

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The David Booth Department of Conservation

TITLE: *No. 5/No. 22*

MUSEUM No.: 1108.1969

ARTIST: Mark Rothko

DATE: 1950 (dated 1949 on reverse)

MEDIUM: Oil on canvas

DIMENSIONS: 117 x 107 in

EXAMINED BY: Michael Duffy, Laura Richter Le, and Magdalena Solano

DATE OF EXAMINATION: September 20, 2023

PURPOSE OF TREATMENT: This treatment was carried out in preparation for a loan to the Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris. Treatment was limited to a couple of days and prioritized stabilizing the work for travel.

PROVENANCE

Gift of the artist, 1969

EXHIBITION HISTORY

Mark Rothko, 1903-1970

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 26 March 1970 – 31 May 1970

Painting and Sculpture: Inaugural Installation

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 20 November 2004 – 31 December 2005

Focus: Reinhardt and Rothko 2008

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 7 March 2008 – 3 August 2008

Abstract Expressionist New York: The Big Picture

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 3 October 2010 – 25 April 2011

Planes of Color

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 21 October 2019 – 2 January 2023

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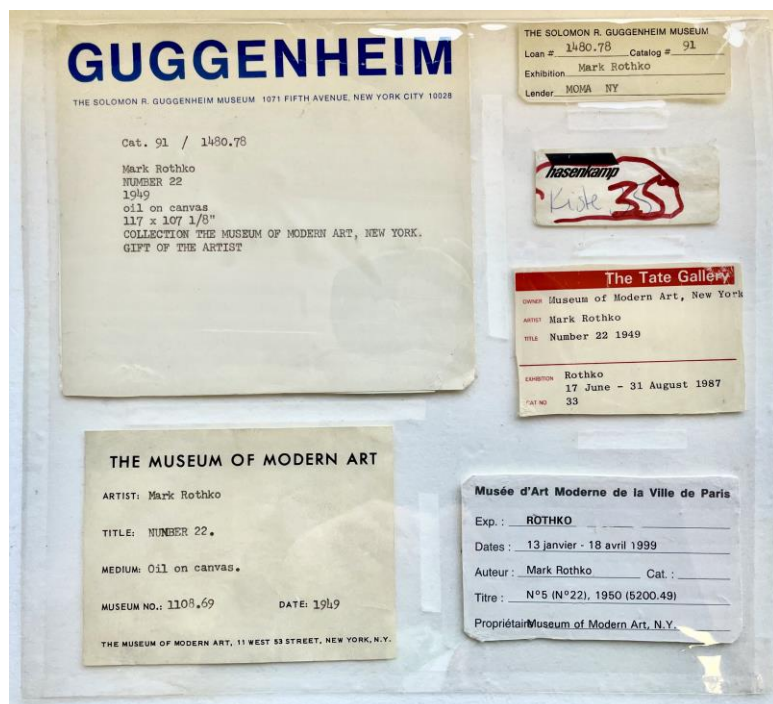
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LABELS AND INSCRIPTIONS

Stretcher and Canvas:



Backing Board:



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DESCRIPTION

The sub-support is an eight-member wooden strainer. The four corner lap joints are each covered with a plywood triangle.

All four edges of the canvas appear to be the selvedge of the fabric, with thick yarns on the canvas verso approximately every 6 inches, presumably used to attached the fabric to the loom.

The ground layer is orangish red and might be tinted glue, as Rothko was known to do elsewhere. The paint is thinly and freely applied in large color fields. The medium likely includes oil paint, but could also include additions of watercolor, glue, and/or acrylics (at this point in his career, Rothko was regularly using Bocour paints).

CONDITION

The strainer is stable overall. On the bottom and top center stretcher bars, there is a protruding wood splinter caused by the backing board screws. The cross bars have many knots, one of which has fallen out (on the lower left crossbar).

The canvas has been lined onto a plain weave linen canvas, which has been stapled many times along the tacking edge. Along the tacking edges (especially the back, right side), there is darkened adhesive residue, likely from the lining. Scattered across the back of the lining canvas are quarter to half inch dark spots, which may be cause by the lining adhesive (?).

The verso is dusty, and there are larger clumps of dust between the lower stretcher bar and canvas.

There are scattered losses along edge (some have been inpainted), alongside a more dense system of craquelure. There is adhesive residue along cracks consolidated in past treatment, appearing with a glossy sheen (noticeable especially in the bottom right corner).

The thin white paint layer is very thin and fragile and has larger patterns of loss (see condition map, detail H).

