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(Encounter, #19, Dec. 1962)

ART

How Art Writing Earns Its Bad Name

By Clement Greenberg

TWENTY YEARS ago who expected that the United States would shortly produce painters strong enough, and independent enough, to challenge the leadership of Paris? The more knowing you were about art the more surprised you were when it happened. For a long while after it had actually happened you refused to believe it. You were convinced only when confirmation arrived from, of all places, Paris itself.

Jackson Pollock had a show there in 1952, and it made such an impression that, though hardly a picture was sold, his art began to be taken more seriously in certain quarters of the Paris art world than anywhere else, including New York. And along with Pollock, the new American abstract painting in general began to be taken more seriously in the same quarters. As it then seemed to me, it was over a year before news of this effectively reached New York. From that time the success in America itself of the new American painting dates, at least as far as collectors and museums and art journalism are concerned.

But it is as though a fatality dogged the success: a fatality of misinterpretation that was also a fatality of nonsense. I call it a fatality—though it might be more proper to call it a comedy—because the misinterpretation and the nonsense have come not from those who professed to reject the new American painting, but from friends or supposed friends. It was as though the critics of modern art set out to justify everything that philistines have said about them.

LATE IN THE SAME YEAR as Pollock's Paris show, an article by Harold Rosenberg appeared in *Art News* in New York under the title "Action Painting."* Though it named no names, it was taken as a first attempt to throw real light, friendly or hostile, on the intentions of the new American painters. Transposing some notions from Heidegger's and Sartre's Existentialism, Mr. Rosenberg explained that these painters were not really seeking to arrive at art, but rather to discover their own identities through the unpremeditated and more or less uncontrolled acts by which they put paint to canvas. For them the picture surface was the "arena" of a struggle waged outside the limits of art in which "existence" strove as it were to become "essence." "Essence," or the identity of the painter, could be recognised by the painter himself only in the very act of painting, not in the result, it being presumed, apparently, that acts in themselves identified you as results or consequences could not. The painted "picture," having been painted, became an indifferent matter. Everything lay in the doing, nothing in the making. The covered canvas was left over as the unmeaning aftermath of an "event," the solipsistic record of purely personal "gestures," and belonging therefore to the same reality that breathing and thumbprints, love affairs and wars belonged to, but not works of art.

Mr. Rosenberg did not explain why the painted left-overs of "action," which were devoid of anything but autobiographical meaning in the eyes of their own makers, should be exhibited by them and looked at and even acquired by others. Or how the painted surface, as the by-product of acts of sheer self-expression ungoverned by the norms of any discipline, could convey anything but clinical data, given that such data is all that raw, unmediated personality has ever been able to convey in the past. Nor did Mr. Rosenberg explain why any

MR. GREENBERG *is one of the best-known American art critics, a former editor of* PARTISAN REVIEW. *A collection of his essays, "Art and Culture," was recently published by Beacon Press in Boston.*

* Now published in *The Tradition of the New* (Thames & Hudson, 15s.). See also Harold Rosenberg, "Critic within the Act," ENCOUNTER, June, 1961 and Donald Davie, "Immoderate Criticism," August, 1959.

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one by-product of "action painting" should be valued more than any other. Since these things, and the action that "caused" them, belonged to no discernible branch of social activity, how could they be differentiated qualitatively? There were still other things that Mr. Rosenberg's eloquence left unexplained, but they need not detain us here.

WHEN HIS ESSAY first appeared it was read by many people as an exposure of the new abstract painting. To those who could not make head or tail of Pollock's middle-period paintings, it offered a plausible explanation: if these things were not really art you had every right to be baffled by them. A corollary was that those who claimed to be able to tell the difference between good and bad "dripped" Pollocks (and Mr. Rosenberg, patently, did not so claim) were deluding themselves and others. Abstract art was under renewed attack in the early 1950s, and "Action Painting" was greeted —or resented—as a veiled blow at "extremist" art. As that, it was soon on its way to being forgotten, as movingly written as it was.

