

WU?[@]therep

RED

by John Logan

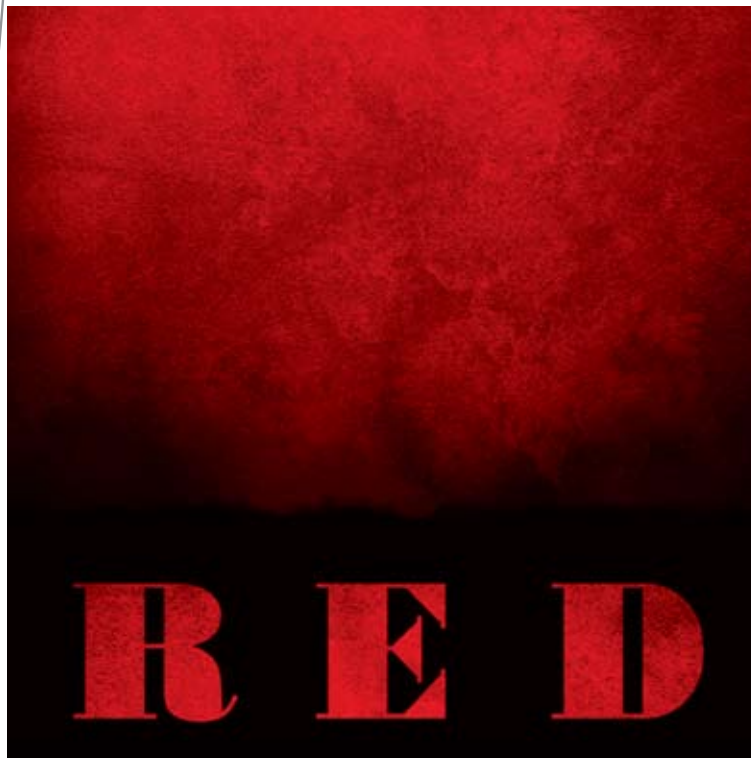
Directed by Steven Woolf

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At The Rep, we know that life moves fast—okay, really fast. But we also know that some things are worth slowing down

for. We believe that live theatre is one of those pit stops worth making and are excited that you are going to stop by for a show. To help you get the most bang for your buck, we have put together **WU? @ THE REP**—an IM guide that will give you everything you need to know to get at the top of your theatergoing game—fast. You'll find character descriptions (**A/S/L**), a plot summary (**FYI**), biographical information (**F&F**), historical context (**B4U**), and other bits and pieces (**HTH**). Most importantly, we'll have some ideas about what this all means **IRL**, anyway.

CU@therep!



The Teacher's Lounge

In an effort to make our educational materials accessible to students and easy for educators to incorporate into the classroom, our study guide is written in a student-oriented format. We hope that you will circulate this guide among your students in the weeks preceding your visit to The Rep, encouraging them to browse it before and after class and as time allows, using it as a launch point for both pre- and post-performance discussions. You may also want to visit our website, www.repstl.org, for additional information including educational games, activity suggestions and behind-the-scenes information. Any materials, either from this guide or from our website may be reproduced for use in the classroom. As always, we appreciate your making live theatre a part of your classroom experience and welcome your feedback and questions.

NEATO!

Show Me Standards: CA 2, 3, 5; FA 2, 3, 4, 5; SS 2, 6
and Illinois Learning Standards: 1, 2, 5, 16, 25, 27.

WELCOME!

The desire to learn, insatiable when awakened, can sometimes lie dormant until touched by the right teacher or the right experience. We at The Rep are grateful to have the opportunity to play a role supporting you as you awaken the desire for learning in your students.

At first glance, *Red* is about Mark Rothko, the Seagram Mural commission and appreciating art. But as your students watch, they will find it is about how we engage in life. Rothko was a strong proponent of "enlightenment" or in-depth learning. In this play he argues not for learning just history and facts but also exploring those things that help us interpret the world. It is not enough to know about an event, we must feel something about it and understand why we feel that way. (Rothko was clearly onto the issue of IQ versus CQ years before it went mainstream.) Additionally, *Red* asks your students to think about the issue of practicality versus one's principles. Mark Rothko and this play will encourage your students to go beyond what they know and to decide what they think.

