982). See also the poems "Walking the Trestle," "Playing in the Mines," "The Miner's Wake," and "Coal Train."

80. Jed Perl, *New Art City: Manhattan at Mid-Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 66–67.

81. Anfam, *Black and White*, 20–21. Despite Anfam's convincing discussion, it seems to this author that Kline's direct involvement with industrial and urban environments outweighed his interest in photography. Photographic images and formal structures provided support for such primary experiences.

82. Carl Chiarenza, *Photographs by Aaron Siskind in Homage to Franz Kline* (Chicago: The David and Alfred Smart Gallery, The University of Chicago, 1975).

83. Jane Livingston, *The New York School: Photographs 1936–1963* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, Inc. and Professional Imaging, Eastman Kodak Company, 1992).

84. Maria Morris Hambourg, et al., *Walker Evans* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art in association with Princeton University Press, 2000), 75.

85. Robert Goldwater, "Franz Kline: Darkness Made Visible," *Art News* vol. 66, no. 1 (March 1967), 40–43.

86. The most comprehensive exhibition of Kline's color abstractions was "Franz Kline Color Abstractions" (Washington, D.C.: The Phillips Collection, 1979). Harry Gaugh curated the exhibition and wrote the catalog essay.

87. In this respect, viewers are often misled by seeing Kline's works in black-and-white reproductions.

88. Peter Agostini in "Strokes of Genius: Franz Kline."

89. William Abernathy, *The Productivity Dilemma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1978, and Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The De-Industrialization of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

90. Lizbeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003).

Pages 102–106

1. Katharine Kuh, *The Artist's Voice: Talks with Seventeen Artists* (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1962), 153.
2. Irving Sandler, *A Sweeper-Up After Artists: A Memoir* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2003), 10.
3. Hubert Crehan, "Clyfford Still: Black Angel in Buffalo," *Art News*, December 1959, 59.
4. Thomas B. Hess, *Willem de Kooning* (New York: Braziller, 1959), p. 21.
5. Robert S. Mattison, *Franz Kline: Coal and Steel*, 79.
6. Ibid., 19.
7. Elaine de Kooning, *Franz Kline* (Washington, D.C.: Washington Gallery of Modern Art, 1962), 14.
8. Elaine de Kooning, "Two Americans in Action: Franz Kline/Mark Rothko," *Art News Annual*, No. 27, Part II (November 1957), 179.
9. Mattison, *Franz Kline*, 28.
10. Model trains were found in Kline's possessions that after his death were turned over the Archives of American Art. See Irving Sandler, *A Sweeper-Up After Artists*, 58.

11. Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 191.
12. Kuh, *The Artist's Voice*, 144.
13. "Our Country and Our Culture," *Partisan Review* (May–June 1952), 284.
14. I offer this interpretation of the possible relation of Abstract Expressionism to American Cold War politics as a riposte to commonly held view that the avant-garde artists were "Cold Warriors." In 1958 the first large survey of Abstract Expressionist painting was sent by the Museum of Modern Art to eight European museums. It established *The New American Painting*, as the show was titled, as the new global avant-garde, replacing the School of Paris. It never occurred to anyone at the time to relate Abstract Expressionist painting to America's role in the Cold War. However, beginning in 1973, during the Vietnam War, antiwar so-called revisionist historians, using the biases of their own time, revised earlier political and social interpretations of American avant-garde art. They conceived of Abstract Expressionism as the aesthetic counterpart of American foreign policy, even as a "weapon" in the cause of its alleged "cultural imperialism," a notion utterly alien to the artists themselves and their critics. According to the revisionists, American avant-garde art was supposed to have made the impact that it had abroad because it celebrated freedom and individualism in contrast to academic Socialist Realism dictated by Communist apparatchiks. This claim is creditable but not a further claim that the success of Abstract Expressionism was not the

result of its aesthetic innovations and quality but of its promotion by Cold War agencies. These assertions were made despite the fact that it was not until 1958, eleven years after the inception of the Cold War in 1947, that *The New American Painting* was sent to Europe, and this by the Museum of Modern Art and *not* by the United States government, which considered Abstract Expressionism a Communist conspiracy to undermine American institutions. Nonetheless, the view that Abstract Expressionism was the art of the Cold war is widely accepted today, even though there is absolutely no evidence of any complicity between Abstract Expressionism and American Cold War agencies, as I have demonstrated in detail in *Abstract Expressionism and the American Experience: A Reevaluation* (Lenox and New York: Hard Press Editions, 2009), ch. 5.