That it finally did not get forgotten was mainly the fault of a young English art critic named Lawrence Alloway. Almost two years after its original appearance it was Mr. Alloway who rescued Mr. Rosenberg's article and set its ideas and terms in effective circulation. Not that Mr. Alloway was an opponent of "extremist" art. On the contrary, he was an ardent champion of it, and especially of the new American kind—being, for that matter, an equally ardent, practically a sectarian champion of most things American. Mr. Rosenberg's notions seem to have struck him as offering the right kind of subversive and futurist explanation of the subversive and futurist and very American species of art that Pollock seemed to represent. The very flavour of the words, "action painting,'" had something racy and demotic about it—like the name of a new dance step—that befitted an altogether new and very American way of making art—a way that was all the newer, all the more *avant-garde*, and all the more American because the art itself was not really art, or at least not art in the way the stuffy past had known it. At the same time, it all sounded, in Mr. Rosenberg's rhetoric, so dramatically modernistic and opaquely profound —like Rimbaud and Sartre and Camus rolled into one—and *avant-garde* art critics have a special weakness for the opaquely profound.

NOT ONLY DID Mr. Alloway take Mr. Rosenberg's amphigoric piece of art interpretation as a manifesto in favour of its subject (and he was but the first among many to do so); he also took it (again, as but the first among many) as a legitimate statement of the aims of "Pollock & Co." as professed by Pollock himself. There was just enough truth in this to make it ironic. Two or three painters close to Pollock in the early 1950s, but who painted in a quite different direction, did rant about "the act," and did say that what mattered was not to have your art appreciated and recognised, but simply to perform the "act" of making *good* art; what happened after that was of small consequence; for all he cared, one of them is reported as saying, his finished pictures could be burned. The artists in question (every one of whom has since become renowned, and rightly so) were not making much headway in the world at that time, and it would not be unjust to characterise their talk in this vein as sour grapes. How much of it Mr. Rosenberg heard, I cannot say. Pollock told me, very sheepishly, that some of the main ideas of the "Action Painting" article came from a half-drunken conversation he had had with Mr. Rosenberg on a trip between East Hampton and New York (if so, Pollock had been parroting in that conversation things he heard from his friends). Mr. Rosenberg has denied this in print, asserting that his "*literary discoveries* [were] outside his [Pollock's] range" (Mr. Rosenberg's italics). Be all this as it may, Pollock and his friends took Mr. Rosenberg's "literary discoveries," when they were made public, for a malicious representation of both their work and their ideas. After all, it was *good* art, and no other kind, that they were interested in. (If Pollock was the one least upset, though seeming the one most directly aimed at, it was because he could not help feeling that "Action Painting" was a big spoof; and he felt that all the more because he thought he was partly responsible for it.)

Mr. Alloway could not have been expected to know all this seven or eight years ago in London. But he still might have waited for some corroboration before proceeding on the assumption that "Action Painting" was a faithful statement of the intentions of the new American painters. As it was, he propagated Mr. Rosenberg's notions with such conviction and verve, and with such confidence, that "action painting" became current overnight in England as the authorised brand name and certified label of the new abstract painting from America. That it connoted a freakish, new-fangled way of applying paint to canvas made it seem all the more appropriate to what struck most people as being a freakish, new-fangled kind of art—or non-art. And though English art-lovers joined Mr. Alloway (or were led by him into doing so) in reading Mr. Rosenberg's piece as sympathetic to its subject, they found a re-

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assurance in it much like that which Americans had found on its first appearance.

IT HAD BEEN ONE of the certitudes of the forward-looking English art person that however little the English themselves might possess the art of painting, the Americans possessed it still less; and it was another certitude that the French possessed that art supremely and absolutely, after whom came the Latins in general. and then the rest of the non-Protestant or non-Anglo-Saxon world. Imagine the shock, then, when it transpired that the wild new stuff from the United States was being taken seriously in Paris and even exerting an influence on the newest art there. At this juncture the "action painting" business came in opportunely to restore morale, at least for the moment.

For if, as Mr. Rosenberg said, the new American painting was not actually art, then that made it still right for the English to have questioned, and to continue to question, the American capacity for pictorial art, whatever else the Americans *were* capable of. The way out for most English art critics (Patrick Heron is the only exception I know) became to react to Mr. Rosenberg's explanation of the new American painting rather than to the painting itself. Basil Taylor spoke of the "record of a gesture armed with a paint brush." Sir Herbert Read (in ENCOUNTER, July, 1955) called it "wildly arbitrary," a "reflex activity, completely devoid of mental effort, of intellection," the product of a "vacuous nihilism that renounces the visible world and even the inner world of the imagination, and scribbles a graph of its uncertainty on the surface of a blank consciousness." But Sir Herbert mentioned no names and refrained, with well-placed caution, from an outright condemnation.

