

Willem de Kooning (1904-1997) Quotes

1. Dutch-born American painter; born in Rotterdam, Holland, on April 24, 1904; suffered Alzheimer's Disease in 1990, which prevented further work for the remaining seven years of his life - died on March 19, 1997, at his home in East Hampton, New York.
2. A leading artist of the abstract expressionist movement of the 1940s and 1950s.
3. **Abstract Expressionism:-** new American style, developed mostly in New York City.
4. *Abstract* - most of the new art eschewed all traces of visible reality; *expressionism* - appeared to have been created through uncontrolled and sometimes violent painterly gestures.
5. **Action painting:-** a style of abstract painting that uses techniques such as the dribbling or splashing of paint to achieve a spontaneous effect.

- An artist is forced by others to paint out of his own free will.
- Art never seems to make me peaceful or pure.
- I am always in the picture somewhere. The amount of space I use I am always in, I seem to move around in it, and there seems to be a time when I lose sight of what I wanted to do, and then I am out of it. If the picture has a countenance, I keep it. If it hasn't, I throw it away.
- I don't paint to live, I live to paint.
- I make pictures and someone comes in and calls it art.
- I might work on a painting for a month, but it has to look like I painted it in a minute.
- I thought Mondrian was phenomenal. he made paintings that were wholly new, that didn't exist.
- I wish I hadn't. I was so modest then that I was vain. Some of them were good, a part of the real me. Just as Van Gogh's *Potato Eaters* is good, as good as anything he painted later in the 'true' Van Gogh style.
- If you go from picture to picture you get all mixed up. So you say to yourself, 'What am I interested in?' and go look at that painting.
- If you pick up some paint with your brush and make somebody's nose with it, this is rather ridiculous when you think of it, theoretically or philosophically. It's really absurd to make an image, like a human image, with paint, today.
- If you had your own idea, that was it, you were stuck with it. The history of painting, however, contained endless inventions which the living painter could make his own. Even inventing a thing that had already been invented was an act of creation. De Kooning likes to call this 'inventing the harpsichord' -- the fact that we have the harpsichord, and even the piano that superseded it, does not prevent the invention that brought it into being from being legitimately repeated.
- In art, one idea is as good as another. If one takes the idea of trembling, for instance, all of a sudden most art starts to tremble. Michelangelo starts to tremble. El Greco starts to tremble. All the Impressionists start to tremble.

- My interest in desperation lies only in that sometimes I find myself having become desperate. Very seldom do I start out that way. I can see of course that, in the abstract, thinking and all activity is rather desperate.
- New York is a great city, but in the long run I got kind of dried out by everything happening there day and night. I was less and less able to work regularly.
- Once, after finishing a picture, I thought I would stop for awhile, take a trip, do things -- the next time I thought of this, I found five years had gone by.
- Style is a fraud. I always felt the Greeks were hiding behind their columns.
- The attitude that nature is chaotic and that the artist puts order into it is a very absurd point of view, I think. All that we can hope for is to put some order into ourselves.
- The trouble with being poor is that it takes up all of your time.
- Whatever an artist's personal feelings are, as soon as an artist fills a certain area on the canvas or circumscribes it, he becomes historical. He acts from or upon other artists.