15. Like train production in the nineteenth century, automobile manufacture in the twentieth was the biggest and most important industry in itself while also stimulating many other businesses to supply its needs. Ford in 1914 and General Motors in the 1950s became models for new industrial methods and organization, just as the railroads had in the preceding century. Also, like the railroad, the automobile changed people's very perceptions of the world and fundamentally altered how they went about in the world. If the railroad transformed space and time, the car revolutionized family life.
16. Frank O'Hara, "Franz Kline Talking," *Evergreen Review* (Autumn 1958), reprinted in Frank O'Hara, *Standing Still and Walking in New York* (Bollinas, CA: Grey Fox Press, 1975), 94.



# EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

**Nude Self-Portrait, 1938**  
Ink and pencil on paper, 11¾ x 8⅝ inches. Collection of Michael Straus

**New York City Drawing, 1939–40**  
Pencil on paper, 6 x 7 inches. Private Collection

**Self Portrait in Studio Interior, 1940**  
Pen and ink; paper mounted on auxiliary paper support, 5⅝ x 4⅞ inches. Private Collection

**Washington Square, 1940**  
Oil on canvas; three-fold screen between glass, 71 x 22¾ inches (each section). Courtesy of Babcock Galleries, New York

**71 West 3rd Street, 1940**  
Oil on canvas, 17 x 21 inches. Private Collection

**Ninth Avenue Elevated RR Station at Christopher Street, 1940–41**  
Oil on board, 16 x 12 inches. Private Collection

**Below South Ferry, 1941**  
Oil on board, 20 x 16 inches. Private Collection

**Chief (train), 1942**  
Oil on canvas, 24 x 32 inches. Private Collection

**Street Scene Greenwich Village, 1943**  
Oil on canvas, 20¼ x 23⅞ inches. Courtesy of Babcock Galleries, New York

**Lehigh River, 1944**  
Oil on canvas, 20 x 26 inches. Private Collection

**Night Scene with Woodhouse, 1944**  
Woodcut on paper, 10 x 10 inches. Private Collection

**PA Landscape (Lehigh River), 1944**  
Oil on canvas, 6 x 12 inches. Private Collection

**Pennsylvania Landscape, 1944**  
Ink on paper, 8½ x 11½ inches. Private Collection

**Red Barn, ca. 1944**  
Oil on canvas, 14 x 17 inches. Private Collection

**Church (Our Lady of Pompeii), 1945**  
Ink on paper, 5⅞ x 3⅝ inches. Private Collection

**Landscape with Lehighton–Weissport Bridge, 1945**  
Pencil on paper, 7⅞ x 9 inches. Private Collection

**Railroad Station, 1945**  
Pencil, paper mounted on paper board, 7⅝ inches x 11⅝ inches. Private Collection

**Seated Woman, ca. 1945**  
Ink on gray toned paper board, 8⅞ x 5⅞ inches. Private Collection

**Untitled-Figures with Train, ca. 1945**  
Crayon, pastel & ink on paper, 2½ x 4½ inches. Private Collection

**Untitled-Locomotive, 1945–47**  
Ink double-sided on 2 ply illustration board, 3¼ x 4⅝ inches. Private Collection

**Elizabeth at Window, ca. 1946–1947**  
Brush and ink on card, 6 x 4¾ inches. Private Collection

**Four Studies, ca. 1946**  
Brush & ink and oil paint on paper, 7¼ x 7¼ inches. Private Collection

**Seated Woman, ca. 1946–1947**  
Ink on paper, 7½ x 6⅞ inches. Private Collection

**Self Portrait, 1946**  
Oil on canvas, 19 x 13 inches. Private Collection

**Studio Interior, 1946**  
Oil on canvas, 14½ x 17¼ inches. Private Collection

**Studio Interior, 1946**  
Oil on canvas, 17 x 14 inches. Private Collection

**Studio Interior, 1946**  
Oil on canvas, 18¼ x 16 inches. Private Collection

**Untitled (Study for Elizabeth at Table), 1946**  
Ink on paper, 4 x 4¾ inches. Private Collection

**Elizabeth at Table, 1947**  
Oil on canvas, 20 x 24 inches. Private Collection

**House with Porch, 1947**  
Ink on paper, 14 x 11 inches. Private Collection

**PA Street Scene (Pennsylvania Mining Town), 1947**  
Oil on canvas, 15 x 19 inches. Private Collection

**Seated Woman within a Drawn Square Border, ca. 1947**  
Ink on paper, 4⅞ x 5¼ inches. Private Collection

**Three Ink Studies-Seated Figures, ca. 1947**  
Ink on paper, left: 2¼ x 1½ inches; center: 2 ⅞ x 2 inches; right: 2⅞ x 1⅞ inches. Private Collection

**Untitled, 1947**  
Brush and black ink on wove paper, 17 ⅙ x 26 ⅞ inches. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Gift of Edward R. Broida (2005.142.24.a)