It was from England and nowhere else that Mr. Rosenberg's notions, with the prestige conferred upon them by Mr. Alloway, were exported to the Continent and back to the United States. That prestige seemed to grow with the prestige of the new American painting itself. What made it wonderful was that nobody stopped to ask what "action painting" could possibly be if it was not supposed to be art. *Avant-garde* art critics everywhere invoked and quoted Mr. Rosenberg's rhetoric—and not only with regard to American painting—and then went on to talk about art and artistic qualities to show that they had not grasped a single implication of his ideas. For Mr. Alloway as for everybody else who "dug" "action painting," there were superior and inferior exponents of it, superior and inferior examples of it. Just as if it had not been Mr. Rosenberg's point throughout his essay to exclude the possibility of such discriminations.

YET THIS MUDDLE attested precisely to the fact that the new American painting was making its way in the world on the basis of qualities more substantial than those allowed it by "Action Painting." It was making its way as art, unmistakable art, not as a super-*avant garde* stunt or as an interesting aberration. Its very real success, worldly and other, no less than the concurrent, if ironical, success of his article —or rather the muddled reading of his article— may be what now leads Mr. Rosenberg to talk as if it had been meant from the first as a wholly sympathetic treatment of the new American painting. He has also let it be known recently that it was mainly "de Kooning & Co." he had in mind, not Pollock. This last will confound, whether they admit it or not, all those art writers who took it for granted all along that Mr. Rosenberg had written about and for Pollock, and for whom de Kooning was, or is, too European (or "civilized") to qualify as an "action painter." But these writers deserve to be confounded for not having been confounded by Mr. Rosenberg's article in the first place.

SENSE, THE TORTOISE, usually overtakes nonsense, the hare, even in this not quite perfect world. It begins to dawn on art-lovers here and there that they have not yet really seen any kind of painting that conforms to Mr. Rosenberg's description. Art turns out to be almost inescapable by now for any one dealing with a flat surface, even if it is mostly bad art. The works of the "gestural" painters, of the "action" athletes, downtown in New York and elsewhere (I'm not referring to the artists originally aimed at by Mr. Rosenberg) reveal themselves as mannered with mannerisms borrowed from de Kooning for the most part, but also from Kline, Gorky, Pollock, and Still, and more lately from Monet too, and maybe even from Magnasco; and their main trouble is disclosed to be a want, not an excess, of spontaneity. It is discovered that flung paint can be as thoroughly controlled and as carefully manipulated as patted or stroked paint. And now that the accidental has been completely assimilated to the tradition of the painterly, even the donkey's tails and the painting chimpanzees and parrots expose themselves as abjectly derivative—and we no longer have to know what artists their owners or keepers admire. Like the wildest painter on 10th Street or in the 14th *arrondissement*, they can't get out of their systems, moreover, the habit of being guided by the shape of the support.

Pollock's art turns out at the same time to

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rely far less on the accidental than had been thought. It turns out, in fact, to have an almost completely Cubist basis, and to be the fruit of much learning and much discipline. The same is true, perhaps excessively true, of de Kooning's art. It was the first look of the new American painting, and only the first look, that led Harold Rosenberg to take it for a mystification beyond art on to which he could safely graft another mystification. (That his "literary discoveries" could seem to anyone to throw light on anything is explained only by the supposition that the blind actually prefer being led by the blind. This would also help explain Sir Herbert Read's present status as an authority on art.)

But if it is left to Mr. Alloway, apparently, the comedy will not end quite yet. Nor will it if it is left to that estimable French art writer, Michel Tapié,* with whom it embraces post-war art in Europe as well as America. Both Mr. Alloway and M. Tapié can *see*, and they do not want for courage either. Mr. Alloway, in particular, I always find refreshing to read. But like M. Tapié, he seems to lack a sense of perspective, and it is this that makes them both inveterate futurists, votaries of false dawns, sufferers from the millennial complex—and to that extent comedians like Mr. Rosenberg, who back in 1952 greeted the beginning of the end of painting as an art.

