

Ethos, Pathos, and Transformation in Western Art: From the Parthenon to Abstract Expressionism

The majestic sweep of Hellenic culture is fraught with an intense interest in dichotomies as stand-ins for the consummate dichotomy: human-divine; mortality-immortality. This first, most fundamental pairing constitutes a unique sort of problem, in fact. While we share with all other non-divine creatures the fact that we are mortal—we grow ill, grow old, and die—differently from all other mortal creatures, we ponder and wonder and worry about immortality: what it means and if we can experience it, which concern connects us uniquely to the gods whose most salient difference from all other creatures is their immortality: they don't grow ill or old and they don't die.

The problem achieves a sort of solution through irony: the embrace of the co-existence of two ideas that cannot co-exist.¹ Thus, for instance, the quintessential epic Hellenic hero, around whom the *Iliad* revolves, Akhilleus, exemplifies in his own being the co-existence of both traits, not only (obviously) because his father is human and his mother a goddess, but because when he agrees to fight at Troy, he knows that he is doomed not only to die but to die at the peak of his youth and his youthful power, on that particular battlefield, but that he will achieve immortality in the form of *kleos aphthiton*: “undying glory.”

In the following centuries of Hellenic literature and also in the visual arts, while any number of images of Akhilleus and other heroic figures similar but not, of course, identical to him, might be said to represent this juxtaposition by definition, Hellenic art makes use of an array of other dichotomies that are both interesting and significant in their own right and as metaphors, stand-ins, for this most fundamental of paired concepts. Among the more significant of these pairings that run parallel are *eros-eris* (love/strife), male-female, animal-human, and *ethos-pathos*.² In 1972, JJ Pollitt wrote about this last pairing—defined as contrasts between calm emotional distancing and dynamic emotional engagement—in his book, *Art and Experience in Classical Greece*.³ Pollitt's well-argued discussion is part of the starting point for this discussion.

One finds particularly compelling representations of *ethos-pathos* in Greek visual art—particularly statuary and relief sculpture—not only in facial expressions. But as *ethos/pathos* may be seen as one among other pairs of

¹There are other forms of irony for the Hellenes that we find in Sophocles or in Sokrates, but I am referring to the earlier form found in the epic tradition. Please note that, in an act of pure snobbishness, I prefer to transliterate Hellenic names with letters closer to their Greek forms than the Latinate forms that we tend to use (thus “Sokrates” rather than “Socrates”)—and for that matter, I prefer to refer to them as Hellenes, which is the Greek term, rather than as “Greeks,” which is what the Romans called them. I will call them Greeks where the particular context makes that more appropriate.

²For an extensive exploration of *Eros* and *Eris* and their interplay not only in Hellenic literature and art but the world of literature that both grows from that literature and that derives from other, non-Western sources, see Soltes: *Eros and Eris: Love and Strife In and Beyond the Greco-Roman World*.

³Note that, as with the term “irony” with slightly different meanings in different contexts, “*ethos*” and “*pathos*”—particularly “*ethos*”—can have different meanings in other contexts.

analogues for immortality/mortality, within visual representation (as Pollitt notes), *ethos-pathos* may also be symbolically connoted by means of revealed-concealed, stasis-action contrasts, and in smooth-rough and other kinds of textural contrasts.⁴ Moreover, transformation—the continuous repetition, but in changed specific forms, of visual ideas—is a general principle within the history of not only Greek art but visual art in general. So the particular manifestations of these interconnected pairs vary both from medium to medium and from time and place to time and place with regard to the specifics of how they are visually expressed.

