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Pollock, Jackson (1912-56). American painter, the commanding figure of the Abstract Expressionist movement.

He began to study painting in 1929 at the Art Students' League, New York, under the Regionalist painter Thomas Hart Benton. During the 1930s he worked in the manner of the Regionalists, being influenced also by the Mexican muralist painters (Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros) and by certain aspects of [Surrealism](#). From 1938 to 1942 he worked for the Federal Art Project. By the mid 1940s he was painting in a completely abstract manner, and the 'drip and splash' style for which he is best known emerged with some abruptness in 1947. Instead of using the traditional easel he affixed his canvas to the floor or the wall and poured and dripped his paint from a can; instead of using brushes he manipulated it with 'sticks, trowels or knives' (to use his own words), sometimes obtaining a heavy impasto by an admixture of 'sand, broken glass or other foreign matter'. This manner of Action painting had in common with Surrealist theories of automatism that it was supposed by artists and critics alike to result in a direct expression or revelation of the unconscious moods of the artist.

Pollock's name is also associated with the introduction of the All-over style of painting which avoids any points of emphasis or identifiable parts within the whole canvas and therefore abandons the traditional idea of composition in terms of relations among parts. The design of his painting had no relation to the shape or size of the canvas -- indeed in the finished work the canvas was sometimes docked or trimmed to suit the image. All these characteristics were important for the new American painting which matured in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

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Biographical Information:

Jackson Pollock was born in Wyoming in 1912 and died on Long Island, New York in 1956. He was a leader of the New York action painters and a major contributor to Abstract Expressionism. He studied from 1929-1931 at the Art Students League in New York City

and started working on government art projects in the late 1930s. Abstract Expressionism is characterized by a lack of representation and by an emotional approach to concept and execution. The movement is often called "The New York School" or "action painting". Its art results from the fusion of various influences, notably surrealism, synthetic cubism, and neoplasticism. Pollock's early abstract style is seen in "The She-Wolf" (1943) and "Eyes in the Heat" (1946). His technique, which for several years involved the dripping and spattering of paint upon the surface rather than the conventional mode of brushing. By 1947 Pollock started to experiment with all-over painting, a labyrinth of lines, splatters, and paint drips from which emerged the great "drip" or "poured" paintings of the next few years. "Number 1 (Lavender Mist)" (1950) is one of his most beautiful drip paintings, with its intricate web of oil colors mixed with black enamel and aluminum paint. Pollock quickly became an international symbol of the new American painting following World War II: he came from out West, became a huge force on the New York art scene, living hard, drinking hard, and then dying violently in a car accident at a young age. He achieved a stature of mythic proportions in the 1950s. He was married to the Brooklyn-born painter Lee Krasner (1908-1984). Action Painting referred to an artistic style in which the process of painting was as important as the completed picture. In Pollock's paintings the elements of intuition and accident play a large and deliberate part, that being one of the major contributions of Abstract Expressionism, which had found its own inspiration in Surrealism's psychic automatism. At the same time, however, Pollock relied on his skills acquired by years of practice and reflection. In the mid 1950s, Pollock experienced a period of crisis and doubt, which led to major depression, as a result of the success of his drip paintings. He changed his style to return to traditional brush painting. The black-and-white canvases and the paintings that followed his depression suggested a new phase, unfortunately terminated by Pollock's accidental death in 1956.

Jackson Pollock (1912-1956)

Paul Jackson Pollock was born January 18, 1912, in Cody, Wyoming. He grew up in Arizona and California and in 1928 began to study painting at the Manual Arts High School in Los Angeles. In the fall of 1930 Pollock came to New York and studied under Thomas Hart Benton at the Art Students League. Benton encouraged him throughout the succeeding decade. By the early 1930s Pollock admired the murals of Jose Clemente Orozco and Diego Rivera. Although he traveled widely throughout the United States during the 1930s, much of Pollock's time was spent in New York, where he settled permanently in 1935 and worked on the WPA Federal Art Project from 1935 to 1942. In 1936 he worked in David Alfaro Siqueiros's experimental workshop in New York.

Pollock's first solo show was held at Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century gallery in New York in 1943. Guggenheim gave him a contract that lasted through 1947, permitting him to devote all his time to painting. Prior to 1947 Pollock's work reflected the influence of [Picasso](#) and Surrealism. During the early 1940s he contributed paintings to several exhibitions of Surrealist and abstract art, including *Natural, Insane, Surrealist Art* at Art of This Century in 1943, and *Abstract and Surrealist Art in America*, organized by Sidney Janis at the Mortimer Brandt Gallery in New York in 1944.