M. Tapié considers post-war abstract painting an almost completely revolutionary phenomenon because, as he thinks, it incorporates new formal structures analogous to the kinds of new structure being investigated by physics and mathematics to-day. I am far from sure that I understand him, but even so, I fail to discern anything in the new abstract painting that is that new. I can see nothing essential in it that cannot be shown to have evolved out of either Cubism or Impressionism (if we include Fauvism in the latter), just as I cannot see anything essential in Cubism or Impressionism whose development cannot be traced back to the Renaissance. In the way of intellectual journalists nowadays (though he is far more than that), M. Tapié has gone in search of something newer than new in order to explain things whose newness is eventually—and must be—self-explanatory.

Mr. Alloway succumbs to the same fallacy of exaggerated newness when he writes, in *Art International*, that the "existentialist description of abstract art" is the "best one currently available." That description consists in the "idea of art as perilous performance and the resultant artefact as unique but [*sic*] absurd." Here the cup of rhetorical novelty runs over. As if every successful work of art since art began were not unique and absurd in the sense that Sartre or Merleau-Ponty gives these words. And as if success in the creating of art, whether Fra Angelico's or Pollock's, could possibly not involve the peril of failure. And as if the peril had not been as great for Rembrandt in his "performance" as for Mondrian or Pollock or Newman in theirs.

It is typical of the best, not worst, art writing of our time that propositions applicable to all successful art are applied to contemporary art as though relevant to the latter alone and expressing insights which the latter alone has made possible. The strongest of *avant-garde* critics—and Mr. Alloway is one of them—sin out of ignorance, or for lack of an elementary grounding in aesthetics. The same is true, moreover, of an academic *avant-garde* critic like Robert Goldwater (what with the speeding up of history, camp-followers are no longer as patient as they used to be), whose essay on Mark Rothko, which is part of the catalogue for the Rothko retrospective now touring Europe, says hardly anything about its subject which is not equally relevant to Velasquez or Takanobu. It is further typical of contemporary art writing, as Dr. Goldwater's essay again shows, to imply, when praising a living artist, that he has come out of nowhere and owes practically nothing to anything before him. It's as though art began all over again every other day.

All in all, the only place where the absurd has made a new lodgement in the area of art is its criticism. There it flourishes with greater vigour perhaps than anywhere else in our culture (which is, of course, saying a lot). Contemporary art criticism is absurd not only because of its rhetoric, its language, and its solecisms of logic. It is also absurd because of its repetitiousness. Since Manet every step in the evolution of modernist art has been hailed, or condemned, as a revolutionary break with the past, and in each instance the passing of only a little time has refuted this claim. Yet this deters hardly anybody, and the epochs of art succeed one another faster than ever. Repetition has a cumulative effect, however, and the absurdity of art writing

* Michel Tapié de Céléyran (he is a cousin of Toulouse-Lautrec) happens to have one of the keenest eyes of our time for painting. He was among the very first to recognise the merits of Dubuffet, Mathieu, Pollock, and Morris Louis, and it was under his auspices that Pollock had his first show in Paris. His ideas, which are another thing, are found in his catalogue notes for the exhibitions of the artists he has sponsored over the last ten years and more at various Paris galleries (mainly the Galerie Stadler).

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has become systematic where it used to be merely whimsical. Vistas of inanity open up that would have made Apollinaire or Elie Faure blanch. Things that would get expelled from other kinds of writing by laughter multiply and flourish in art writing. In a recent book on Pollock (by an Englishman) we read of his "attempt to disrupt the time flux and invoke a new contingency"; in a recent book on de Kooning (by an American) we read of colours that "erupt through the ceiling, coherent in their poetry of ambiguity"; in another book on Pollock (by an American) we read that one of Pollock's paintings is a "scornful, technical masterpiece, like the *Olympia* of Manet... one of the most provocative images of our time, an abyss of glamour encroached upon by a flood of innocence." (This, about a picture that Pollock himself considered a failure.)