One might begin with one of the myriad depictions in Greek pottery of the battle between Herakles and the Nemean Lion. This was the first of the renowned Twelve Labors through which the hero, on a microcosmic scale, here and there across the Hellenic world, accomplishes what his father, Zeus, had accomplished on the macrocosmic scale before the beginning of human time: forging *kosmos* (order) out of *khaos*. In each representation of the struggle, no two exactly alike—I have in mind in particular the black-figure image by the so-called “Berlin Painter” found in the Cleveland Museum of Art and dating from ca 515-10 BCE. My central focus, beyond the contrastive dynamic diagonals assumed by the protagonists’ bodies, is their faces, pitting a calm, cool, collected Herakles—the embodiment of *ethos*—against a snarling, teeth-baring, angrily engaged Nemean Lion: the embodiment of *pathos*.

This vase comes toward the end of the “Archaic” Period, near the edge of a half-century of eristic engagement between the Athenian-led Hellenes and the expansive Akhaimenid Medo-Persian Empire. By the end of that period, five things will have fallen into place. The Hellenes will have asserted their independence from the Persians through five decades of the so-called Persian Wars; the Hellenes will have begun to express a sense of their superiority over the Persians, in spite of the grandeur and gilded glory of Persian culture; the term referring to the Persians—due simply to the unintelligibility of their language to the Greeks (it sounds to Hellenic ears like “bar-bar-bar”): *barbaros* (sing)/*barbaraoi* (plur)—will begin its semantic journey toward its meaning to this day: barbarian; the Athenians will have risen to the top of the Hellenic world as its political leaders and cultural hub; and within the world of visual art, the transition from Archaic to Classical style will have been completed.

The consummate symbol of both Athens at its peak and of classical Greek architecture in general at its peak is the Parthenon. That temple, devoted to the goddess Athena in her guise as virgin (*parthenos*) as the patron deity of the city (hence its name, Athens), resonates in both its placement and general structure with important conceptual contrasts. The Acropolis (“high city”) rises from its

⁴Please note that the words “symbol” and “symbolic” are Greek (from the verb “*symbollein*”: “to throw with/together”) and the noun refers to something, usually a concrete entity, that stands in for a usually abstract concept to make the latter more readily intelligible. Thus, for instance, in *Iliad*: VI: 119-236, the Trojan warrior, Glaukos, and his Akhaian counterpart, Diomedes, pause in the midst of the fury of battle, converse regarding who each of them is, and end up exchanging gifts—*symbola*—to demonstrate with these concrete objects the intangible reality of friendship (a subset of *eros*) even within the context of war (*eris*). For a detailed but concise discussion of this, see the introductory chapter in Soltes, *Our Sacred Signs*.

1 lower surroundings like the pregnant belly of mother earth, which connects to
 2 the mother goddess which Athena had once been in the pre-Greek era—so the
 3 Virgin aspect of female divinity rises from its mother aspect. And, in continuing
 4 a tradition that the Hellenes were certainly aware of in Egypt (pyramids and
 5 funerary temples) and were perhaps not aware of in Mesopotamia (ziggurats)
 6 and the Middle East, that preceded Hellenic culture by several thousand years,
 7 the human-contrived architecture of precisely ordered geometries—horizontals
 8 surmounted by verticals surmounted by horizontal and crowned by diagonals;
 9 rectangles surmounted by triangles—rises directly from and offers a dynamic
 10 dialogue with the irregularly shaped rocky, divine-made curves of the bulbous
 11 extrusive formation on which the temple rests. More intense contrast, then:
 12 human-made vs divine-made, regularity vs irregularity, *kosmos* (order) vs *khaos*.

13 But aside from the architectural structure in its relation to the natural
 14 landscape, the Parthenon's extraordinary program of relief statuary amplifies the
 15 vocabulary of contrastive concepts. Not surprisingly, the high relief-carved
 16 scenes on the East and West pediments—the first depicting the birth of Athena
 17 and the second the competition between Athena and Poseidon for patronage of
 18 the city—blur the line between two dimensional and three-dimensional statuary
 19 in the robust manner of their pulling away from the “ground” behind them, as if
 20 it is space not solid rock. The same may be said of the extensive series of 64
 21 reliefs depicting Lapiths and Centaurs in battle along the metope of the temple—
 22 one pair in each quadrangular frame flanked by rigorous vertical triglyphs.
 23 Where these pairs are concerned, however, there is an additional visual issue:
 24 the series of textural contrasts, between human and equine flesh, human and
 25 equine hair, and naked flesh and billowing garments.

