Composition #111
by Ryan Bush
What is Abstract Photography?
more representational  more abstract
Palm #3
by Ryan Bush
Agave Design 2, ca.1920
by Imogen Cunningham

Jerome 21, 1949
by Aaron Siskind

Blast Furnace, 1927
by Charles Sheeler

Cape Cod 1972
by Harry Callahan

Empty Room 1992
by Mark Citret
Bear Print, 1997-2000
by Brice Marden

Ocean Park 48, 1971
by Richard Diebenkorn

White & Brick on Light Red, 1954
by Mark Rothko

Number 8, 1949
by Jackson Pollock

Nini’s Painting 1971
by Cy Twombly

Composition #4, 1942
by Piet Mondrian
“But what IS it?”
Bass Clef
by Ryan Bush
Edward Weston

Pepper, 1930
by Edward Weston

Nautilus Shell, 1927
by Edward Weston
Different ways of seeing
Three levels of seeing

1. Ordinary Sight
2. True Seeing
3. Creative Imagination
“The most pressing of tasks… is to lift the veil that prevents the self from seeing itself and others.”

--William Chittick
“Art does not reproduce the visible, rather it makes it visible.”

Paul Klee

Sign in Yellow, 1935
by Paul Klee

Static-Dynamic Gradation, 1923
by Paul Klee

"Art does not reproduce the visible, rather it makes it visible.”
“The visualization of a photograph involves the intuitive search for meaning, shape, form, texture, and the projection of the image-format on the subject. The image forms in the mind—is visualized... The creative artist is constantly roving the worlds without, and creating new worlds within.”
“The light of eyesight or unveiling [true seeing]... and the light of insight or knowledge [creative imagination]”

“The sensory and suprasensory lights are ranked in layers, some of which are more excellent than others.”

ibn ‘Arabi
1165-1240
“The visible which cannot be seen... is perceptible only by the Active Imagination... A mystic perception is required... to perceive [the deeper reality] through the figures which they manifest...

The ‘place’ of this encounter is... in the manner of a bridge joining the two banks of a river. ... A method of understanding which transmutes sensory data and rational concepts into symbols.”

-- Henry Corbin
Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179)

“The sensory becomes a bridge to the eternal.”
"I believe abstraction is real, probably more real than nature."
"That which they call abstract is the most realistic, because what is real is not the exterior but the idea, the essence of things."
“The place or the medium of realization is neither mind nor matter, but that intermediate realm of subtle reality which can be adequately expressed only by the symbol.”
Imaginal Worlds
Avicenna (ibn Sina)
980-1037

ibn ‘Arabi
1165-1240
“The mundus imaginalis is the realm where invisible realities become visible, and corporeal things are spiritualized.”

-- William Chittick

“The imagination, magical intermediary between thought and being, incarnation of thought in image, and presence of the image in being.”

-- Alexandre Koyré

“[The beings created by Active Imagination] subsist with an independent existence [of their own type] in the intermediate world.”

-- Henry Corbin
“The soul’s ‘storehouse of imagination’ is full of images derived from both the outward and the inward worlds. Each image is a mixture of subtlety and density, luminosity and darkness, clarity and murkiness.”

-- William Chittick
Cosmology in Mystical Islam

Divine World (God)
World of Spirits (angels, abstract meanings)
Imaginal World (jinns, autonomous imagination)
Conjoined Imagination (personal fantasies)
Sensory World (our ordinary world)
Multiple Visions
Active Imagination
With all the veils that so often cover our sight, whenever we are able to lift the veils, we have a responsibility to share what we have seen.

We all need to bring more consciousness into this world by building bridges to the imaginal world.
Thank you.