What is there about art writing that encourages this sort of thing? What is there in the people who read art writing that makes them tolerate it? Why is art writing the only kind of writing in English that has lent itself to Existentialist and Phenomenological rhetoric? What is there about modern art itself that leads minds like Herbert Read's and Harold Rosenberg's astray? The answer is not one, I think, that reflects on modern art. It has to do with the speed with which modernist painting and sculpture have outrun the common categories of art criticism, invalidating them not only for the present or future but also for the past. (This has not been a revolution; it has been a clarification.) The widening of the gap between art and discourse solicits, as such widenings will, perversions and abortions of discourse: pseudo-description, pseudo-narrative, pseudo-exposition, pseudo-history, pseudo-philosophy, pseudo-psychology, and—worst of all—pseudo-poetry (which last represents the abortion, not of discourse, but of intuition and imagination). The pity, however, is not in the words; it is in the fact that art itself has been made to look silly.

Morning

Hollow-feeling, empty of sleep and as yet unbreakfasted,
From an already forgotten stranger's bed
I stumble out into an unfamiliar part of the town.

So dazzlingly greeted! The sunlight's sudden recognition breaking
Across a row of houses I have never seen;
These shoppers remote as if some distant generation.

Let me ask of you nothing.
All now seems possible. O let me nothing ask.

Harry Fainlight

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THE CLUB'S PRIME HOUR: 1952

Excerpts from the forthcoming book:

ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISTS' ART and the BOOK OF THE CLUB

by Philip Pavia

What was the Club? It was a whirling dervish clubroom of artists, of panel discussions, of get-togethers, of critics and guests, of parties, of openings, of homages; it was the vortex of American cultures, a magnetic center for a decade. Usually the state of mind of the nation comes out most eloquently through its writers. This time it came out through its artists. They met at the Club and the writers and critics came as guests. Sometime, within the lifespan of the Club, the first true American experience in art was born.

It was defined, refined and beaten out in the warfare of brains and ideas, conversations and sweet black jazz. For the first time we weren't French...or English, we wanted to be the leaders. I was "that guy" who made the panels each week -- was the head of the war planning board. I decided to call eight panels, Abstraction and Expressionism. It was the result of an endless warfare that went on between abstractionists and expressionists -- and it proved to be the Club's prime hour. The plan was to have the abstractionists make their statements and then have the expressionists make their statements, then if it didn't turn out too disastrously,

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to get an entente. The name "Abstract-Expressionism" was the final result. It was not a direct steal from Kandinsky's use of it during my student days in Paris. I used it as oil on troubled water; I couldn't stop the rocking and rolling of the two factions of the Club. It was really an entente compromise label at first. Then later, Abstract-Expressionism was used by friends and enemies to denote a movement.

From this turmoil, the new American experience and its name spread all over the world -- beyond the walls of the Club.

The confrontation of these two leading contemporary sides of thinking threatened to split the Club. I feared this for four years. The abstractionists (Mondrian, Malevich and Kandinsky fans) were the largest group in the Club and the most aggressive; in the other group, the expressionists (Picasso, Soutine, Roualt, Giacometti and Dubuffet fans) were smaller but stubborn diehards. There were other small groups but undecided voters, they would vote for either side. Throughout, there was always the hope of an entente unity. It was after the eight panels that such a fusion happened.

While this warfare of ideas over coffee cups was raging downtown, a group of uptown artists, who now claimed to have been "the first wave" were listening to other drummers.

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Launched by Peggy Guggenheim in her gallery, with her war planning board of Duchamp, Ernst, Breton, and Putzel, these "first wave" artists battled in the field and perimeter of Surrealism -- between the semi-abstract amoeba and the straight-out zoological garden (as Joseph Stella called the surreal dream). They were battling against their European sources, but always on the European turf of the Surrealist dream landscape: they competed against Joan Miro's stylistic perfection but at the same time kept the refugees' premise, that the dream is the prime mover of the experience. Still, when this uptown group came slumming downtown to the Club, we welcomed them. But we never copied them. We kept our eye on our ball.

The intense comraderie within the Club provided the heat that was necessary to give birth to Abstract-Expressionism. ("If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen" - should have been our motto.) Exactly the same kind of social heat preceded the emergence of both Impressionism and Cubism.