26 What most distinguishes the Parthenon from other Hellenic temples,
 27 however, is the temerity with which the Athenians placed themselves along the
 28 entablature above the inner colonnade—nobody had dared depict contemporary
 29 citizens in the upper reaches of a temple as part of its decor before; these were
 30 spaces typically reserved for gods and goddesses, battles between gods and titans
 31 and giants, heroes and creatures, like the centaurs, of an earlier age. The great,
 32 524'-long panathenaic procession, carved, apparently, by Phidias, is dominated
 33 by Athenians—males, of course—on horseback, moving toward the front area
 34 where the sacred garment (a *peplos*) is being offered to the goddess. In that
 35 dynamic line-up—aside from its sheer artistic virtuosity, in which layers of
 36 figures of varied depths move against the stone-that-is-space background so that,
 37 again, the line between two- and three-dimensional work dissipates—equine and
 38 human flesh and hair and naked flesh and flowing capes contrast, but more to
 39 the point for our purposes, the calm, cool *ethos* of the humans contrasts with the
 40 ferocious *pathos* of the horses as their riders strive to keep them under control.

41 This iteration of the Parthenon, under the patronage of the Athenian leader,
 42 Perikles and his wife, Aspasia, was designed (by Kallikrates and Iktinos) and
 43 constructed between 447 and 432 BCE—begun in the aftermath of the Persian
 44 Wars with the implication that the Hellenes had been successful thanks to the
 45 divine imprimatur of the goddess of wisdom and war, and completed on the eve
 46 of the Peloponnesian Wars by the end of which Athens and its democracy were

on their knees before Sparta and the oligarchy that, in its victory, Sparta imposed upon the Athenians. There were those thereafter who, looking back, concluded that the hubris of Athens at placing its mortal citizens up where only immortals belong had offended the gods and Athena herself, which is why they lost the war—but that’s another story for another day.

In any case, one may observe not only this dynamic of contrastive *ethos-pathos* representation, together with its analogues, in many other key works of Greek statuary and vase-painting, but one may also observe a shifting interest in the specifics of immortal-mortal dichotomies aligned with the display of *ethos* and *pathos* characteristics—both in divine/human contrasts and within the vocabulary of representing diverse *kinds* of gods as well as humans. In the continuous transformations that define the history of art, moreover, one may see these kinds of contrasts further evolving in shifting styles and media. Further, where the Parthenon offers *ethos-pathos* in a series of single “frames,” one may also see this contrast in comparing “frames” that are sometimes centuries apart.

This is evident for instance in comparing the representations of the Virgin and Christ Child in 12th- and 13th-century Byzantine art with early 16th-century depictions of the same subject by Raphael Sanzio (1483-1520). Thus the ca 1120 CE mosaic of the Virgin and Child in the south gallery of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople/Istanbul—in which they are placed between images of the Emperor John II Comnenos and Empress Irene—is all *ethos*: a calm, unemotive and solemn Mary stares out at the viewer and an equally *ethos*-effecting Christ child, who, neither quite standing nor sitting on her non-lap, assumes a more adult than child-like mien, as he gestures with his symbolic finger configuration with one hand and holds the scroll of his New Covenant with the other. The purpose of the highly stylized, flat, rigid figures is to emphasize their divine aspects—he as God in human form; she as the Virgin Mother of the process by which he became what he is—and to convey a sense of their transcendent character.

