

**Bare Bones Paper on a Work of Art**

prepared by:

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Title

Code Blue

Accession No.

Artist

Helen Frankenthaler

Type of work

acrylic  
on canvas

Brief Biography of artist:

She was born in 1928 in New York City. She was an abstract painter who in 1950 met and worked with other abstract painters in NY: David Smith, Jackson Pollock, Lee Krasner & Willem de Kooning. In 1958 she married another abstract painter, Robert Motherwell.

Background Information and facts to bring out:

HF is an abstract expressionist, which is a school that developed after WW II perhaps in response to the bloody horror of war. This style is "non-representational" and combines abstract form with emotional value. This style was developed in NY and the paintings are typically bold, forceful and large in scale. Helen F. worked on the floor of her studio using brushes, mops, brooms & buckets.

Formal Qualities (art elements &amp; design principles) observed in the work:

Unpainted canvas has a "stained" effect because the paint soaks into the canvas rather than laying on top. It is interesting to examine and conjecture about how she applied the various colors. There is a balance here between forceful and calm achieved by her use of color and paint application.

Expressive Qualities felt in the work:

In the 1980's when this painting was done her work generally reflected a calm serenity. There is still strength and boldness felt especially with the thickly applied blue painting across the top and down the left hand side which the artist has made no effort to smooth. This is contrasted with the soothing flat blue green color which predominates.

Questions to ask:

Compare the canvas which is unpainted. Compare it to the canvas to "Americana" which has been gessed. What do you notice about how the paint was applied? Where is the paint applied thickly? Thinly? What do you think the artist used to apply the paint? What do you think the artist was feeling when she painted this? What does this work remind you of?

Using the work in a tour:

Code Blue could be compared with two other Abstract Expressionist works owned by the KIA: Red Cragon by Franz Kline and the sculpture Yellow Stone Sage by Peter Voulkas. The use of paint (heavy & light) could be compared in the two works, and all three could be