The Impressionists, they say especially the hard core painters, for fourteen to sixteen years before their first show in 1872 drank, talked and danced at the public cafes far into the night - and even painted their relaxed soirees. You can almost hear the music in the background of their joyous

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paintings. On Sunday, they enjoyed picnics in the countryside, sometimes near the river where Monet tied up his houseboat studio. Haystacks and trees, meadows and sky shaped the environment on Sunday outings. Renoir was their leader and shepherd, kept them together and on course, but he was whipped with complaints and jealousies. All this comraderie helped, as a catalytic heat, turn out giants of art.

Their lifestyle parallels the Club on 8th Street and excuse my immodesty. At our Club, we danced at opening parties - black jazz, cowboy polkas, Viennese polkas and musette music (accordion) and finally the crazy tarantella. It was crazy, after all we had Indian backgrounds and cannot help being wild Americans compared to those elegant and mannered Frenchmen. Instead of haystacks and riverbanks, we had skyscrapers and canyon streets, crowded docks and huge spider bridges. Our environment pushed and packed us Americans into a different package from the Impressionists. The old fashioned Impressionists could never get inspiration from the violent tactile environment of New York. Nothing in our streets sould make dreams for the Surrealists or soft tender light for the Impressionists.

Nature in New York, is a gift. It gave us a swarm of sweating humanity -- the expressionist's meat and bone. And the environment of overcrowding objects, machines and black asphalt was honey and nectar for abstractionist's

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inspiration. And New York's hard Atlantic Ocean light entered our sensibilities stark and raw -- too shocking for the sensibilities of an Impressionist or Surrealist.

And a second parallel to our Club. The Cubists had their own special informal evenings in a building called Lavoir Bateau. It was somewhat like in a tenement house crammed with individual studios instead of apartments. The artists Picasso, Braque, Max Jacobs, and many other budding Cubists live and worked with only a wall separating them. (In 1950's on 10th Street New York City, 20 artists all lived within shouting distance of each other.) The bunch in Paris would often gather in one studio and do the usual thing artists do together, talk, not just plain shop talk but exchange secrets. They excavated their sensibilities while painting during the day then talked at night. And that mysterious Friday night rhythm that prods artists to walk and talk and hang out to dry their week's work of sensibilities was also repeated in 10th Street in the Club days.

To differentiate a little on these immodest parallels, the 8th Street Club were closer to the Cubists' special evenings than to the Impressionists. The Cubists were French, Spanish, Dutch, Americans and others unidentified -- a miniature League of Nations exactly like the make-up of our Club. We were a melting pot too. National cultures hovered over all exchanges of secrets -- the early Impressionists were

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practically one family tribe of French.

Henry Miller said often in his informal talking and also in his writing, artists make terrific conversationalists. Better, he said than writers who have such careful sentence structure that their teeth look like typewriter keys banging away. Not artists, he said, spontaneous, hardly any periods, they talk about their art and sensibilities with intonations of voice and word nuances closer to the poet.

Whenever I go back in my mind to those eight panels, I see a famous painting. It's full of life and it has the spirit and meaning of those panels. This painting usually carries me back to the scene and one 15-second experience is more effective than a word.

I have in mind the Italian Renaissance painting, The Battle of San Romano, painted by Paolo Uccello in the 15th Century. There are three parts and any of them would be the perfect correlative for those eight panels. The painting with dead horses, live horses, spears, rabbits, shields, signs and live horsemen, dead soldiers and broken lances, all these are illustrative of the disastrous confrontation before the peace. Now from memory and scanty notes, I'll add the accompanying dialogues, reconstructed into one or two liners!

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"Stop. You're beating a dead horse. Pick a live one."

"Clap your hand, well, that's it. It's that space in between. You don't see space, you hear it."

"Excuse me, would you follow any horseman who has a banner?"

"You paint like you have ten foot poles for brushes. Get with it. Smell the Turpentine."

"In our fighting. Don't step on dead soldiers, it's a waste of time."

"You're flat footed. When I say a new perspective space I mean fixed points."

"He's right, like the fixed hub of a wheel, not a railroad track like those Surrealist paintings."

"A two-dimensional perspective point, not tied down with aerial illusionary converging lines."

"Yes I agree. I like the pressure points that I see in Uccello's paintings. Pressure points in flat space and what life!"

