

**PRINCIPAL**

Janet Lehr

Estab. 1972



**NEW YORK CITY**

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**FRANZ KLINE**

(May 23, 1910, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania -May 13, 1962, New York City, New York)



*Queen of Hearts*, 1960

Mixed paint on canvas

240 x 210 inches (609.6 x 533.4 cm); 20 x 18 feet.

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Provenance:

Gallery Maeght, 1978  
Lang and O'Hara Gallery, NY  
Private Collection, USA

Exhibited:

1960 Queen of Hearts is performed in front of a backdrop painted by Franz Kline  
1979-1981, National Gallery, Washington, D.C.

"Art and Dance," November 9 - January 8, 1983, Institute of Contemporary Art,  
Boston. Exhibition travelled to the Toledo, Ohio, Museum of Art, March 6 - April  
24, 1983; The Neuberger Museum, Purchase NY; The Fort Lauderdale Museum  
of Art, 1987 - 1988.

IBM Building, New York.

May 1989 displayed at Apollo Theater, NY.

Literature:

ArtNews, Varsari Diary by Barbara Mac Adam, "Kline Plays the Apollo,"  
September, 1989, p. 15.

Franz Kline: Art and the Structure of Identity, 1994, "Paints his largest work,  
[Queen of Hearts] a backdrop for dancer Merle Marsciano's performance at  
Hunter College Playhouse, a performance for which Jeanne Bultman designed  
the costumes.

"Franz Kline's third solo exhibition at the Sidney Janis Gallery. Queen of Hearts  
is performed in front of a backdrop painted by Franz Kline."

[http://www.warholstars.org/abstractexpressionism/timeline/abstract\\_expressionism\\_4.html](http://www.warholstars.org/abstractexpressionism/timeline/abstract_expressionism_4.html)

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Fundació Antoni Tàpies catalogue, p. 173. (March 18th 1994 at the Museum in Barcelona to London, Madrid, and ended in Berlin February 5th 1995. Curated by Stephen Foster.)

**The full entry for 1960 on p.173 reads: Third solo show at Sidney Janis Gallery. Exhibits one of his most ambitious works to date, the large wall picture *New Year's Wall: Night*. Paints his largest work, [Queen of Hearts] a backdrop for dancer Merle Marsicano's performance at Hunter College Playhouse. Ten paintings included in the XXX Venice Biennale."**

Franz Kline, by Harry F. Gaugh, 1985 (pub. Abbeville Press NY), "Paints a backdrop for Queen of Hearts a dance performed by Merle Marsciano at Hunter College Playhouse, March 23; this is the largest painting that Kline ever does: 20 x 18 feet. Kline selects one of his earlier drawings from a telephone-book page as the "model sketch." p. 180. He complies with Merle Marsciano's request and puts a single slash of red paint through the center of the painting.



**KLINE FRANZ**

**Queen of Hearts**

**Oil on Canvas 1960 20x 18 feet 240 x 210 inches 609.6 x 533.4 cm**

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**Franz Jozef Kline** (May 23 1910 – May 13 1962) was an American painter mainly associated with the Abstract Expressionist movement centered around New York in the 1940s and 1950s. He was born in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, attended Girard College, an academy for fatherless boys, attended Boston University, spent summers from 1956-62 painting in Provincetown, MA, and died in New York City of a rheumatic heart disease. He was married to Elizabeth Vincent Parsons, a British ballet dancer whose life was blighted by mental illness. Elizabeth Zogbaum was his long time companion, and later, his executrix.

As with Jackson Pollock and other Abstract Expressionists, he was labeled an "action painter" because of his seemingly spontaneous and intense style, focusing less, or not at all, on figures or imagery, but on the actual brush strokes and use of canvas. Spontaneity in art is a relative term. Kline's mature abstract works, are an example of, "spontaneity is practiced". He would prepare many draft sketches – notably, commonly on telephone book pages – before going onto execute his "spontaneous" painting.

Kline's best known abstract expressionist paintings are in black and white. Kline re-introduced color into his paintings around 1955, though he used color more consistently after 1959. Kline's paintings are deceptively subtle. While generally his paintings have a dynamic, spontaneous and dramatic impact, Kline often closely referred to his compositional drawings. Kline carefully rendered many of his most complex pictures from studies.

Kline's most recognizable method/style derives from a suggestion made to him by his friend Willem De Kooning. In 1948, de Kooning suggested to an artistically frustrated Kline, to bring in a sketch and project it with a Bell Opticon opaque projector he had at his studio. Kline described the projection as such:

"A four by five inch black drawing of a rocking chair...loomed in gigantic black strokes which eradicated any image, the strokes expanding as entities in themselves, unrelated to any entity but that of their own existence."