It would be a good idea to take a minute on the bus to give your students these quick theatre etiquette reminders:

- This show has an intermission; there will be time for bathroom breaks before the show and partway through.
- The actors can hear the audience and appreciate the laughter, gasps and quiet attention to action. However, talking, moving around and eating is very distracting to others and can dampen the energy of what is happening on stage.
- Pictures, phone calls and texting are not allowed at any time during the performance.

Like Rothko's art, live theatre won't allow your students to take a passive role—they must work with us to create the experience which takes the learning deeper. Our unique ability to fuse words and images onstage allows your students to explore new ideas as well as excites their imaginations. We will do our part so your students will be stirred to understandings and self-awareness while delving into new and familiar worlds. You are doing your part by using The Rep to extend your intellectual and aesthetic curriculum. Thank you!

Marsha

Marsha Coplon
Director of Education

A/S/L

MARK ROTHKO is an eccentric, celebrated painter in his 50s who specializes in Abstract Expressionism. He is incredibly intelligent, confident and intolerant of ignorance, making him a powerful and intimidating presence (especially when the conversation turns toward art, which it always does!).

Rothko's new assistant, KEN, is an eager student of the successful painter. An aspiring artist himself, Ken is a quick study of Rothko's lessons. But there's more than meets the eye with this 20-something, as he seems to be hiding a dark past behind his pursuit of "red."

R/B/T/L

EDUCATION/CRITICAL THINKING

Rothko is clearly a strong advocate for enlightenment, as he continually harps on Ken to be better informed. He doesn't want Ken to simply study art history, but rather to study a variety of disciplines that should inform his work on canvas. But Rothko isn't interested in mere silent scholarship, as he pushes Ken even harder to critically analyze art and more deeply assess how he feels and why. Simply saying "I like it" is not a good answer when Rothko asks Ken what he thinks of a painting. The next time someone asks you about a piece of art, try and consider what about the piece is interesting, engaging, moving and thought-provoking instead of thoughtlessly replying, "I like it," like Ken.

DEFINING MOMENTS

In spite of his high ideals on art, Rothko accepts the Seagram Mural project (and the large paycheck for the work). While in the end Rothko ends up honoring his own ideals by giving back the money and refusing to complete the job, he spends much of the play justifying the commission to both Ken and himself. In a pivotal moment in the play—a defining moment for Rothko—he clearly sees that the Seagram Murals will end up being mere wall décor for a luxury restaurant, not the spiritual experience that he intends. When it counts, Rothko sticks to his principles and holds true to his larger artistic mission in spite of the opportunity to sell out. Defining moments aren't just limited to dramatic characters, and we can learn from Rothko by always remembering to do what's right (even if, like Rothko, we've already made an error in judgment).



RED IS SET in Mark Rothko's studio in New York City, an old gymnasium splattered and stained with hues of dark red paint. The action of the play spans approximately 1958-1959, and while Rothko and Ken may venture into stories that take place off stage, the play never strays from the confines of the sealed studio.

AS THE PLAY OPENS, Rothko is surveying his most recent project, the Seagram Mural paintings (a monumental commission in which Rothko will paint murals for the Seagram Building's restaurant—the Four Seasons—for approximately \$35,000 or \$2.5 million in today's money). As his new assistant, Ken, reports to work for the first time, Rothko asks Ken "What do you see?"

KEN'S RESPONSES aren't quite good enough for Rothko. In the scene that ensues, Rothko berates his fresh employee for not having more discernment and elevation of taste. This young assistant has a lot to learn about the integrity, depth, history and virtue of art.

MONTHS PASS, and Ken seems to be acclimating quite well. He is even beginning to understand Rothko's work. His paintings are about feeling, movement, illumination, tension and time. They aren't merely representational pictures that are static—the work is dynamic and demands active participation of the viewer. Because of this interactive quality, much of Rothko's time is spent speaking with the art (or letting the art speak to him), much to Ken's chagrin.