The same may be said of the many Byzantine icons of the Madonna and Child, from the following century, such as the so-called *Mellon Virgin and Child* at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC—in which, even as the Christ Child is held to the side of the Virgin, and their cheeks touch, they nonetheless retain a stylized *ethos*-filled calm. Yet for all of the stylized stiffness, the regularized gold-leaf-laced folds in the garments and the preternaturally long fingers and bodies that seem devoid of bones beneath their fleshless flesh, there is a more obvious poignancy than that so entirely lacking in the Hagia Sophia image. Perhaps because the icon offers a mother and child, however transcendent, whereas the mosaic presents the Mother of God—the *Theotokos*. Conveyed largely by the placement of the figure, cheek to cheek, the *ethos* of the icon manages to invoke the viewer’s *pathos*, particularly as, thanks both to the symbolic colors and to the viewers’ knowledge of the Christ narrative, they understand that this child will suffer an agonizing death three decades into the future and his mother will endure the pain that every mother suffers who witnesses the horrifying death of her child.

1 That sense of human *pathos* dominates images like Raphael's 1508 *Tempi*
 2 *Madonna*, painted toward the end of his Florentine period. For the emphasis in
 3 the Italian Renaissance era of which Raphael is a central articulator, is on the
 4 *human* qualities of Jesus and his Mother—this is one of the reasons we speak of
 5 Renaissance *humanism*. The focus is on the manner in which he and she are *one*
 6 *of us*, a part of what we are and not apart from what we are, immanent and not
 7 transcendent: and as humans, our most defining feature is that we suffer illness,
 8 old age, and death—most emphatically, death—and he as God *becomes* one of
 9 us to experience all of that. So this child is a real, plump Umbrian peasant child,
 10 held lovingly in his Umbrian mom's arms—Raphael was from Umbria—her
 11 fingers gently pressing into his lush flesh and his over-the-shoulder look toward
 12 us as winsome as it gets. They both *convey* human *pathos* and cannot fail to
 13 evoke *pathos* from *us*, given (again) our knowledge of where their story will
 14 arrive thirty years or so down the road.

15 One can also find the *ethos-pathos* contrast within the work of a single artist
 16 but at different times and places (as opposed to their co-existence in a single
 17 work, as with Phidias' Parthenon riders)—perhaps reflecting different times and
 18 moods in his or her own life. At virtually the same time when Raphael was
 19 painting his *Tempi Madonna* and shortly thereafter, in Rome, created
 20 extraordinary frescoes in the Vatican offices—the *Stanze*—Michelangelo di
 21 Buonarroti (1475-1564) was also arriving from Florence to begin Pope Julius
 22 II's enormous project of creating a series of frescoes to cover the entire Sistine
 23 Chapel ceiling. At the center of Michelangelo's composition we observe the
 24 artist's visual interpretation of the moment in Genesis 2:7 when God "breathes
 25 into the [clod of human-shaped] earth (Hebrew: *adamah*; hence *Adam*) the spirit
 26 of life"—which is to say, within standard Jewish and Christian interpretation,
 27 Adam is be-souled (Latin *anima*=soul; hence he is literally *animated*). The
 28 moment is imbued with pure *ethos*: both the expressionless Adam, with his limp
 29 hand—because he has not yet been animated—and also God, *especially* God,
 30 swooping toward Adam in a bevy of clouds and angels, even as his hand and its
 31 extended finger are energized and active, assumes a facial expression not of
 32 excitement but of absolute calm. What for us humans is the beginning of a long
 33 and dramatic experience is for God—who has always been and always will be,
 34 after all—just another moment, the long-term outcome of which is already
 35 known: God is also omniscient, of course.

36 When God wants to express *pathos*, He follows the Christian narrative of
 37 both becoming human for a few decades and of meting out judgment to humans.
 38 Michelangelo would be sent from Rome, back to work on Florentine projects,
 39 when Julius II's successor, a Florentine scion of the Medici family, assumed the
 40 papal throne as Leo X. Eventually, the artist would be called back to Rome by
 41 another Medici Pope, Clement VII, to cover the vast altar wall of the chapel—
 42 which he completed (in 1536-41) under Clement's successor, Pope Paul III—
 43 with the subject of the Second Coming of Christ, and more importantly, the final
 44 judgement, and based on ideas derived from the Book of Revelation: at the
 45 opposite end of the Christian Bible from Genesis. The imagery swirls around
 46 pure *pathos*: the central figure is a Herculean Christ with a calm *ethos* expression

