

FAMILY KIT

TO EXPLORE
THE EXHIBITION
"ROTHKO IN FLORENCE"



FOR AGES 5 AND UP

Mark Rothko taught art for 20 years to children aged 3 and up. His students called him "Rothkie" and remembered him as "a big bear of a man, the friendliest, nicest, warmest member of the entire school".

Here are five simple ideas he shared for future artists and art lovers:

1. YOU CAN MAKE ART AS EASILY AS YOU TALK OR SING

You can use your imagination and creativity anytime, even if you've never taken an art class. Art is for everyone!

2. FIND YOUR OWN SPECIAL WAY TO EXPRESS YOURSELF

You can use words, sounds, drawings, dancing, photos, or anything else you can think of. There is no right or wrong in art: your style is yours alone!

3. BEFORE DRAWING SHAPES, TRY EXPERIMENTING WITH COLORS

Use them freely and have fun. You can look at other artists for ideas—but make your own creations.

4. MAKE YOUR OWN ART SHOW

Hang your drawings on your bedroom walls, in your house, or outside in the streets.

5. ART HELPS US BECOME CREATIVE AND FREE THINKERS

You don't have to become an artist when you grow up to love art. You can always enjoy art by visiting museums and exhibitions.

These ideas are freely inspired by two books written by Mark Rothko: *The Scribble Book* and *New Training for Future Artists and Art Lovers*.

The Family Kit is a tool for exploring the exhibition *Rothko in Florence*, with observation tips, curiosities, and activities to be shared as a family.

The Kit takes the form of a map and suggests a six-stop route through the rooms of Palazzo Strozzi to discover the artworks and enjoy yourselves together.

The Family Kit is a project of the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi.

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WHAT IS THE FAMILY KIT?

The Family Kit is a tool for exploring the exhibition together as a family.

- Follow the map
- Decide how much time to spend at each part of the tour
- You may use the steps under the windows to rest
- Keep a safe distance from the artworks and keep attention of other visitors

THE EXHIBITION ROTHKO IN FLORENCE

The exhibition you are about to visit is dedicated to Mark Rothko, one of the most important artists of the twentieth century. At Palazzo Strozzi, it brings together small paintings, sketches, and very large canvases (around 70 works in total!), selected by the artist's son Christopher together with curator Elena Geuna. The works you will see come from museums and collections all over the world, including London, Paris, New York, and Washington.

WHO IS MARK ROTHKO?



He was born in 1903 in Dvinsk, in the Russian Empire (now Latvia), with the name Marcus Rotkovitch. He was the youngest in his family: he had two brothers, Moise and Albert, and a sister, Sonia. His father Jacob was a pharmacist, and his mother Chaya grew up in a rich family.

WHEN HE WAS 10 YEARS OLD

with his mother and sister, he left for the
UNITED STATES.

After a 12-day sea voyage, they arrived in New York and continued by train to Portland, where his father and brothers had moved a few years earlier.

At about 20 YEARS OLD he moved to NEW YORK

where he attended art classes and spent many hours in the city's

MUSEUMS such as the Metropolitan Museum and the MoMA, which opened in 1929.

In this period he painted works with figures and landscapes and taught art classes for children and teenagers, encouraging them to experiment freely with shapes and colors.

AT 37 he began using the name Mark Rothko. Around the age of 40, his paintings became more and more abstract, until he created large canvases made only of COLOR.

He loved Italian art and traveled to Italy three times—in 1950, 1959, and 1966.

IN FLORENCE

he admired Fra Angelico's frescoes at San Marco and was very impressed by the entrance vestibule of the Laurentian Library, where Michelangelo created false windows that do not look outside.

AT 60 YEARS OLD

he was a famous artist, and his paintings were shown in major museums and exhibitions around the **WORLD.**

During this period, he worked on VERY BIG CANVASES

made especially for spaces where people could feel immersed in his colors.



AT THE AGE OF 63

in 1966 he returned to Europe with his wife and his two children: Kate, aged 16, and Christopher, aged 2. He visited Florence and Rome again to see the artworks he had loved on his previous trips.

He would never return to Europe, but past masterpieces continued to influence his

ART.

ROOM 2 MULTIFORMS

At the end of the 1940s, Rothko searched for his own style and created paintings known as *Multiforms*, where lines and shapes seem to dissolve. Some color shapes are regular and geometric, while others melt into one another. On the canvases you can see thick brushstrokes, light touches, areas without paint. It almost feels like the colors are moving!

Choose your favorite artwork in the room and take a deep look at it. Imagine you are looking through a foggy window and you can only see blurry patches of color. What could they be?

ROOM 3 POEM TO COLOR

In the 1950s, Rothko arrived at his classic style: large canvases where overlapping brushstrokes create rectangles of color. Rothko create powerful images through very few elements: simple shapes and colors.

You can try it too with using only a few words to create a short and simple poem. Choose a painting in the room and get inspired:
1st line - Say the color that catches your eye the most.
2nd line - In a short sentence, tell what that color is doing in the painting.
3rd line - Imagine a sound for this artwork.
Would you like to give your poem a title?



ROOM 1 A SELF-PORTRAIT

In the middle of the room there is the self-portrait Rothko painted when he was 33 years old. He shows himself wearing glasses and a red tie: **what impression do you get of him?** On the walls around you there are paintings he made between the 1930s and 1940s. At first, you can easily recognize what you see: a woman in red in the subway, two girls looking out of a window, a city. As time goes by, the figures become less and less defined.

Start at the entrance and walk all the way to the end of the room. As you go, look carefully and see how his paintings changed over ten years!



ROOM 4 INSIDE THE ARTWORK

Rothko did not like to explain his paintings, and he often didn't give them titles. But he cared a lot about how they were placed in the room. He wanted them to hang a bit lower, just like when he painted them. He also suggested looking at them from very close, so you can feel surrounded by the colors.

Now it's your turn to explore without using words. Choose a painting in the room: look at it from very close, from far away, move all the way to the left, all the way to the right, and then to the center. Finally, turn around: Rothko said it is possible to feel the presence of some paintings even with your back to them. Can you feel the painting you chose without looking at it?



ROOMS 9-10 WHERE COLORS MEET

In the last years of his life, Rothko made paintings that look very simple: just two colors and a white frame. He chose to keep only what was really important.

Think about everything that belongs to you and imagine removing all that is not necessary: what remains?

Often, the apparently simplest things contain a complexity that is not visible at first glance and reveals itself over time—just like these works by Rothko. If you observe them carefully, you can notice the nuances, the brushstrokes and the line where the colors meet.

Follow it slowly to the last artwork: where does the line take you?

ROOM 8 DO ABSOLUTELY NOTHING

From the late 1950s, the colors became darker and more intense. To really see all the tiny changes and shades, you need to look slowly and carefully. Rothko himself would look at his canvases for a long time before each brushstroke. His paintings are made for attentive and silent observation. His son Christopher said: "He didn't make paintings to look at, but paintings into which one must enter".

Choose a painting and the distance from which to observe it. Make yourself comfortable (sitting or standing). Take a breath and spend as much time as you can just being with the painting without doing anything at all.

