

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The David Booth Department of Conservation

TITLE: *Slow Swirl by the Edge of the Sea*

MUSEUM No.: 429.1981

ARTIST: Mark Rothko

DATE: 1944

MEDIUM: Oil on canvas

DIMENSIONS: 6' 3 3/8" x 7' 3/4"

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

DATE OF EXAMINATION: September 27, 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 day and prioritized stabilizing the work for travel.

PROVENANCE

Bequest of Mrs. Mark Rothko through The Mark Rothko Foundation, Inc.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

To Be Looked At: Painting and Sculpture from The Collection

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 29 June 2002 – 6 September 2004

Painting and Sculpture: Inaugural Installation

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

Abstract Expressionist New York: The Big Picture

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

Painting and Sculpture Changes 2013

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1 January 2013 – 31 December 2013

Painting and Sculpture Changes 2015

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1 January 2015 – 31 December 2015

4th Fl: 401, Out of War

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 21 October 2019 – 5 February 2023

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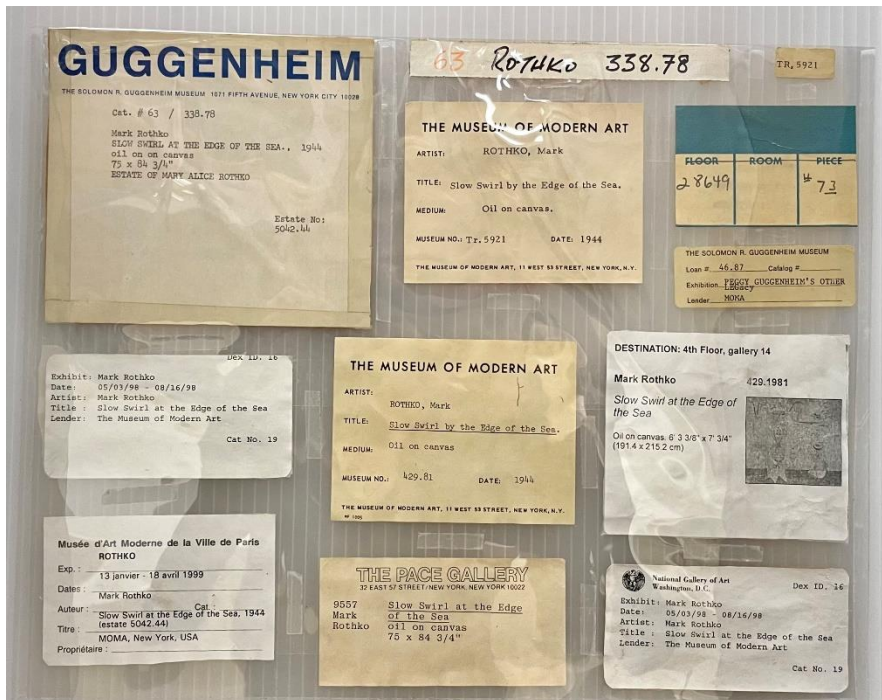
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LABELS AND INSCRIPTIONS

Stretcher and Canvas:



Backing Board:



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DESCRIPTION

The sub-support is an eight-member strainer. Each member is composed of three thin wood boards sandwiched together.

The paint layer is thinly applied, with light impasto in the visible brush lines. The paint consistency ranges from thin, liquid washes to relatively dry brush strokes.

The work is signed "Mark Rothko" in paint in the lower right corner.

CONDITION

The strainer appears stable overall. There is a splinter on the right side of the bottom strainer bar (on the side closer to the canvas). The canvas is loose on the strainer and there are small planal deformations throughout. All four corners are drawn.

There is cracking across the surface with small associated losses along the crack intersections and areas of thickest impasto (point N and P on condition map). Some small points of distortion, from impact or accretions under the strainer bars, have cracking and small losses (points C and I on the condition map).

There are drip lines on the bottom right (at the top of the brown strip). They appear to have been previously inpainted, and this layer is now unevenly covering the lighter passage below (image J on condition map). There are scattered white spots across the lower half of the painting (image K) in which the white priming layer is visible, surrounded by a thin brown halo. It is unknown if these were created by the artist.

Note: the planar deformations, cracking, and drips are all seen on past condition assessments (e.g. 1998 and 2003), indicating that these are not new issues. Areas that appear actively unstable were small networks of cracks where the paint medium was crumbling.

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Condition Map:



■ cracks

■ drip/stain

■ abrasion

■ loss

■ surface
distortion

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Cracks:



A



B



C



D

Surface Distortion:



E



H



F



I



G

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Drips:



J



K

Losses:



L



O



M



P



N

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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 dirt trapped between the lower stretcher bar and canvas.
- 3) The recto was dusted with a nylon brush.
- 4) Unstable/active cracks and losses were stabilized with Lascaux medium for consolidation.
 - a. Solubility tests were conducted with DI H₂O and xylene. The painting overall was slightly soluble in DI H₂O.
- 5) Corrugated chloroplast backing boards with polyester batting inserts (adhered to the backing with double-sided tape) were attached to the verso using the previous screw holes (as suggested in 2003 when examined at MoMA by Claire Gerhard).