From the fall of 1945, when Lee Krasner and Pollock were married, they lived in the Springs, East Hampton, New York. In 1952 Pollock's first solo show in Paris opened at the Studio Paul Facchetti and his first retrospective was organized by Clement Greenberg at Bennington College in Vermont. He was included in many group exhibitions, including the annuals at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, from 1946 and the Venice *Biennale* in 1950. Although his work was widely known and exhibited internationally, he never traveled outside the United States. He was killed in an automobile accident on August 11, 1956, in the Springs, East Hampton, New York.

Pollock, Jackson, 1912–56, American painter, b. Cody, Wyo. He studied (1929–31) in New York City, mainly under Thomas Hart [Benton](#), but he was more strongly influenced by A. P. [Ryder](#) and the Mexican muralists, especially [Siqueiros](#). From 1938 to 1942, Pollock worked on the Federal Art Project in New York City. Affected by [surrealism](#) and also by [Picasso](#), he moved toward a highly abstract art in order to express, rather than illustrate, feeling. His experimentations led to the development of his famous “drip” technique, in which he energetically drew or “dripped” complicated linear rhythms onto enormous canvases, which were often placed flat on the floor. He sometimes applied paint directly from the tube, and at times also used aluminum paint to achieve a glittery effect. His vigorous attack on the canvas and intense devotion to the very act of painting led to the term “action painting.” Pollock had become a symbol of the new artistic revolt, [abstract expressionism](#), by the time he was killed in an automobile accident. His paintings are in many major collections, including museums in New York City, San Francisco, Dallas, and Chicago. Pollock was married to the painter Lee [Krasner](#)

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During the 1950s Pollock continued to produce figurative or quasi-figurative black and white works and delicately modulated paintings in rich impasto as well as the paintings in the new all-over style. He was strongly supported by advanced critics, but was also subject to much abuse and sarcasm as the leader of a still little comprehended style; in 1956 Time magazine called him 'Jack the Dripper'.

By the 1960s, however, he was generally recognized as the most important figure in the most important movement of this century in American painting, but a movement from which artists were already in reaction (Post-Painterly Abstraction). His unhappy personal life (he was an alcoholic) and his premature death in a car crash contributed to his legendary status. In 1944 Pollock married **Lee Krasner** (1911-84), who was an Abstract Expressionist painter of some distinction, although it was only after her husband's death that she received serious critical recognition.

Breaking the ice

It was Jackson Pollock who blazed an astonishing trail for other Abstract Expressionist painters to follow. De Kooning said, "He broke the ice", an enigmatic phrase suggesting that Pollock showed what art could become with his 1947 drip paintings.

It has been suggested that Pollock was influenced by Native American sand paintings, made by trickling thin lines of colored sand onto a horizontal surface. It was not until 1947 that Pollock began his "action" paintings,

influenced by Surrealist ideas of "psychic automatism" (direct expression of the unconscious). Pollock would fix his canvas to the floor and drip paint from a can using a variety of objects to manipulate the paint.

[The Moon-Woman Cuts the Circle](#) (1943; 109.5 x 104 cm (43 x 41 in)) is an early Pollock, but it shows the passionate intensity with which he pursued his personal vision. This painting is based on a North American Indian myth. It connects the moon with the feminine and shows the creative, slashing power of the female psyche. It is not easy to say what we are actually looking at: a face rises before us, vibrant with power, though perhaps the image does not benefit from labored explanations. If we can respond to this art at a fairly primitive level, then we can also respond to a great abstract work such as *Lavender Mist*. If we cannot, at least we can appreciate the fusion of colors and the Expressionist feeling of urgency that is communicated. *Moon-Woman* may be a feathered haridan or a great abstract pattern; the point is that it works on both levels.



Paul Jackson Pollock was born January 28, 1912, in Cody, Wyoming. He grew up in Arizona and California and in 1928 began to study painting at the Manual Arts High School, Los Angeles. In the fall of 1930, Pollock moved to New York and studied under Thomas Hart Benton at the Art Students League. Benton encouraged him throughout the succeeding decade. By the early 1930s, Pollock knew and admired the murals of José Clemente Orozco and Diego Rivera. Although he traveled widely throughout the United States during the 1930s, much of Pollock's time was spent in New York, where he settled permanently in 1934 and worked on the WPA Federal Art Project from 1935 to 1942. In 1936, he worked in David Alfaro Siqueiros's experimental workshop in New York.