1 but his body language is all *pathos*, dominated by a powerful upraised hand—
 2 about to sweep down and consign the damned and the doomed to hell. This
 3 Christ is terrifying enough that even his Virgin Mother, the intercessor, cowers
 4 in what may be read not only as a position of subservience but as a condition of
 5 fright. The expressions on all the figures around him are either fearful or
 6 ferocious. The emotional and spiritual emphasis of the imagery may have been
 7 inspired, as some say, in part, by the ideology of Paul III,⁵ but it surely reflects
 8 Michelangelo's own tortured sense of self. For among those also shrinking away
 9 from the gigantic Christ Judge the artist has portrayed himself—as Saint
 10 Bartholomew turns back to God, we see the artist's face evident on the flayed
 11 carapace of skin that recalls the saint's particular mode of martyrdom, resonating
 12 from the artist's own sense not only of physical exhaustion but of spiritual
 13 unworthiness.

14 By this time Michelangelo was not the only painter to be offering *pathos*-
 15 dominated imagery in his work, as others, too, extended the Mannerist style's
 16 vocabulary in reacting to the Western Christian World's spiritual crisis. It was
 17 mired in the expanding Reformation and hurtling toward the Counter-
 18 Reformation and with it an Age of Religious Wars: spiritually imploding while
 19 simultaneously exploding in its physical sense of self through the Age of
 20 Exploration.⁶ The ongoing series of questions and crises of the next few
 21 centuries may be said to culminate with the Era of Revolutions—industrial,
 22 technological, scientific, as well as political, philosophical and theological—that
 23 carry the West from the late 18th through the mid-19th centuries. For artists—
 24 particularly painters—their particular culminating crisis arrived with the
 25 development of optics and spectroscopy as new sciences and the beginnings of
 26 the technology of the *camera oscura*, in the 1820s-1840s. The solution to the
 27 problem—how can we compete with photography in reproducing in precise
 28 detail the outside world on our canvases?—was what was initially insultingly
 29 labeled as Impressionism,⁷ but which designation eventuated as a proudly worn
 30 badge by Pissaro, Monet, Renoir, Sisley, and their followers.

⁵Sydney J. Freedberg, *Painting in Italy, 1300-1600*, 471.

⁶Just a quick summary reminder: Martin Luther's 95 Theses tacked on the Wittenberg Church door in 1517 marked the beginning of push back against the Church in Rome on several levels; by the 1530s there was a handful of Protestant Denominations, including that shaped by the English King Henry VIII for other than purely spiritual reasons. By the 1540s the Catholic Church had begun to push back with a Counter-Reformation. In the visual arts this religious crisis led to Mannerism, with its often odd colors and distortions, but gradually resolved with the shaping of the Baroque as an instrument of the Counter-Reformation. By mid-century, all of this led to the beginning of more than 150 years of incessant and often extremely vicious warfare between Catholics and Protestants. Meanwhile, by 1522, when the survivors in Magellan's crew completed their journey around the planet—which thus proved definitively to be somewhat spherical and not a flat plate—that sense of the physical world that was new for so many led to a legion of exploratory voyages to see what was out there beyond Europe and the Mediterranean.

⁷The art critic, Louis Leroy, first used the term "impressionism" in a negative and very hostile review of the signal 1874 exhibition of works by Pissaro, Monet, Renoir, and others. He was referring specifically to the rough-hewn, rather sketchy style of Monet's 1872 painting "Impression, Sunrise," which to Leroy seemed unfinished—like other works in the exhibit, a "mere impression" of a scene, not a *real* painting.