IN ONE such moment—when a painting is revealing itself to Rothko, revealing what it needs to be complete—Ken pipes in with his thoughts. As Rothko lays into Ken for interrupting his process, the two together find the true depth of "red." The color is so much more than mere color, it's a series of physical entities, emotions and ideas. So is Rothko's greatest fear, however—black. But what does it really mean?

IN A LATER attempt to impress Rothko, Ken analyzes Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*.

He mistakenly presumes that Rothko is one of Nietzsche's types—Apollonian (order, method and boundary) while contemporary Jackson Pollack is the other type, Dionysian (wild, rebellious, drunken and unrestrained). Rothko quickly corrects Ken's metaphor, however, by noting that his own work is an attempt at striking a balance between the two types. The dynamic nature of his work lies in the pulsation between order and chaos, form and emotion. His paintings (much like Ancient Greek tragedy was to Nietzsche) are attempts to represent the perfection of human existence. That is why the paintings are not mere collectibles, decorations or symbols of social status. The paintings are reminders of the true tragedy of our existence (in Rothko's eyes)—that we as humans can never truly strike this balance between order and chaos.

IT BECOMES apparent that Rothko is in the twilight of his career when one day he returns to the studio ranting and raving about how the Pop Artists, Minimalists and Neo-Dadaists are all trying to kill him. He finds their work irreverent and unsubstantial, and he can't believe the young upstarts are trying to snuff him out. Ken reminds Rothko of his earlier pride in crushing the Cubist movement. The argument leads to a revelation about Rothko's latest commission—that he is selling out to Seagram instead of standing for the integrity, depth, history and virtue of his work.

KEN CALLS ROTHKO on his grandstanding—this isn't a Michelangelo masterpiece that will become a sacred temple of art. This is the Four Seasons restaurant, a place where rich socialites will ignore the ambiance. Though he expects to be fired for his audacity, Rothko instead responds, "Fired? ... This is the first time you've existed."

IN THE END, Rothko rejects the Seagram commission and returns the money. He also releases Ken, pushing him to go out in the world and make his own work.





PULSATE: expand and contract with strong, regular movements; also quiver with excitement

PERIPHERAL: of secondary or minor importance; marginal

EMPATHETIC: possessing the ability to understand and share the feelings of another

DISCERNMENT: the ability to judge well

POIGNANT: evoking a deep sense of sadness or regret; keenly felt

PANOPLY: a complete or impressive collection of things

PENTIMENTO: a visible trace of earlier painting beneath a layer or layers of paint on a canvas

LUMINESCENCE: the low-temperature emission of light by chemical or physiological process

COGNITION: the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding

DISQUIETED: a feeling of anxiety or worry

FRIEZE: a broad horizontal band of sculpted or painted decoration, especially on a wall near the ceiling

INEXORABLE: impossible to stop or prevent

CHARLATAN: a person falsely claiming to have special knowledge or skill; a fraud

SUPERFLUOUS: unnecessary, especially through being more than enough

AUDACIOUS: showing a willingness to take surprisingly bold risks, also showing an impudent lack of respect

ABUT: touch or lean upon

FLUX: a continuous flow or movement

PAEAN: a thing that expresses enthusiastic praise

BIOLUMINESCENT: the biochemical emission of light by living organisms such as fireflies and deep-sea fishes

EFFULGENCE: radiant splendor; brilliance

ENIGMATIC: difficult to interpret or understand; mysterious

MULTIFARIOUS: having many varied parts or aspects

SYMBIOSIS: a mutually beneficial relationship between two different entities

DISSONANCE: lack of harmony

EPHEMERAL: lasting for a very short time

BOHEMIAN: a person who has informal and unconventional social habits, especially an artist or writer

MALEVOLENT: having or showing a wish to do evil to others

CHROMATIC: of, relating to, or produced by color; highly colored

ANTHROPOMORPHIZING: the attribution of human characteristics or behavior to a god, animal or object

DECLENSION: a condition of decline or moral deterioration

UBIQUITOUS: present, appearing or found everywhere

PROSAIC: commonplace; unromantic

ARRIVISTE: an ambitious or ruthlessly self-seeking person, especially one who has recently acquired wealth or social status

ZEITGEIST: the defining spirit or mood of a particular period of history as shown by the ideals and beliefs of the time

FUTILITY: pointlessness or uselessness

SOLIPSISTIC: pertaining to the theory that the self is all that can be known to exist

HERMETIC: complete and airtight; insulated or protected from outside influences

SALIENT: most noticeable or important

CAPRICIOUS: given to sudden or unaccountable changes in mood or behavior



ROTHKO's V.I.Ps

Just as Rothko remarks early in the play, "You cannot be an artist until you are civilized. You cannot be civilized until you learn." Clearly, you better get to know the people below!