Pollock's first solo show was held at Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century gallery, New York, in 1943. Guggenheim gave him a contract that lasted through 1947, permitting him to devote all his time to painting. Prior to 1947, Pollock's work reflected the influence of [Pablo Picasso](#) and Surrealism [\[more\]](#). During the early 1940s, he contributed paintings to several exhibitions of Surrealist and abstract art, including *Natural, Insane, Surrealist Art* at Art of This Century in 1943, and *Abstract and Surrealist Art in America*, organized by Sidney Janis at the Mortimer Brandt Gallery, New York, in 1944.

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Jackson Pollock (1912-1956)

Paul Jackson Pollock nasce a Cody, Wyoming, il 28 gennaio 1912. Passa la gioventù in Arizona e in California, e nel 1928 incomincia a studiare pittura alla Manual Arts High School di Los Angeles.

Nell'autunno del 1930 si reca a New York e studia all'Art Students League avendo per insegnante Thomas Hart Benton, che lo incoraggerà nei dieci anni seguenti. Nei primi anni '30 Pollock conosce e apprezza le pitture murali di José Clemente Orozco e Diego Rivera; per tutto il decennio viaggia molto negli Stati Uniti, ma per la maggior parte del tempo vive a New York, dove si stabilisce definitivamente nel 1935 e dove lavora per WPA Federal Art Project dal 1935 al 1942; sempre a New York opera nella bottega di David Alfaro Siqueiros nel 1936.

Nel 1943 tiene la prima personale alla galleria di Peggy Guggenheim a New York, Art of This Century; Peggy Guggenheim gli offre un contratto che dura fino al 1947 e che gli permette di dedicarsi esclusivamente alla pittura. Nelle opere anteriori al 1947 si avverte l'influenza di [Pablo Picasso](#) e del surrealismo; nei primi anni '40 partecipa a diverse mostre di arte surrealista e astratta, tra cui *Natural, Insane, Surrealist Art*, alla galleria Art of This Century nel 1943, e *Abstract and Surrealist Art in America*, allestita da Sidney Janis alla Mortimer Brandt Gallery di New York nel 1944.

Nell'autunno del 1945 sposa Lee Krasner e si stabilisce a The Springs, East Hampton. Nel 1952 ha luogo la prima personale a Parigi, allo Studio Paul Facchetti, e la prima retrospettiva al Bennington College nel Vermont, organizzata da Clement Greenberg. Partecipa a diverse collettive, tra cui quelle annuali al Whitney Museum of American Art di New York a partire dal 1946, e alla Biennale di Venezia nel 1950. I suoi lavori sono conosciuti ed esposti in tutto il mondo, ma non viaggia mai fuori dagli Stati Uniti. Muore in un incidente automobilistico a The Springs l'11 agosto 1956.

Biography:

Jackson Pollock grew up on the west coast, influenced by the art of the Native American and Mexican cultures in his area. He also was impressed by the brash techniques of Benton and the Regionalists. One of his other interests, psychology, found its way into Pollock's work. In the Surrealist style, he began to paint spontaneously, as a way to depict subconscious thoughts and feelings. Pollock's alcoholism and misunderstood paintings pushed him into isolation until 1947, when he introduced his "drip" technique. This process of dripping paint straight from the can onto a canvas made Pollock famous. However, his production decreased in the 1950's and he died in a car crash in 1956.

Pollock, Jackson (1912-1956), American abstract painter, who developed a technique for applying paint by pouring or dripping it onto canvases laid on the floor. With this method Pollock produced intricate interlaced webs of paint, as in *Black and White* (1948, private collection). Rapid and seemingly impulsive execution like Pollock's became a hallmark of [abstract expressionism](#), a movement that emphasized the spontaneous gestures of the artist.

Born in Cody, Wyoming, Pollock moved to New York City in 1930 to study at the Art Students League with American artist [Thomas Hart Benton](#). Pollock's early paintings, realistic scenes of life in America, clearly reflect Benton's influence. As his career progressed, Pollock rejected his teacher's representational subject matter, but retained Benton's emphasis on rhythmic, dynamic composition. In New York, Pollock was also exposed to the work of Mexican mural painters [José Clemente Orozco](#) and [David Alfaro Siqueiros](#). Their experimental techniques, large scale, and use of industrial paints had a lasting impact on Pollock's work.

