



Shoot for the Stars

The Space Race, a rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States for spaceflight dominance, captivated Alma Woodsey Thomas. As the U.S. explored uncharted territory, the artist did too. Thomas landed on her abstract style just before the first astronauts set foot on the moon in 1969.



Orion, 1973

Take a closer look

Alma Woodsey Thomas (1891–1978) created her signature “Alma Stripes” by allowing the unpainted canvas to show between her freehand dabs of paint. Though linear in nature, her vertical lines and rectangular dashes are not perfectly geometric.

Something to talk about

For Thomas, red symbolized the power required to break from Earth's gravity. Note the variations of that hue in *Orion*. What would you name them to describe this painting to someone who couldn't see it?

In her own words

“The use of color in my paintings is of paramount importance to me. Through color I have sought to concentrate on beauty and happiness, rather than on man's inhumanity to man.”

Who knew?

Born in the segregated south, the artist moved with her family to Washington, D.C., in 1907. The house that she called home and studio until her death still stands at 1530 15th Street, NW. It bears a plaque recognizing Thomas's artistic contributions.

Alma Woodsey Thomas, *Orion*, 1973; Acrylic on canvas, 59% x 54 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; © Estate of Alma Woodsey Thomas; Photograph by Lee Stalworth

