

On the floor I am more at ease, I feel nearer, more a part of the painting, since this way I can walk around in it, work from the four sides and be literally 'in' the painting.

-- Jackson Pollock, 1947.

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.



Male and Female

1942 (240 Kb); Oil on canvas, 73 ¼ x 49 in; Philadelphia Museum of Art



The Moon-Woman

1942 (170 Kb); Oil on canvas, 69 x 43 in; Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice



*Stenographic Figure*

1942 (180 Kb); Oil on canvas, 40 x 56 in; The Museum of Modern Art, New York



*Blue (Moby Dick)*

c. 1943 (150 Kb); Gouache and ink on composition board, 18 3/4 x 23 7/8 in; Ohara Museum of Art, Kurashiki



*The She-Wolf*

1943 (230 Kb); Oil, gouache, and plaster on canvas, 41 7/8 x 67 in; The Museum of Modern Art, New York



*The Key*

1946 (270 Kb); Oil on canvas, 59 x 84 in; The Art Institute of Chicago



*The Tea Cup*

1946 (230 Kb); Oil on canvas, 40 x 28 in; Collection Frieder Burda, Baden -



*Baden Easter and the Totem*

1953 (150 Kb); Oil on canvas, 84 1/4 x 58 in; The Museum of Modern Art, New York

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 harridan or a great abstract pattern; the point is that it works on both levels.

### Thomas Hart Benton

Thomas Hart Benton was born on April 15, 1889 in Neosho, Missouri. He spent most of his childhood in boarding schools and in Washington, D.C. and landed his first job as a cartoonist for the Joplin American in Missouri. Benton studied at the Art Institute of Chicago, resided

Bobbie king



briefly in Paris and New York City, then settled in Kansas City, working as an instructor of drawing/painting at the Kansas City Art Institute. His most famous pupil was the Abstract Expressionist Jackson Pollock; his well known Nebraska students at the Institute were Aaron Pyle and Bill Hammond.

Benton was part of the Regionalist movement and is well known for his mural paintings that depict common everyday scenes of Midwestern life. The figures in his works often appear cartoon-like through the way he distorts the bone and muscular structure of their faces. His most famous murals are located in the Missouri State Capitol in Jefferson City and in the Truman Library in Independence. Benton died January 19, 1975 in his studio.



Master **José Clemente Orozco** was born in Zappopan, Jalisco in 1883 and died in 1949. He studied at the School of Fine Arts. Orozco is known as the chronicler of the pain, suffering and misery of the Mexican Revolution. The most outstanding and original legacy of this artist is located in the City of Guadalajara, where in addition to his paintings at the University of Guadalajara, another very important piece is the "Mural de Hidalgo", located along the main staircase of the Government Palace. The mural at the Legislative Chamber of the Government Palace, where all the Mexican heroes from the Independence until the Revolution can be seen, and his masterpiece at the Chapel or Assembly Hall of the Cabanas Hospice "La Espada y la Cruz" (The Sword and the Cross), where the preHispanic world, the Colonization period and contemporary Mexico provide a permanent history lesson.



Diego Rivera The Museum of Modern Art, New York



Peasants 1947  
Diego Rivera

**DIEGO RIVERA (1886-1957)**, muralist painter, was one of the greatest artists in the XXth century. Born in Guanajuato Mexico, in 1892 he moved to Mexico City with his family. He studied in the San Carlos Academy and in the carving workshop of artist José Guadalupe Posada, whose influence was decisive.

Later in Paris, he received the influence of post-modernism and cubism, the mediums in which he expressed himself with ease. Diego Rivera with the use of classicist, simplified and colorful painting recovered the pre-columbian past catching the most significant moments in mexican history: the earth, the farmer, the laborer, the costumes and popular characters.

Diego Rivera's legacy to modern mexican art was decisive in murals and canvas; he was a revolutionary painter looking to take art to the big public, to streets and buildings, managing a precise, direct, and realist style, full of social content.

A 20th-century literary and artistic movement that attempts to express the workings of the subconscious by fantastic imagery and incongruous juxtaposition of subject matter.

Surrealism, movement in visual art and literature, flourishing in Europe between World Wars I and II. Surrealism grew principally out of the earlier [Dada](#) movement, which before World War I produced works of anti-art that deliberately defied reason; but Surrealism's emphasis was not on negation but on positive expression. The movement represented a reaction against what its members saw as the destruction wrought by the "rationalism" that had guided European culture and politics in the past and that had culminated in the horrors of World War I. According to the major spokesman of the movement, the poet and critic André Breton, who published "The Surrealist Manifesto" in 1924, Surrealism was a means of reuniting conscious and unconscious realms of experience so completely that the world of dream and fantasy would be joined to the everyday rational world in "an absolute reality, a surreality." Drawing heavily on theories adapted from Sigmund Freud, Breton saw the unconscious as the wellspring of the imagination. He defined genius in terms of accessibility to this normally untapped realm, which, he believed, could be attained by poets and painters alike.



The major Surrealist painters were Jean Arp, Max Ernst, André Masson, René Magritte, [Yves Tanguy](#), Salvador Dalí, Pierre Roy, Paul Delvaux, and Joan Miró. With its emphasis on content and free form, Surrealism provided a major alternative to the contemporary, highly formalistic Cubist movement and was largely responsible for perpetuating in modern painting the traditional emphasis on content.



(1934)---dali

**The Ghost of Vermeer of Delft Which Can Be Used as a Table**



**The Average Bureaucrat (1930)--dali**

*Indefinite Divisibility*  
**Tanguy, Yves (1900-55).**

