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Franz Kline

Born: 1910 Wilkes-Barre, PA
Died: 1962 New York, NY

1910

Franz Josef Kline, named by his father after the Austrian Emperor, is born on May 23, in Wilkes-Barre, PA. He is the second child of Anthony and Anne E. Kline (née Rowe). The family lives in Leighton, PA.

1917

In August, when Franz is seven years old, his father commits suicide, according to the family and to newspaper accounts.

1919

On March 21, Franz is admitted to Girard College in Philadelphia, which he attends for about six and a half years.

1927

Takes the basic course of instruction at the Infantry Branch, Citizen's Military Training Camp, Ft. Howard, MD. Throughout his high school years he draws outside class using large drawing pads.

1931–32

Lives in Boston's Back Bay. Enrolls at Boston University. Attends classes at the Boston Art Students League.

1933

Introduced to Martha Kinney (nicknamed "Nutsy"), another art student. She becomes his constant companion, following him to England in late 1935.

1935

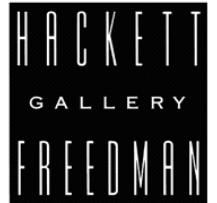
Visits England.

1936

Goes to museums and galleries in London and makes frequent trips to the British Museum. He always carries a sketchbook, drawing both works of art and London subjects. Attends Heatherley's Art School. Continues to sketch outdoors. He grows fond of London and frequents booksellers to collect old books on British illustrators.

1937

In January, Kline meets his future wife, Elizabeth V. Parsons, a model in Frederic Whiting's illustration class at Heatherley's. Continues to attend Heatherley's and has an unpublicized one-man show with drawings. Visits the National Gallery and speaks often of his admiration for Rembrandt, Whistler, Keene, and Phil May, whose illustrations are in old issues of Punch.



1938

Returns to the U.S. on February 17. Goes home briefly to Lehighton. He moves to New York in the Spring. Works briefly as a window display artist for Arnold Constable and tries to sell his illustrations to magazines such as the New Yorker. In November, Elizabeth arrives from England at Ellis Island. They are married on December 5.

1939

Meets the two major patrons of his figurative art this year: Dr. Theodore J. Edlich Jr. and I. David Orr.

1940

Paints murals for bars in Brooklyn and Hoboken between 1939 and 1943, but their location and whether the paintings are extant is unknown. In late summer, he wins a prize of \$15 at the Washington Square art show for a pen-and-ink drawing. The prize is awarded by the Whitney Museum of American Art.

1942

Listed in the New York Times on April 8, in "Academy of Design Opens Its Art Show," among the young painters whose work had not been shown before at the Academy.

1943

Wins the S. J. Wallace Truman prize of \$400 at the 117th Annual National Academy show. During the summer, he is a second lieutenant in the reserve corps of the Citizens' Military Training Camp, Ft. Monroe, VA. Meets Willem de Kooning.

1944

Wins the S. J. Wallace Truman Prize for the second time at the National Academy's Annual Exhibition.

1945

After World War II, Kline begins going regularly to the Cedar Bar. Other regulars include de Kooning and Pollock. Two exhibitions at the National Academy. As early as 1945, he begins to broaden his pen-and-ink technique and become selective of illustrative details in drawings.

1946

In May, Mrs. Kline enters Central Islip State Hospital for six months. Her recurring mental problems require several hospitalizations throughout the 1940s and '50s. Late fall, he is commissioned by Lehighton's American Legion Post 314 to paint a mural behind the bar in its large assembly room. Paints *The Dancer* (now in the Edlich Collection), which Kline refers to as his first abstract painting.

1947

Does *White Paintings*. Large areas of paper show through some; others have extensive white overpainting and calligraphic brushwork.

1948

Listed in *Who's Who in the East*, Volume II, 967.

1950

Exhibits one abstract painting in *Talent 1950* at the Kootz Gallery. Clement Greenberg and Meyer Schapiro choose the paintings, one each by twenty-three artists. Greenberg visits Kline's studio to see his work. Kline is surprised that Greenberg likes the black-and-white examples. First solo show at the Egan Gallery. Represented in *Young Painters in U.S. and France* at the Sidney Janis Gallery.