The [surrealism](#) movement was another significant influence upon Pollock, whose ideas about the relevance of the unconscious to artistic creativity coincided with his own experience. As part of treatment for alcoholism, Pollock underwent psychoanalysis; his therapists, who followed the teachings of Swiss psychiatrist [Carl Gustav Jung](#), encouraged him to analyze his drawings for clues to his unconscious mental processes. Surrealist artists had also hoped to tap into the unconscious through *automatism*, a technique in which the artist's hand wanders across the painting's surface with as little conscious control as possible. In early works such as *The She-Wolf* (1943, Museum of Modern Art, New York City), Pollock combined surrealist automatism with subject matter that reflects his interests in ancient sculpture, non-Western art, and the work of Spanish artist [Pablo Picasso](#).

After moving to a larger studio on Long Island in 1947, Pollock began creating his characteristic large-scale abstractions. He placed the canvas on the floor, attacked it from all directions, and poured paint directly on it. His new method resulted in part from his interest in Native American sand paintings, which are created on the ground with sand of various colors let loose from the hand. Typical of this period, *Autumn Rhythm* (1950, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City) is clearly abstract, since it makes no direct reference to the external world. However, Pollock described his abstraction as an attempt to evoke the rhythmic energy of nature (as the title *Autumn Rhythm* indicates).

Pollock reinforced this dynamism with compositions that emphasized all parts of the canvas equally and had no visual center of attention. Although the press often derided Pollock as a purely impulsive and untrained artist, in reality he used careful calculation to achieve his all-over compositions and to avoid emphasizing one area over another.

Although his dripping technique remained unchanged, Pollock reverted to figuration in 1951. In *Portrait and a Dream* (1953, Dallas Museum of Art, Texas), for example, interlaced streams of black paint on the left side of the canvas are fully abstract, but on the right side these black lines form a woman's head, which Pollock then filled in with patches of red, yellow, pink, and gray. He became less productive in the last years of his life, and died in an automobile accident in 1956.

Pollock's work proved remarkably influential on later artists: Color-field painters [Helen Frankenthaler](#) and [Morris Louis](#) adapted his paint-pouring technique. [Frank Stella](#) and [Robert Morris](#) made all-over composition a hallmark of the [minimal art](#) movement. Sculptors [Richard Serra](#) and [Eva Hesse](#) and performance artist [Allan Kaprow](#) retained Pollock's emphasis on the process of creation and pushed this emphasis even further.

Pollock, Jackson

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American painter, b. Cody, Wyo. He studied (1929-31) in New York City, mainly under Thomas Hart Benton but he was more strongly influenced by A. P. [Ryder](#) and the Mexican muralists, especially [Siqueiros](#). From 1935 to 1942, Pollock worked on the Federal Art Project in New York City. Affected by [surrealism](#) and [Dadaism](#), he moved toward a highly abstract art in order to express, rather than illustrate, feeling. His experiments led to the development of his famous "drip" technique, in which he energetically drew or complicated linear rhythms onto enormous canvases. He sometimes applied paint directly from the can. He also used aluminum paint to achieve a glittery effect. His vigorous attack on the canvas and his emphasis on the very act of painting led to the term "action painting." Pollock had become a symbol of the new movement, [abstract expressionism](#), when he was killed in an automobile accident. His paintings are in many museums, including museums in New York City, San Francisco, Dallas, and Chicago.

Pollock's poured paintings are as visually potent today as they were in the 1950s, when they first shocked the art world. Their appearance virtually shifted the focus of avant-garde art from Paris to New York, and their influence on the development of Abstract Expressionism — and on subsequent painting both in America and abroad — was enormous.

To many, the large eloquent canvases of 1950 are Pollock's greatest achievements. "Autumn Rhythm," painted in October of that year, exemplifies the extraordinary balance between accident and control that Pollock maintained over his technique. The words "poured" and "dripped," commonly used to describe his unorthodox creative process, which involved painting on unstretched canvas laid flat on the floor, hardly suggest the diversity of the artist's movements (flicking, splattering, and dribbling) or the lyrical, often spiritual, compositions they produced.

In "Autumn Rhythm," as in many of his paintings, Pollock first created a complex linear skeleton using black paint. For this initial layer the paint was diluted, so that it soaked into the length of unprimed canvas, thereby inextricably joining image and support. Over this black framework Pollock wove an intricate web of white, brown, and turquoise lines, which produce the contrary visual rhythms and sensations: light and dark, thick and thin, heavy and buoyant, straight and curved, horizontal and vertical. Textural passages that contribute to the painting's complexity — such as the pooled swirls where two colors meet and the wrinkled skins formed by the build-up of paint — are barely visible in the initial confusion of overlapping lines. Although Pollock's imagery is nonrepresentational, "Autumn Rhythm" is evocative of nature, not only in its title but also in its coloring, horizontal orientation, and sense of ground and space.

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