"I agree. I don't believe in the 'push and pull' as Hoffmann shows us with planes. Concentrated pressure points get away from all-over painting."

After this esthetic warfare had been raging for a number of years, one premise became pivotal to the Club's thinking. It was the belief that a driving force exists beneath the style and that this driving force penetrated all the artworks made by man. Through all time and all places, it cut through all styles. It is something called sensibility.

Roger Fry, the English critic, writes that sensibility can be found in the raw, in African masks and that this

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is what divides primitive art from the intellectuality of European art. He calls this nervous energy, a precious hunk of vitality. The endless Club talks expanded the range of possibilities within the sensibilities: red can be hard or soft, yellow can explode, blacks can be fast or slow. The plane can be instantaneous or slowly mapped out with pivot points and timeless perspectives. Edges can be tight wires or shredded smears. Colors can be combed to a rich ceramic gloss or gassy caves. There is weight and buoyancy, weather and finally nature.

From these sensibilities the artists had to make an art experience - an unity. With one painter a particular sensibility would trigger the fusion, with another painter, it would be a different one. We gave nicknames accordingly. There was Mr. Flat Space, and Mr. Composition, Mr. Color, Mr. Pure, Mr. Corners, Mr. Line Drawings. (Here, Lewitin and I were the culprits.) But the result had to be a full art experience, an unity of the sensibilities - not a design. In this manner, the Club warfare avoided group style. Just the opposite. It produced a victory for personal sensibility -- as result there were many champions.

This was a great victory. It was the first break away from the French experience which we knew from years of constant exposure -- the French definitely made style and handwriting the prime mover of our seeing of art. With the

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new experience based on sensibility there was no style. Style and handwriting did not dominate. To change the French experience was always our target, maybe unconsciously. Almost by default came the birth of the American experience. Finally Miro's perfect styling was dead. Finally we had undressed style and grabbed whole of a pure and naked experience. Friends and enemies said we had an unstyled look. And we agreed. The painting and sculpture in and around the Club had a distinct look...the look of a no-style.

What would be the name for the artists of this new "unstyled look"? Among the labels and adjectives that assailed us, my favorite one was the "noble savages". This was the name applied, by the French to the artists of the Lescaux cave paintings where the caves were discovered in the late 40's. The Club came 18,000 years after Lescaux, it is true, but we felt closer to the caveman's art than French art. The original noble savages of the past were all sensibility and no-style.

History has difficulty absorbing an art movement with no style. No-style is also anti-history, because it opposes the premises of history such as succession, sequential development, layerings parallel to historical events, the Germans called it zeitgeist. No-style has a vertical push that cuts through layers of history. That's why Lescaux Pintings still give us a fresh experience. "They look so modern."

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Stanley Kunitz the poet was first to notice that vertical push is the key characteristic of revolutionary movements. In a panel of historians discussing the art experience, we would hear pyramids of abstract nouns and long quotes from German textbooks about style and there would be no revolution. So when I made the eight panels on abstraction and expressionism I used the same method Renoir used when he made the first Impressionist exhibition. After fourteen or sixteen years of fighting and feuding, most of the impressionists didn't want that Provencal ## painter in the show. "He paints black lines, and has too many perspective points and his perspectives are lopsided." Renoir put him in anyway. It was Cezanne. I took the same punishment when I was the head of the war planning board.

I have no exact recording but only fragmentary notes and they are mixed up at that, between the panelists and the audience. Here are only part of the reconstructed dialogues.

FRAGMENT I
Eight Panels - 1952

"You're too hard on him. He's an artist whether he loves Mondrian or not."

"I'm not a one-eyed artist making diagrams. I want to look through two-eyes and - get a full experience."

"Yes! That's right. Otherwise, it's lightweight."

"Pavia. Stop reading Tom Hess' book. He's all ## about abstract and surrealist art."

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"You're wrong! Tom's point is clear. He wants to fight the refugee's surrealist art."

"He's right! Since 1943, and since the Guggenheim uptown bunch, Max Ernst, Duchamp, Putzel, Breton, the refugees called all the shots, pick ad run the New York avant guarde. Now it's 1952 and we still live under their shadow."

"They pick and choose the abstract and surrealist art and that is distinctly a French taste and French experience. Hess tried to break the French taste-setters' leadership."

