



I didn't start out thinking of them as portraits . . . but gradually they did become a little less formal and more moody. There were times – though not all the time – that I definitely saw parts of myself in the horses.

SUSAN ROTHENBERG

Susan Rothenberg

***Cabin Fever*, 1976**

Acrylic and tempera on canvas

67 x 84 1/8 inches

Collection of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth,

Museum purchase, Sid W. Richardson Foundation Endowment Fund and an anonymous donor

Acquired in 1991

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Created during a time in which Minimalist and post-Minimalist art dominated much of the art world with its simple, abstract language, Susan Rothenberg's paintings of horses were emblematic of what many younger artists were interested in – re-exploring the power of imagery. In some ways, Rothenberg used the ideas of the Minimalist and post-Minimalist artists in *Cabin Fever*, with her limited color palette and division of the composition into two equal parts. The departure in her work is the horse, caught in mid-run or mid-jump within the frame of the canvas. The image of the horse is a metaphor for Rothenberg's psyche in some ways. In fact, in 1974, Rothenberg took Polaroid photographs of herself in a similar position as studies for paintings that were never produced. In *Cabin Fever*, the horse is captured, perhaps stuck, in motion. We see the horse in two states – the orange shape outlined in black and the black shape behind it – suggesting the repetitive movement, or twitching, of the animal caught within the frame of the canvas. As the title suggests, the work is about the feeling of being trapped in a place, or as Rothenberg puts it, "when you go nowhere." Like many of the artists of the time, Rothenberg was only beginning to explore the emotional and psychological content of metaphors and imagery in her work.