REMBRANDT – (Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn) Dutch painter associated the Dutch Golden Age and Baroque movements, perhaps best known for his portraits.

TURNER – (J.M.W. Turner) English painter associated with Romanticism, most famously known as a landscape painter.

MICHELANGELO – (Michelangelo Buonarroti) Italian sculptor, painter, architect and poet, served as a leading figure in the High Renaissance.

MATISSE – (Henri Matisse) French painter and sculptor associated with the Fauvists, known for his use of nonnaturalistic color.

POLLOCK – (Jackson Pollock) American painter associated with Abstract Expressionism.

PICASSO – (Pablo Picasso) Spanish painter, sculptor and graphic artist, known for his avant-garde style and for developing Cubism.

NIETZSCHE – (Friedrich Nietzsche) German philosopher whose revolutionary ideas on morals and the individual helped shape modern Existentialism, Nihilism and Postmodernism. He is best known for arguing against Christianity's compassion for the weak, exalting the "will to power," and formulating the idea of Übermensch (superman), who can rise above the restrictions of ordinary morality. In his book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, he explores classic Greek tragedy and its ability to capture meaning and the human condition.

FREUD – (Sigmund Freud) Austrian neurologist and psychotherapist who founded psychoanalysis as both a theory of personality and a therapeutic practice. He proposed the existence of an unconscious element in the mind that influences consciousness.

JUNG – (Carl Jung) Swiss psychologist who originated the concept of introvert and extrovert personality and the four psychological functions of sensation, intuition, thinking and feeling.

BYRON – (Lord Byron) English poet whose work exerted considerable influence on the Romantic movement. He is perhaps best known for "Don Juan."

WORDSWORTH – (William Wordsworth) English poet whose collection of poems "Lyrical Ballads" (composed with Samuel Coleridge) was a landmark in Romanticism. He was Britain's Poet Laureate from 1843 to 1850.

AESCHYLUS – Ancient Greek dramatist best known for his trilogy *The Orestia*, consisting of the tragedies *Agamemnon*, *Choephoroe* and *Eumenides*. He is also credited with expanding the number of characters in plays to allow for conflict among them, as previously characters had only interacted with the chorus.

TURGENEV – (Ivan Turgenev) Russian novelist, playwright and short-story writer whose work (most famously his novel *Fathers and Sons*) examines the lives of individuals to illuminate the larger social, political and philosophical issues of the day.

SOPHOCLES – Ancient Greek playwright known for the complexity of plot, depth of character, and examination of the relationship between mortals and the divine order. He is best known for *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*.

SEE FOR YOURSELF

Want to get a look at some of these artists' work?

Check out the comprehensive online art database at artcyclopedia.com.

SCHOPENHAUER – (Arthur Schopenhauer) German philosopher known for his work *The World as Will and Idea*, which states the will is identified with ultimate reality and happiness is only achieved by rejecting the will.

DALI – (Salvador Dalí) Spanish painter of the Surrealist movement best known for portraying images with almost photographic realism against backgrounds of arid Catalan landscapes.

DE KOONING – (Willem de Kooning) US painter born in the Netherlands on the leading edge of Abstract Expressionism. He usually retained figurative elements in his work, either represented or merely hinted at.

NEWMAN – (Barnett Newman) An important figure in color-field painting, he juxtaposed large blocks of uniform color with narrow marginal strips of contrasting color. While often associated with the Abstract Expressionist movement, he is also tied to the Abstraction and Minimalist movements.