1 Impressionism amplified the ways we think about painting by adding
 2 another kind of nuance. The goal of Raphael and Michelangelo or Leonardo and
 3 of their 15th-century predecessors, their contemporaries in Northern Europe and
 4 those who followed in their footsteps as far as Jacques-Louis David in the early
 5 19th century was to create the illusion that one is viewing three-dimensional
 6 entities in a volumetric space, rather than pigment on a flat surface.⁸ There is no
 7 evidence of the paintbrush and its bristles on the Raphael canvas that we have
 8 discussed. Impressionism thrusts the fact that one is looking at a *painting* in
 9 one's face: the brushstrokes are powerfully present—horse hairs from the brush
 10 may be often seen still embedded in the paint—and more importantly, the
 11 viewer, not the painter, *completes the painting*. That is: given how spectroscopy
 12 works and the relationship of different colors to each other, and given optics and
 13 how the human eye works, not only do any two of us not see, say, red or blue as
 14 exactly the same pigment, but when we look at an Impressionist work, its surface
 15 contrived of thick blobs, strokes, and dabs of paint, each of us will need to stand
 16 at a different distance from the canvas for those blobs and dabs of color to
 17 coalesce into a given image—indeed, one viewer may find his or her distance
 18 changing at different times of day, under changing light conditions and/or
 19 different levels of eye-fatigue.

20 So when in 1894, Claude Monet (1840-1926) painted more than 30 versions
 21 of the facade of the Cathedral in Rouen, he was playing on these ideas. It was
 22 not the cathedral that he was depicting, but rather the light that worked its way
 23 across the edifice, from one time of day to the next and one season to the next,
 24 so that, as much as that solid mountain of architecture—a conceptual descendant
 25 in its way of *both* the Parthenon and the Acropolis on which it sits—remains
 26 unchanged, it never looks quite the same at any two different times. The
 27 immutable and the mutable, the divinely-contrived light and the humanly-
 28 contrived structure of divinely-contrived stone coalesce slightly differently in
 29 each image. And that image is finalized by the viewer and when and from where
 30 s/he looks at it.

31 That said, there is something consistently calm and calming about that
 32 structure as the artist keeps visiting it and as we, the viewer, keep visiting it at
 33 different times and view it from slightly different focal points: it embodies a
 34 particular kind of visual *ethos*. Let us contrast this with the depiction of the
 35 church at Auvers-sur-Oise by Vincent Van Gogh (1853-90). The painting dates
 36 from 1890, although overall Van Gogh arrived later onto the scene than Monet,
 37 as what might be called a neo-Impressionist. He was, more than that, an
 38 Expressionist, which term refers to intense emotional visual expression: his
 39 rendition, like so many of his other works, be they landscapes or portraits, is
 40 fraught with *pathos*. His canvas vibrates with strident color—particularly the
 41 overweening sky of an almost oppressive blue, that resonates into the
 42 windows—and the walls of the structure seem to be panting, contracting and

⁸Leon Battista Alberti offered a carefully conceived recipe of how to accomplish this illusion in his three-volume 1435 work, *On Painting*, (*De Pictura*; it was written in Latin and translated a few later into Italian), which became a kind of scientific and philosophical textbook for painters in the generations that followed.

expanding, while the road and garden around the church present a delightfully chopped and aggressive pattern to the eye.

So, too, one may follow these contrastive and transformative patterns deeper into modernity and into the realm of abstract art. Dichotomous symbolic conceptions underpin the contrasting modes of Abstract Expressionism, in the Gestural versus Chromaticist works of Jackson Pollock versus those of Mark Rothko or Barnett Newman. Thus a work like Pollock's 1950 *Autumn Rhythms #30* reflects the explosion of the world, from Auschwitz to Hiroshima. Contrary to what most critics and art historians at the time asserted⁹ (and have for the most part asserted for the past 75 years)—that works like this are purely about form, color, line—like artists throughout history, and to whatever extent he is certainly concerned about these formal elements, Pollock (1912-56) is responding to what has been happening in the world across much of the first half of the twentieth century. Thus when one looks at this painting, one can seem to be hurtling into its depths, thanks to his instinctive sense of how different pigments interact with each other and with our eyes, but the size of the painting and the fact that it is unframed—the canvas and its colors wrap around the stretcher—means that there is no traditional separator between the painting and the world beyond it, to which it is very much connected. And Pollock's explosive response to the exploding world on his canvases is pure and powerful *pathos*.