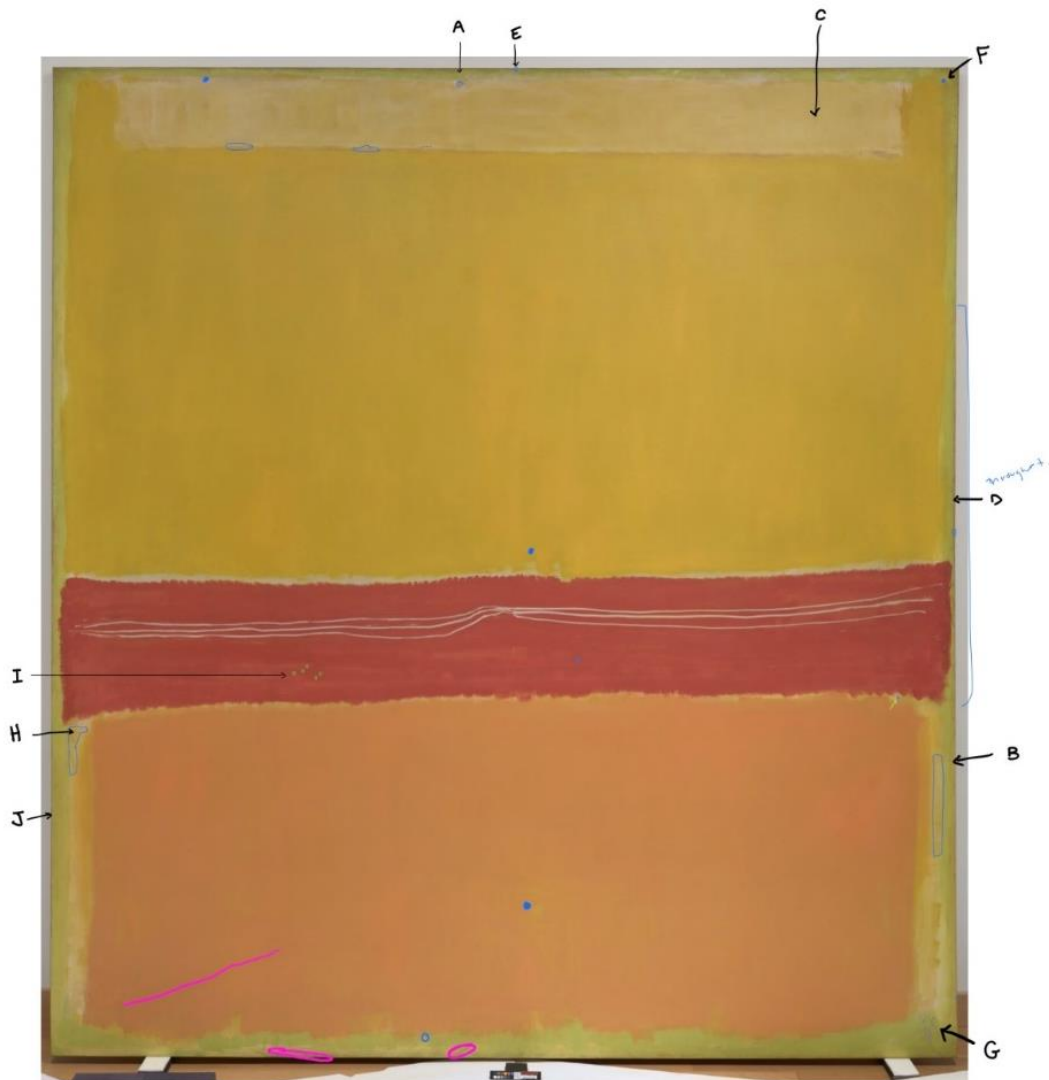
There are gray patches of discolored retouching along the edges. A group of small circular flakes in the red stripe appear slightly unstable, with a circle of white ground visible around each (detail I, condition map).

There are paint splatters and abrasions on lower edge (potentially from the artist's studio), most noticeably two red lines on bottom left edge. Some of the abrasion along the bottom has been inpainted. There are lines of white abrasion along the top edge.

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Condition Map:



- losses
- lifting
- abrasion
- adhesive residue

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TREATMENT

- 1) The backing board was removed and the labels adhered to the backing were encapsulated in mylar.
- 2) The verso was dry cleaned with a vacuum, soft brushes, and soot sponges. Masking tape was used to remove debris and dust clumps trapped between the lower stretcher bar and canvas.
- 3) Excess staples were removed from the tacking edge, some of which were protruding out and many which had glassine or paper trapped below from wrapping.
- 4) The splinters in the bottom and top, center stretcher bars were put back in place with fish glue and clamped.
- 5) A sample of the lining adhesive was taken for analysis from the tacking edge.
- 6) The recto was dusted with a nylon brush.
- 7) Unstable cracks were stabilized with Lascaux medium for consolidation.
 - a. Solubility tests were conducted with DI H₂O, isopropanol, petroleum benzene, and xylene. The painting overall was slightly soluble in DI H₂O and soluble in isopropanol.
- 8) The loss at the center of the work in the red section, was consolidated with Lascaux Medium for Consolidation and inpainted with QoR colors.
- 9) A new chloroplast backing board was attached to the verso.