MANET – (Édouard Manet) French painter who adopted a Realist approach that greatly influenced the Impressionists, using pure color to give a direct unsentimental effect.

VELAZQUEZ – (Diego Velázquez) Spanish painter who was the leading artist in the court of King Philip IV, associated with the Baroque movement and most famous for his portraits.

YEATS – (William Butler Yeats) Irish poet and playwright often credited for stimulating Ireland's theatrical, cultural and literary revival. He is perhaps best known for his poem "Sailing to Byzantium."

CARAVAGGIO – (Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio) Italian painter influential in the transition from late Mannerism to Baroque. His paintings combine a realistic observation of the human state (both physical and emotional) with a dramatic use of lighting.

VAN GOGH – (Vincent van Gogh) Dutch painter best known for his Post-Impressionist work. Suffering from severe depression, he cut off part of his own ear and eventually committed suicide.

JOHNS – (Jasper Johns) US painter, sculptor and print maker. A key figure in the development of Pop Art, he depicted commonplace and universally recognized images.

STELLA – (Frank Stella) US painter, an important figure in Minimalism known for his series of all-black paintings.

RAUSCHENBERG – (Robert Rauschenberg) US artist who incorporated three-dimensional objects such as nails, rags and bottles into his paintings, associated with the Neo-Dada movement.

LICHTENSTEIN – (Roy Lichtenstein) US painter and sculptor on the leading edge of Pop Art, known for paintings inspired by comic strips.

WARHOL – (Andy Warhol) US painter, graphic artist and filmmaker. Also a major figure in the Pop Art movement, he achieved fame for a series of silkscreen prints and acrylic paintings of familiar objects (such as Campbell's soup cans) and famous people (like Marilyn Monroe) that are treated with objectivity and precision.

BRUEGEL – (Pieter Bruegel the Elder) Flemish painter known for his landscapes and peasant scenes. He is associated with the Dutch and Flemish Renaissance.

VERMEER – (Jan Vermeer) Dutch painter known for painting domestic genre scenes with clear design and simple form, associated with the Dutch Golden Age and Baroque movements.





MARK ROTHKO (given name Marcus Rothkowitz) is often considered a dark, brilliant, enigmatic man and artist. But where did all of his passion, drive and creativity come from?

FROM THE BEGINNING, Rothko had a taste for the dark and dramatic. He was born on September 25, 1903 in what was then Dvinsk, Vitebsk Province, which was part of the Russian Empire (or present day Daugavpils, Latvia). This was a land and time rife with conflict, which would eventually boil over into civil war in 1917. As Jews, the Rothkowitz family was particularly vulnerable to the larger Czarist Russian anti-Semitism (Russification, or the forced assimilation of Russian language and culture by non-Russian communities, was commonplace). While Dvinsk was a relatively safe area, the Russian Empire was generally volatile and there was always an underlying fear of this racism for Mark growing up. The family wouldn't escape the turmoil until they immigrated to the United States in 1913.

THIS TENSION did not inhibit Rothko's personal growth, however, as he quickly demonstrated a great deal of intelligence and potential. This pleased his father, Jacob Rothkowitz (a pharmacist and intellectual), who would have it no other way. By age 17, Rothko could fluently speak four languages (Russian, Yiddish, Hebrew and English), he graduated high school with all honors (after skipping from third grade to fifth earlier on in school), and he capped off his academic excellence by obtaining a scholarship to attend Yale University.

ROTHKO DIDN'T STAY at Yale long, however, as he felt racism and elitism plagued the institution. After dropping out, he moved to New York City and found work in the garment district. He "stumbled upon" art in 1923 while visiting a friend at the Art Students League of New York, where he observed students sketching a model. Rothko

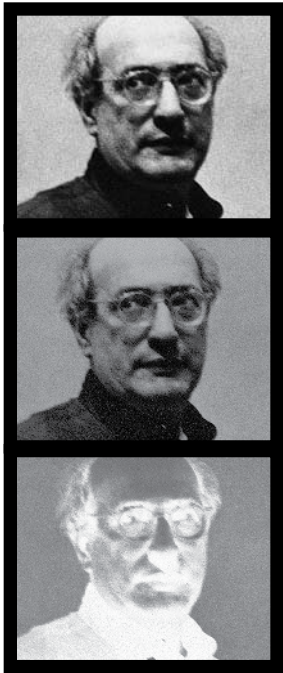
himself cites this as the moment he became an artist.