By contrast, the Chromaticist (aka Color Field) Abstract Expressionists are trying to put the world *back together* on their canvases: they offer a calming *ethos*. Thus Mark Rothko (1903-70), for instance, in his 1950 *White Center*, draws the viewer's eye toward that center. The painting, in his canonical style, offers a trinity of rough-edged rectilinear color fields—like an abstract vertical triptych—where the agent that causes the canvas to scintillate is that element referenced in Genesis as beginning the ordering of the universe: *light*. It is not surprising that, when the De Menil family decided to build a meditative chapel near the museum that bears their name in Houston in 1964, they created a plain, unadorned, white-painted space, its walls simply hung with 16 large Rothko paintings.¹⁰

Barnett Newman (1905-70) is part of the same Chromaticist group as Rothko, and in paintings like *Covenant #6*, he causes the viewer's eye to be drawn to the center, to the thin white strip of color—he called such strips “zips”—that function simultaneously to pull the blue-hued surface to either side of the zip together and to drive them apart, effecting the beginning of a separation, facilitated by light, that resonates from the passage in Genesis 1:6-7 when the secondary act of divine creation was to separate the waters above from those below, initiating the diversity of our reality out of a primordial unity. Like Rothko, Newman's calm, *ethos*-suffused images restore the order of the universe on the microcosm of his canvasses, again and again.

⁹I am thinking in particular of the giants among the critics of that era, Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg, but the same view may be found subsequently, for example, in Barbara Rose's iconic *American Art Since 1900*.

¹⁰Alas, when the chapel opened seven years later, Rothko was not present, having succumbed to a deep depression and taken his own life in his studio the year before.

One might turn this abstract visual dialogue of *pathos* and *ethos* one further twist in considering canonical works by the third major Chromaticist Abstract Expressionist painter, Adolph Gottlieb (1903-74), whose *Burst* series may be seen to put the world back together but by suffusing its visual space with an internal dialogue between *pathos* and *ethos*. His 1961 *Untitled* painting, for example, unifies the field with white—that hue that simultaneously represents the absence of color and also, chemically speaking, the totality of color, and that offers an ability to stand in for the unifying force of light, which is comprised of the entire spectrum of color. Against this ground, the upper shape, a chaotic black form, filled with passion and *pathos*, engages in a dynamic dialogue with the lower shape, an ordered red form that suggests *ethos* in its calm structure—even as one might argue that the red *color* bespeaks *pathos* and the black color *ethos*.¹¹

The co-existence of these two forms and their potential underlying concepts within the same frame and field may be seen not only to stand in for the *ethos-pathos* dichotomy, but for the dichotomy for which *ethos* and *pathos* are one pair among many that stand in for the ultimate dichotomy within the human condition: mortality and immortality and the ironic, paradoxical notion of their co-existence within our same reality that first obsessed the Greeks three millennia ago. If these *ethos-pathos* contrasts reflect divergent responses to the human role in creation, destruction, and also re-creation in the mid-20th century, they are also a reminder—for every single one of the artists discussed in this narrative, is long dead and yet their work remains long discussed—that among the diverse parallel ways in which mortals may achieve immortality is by producing diverse and transformative works of art that persist through the centuries and which other humans discuss and explore long after the artists who created them are gone.

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¹¹For a more detailed discussion of how the Abstract Expressionists engaged the world and how in particular the Chromaticists wished to put it back together on their canvases, see Soltes, *Symbols of Faith*. Since the Chromaticists were, interestingly, mostly Jewish (these three leading figures were Jews), there is a more extensive discussion of their work and its purposes in Soltes, *Tradition and Transformation*.

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