

Jackson Pollock



Greyed Rainbow, 1953
oil on linen, 182.9 x 244.2 cm
Art Institute of Chicago

The Artist

Jackson Pollock

Born January 28, 1912 in Cody, WY; Died August 11, 1956 in Springs, NY

Born Paul Jackson Pollock, Pollock was the youngest of five sons. His father was a farmer, and later a land surveyor for the government. His family moved a lot during his childhood, Wyoming, Arizona, and California, where Pollock graduated from high school. After graduation, he followed his older brother to New York City, where he studied at the Art Students League of New York. Here he studied under Thomas Hart Benton, who was very influenced by Native American art. Pollock was not extremely interested in this subject, or in traditional styles of painting, and instead began to “Action Paint.”



Hans Namuth
Jackson Pollock at work in his studio, 1950
photograph
Museum of Modern Art, New York City

Pollock married fellow artist, Lee Krasner, in 1945. The two moved to Springs, New York, where Pollock changed the barn into his studio. With this large space, he began making paintings with canvases laying on the ground and dripping paint over them. It was in this way that Pollock created his most famous pieces. As Pollock became a more popular artist, the demand on him for new work caused stress in his life and deepened his alcoholism. He changed from his signature drip style and produced darker paintings. He died in a car accident in 1956.

Art Movement

Abstract Expressionism

This American art movement and style developed after World War II. Artists that practiced abstract expressionism moved away from traditional styles of painting and enjoyed experimentation, improvisation, and moving away from traditional subjects.

The Artwork

Greyed Rainbow

Pollock's *Greyed Rainbow*, one of his last paintings, was made in his typical “Action Painting” style. According to the Art Institute of Chicago, Pollock combined a modification of Native American sand

painting with an attempted visualization of jazz-music improvisation. Towards the bottom of the painting, color emerges from the gray, possibly mimicking a rainbow shining through storm clouds.

Discussion Suggestions

Talk about Pollock's Painting

- *Is it really art? Why or why not?*
- *How do you think this painting was made?*
- *What kinds of colors do you see? Are they dark, light, bright?*
- *Can you see any shapes in what the artist has painted? Are they tall shapes? Short shapes? Large shapes? Small shapes?*
- *What are the lines like? Did the artist make squiggly lines? Straight lines? Thick lines? Thin lines?*
- *How does this painting make you feel when you look at it? Do you think the artist was sad when he or she drew this? Why or why not?*

Activity Idea

Create Your Own Action Painting!:

- Label paper with student's name and place this paper name side down in the box.
- Squirt 3 dollops--about a teaspoon to tablespoon--of paint onto the paper already laid in the shoebox.
- Choose complementary colors or contrasting for a more shocking look.
- Have student drop marbles into the box and tip the box to roll them around, careful to not drop the marbles out of the box. In doing so each creates a unique design!
- When finished, take the painting out of the box and set aside to let dry.

Materials Needed:

- One piece of construction paper for each child (letter sized for smaller boxes, larger sized for larger boxes)
- Several large shoe boxes or other boxes (Closed containers like Pringles cans or mailing tubes might be less messy for smaller children)
- Tempera Paint
- Marbles (5-6 for each student)

Alternative

If a computer is available for each student, consider having each student visit <http://www.jacksonpollock.org>, where one can create Pollock-like paintings with a mouse! Students can drag the mouse around the page to create a unique painting, clicking to change the "paint" color.