HE DIDN'T immediately catapult to fame, fortune and the top of his craft, though. In fact, he didn't really stick with it very long (to start, anyways). Shortly after his visit in 1923, Rothko was bitten by the theatre bug and gave acting a try. His stint on stage didn't last long, however, and soon he was back at painting. He took several classes at New School of Design and with the Art Students League of New York, through which he found art to be so much more than oil on canvas. He saw art to be a tool to express depth, emotion and spirituality.

BY THE MID-1930S, Rothko had several exhibitions under his belt and was beginning to develop his trademark style. While his early work was representational and focused on mythological subjects, he was beginning to find his expression in rectangular fields of color and light. Form, space and color—instead of urban and natural scenes—were the path for art to enact drama.

MYTHOLOGY, psychology, other art forms and philosophy greatly influenced Rothko as he perfected his style. He was well-read and favored the ideas of Jung, Freud, Nietzsche, T.S. Elliot and Thomas Mann (among others). He was particularly obsessed with Nietzsche's tragic ideal, or a balance of the Apollonian (order) and Dionysian (chaos) as expressed in Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*. This ideal in particular seemed most prominent in Rothko's quest of creation, as his aim was to portray the balance of Nietzsche's two elements on canvas. Furthermore, Rothko wanted to do it without the assistance of conventional mythologies and symbols.

THAT IS—the painting, all on its own, was to be the beginning, middle and end of the experience. An experience that Rothko believed should be both intimate and deeply religious.





BY 1949, Rothko seemed to be really hitting his artistic stride. Critics referred to his paintings as “multiform” paintings, playing on Rothko’s aims and ideals for the work. As his success seemed to grow, Rothko became more and more protective of his work and even prescriptive of how it should be experienced. He turned down many commissions because he felt they would compromise the integrity of his work. Rothko grew more and more withdrawn, sensing that his work was becoming ever more misunderstood. As collectors clamored to obtain his work, he felt they were missing the point—the greater spiritual experience.

IN 1958, Rothko had a chance to both educate and spurn the individuals who didn’t understand his work. When the beverage company Joseph Seagram and Sons asked him to provide paintings for a new luxury restaurant, The Four Seasons, he ironically accepted the opportunity. He said he wished to paint “something that will ruin the appetite of every son-of-a-b**** who ever eats in that room.”

PUTTING ROTHKO’S alleged loathing of the project aside, the Seagram murals held a new, exciting and inspiring challenge for the artist—to design a coordinated

series of paintings specifically for a single, large location. With this set of parameters, Rothko could truly determine the audience’s experience with the art. After visiting the completed restaurant himself, however, Rothko ended work on the project and returned the commission money to Seagram. Whatever his motivation was for taking and subsequently refusing the project is still unclear even to this day.

ALONG WITH FAME and withdrawal came deeper darkness for Rothko. The bright reds, yellows and oranges that had come to mark his work were slipping into darker blues, greens, grays and blacks. As the Pop Art artists began their rise to prominence in the early 1960s, he feared being replaced, exclaiming, “Are the young artists plotting to kill us all?”

IN 1964, Rothko began what would end up being his final work of art—The Rothko Chapel. It was a building he designed from the ground up in Houston, Texas to be an artistically religious destination. It houses 14 large, dark paintings intended to elicit a great spiritual experience. Unfortunately, Rothko took his own life in 1970 after overdosing on anti-depressants before the Chapel was opened in 1971.

READ MORE ABOUT IT

We encourage you to explore the following books, movies and websites for more information.

Rothko, Mark.
Writings on Art, Yale University Press. 2006.

Rothko really did have deep and innovate ideas on art, but you don’t have to take our word for it, take his! *Writings on Art* features Rothko’s insights in his own words.