1951

The Ninth Street Show is held at 60 East Ninth Street. Kline's black-and-white abstraction (now called Ninth Street) takes its name from the show. His second one-man show at the Egan Gallery. *Cardinal and Chief* are reproduced and discussed by Thomas B. Hess in *Abstract Painting, Background and American Phase*. Kline is one of twenty artists in *American Vanguard Art for Paris* at the Janis Gallery. Among others were Albers, de Kooning, Gorky, Gottlieb, Guston, Motherwell, Pollock, and Tomlin.

1952

Represented in the Second Annual Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture at the Stable Gallery. Is invited to teach at Black Mountain College. Paintings and drawings are shown at the Margaret Brown Gallery, Boston. "Kline Paints a Picture," by Robert Goodnough, is published in December *ArtNews*. The article focuses on Kline at work on *Abstract Painting* (1952).

1954

One-man exhibition of large paintings at the Institute of Design, Chicago. Concurrently, the Allan Frumkin Gallery shows drawings and easel-size works. Spends the summer at the Red House in Bridgehampton with the de Koonings, Ludwig Sander, and Nancy Ward.

1956

Sidney Janis becomes Kline's dealer. First one-man show at Janis Gallery. Significant use of color in a large black-and-white abstraction, *De Medici*, and in smaller works such as *Yellow, Red, Green, Blue* (now in the Baltimore Museum of Art). Nine paintings included in *12 Americans* organized by Dorothy C. Miller for the Museum of Modern Art. His work is shown at the Venice Biennale.

1957

Garcia exhibited at the Janis Gallery *Eight Americans*. Other artists represented are Albers, de Kooning, Gorky, Guston, Motherwell, Pollock, and Rothko.

1958

One-man exhibition, including small drawings, at the Galleria del Naviglio, Milan. One-man show at the Janis Gallery. Five works included in *The New American Painting*, organized by the International Program of the Museum of Modern Art. Exhibition Itinerary, 1958–59: Basel, Milan, Madrid, Berlin, Amsterdam, Brussels, Paris, and London. Makes sfumato paintings.

1959

Included in Part II of "The Varied Art of Four Pioneers," *Life Magazine*. A series of photos of Kline is done in preparation for the *Life* feature. At one session, he is photographed making a painting on glass.

1960

Mahoning (1956), now in the Whitney Museum of American Art, is included in *60 American Painters 1960: Abstract Expressionist Painting of the Fifties* at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. *Nine American Painters* at Janis Gallery includes Kline's *Turbin*, 1959. Participates in the Venice Biennale. Wins the Italian Ministry of Public Instruction Prize. *New Year Wall Night* (1960) receives honorable mention, Guggenheim International Award Exhibition. Short Kline biography in *Who's Who in Art*.

1961

Awarded the Flora Mayer Witkowsky Prize of \$1,500 at the 64th American Exhibition, for *Sawyer* at The Art Institute of Chicago. Enters Johns Hopkins Hospital for examinations that reveal a rheumatic heart. Exhibition of paintings and drawings, New Arts Gallery, Atlanta. One-man show, Janis Gallery. Also has a two-man show with Guston at the Dwan Gallery, Los Angeles.

1962

In February, Kline has first heart attack and goes to St. Clare's Hospital. He is put on strict regimen and must be weighed daily. Unable to continue painting. May 4, enters New York Hospital. Dies May 13. Six works by Kline are included in *Continuity and Change, 45 American Abstract Painters and Sculptors*, Wadsworth Atheneum. His last painting, *Scudera*, is included in *Ten American Painters* at Janis Gallery. Franz Kline Memorial Exhibition, Washington, D.C. Gallery of Modern Art. Elaine de Kooning's catalog essay is published in *ArtNews*, LXI (Nov. 1962), "Franz Kline, Painter of His Own Life."

1963

Memorial exhibition at Janis Gallery, *Thirty Paintings, 1952–1961*.

1963–64

One-man exhibition organized by Frank O'Hara at the Museum of Modern Art; goes to Amsterdam, Turin, Brussels, Basel, Vienna, London, and Paris.

1968–69

One-man exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Exhibition travels to Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, San Francisco Museum of Art, and Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

1974

Franz Kline: *Selected Works*, Allan Stone Gallery, New York.

1977

Exhibition of works on paper, The Mayor Gallery, London.