**Untitled, 1947**  
Oil on canvas, 28 x 35 inches. Allan Stone Collection, Courtesy of Allan Stone Gallery, New York

**Untitled–Interior with Table, ca. 1947**  
Ink on paper, 3⅞ x 4⅞ inches. Private Collection

**Abstract in Black, Blue, Pink and Yellow, 1948**  
Oil on canvas, 15 x 18 inches. Private Collection

**Chatham Square, ca.1948**  
Oil on canvas, 41 x 31 inches. Private Collection

**Chinatown, ca. 1948**  
Oil on board, 28 x 40½ inches. Private Collection

**Pennsylvania Landscape, 1948–49**  
Oil on canvas, 27½ x 34 inches. Private Collection

**Two Studies: Chatham Square, ca. 1948**  
Pencil and colored pencil on paper, 4½ x 2½ inches each. Private Collection

**Untitled, ca.1948**  
Ink on paper, 4¼ x 4¾ inches. Collection of Michael Straus

**Untitled, ca. 1948**  
Ink on paper, 5½ x 5⅞ inches. Private Collection

**Black and White, 1949**  
Oil on paper, 11 x 8¾ inches. Collection of Juliet and Michael Rubenstein

**Street Scene, 1949**  
Pen and ink wash, pencil on paper, 8½ x 11 inches. Collection of Spanierman Gallery, LLC

**Untitled, 1949**  
Oil on paper, 8½ x 7 inches. Allan Stone Collection, Courtesy of Allan Stone Gallery, New York

**Untitled, 1950s**  
Brush and black ink on wove paper, 9¼ x 6¾ inches. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Gift of Elisabeth R. Zogbaum (1998.112.5)

**Untitled, ca. 1950**  
Graphite on wove paper, 10⅞ x 8⅞ inches. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Gift of Rufus F. Zogbaum (1998.113.14)

**Untitled, 1950s**  
Oil and graphite on wove paper, 23⅜ x 26⅞ inches. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Gift of Elisabeth Ross Zogbaum (2006.67.3)

**Poem, from 21 Etchings and Poems Portfolio, 1951, published 1958**  
Franz Kline and Frank O'Hara  
Etching on Rives paper, 16¾ x 20 inches. Allentown Art Museum, The Grippe Collection, 2009 (2009.21.2.9)

**Untitled, ca. 1952**  
Ink on telephone book paper, 10¾ x 9 inches. Private Collection, Courtesy of McKee Gallery, New York

**Study for Cross Town, 1955**  
Oil on canvas, 18 x 24½ inches. Courtesy of Michael Klein Arts, NY

**Untitled, ca. 1955**  
Oil with paper collage on wove paper mounted to paperboard, 12⅝ x 9⅞ inches. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Gift of Edward R. Broida (2005.142.26)

**Untitled, 1957**  
Oil on paper mounted on board, 20¾ x 15½ inches. Allan Stone Collection, Courtesy of the Allan Stone Gallery, New York

**Drawing, September 1958**  
Ink on paper, 10½ x 13¾ inches. Collection of Juliet and Michael Rubenstein

**Painting with Color, 1958**  
Oil on paper mounted on canvas, 14¼ x 19¼ inches. Allan Stone Collection, Courtesy of the Allan Stone Gallery, New York

**Untitled, 1958**  
Oil on paper mounted on board, 11¼ x 15½ inches. Allan Stone Collection, Courtesy of the Allan Stone Gallery, New York

**Untitled, ca. 1958**  
Tempera on wove paper, 13⅞ x 16⅞ inches. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Gift of Rufus F. Zogbaum (1998.113.12)

**Untitled, ca. 1958**  
Oil on paper, 18⅞ x 23⅝ inches. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Gift of Elisabeth R. Zogbaum (1993.5.1)

**Turin, 1960**  
Oil on canvas, 80⅞ x 95½ inches. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri, Gift of Mrs. Alfred B. Clark through the Friends of Art, F61-23, Photo: Edward C. Robison III

**Untitled, ca. 1960**  
Oil on paperboard, 22⅞ x 21⅞ inches. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Gift of Elisabeth Ross Zogbaum ( 2006.67.4)

**Drawing for Corinthian II, 1961**  
Ink and gouache on paper, 15½ x 23¾ inches. Leonard and Stephanie Bernheim Collection

**Study for Caboose, 1961**  
Ink on board, 19¼ x 22 inches. Gift from the artist to Peter Agostini nos. 61, 62

**Untitled, 1961**  
Ink, pencil, and gouache on paper mounted on board, 19½ x 17 inches. Gift from the artist to Peter Agostini nos. 61, 62



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