

University of South Florida Contemporary Art Museum
Helen Frankenthaler: A Brief Biographical Timeline

- 1928: Born December 12th in New York City. Grows up in the wealthy Upper East Side of Manhattan. Her father (Alfred) was a prominent New York State Supreme Court judge. Her mother (Martha) had emigrated with her family from Germany as an infant.
- Childhood: Youngest of 3 girls. Privileged background; progressive and intellectual Jewish family.
- Early
Schooling: Manhattan's exclusive [Brearley School](#)
- 1940: Her loving and doting father dies of cancer, impacting Helen deeply.
- Later
Schooling: The Dalton School (Mexican modernist painter Rufino Tamayo was one of her teachers)
- 1949: Graduates from Bennington College in Vermont. Studied under Paul Feeley (an admirer of Picasso), whom she credits for her understanding pictorial composition and cubism.
- 1950: Spends the summer in Provincetown, MA. Meets Clement Greenberg (19 years Helen's senior), the most influential art critic at the time, who introduces her to the professional art scene. Has a 5-year relationship with him.
Her work, *Beach* (1950), is exhibited. Sees Jackson Pollock's work for the first time.
- 1952: Develops Soak Stain technique. Creates *Mountains and Sea* (1952); it is included in art exhibition
- 1957: Meets abstract expressionist painter Robert Motherwell
- 1958: Marries Motherwell. Known as the "golden couple" in art circles and for their lavish entertaining.
- 1960: The term "color field" painting is used to describe Frankenthaler's work
- 1963: Frankenthaler begins using acrylic (rather than oil) paints
- 1971: Frankenthaler and Motherwell divorce.
- 1994: Marries Stephen M. DuBrul, Jr., an investment banker
- 2001: Receives National Medal of Arts
- 2011: Dies on December 27, age 83 in Darien, Connecticut