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Kline created paintings in the style of what he saw that day throughout the remainder of his life. They were first exhibited in 1950, at an exhibition at the Charles Egan Gallery, New York City.

Stephen C Foster writes in the notes for, "*Franz Kline: Art and the Structure of Identity*": One of the foremost representatives of Abstract Expressionism, the North American painter Franz Kline (1910-1962). With this exhibition the Fundació tried to reinstate the true value of the work of Kline, to contextualize its artistic project and to facilitate the public's access to its actual historical significance. The seventy works on show cover the period between 1947 and 1962, that is, the whole of the artist's mature phase until his death.

Bearing in mind that this is a relatively short period, that Kline's work is scattered among a considerable number of collections and that the paintings are extremely fragile, the exhibition, "*Franz Kline: Art and the Structure of Identity*", can be considered one of the most important ever dedicated to this creator.

The exhibition tried to reflect, on the one hand, the internal structure of Kline's pictorial corpus and, on the other, the articulation of a dialogue between the works and the problems the painter has to face throughout the creative process. The show included paintings both the so-called "black and white" paintings and the colour ones; however, no works were chosen from the early period, since they are academic in character, considered minor and non embryonic of Kline's mature output. The aim of the retrospective was to dispel the preconceived notion that Kline painted only in black and white and that, when he used colour, this was a simple addition to a black and white base. The artist himself was clear on this issue.

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"I don't think about adding color. I merely want to feel free to paint in color, or in black and white. I painted originally in color and finally arrived at black and white by painting the color out. Then I started with only color, white and no black -then color and black and white. I'm not necessarily after the same thing with these different combinations, for, though some people say that black and white is color, for me color is different. In other words, an area of strong blue or the interrelationship of two different colors is not the same thing as black and white. In using color, I never feel I want to add to or decorate a black and white painting. I simply want to feel free to work both ways. And because someone uses pink, yellow, and red doesn't necessarily make him a colorist."

Kline's painting reveals a distance from that of the rest of the Abstract Expressionists, although it also makes evident that a series of mutual influences existed between his work and that of other members of the group. Thus, the oeuvre of Franz Kline cannot be understood without the existence of Jackson Pollock and, above all, Willem de Kooning. Furthermore, the group acted as such, that is, its members shared friendship, ideals and styles, on the one hand, and New York's downtown on the other, with the mythical Cedar Tavern in University Place as their "centre of operations".

The exhibition wanted to contribute to the debate, posed some years ago, on the validity of the methodology and the critical and historiographical criteria applied to the study of Abstract Expressionism in particular and to the artistic phenomenon in general. Beyond these considerations, however, the exhibition dedicated to Franz Kline provided the opportunity to contemplate, for the first time in Spain, an oeuvre of great beauty, tense, subtle and, on occasions, poignant.

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The exhibition is accompanied by a profusely illustrated book-catalogue with an introduction by Manuel J. Borja-Villel, Director of the Museum of the Fundació Antoni Tàpies, an essay by Stephen C. Foster, the exhibition curator, and texts by Bill Berkson, Frank O'Hara and B.H. Friedman.

Until the Willem de Kooning retrospective Fall 2011 at MOMA, heroic scale canvases have rarely been shown. To find two in the space of a single year is an exciting footnote to the era of classic Abstract Expressionist art.

**RECENT FRANZ KLINE AUCTION SALES:**



[Full details](#)



1

Title

Description

Medium

Year of Work

Size

Misc.

Sale of

Estimate

Sold For

**Franz Kline**

Untitled

Franz Kline (1910-1962) Untitled signed twice and dated twice 'FRANZ KLINE '57' (on [More ...](#)

oil on canvas

1957

Height 79 in.; Width 110.4 in. / Height 200.7 cm.; Width 280.4 cm.

Signed

Christie's New York: Wednesday, November 14, 2012 [Lot 00017]

Post-War & Contemporary Evening Sale

20,000,000 - 30,000,000 USD

40,402,500 USD Premium [Currency Converter](#)



[Full details](#)



2

Title

Description

Medium

Year of Work

Size

Misc.

Sale of

**Franz Kline**

King Oliver

signed and dated 'FRANZ KLINE '58' (on the reverse) oil on canvas 99 x 77 1/2 in. (25 [More ...](#)

oil on canvas

1958

Height 99 in.; Width 77.5 in. / Height 251.4 cm.; Width 196.8 cm.

