

## Bendel Hydes & Abstract Expressionism



Jackson Pollock, *Drip Painting*, 1951



Bendel Hydes, *Interior*, 1989



Mark Rothko, *Yellow Over Purple*, 1956



Bendel Hydes, *Untitled*, 1988

***“What I am striving for is to discover new ways of seeing the world. What the untrained eye might see as abstraction is nothing but a new vehicle by which to represent reality” (Bendel Hydes)***

## The Artist

Bendel Hydes is known as Cayman's foremost contemporary artist. He was born in West Bay, Grand Cayman in 1952. Hydes studied art at Liverpool College of Art and Canterbury College in the UK and finished his studies at Clark University in the US, where he completed a degree in philosophy and political science.

Hydes has lived and worked in New York City since 1982 and participated in several important exhibitions there and in France, Brazil, London and Washington, D.C. His art is found in the collection of HRH Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh and several other public and private collections, including the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands and the Cayman Islands National Archive.

Whilst he began his career working in a realist or representational style, since the 1980s Hydes has worked with abstraction, creating paintings that are inspired by his Caymanian heritage, as well as European and American modern art movements such as Abstract Expressionism.

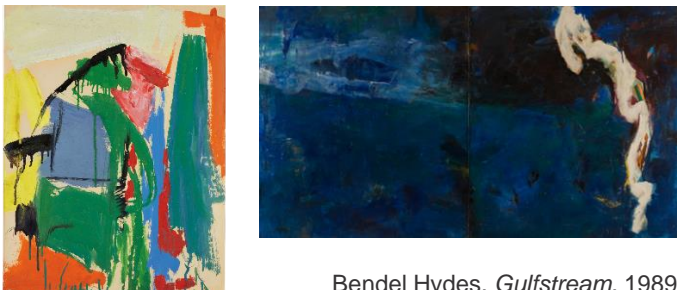


Jackson Pollock, *Blue Pools*, 1952

## Abstract Expressionism

Abstract art refers to the non-representational style of visual depiction that is less concerned with accurate rendering of visual reality and more so with colour and composition in their own right. Expressionism refers to an artistic style rooted in the subjective experiences of the artist. Expressionist art typically prioritises the emotions or inner feelings of the artist over the external world or the specific subject that is being depicted.

Abstract Expressionism was an American art movement that emerged in New York in the 1940s and which extended these concepts further, while also developing the idea of spontaneous creation associated with Surrealism—a European art movement that emphasised the creative possibilities inherent in exploring the subconscious and automatic (unrehearsed) techniques of production. Artists commonly associated with Abstract Expressionism include Clyfford Still, Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock and Barnett Newman.



Franz Kline, *Untitled*, 1954

Bendel Hydes, *Gulfstream*, 1989

## The Artwork

Bendel Hydes began exploring ideas and techniques associated with Abstract Expressionism after he moved to New York in the early 1980s—the city where that style first emerged. Hydes uses the technique of dripping or pouring paint in many of his works of this period, including *The Ledges* (1994), which is inspired by the painting style of Jackson Pollock. Hydes also uses simplified blocks of paint in many of his abstract works of the 1990s, which are similar to Mark Rothko's paintings of the 1950s that employ contrasting rectangular fields of colour.



Bendel Hydes, *The Ledges*, 1994

Mark Rothko, *White Center Painting*, 1950

## Discussion

- What do Bendel Hydes' paintings make you think of? How do they make you feel? Do the titles give you an idea about the meaning of each painting?
- Do you prefer work that has an idea behind it? Is your own art more about the image you produce or the idea behind it?
- The sea features in Hydes work because of his childhood in Cayman and his family's connection to maritime culture. What things in your life influence what you like to paint?

## Making Comparisons

- Look at the work of other Abstract and Expressionist painters such as Pollock and Newman. How is their work similar to, and different from, the work of Bendel Hydes?

<https://www.moma.org/artists/4285>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jackson\\_Pollock](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jackson_Pollock)

## Follow Up Activities

- Look at the Bendel Hydes paintings that are on display at the National Gallery. Can you identify works that are similar in style to paintings by well-known Abstract Expressionist artists? What are some of the traits they have in common?
- Can you create your own artwork using some of the techniques that were common in Abstract Expressionism and which influenced artists like Bendel Hydes? Think about dripping or pouring paint and adopting a more spontaneous approach. Try and channel your feelings and emotions through your choice of colours as well.