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### 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