

# MARK ROTHKO



1903-1970

# Colour Field Painting

Some artists use colours to evoke an emotion.

Their paintings inspire a subtle feeling when we look at them.

These paintings are always more vibrant when seen in real life.

“I’m interested only in expressing basic human emotions: tragedy, ecstasy, doom, and so on.”

-Mark Rothko

Mark Rothko  
Orange, Red and Red,  
1962  
Oil on canvas  
236.5 × 203.5 cm

Rothko wanted the large scale of his paintings to envelop the viewer. He asked that his largest pictures be hung “so that they must be first encountered at close quarters, so that the first experience is to be within the picture.”

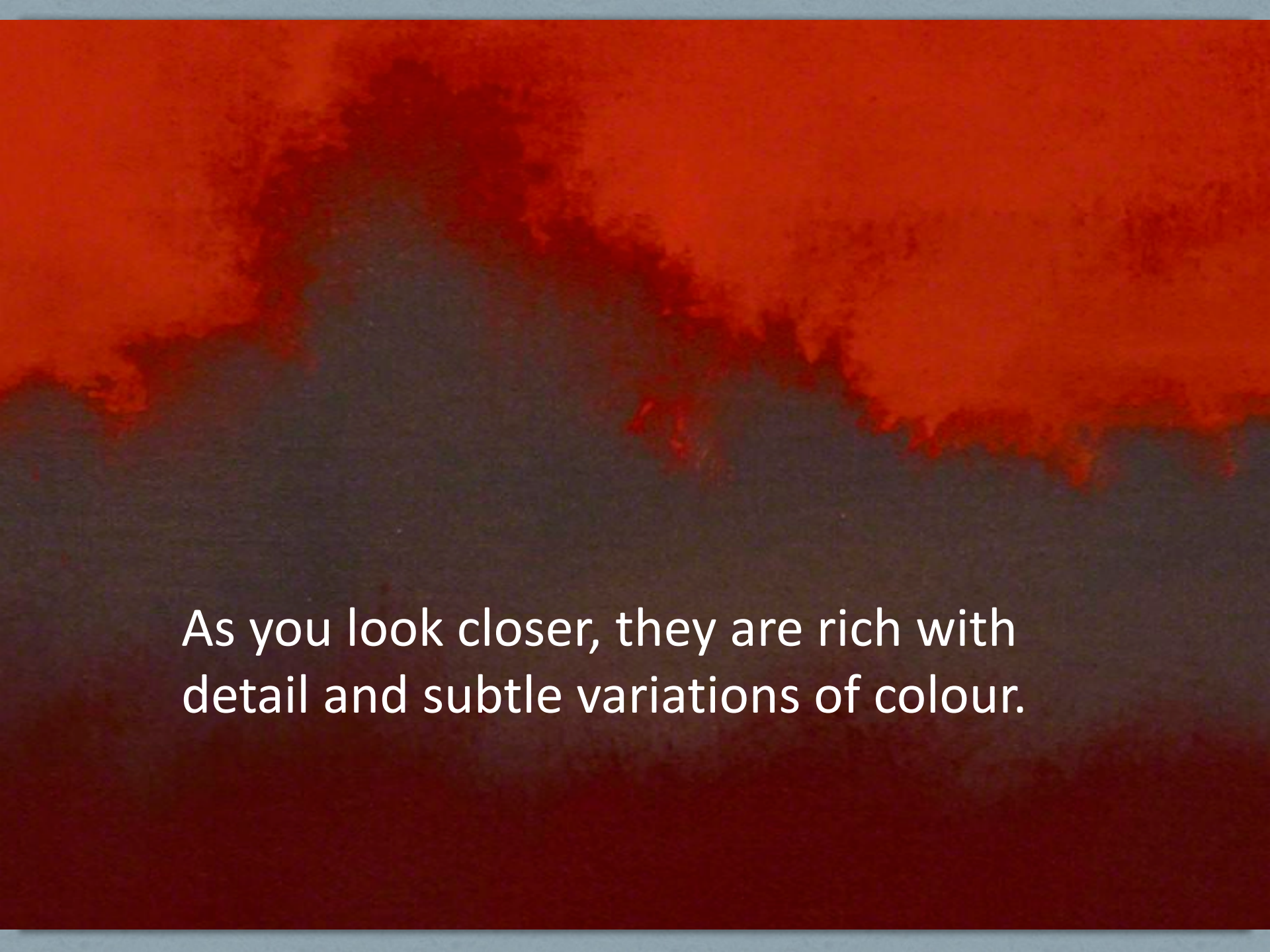
*(Art Since 1950)*



These paintings are more than 2 meters high  
Imagine standing up close to the painting...  
entirely surrounded by colour



At first glance, they are just colour.

The background of the slide is an abstract composition. The upper portion is dominated by a vibrant, textured orange-red color, resembling a close-up of a flame or a thick layer of paint. This transitions into a darker, more muted blue-grey area that also has a visible texture, possibly representing a different material or a shadowed part of the same surface. The overall effect is one of depth and rich color variation.

As you look closer, they are rich with detail and subtle variations of colour.

Mark Rothko  
Orange, Red and Red,  
1962  
Oil on canvas  
236.5 × 203.5 cm



What emotion do these colours inspire?

Love?

Hate?

Fear?

What do you  
associate with  
the colour  
blue?

Mark Rothko  
Blue and Grey  
1962  
Oil on canvas  
193 × 175 cm



# Task

Look closely at the blue image on the previous page.

Now write your answers to the following questions:

- What emotion or feeling does this express?
- Would a different colour have the same effect?
- Why do you think Rothko has paired these two colours?

# create

Create a piece of art that depicts an emotion.

Use paint if you have it. If not, what colourful resources do you have that you could use?

Limit your palette, using only one other colour

**DO NOT PAINT IMAGES (pictures)**

# evaluate

---

- What colours have you used?
- What sense, emotion or feeling do you get from looking at your painting?
- Ask others in your household these questions and gain their responses.
- Did they respond as you wanted them to?

# resources

- Rothko cover image photographed by Emily Osann at the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC.
- Other images and details from [www.art.sy.com](http://www.art.sy.com)
- National Gallery of Art, Washington (1999). *Teaching Art Since 1950*. Washington: Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art.