

## NCMA To Go Kit

# Mini Modern Paintings

Explore techniques of painting inspired by artist Helen Frankenthaler.



Helen Frankenthaler, *Captain's Watch* (detail), 1986, acrylic on canvas, 76¾ × 58¾ in., Gift of Mary and Jim Patton

Artist Helen Frankenthaler (1928–2011) said of painting, “A really good picture looks as if it’s happened at once.” Her expressive painting style—full of movement and spontaneity—is on display in the NCMA’s *Captain’s Watch* (1986). She is best known for her “soak-stain” technique, in which she would pour very thin paint onto an unprimed canvas to create layers. It looks quite different from paint brushed on a canvas! Compare the brown-gray paint on the bottom of this image with the hot pink brushstrokes above it. Can you see different textures?

### About Abstract Expressionism

Frankenthaler was part of the Abstract Expressionist movement in art. Artists who developed this style became known for large, action-filled paintings that showcased forms over recognizable imagery and evoked complex emotions. Frankenthaler and painters like Jackson Pollock, Lee Krasner, and Mark Rothko achieved international fame for this kind of work. Within Abstract Expressionism, Frankenthaler was part of a group called color field painters, who were most interested in creating works of art that explored meaning through large areas of color.

### MATERIALS

*included in kit*

- Canvas
- Acrylic paint
- Foam brush
- Paintbrush

*not included in kit*

- Cotton ball, stick, or other tools for making marks

### INSTRUCTIONS

#### 1. Prepare your area for painting.

#### 2. Gather a smock, a paper plate for a palette, and towels.

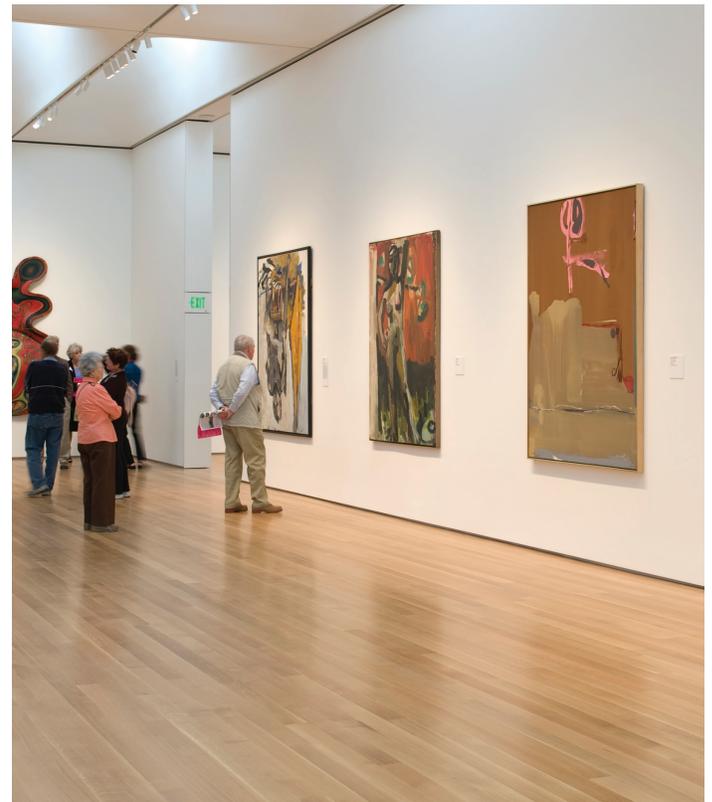
These items are helpful to have on hand for messes!

#### 3. Paint by exploring different techniques.

A few ideas to try:

- Mix acrylic paint with water and pour or dab onto the canvas with a foam brush.
- Dot paint onto the canvas with a cotton ball.
- Cover the canvas with paint and scratch into the surface with a stick.
- What else can you imagine and try?

#### 4. Let your painting dry.



Helen Frankenthaler’s *Captain’s Watch* on view in West Building.