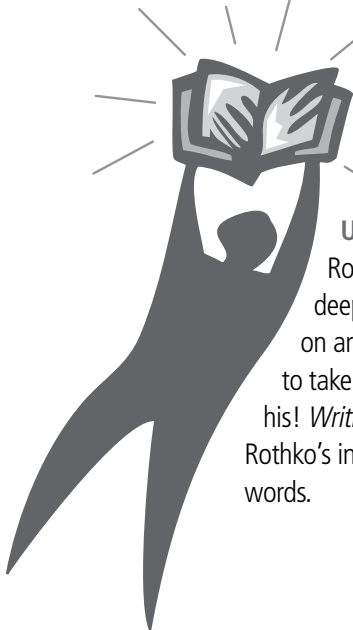
Arnason, H. H. and Mansfield, Elizabeth. *History of Modern Art* (6th Edition), Prentice Hall, 2009. As Rothko says, “To surmount the past, you must know the past.” This survey of modern art will help make you totally art smart!

Simon Schama’s *Power of Art*, 400 minutes, BBC Warner, DVD, 2007. Still struggling to define great art? Check out this

BBC documentary series which covers van Gogh, Caravaggio, Rembrandt, Rothko and more!

www.nga.gov/feature/rothko/
Check out the National Gallery of Art’s website for a complete overview of Rothko and his work.

www.rothkochapel.org/
Find out more about The Rothko Chapel (including an image gallery) at the official site of the artist’s final creation.



ON ART

KEN: I mean he's [Jackson Pollock] an artist, he's in Life magazine, he's young, he's famous, he has money—

*ROTHKO: That's exactly it. Here's a schmuck from Wyoming who can paint. Suddenly he's a commodity. He's 'Jackson Pollock.' Lemme tell you, kid, that Oldsmobile convertible really did kill him. Not because it crashed, because it existed. Why the f*** did Jackson Pollock have an Oldsmobile convertible?*

KEN: So artists should starve?

ROTHKO: Yes, artists should starve. Except me.

AMONG THE very difficult questions the play *Red* asks is the notion of what constitutes a true artist and true art. As illustrated in the passage above, Rothko certainly has an opinion on the subject, but is his opinion certain? It seems a little inconsistent to propose that in order to be a true artist, one cannot be financially successful ... especially if he's calling himself an exception to the rule!

BEFORE WE can really begin to think about Ken's question (and Rothko's answer), we have to know a few things—like a basic, working definition of art. While philosophers, intellectuals and even artists themselves have struggled for eons to definitively determine what art actually is, the New Oxford American Dictionary lays it out as follows:

ART |ärt|

noun

1 the **expression or application of human creative skill and imagination**, typically in a visual form such as **painting or sculpture**, producing works to be **appreciated** primarily for their **beauty or emotional power**

SO WE COULD SAY, for our purposes, that the textbook definition of art is:

The expression or application of creative skill and imagination including (but not limited to) the forms of painting, sculpture, music, literature, dance and drama, appreciated for the beauty or emotional power of the work.

SO FAR, SO GOOD? While we could certainly add more forms to our list, this at least gives us a good place to start. So what are the key ingredients of art? Looking back at our textbook definition, the following should jump out at you:

1. Expression
2. Application
3. Creative skill
4. Imagination
5. Beauty
6. Emotional power

GIVEN THE ingredients laid out in our definition, art is a creation (**expression or application**) conceived of by someone with an innovative mind (**imagination**) and constructed with artistic talent (**creative skill**). And of course, a piece of art should have some effect on its audience (either by virtue of its **beauty** or some **emotional power**).

We're almost there ...

NOW THAT we've sifted through some of the more abstract details, we can formulate exact questions to help us figure out whether or not something is art. Let's ask ourselves whether the play *Red* is art.

1. Is *Red* a creation conceived of by someone with imagination and constructed with artistic talent?

Yes. While the play is based on real life, John Logan has imagined a world in which Mark Rothko can tell us his story on stage. Logan has demonstrated his artistic talent by constructing a well-written play that allows many artists (cast, directors, designers) and

crewmembers (the multitude of folks behind the scenes) to communicate the story, giving audience members a chance to discern the story for themselves.

