

# JASPER JOHNS

b. May 15, 1930

**Jasper Johns is among the leading artists of the 20th century. His works are on display in major museums worldwide.**

*“To be an artist you have to give up everything, including the desire to be a good artist.”*

Jasper Johns is one of America's most successful and influential contemporary artists. His paintings and prints, often incorporating objects and symbols from popular culture, inspired a new generation of artists and laid the groundwork for the Pop Art movement.

Johns was born in Allendale, South Carolina. “In the place where I was a child, there were no artists and no art,” says Johns. The son of divorced parents, Johns grew up being passed among relatives. It was such an unhappy childhood, Johns says, he was “dying” to get away from it.

In 1949, the aspiring artist moved to New York City. In New York, he explored the art scene and developed a circle of creative contemporaries, including composer John Cage, dancer Merce Cunningham and painter Robert Rauschenberg, with whom he developed a romantic and professional relationship.

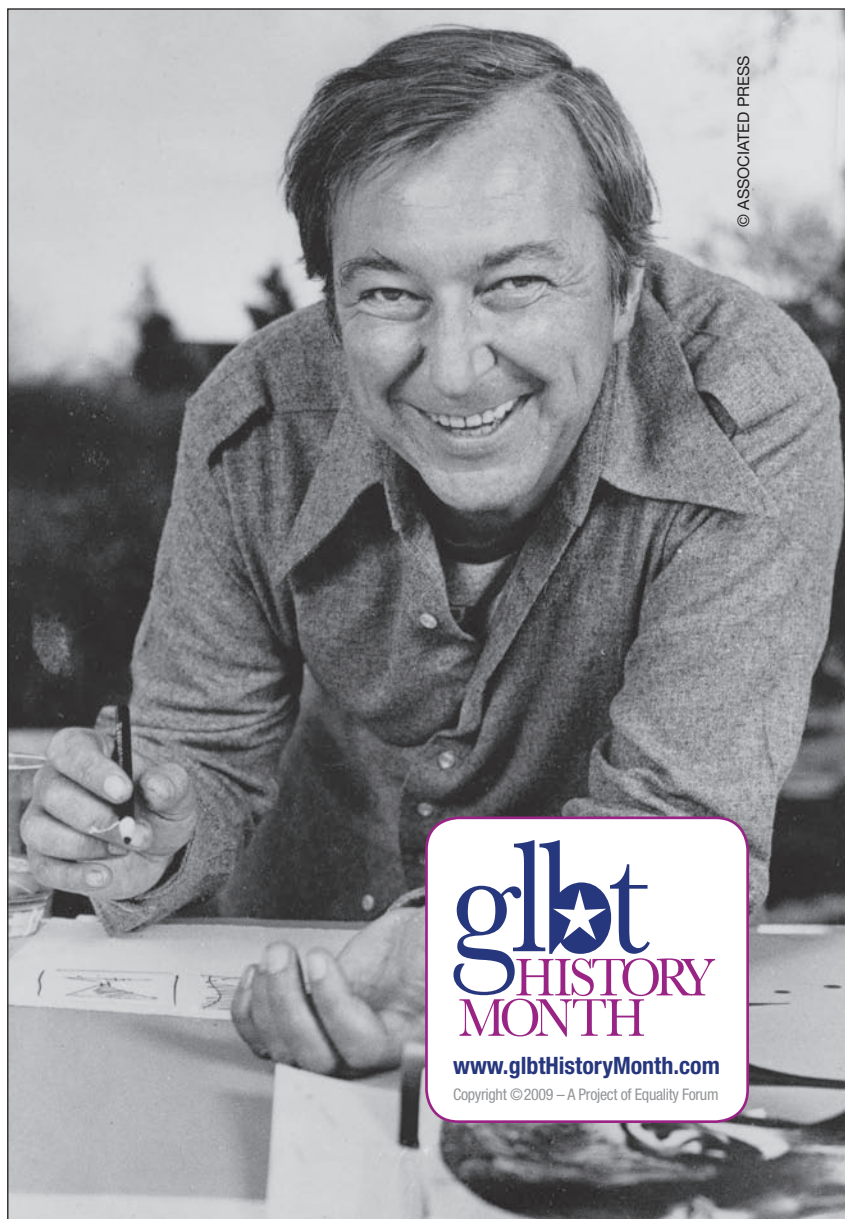
In 1958, gallery owner Leo Castelli, who discovered Johns, was so impressed with the young artist that he offered him a solo show. At that exhibition, the Museum of Modern Art purchased three pieces, launching Johns as a major influence in contemporary art.

“Flag” (1954-1955) is Johns's best-known painting and considered by many his most important work. His use of classical iconography—flags, maps, targets, letters and numbers—became the hallmark of his early works.

Johns is widely recognized for the distinctive surface treatments of his paintings. With the use of media such as encaustic (paint mixed with melted wax) and plaster relief, his innovative techniques and experimentation made Johns a breakthrough artist.

In 1998, Johns's “White Flag” was sold to the Metropolitan Museum of Art for more than \$20 million. In 2006, his “False Start” sold for \$80 million—the highest price ever paid for a painting by a living artist.

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