Signed

Christie's New York: Wednesday, November 12, 2014 [Lot

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00023]  
Post-War & Contemporary Art Evening Sale  
Estimate 25,000,000 - 35,000,000 USD  
Sold For 26,485,000 USD Premium [Currency Converter](#)



[Full details](#)



3

**Franz Kline**  
Title De Medici  
Description Franz Kline (1910-1962)De Medicisigned and dated 'FRANZ KLINE -56' (on the reverse [More ...](#))  
Medium oil on canvas  
Year of Work 1956  
Size Height 82.5 in.; Width 114.5 in. / Height 209.6 cm.; Width 290.8 cm.  
Misc. Signed  
Sale of Christie's New York: Wednesday, November 14, 2012 [Lot 00026]  
Post-War & Contemporary Evening Sale  
Estimate 5,000,000 - 7,000,000 USD  
Sold For 11,058,500 USD Premium [Currency Converter](#)



[Full details](#)



4

**Franz Kline**  
Title Shenandoah  
Description signed and dated 56 on the reverseoil on canvas[More ...](#)  
Medium oil on canvas  
Year of Work 1956  
Size Height 57 in.; Width 81 in. / Height 144.8 cm.; Width 205.7 cm.  
Misc. Signed  
Sale of Sotheby's New York: Tuesday, November 13, 2012 [Lot 00008]  
Contemporary Art Evening Auction  
Estimate 6,500,000 - 8,500,000 USD  
Sold For 9,322,500 USD Premium [Currency Converter](#)



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5

Title  
Description  
Medium  
Year of Work  
Size  
Misc.  
Sale of

**Franz Kline**

Untitled  
Franz Kline (1910-1962) Untitled signed and incorrectly dated 'FRANZ KLINE '54' (on [More ...](#))  
oil on canvas  
1955  
Height 52 in.; Width 37 in. / Height 132.1 cm.; Width 94 cm.  
Signed  
Christie's New York: Wednesday, November 14, 2012 [Lot 00021]  
Post-War & Contemporary Evening Sale  
Estimate 3,500,000 - 4,500,000 USD  
Sold For 6,466,500 USD Premium [Currency Converter](#)



[Full details](#)

6

Title  
Medium  
Year of Work  
Size  
Misc.  
Sale of  
Estimate  
Sold For

**Franz Kline**

Crow dancer  
oil on canvas  
1958  
Height 78 in.; Width 69 in. / Height 198.1 cm.; Width 175.3 cm.  
Signed  
Christie's New York: Wednesday, May 11, 2005 [Lot 00016]  
Post-War and Contemporary Art (Evening Sale)  
Estimate 4,000,000 - 6,000,000 USD  
Sold For 6,400,000 USD Premium [Currency Converter](#)



[Full details](#)

7

Title  
Medium  
Year of Work  
Size  
Sale of  
Estimate  
Sold For

**Franz Kline**

Painting in black and white and color (Washington wall)  
oil on canvas  
1959  
Height 43.1 in.; Width 175 in. / Height 109.5 cm.; Width 444.5 cm.  
Christie's New York: Tuesday, November 8, 2005 [Lot 00038]  
Post-War and Contemporary Art  
Estimate 2,500,000 - 4,000,000 USD  
Sold For 5,448,000 USD Premium [Currency Converter](#)

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8

Title  
Description

Medium  
Year of Work

Size

Misc.

Sale of

Estimate

Sold For

**Franz Kline**

Mars black and white

Franz Kline (1910-1962) Mars Black and White signed and titled 'FRANZ KLINE MARS BLA

[More ...](#)

oil on canvas

1959

Height 82 in.; Width 55.1 in. / Height 208.3 cm.; Width 140 cm.

Signed, Inscribed

Christie's New York: Wednesday, November 12, 2008 [Lot 00037]

PostWar & Contemporary Evening Sale

4,000,000 - 6,000,000 USD

5,122,500 USD Premium [Currency Converter](#)



[Full details](#)



9

Title  
Medium  
Year of Work

Size

Misc.

Sale of

Estimate

Sold For

**Franz Kline**

Ninth Street

Oil on Canvas

1951-1951

Height 60 in.; Width 78 in. / Height 152.4 cm.; Width 198.1 cm.

Signed

Sotheby's New York: Tuesday, November 12, 2002 [Lot 00013]  
Contemporary Art: A Private American Collection

4,000,000 - 6,000,000 USD

4,519,500 USD Premium [Currency Converter](#)



[Full details](#)



10

Title  
Medium  
Year of Work

Size

Misc.

Sale of

Estimate

Sold For

**Franz Kline**

Harley red

oil on canvas

1959-1960

Height 82 in.; Width 67 in. / Height 208.2 cm.; Width 170.2 cm.

Signed

Sotheby's New York: Wednesday, November 9, 2005 [Lot 00025]

Contemporary Art / Evening

2,500,000 - 3,500,000 USD

3,488,000 USD Premium [Currency Converter](#)