Easy enough, right?
Now onto deeper things ...

2. Does *Red* have some effect on its audience (either by virtue of its beauty or some emotional power)?

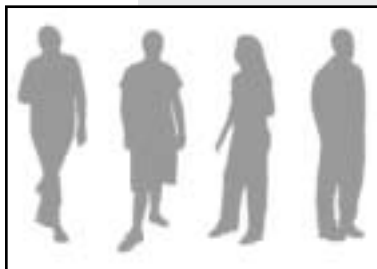
Yes. Though admittedly, this is where things get a little more difficult. After all, everyone certainly may not find beauty or emotional power in the same things. But, whether you enjoyed the play or not, you should be able to at least comprehend where the beauty or emotional power lies in the work (though sometimes saying it out loud is difficult—for example, what was the beauty or emotional power for you in *Red*?). That said, the beauty and emotional power of the play might be the difficult questions it asks the audience!

NOW THAT WE'VE wrestled a little bit with the basic definition, onto Ken's question, which was—"So artists should starve?"

WHAT'S MONEY got to do with it? More than you might imagine, actually. In our assessment of whether or not *Red* is art, we realized that some of our determination depended upon our own sense of taste. We all find beauty and emotional power in different things, which means subjectivity can creep in to our definition.

MANY ARTISTS stringently agree with Rothko's premise that art has a larger purpose, whether it is a spiritual experience, inciting political change or asking difficult questions of the audience. These individuals might say that their mission statement is to somehow change the world, and so making a buck or two off their art seems petty and diminishes the beauty and emotional power of the work. Instead of changing the world, they're "selling out," so to speak.

OF COURSE, there are those who might define art as a financially scant occupation by matter of convenience . "Yes, artists should starve. Except me."



- * So what is true art? Is it the wildly successful and well-known Hollywood summer blockbuster?
- * Who is the true artist? Is he or she the starving visionary, silently struggling to change the world?



SWDY?

ROTHKO: *Wait. Stand closer. You've got to get close. Let it pulsate. Let it work on you. Closer. Too Close. There. Let it spread out. Let it wrap its arms around you; let it embrace you, filling even your peripheral vision so nothing else exists or has ever existed or will ever exist. Let the picture do its work—But work with it. Meet it halfway for God's sake! Lean forward, lean into it. Engage with it! ... Now, what do you see?—Wait, wait, wait!*

- * Do you ever feel like the arts are inaccessible, elitist or just plain boring? While we all may have had confusing or off-putting moments like the one above (where Rothko is telling Ken how to see a painting), is that the ultimate goal of art—to confuse and alienate? Was that Rothko's ultimate goal? Why do you think the arts are important, and what can you do to help people see art more clearly?

KEN: *You take pride in that. 'Stomping' Cubism to death.*

ROTHKO: *The child must banish the father. Respect him, but kill him.*

KEN: *And enjoy it?*

ROTHKO: *Doesn't matter. Just be audacious and do it ... Courage in painting isn't facing the blank canvas, it's facing Manet, it's facing Velazquez. All we can do is move beyond what was there, to what is here, and hope to get some intimation of what will be here. 'What is past is passing and to come.' That's Yeats, whom you haven't read.*

- * What do you make of Rothko's pride in "destroying" Cubism? How does his philosophy in this moment compare (or contrast) with his earlier notions on

knowing history? What aspects of art (from our prior defining of art) seem most important to Rothko, and how does he use them?

ROTHKO: *You have a lot to learn, young man. Philosophy. Theology. Literature. Poetry. Drama. History. Archeology. Anthropology. Mythology. Music. These are your tools as much as the brush and pigment. You cannot be an artist until you are civilized. You cannot be civilized until you learn. To be civilized is to know where you belong in the continuum of your art and your world. To surmount the past, you must know the past.*

- * Rothko reminds Ken (over and over again) that art isn't simply knowing how to paint and remembering a few famous painters. Rothko believes that art encompasses a whole host of disciplines worth studying and knowing well. What do you think? How does knowing about history or drama inform painting? And what's the point of spending so much time studying the past? Do we really need to know it in order to "surmount" it? Why or why not?