"You like him because he listens to the Club yakking and fighting."

"In an article in 1950, he listed step by step, eleven new art movements that would be in the New York future with one 'if' if we break the refugee's taste-setters' pickings of abstract and surrealist arts."

"That's beating a dead horse. The surrealist influence has steamed out. They're all gone."

"Even their elite favorites are changing their style. Have you seen the changes in their shows. Unbelievable their somersaulting."

"Yes! Art of this century! Surrealist art is dead. I mean the Guggenheim Gallery and its taste-setters."

"De Kooning and Kline's shows in 1950 were the turning point. Their 'un-style look' was revolutionary. Pollock broke the ice but excuse me but they 'melted the ice.' Malraux's quote of an oriental one-liner: 'One idea and a thousand hands'. It's the American experience and the Club's thousand hands.

FRAGMENT II

"I mean pure abstraction. Not that semi-abstract of the surrealist. A purer stuff. Maybe an abstraction beyond Mondrian."

"After his geometry! Impossible! How can it be?"

"Yes! He's right. It's the last stop in abstract image."

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"That's what they must have said in the Italian Renaissance, perspective is the last stop in abstract deep space. And then, French art broke it with flat space."

"You're right. Now, the problem is -- !"

"Yes, we know what you're going to say, pressure points on flat space. You look at de Kooning and Kline too much."

"Well! It's better than looking at those semi-abstract surrealist images of Ernst, Tanguy, Duchamp, Masson and Miro. Joseph Stella used to call it the 'zoological garden school'."

"Old Stella just liked drawing the Brooklyn bridge and cable lines. Another painter, color-blind."

"You should talk about color-blind, those surrealist used pre-impressionist shade and tint colors."

"Color! That's it. It's the new abstraction. Color gives, when placed right, a complete, satisfying experience."

"You mean spin a wheel and read the right color blend. You're a geometrical colorist, all by symmetrical charts."

"No. I use weight of colors, I see opaque-ness and luminosity as a balancing of weights."

"What ## is that. You'll bring those heavy German expressionists' colors and say it works?"

"You have to admit there's a contemporary feeling in the pressure of their colors."

"You talk about 'pressure' and 'weight' and the fact is you're all painting long brushstrokes and your colors are patches."

"In a brushstroke full of pigment color, is it in the pressure from the human hand or the pigment, you experience the weight?"

"Both. The pressure and the weight make a new experience, they're all dead horses now."

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FRAGMENT III

"Let's not have so many declarative sentences. It makes me think of my old army sargeant's orders for victory."

"Yes he's right. What about some polemics!"

"Easy. Let's get the expressionist bunch upset, they all have bad tempers. You know expressionists have a lot of prima donna in their make-up."

"I know one question which opens more white in their eyes. Talk about their grandfathers and how abstract art of the Cubists wiped them out."

"Good! We know you were going to bring up that dead horse again. Let's start with Gorky. I know, you purists branded him as a traitor because he's an ex-abstractionist."

"Even the surrealist elite bunch from the 'Art of this Century' disowned him."

"But Gorky had something they didn't like. That's why! He had in his brushstroke, a touch and go, and which was not experienced from in a dream. Far from it. It was tactile. You could almost feel you stroking it, yourself with Gorky."

"Expressionism has many meanings but this is the craziest. Abstractionists don't have this problem. Brushstrokes ruin the flat plane."

"You're not consistent because you're from the 'pure' school."

"I knew this was going to happen. That ## Pavia did it again. Reinhardt told him not to put anybody on this panel who believes in wiggly lines."

"You think like a draftsman. Lines are everything. What about the space experience. Because you make it flat, it has a neutral role."

"Now we're coming to the heat. You have to admit our wiggly line makes the art space more vibrant, more alive. A new material."

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"What do you mean! A new non-geometric material."

"Well. We'll change it and say space has a new material for our experience."

"Let's be clear before it goes into no-man's-land and trench warfare. Space is part of abstract art. Remember two-dimensional space of Mondrian."

"Yes, we agree. There's an art space in both of the experiences. Except, Mondrian's space is too neutral- it doesn't work too hard as a material in our experience."

"What do you mean? Neutral!"

"I must confess, that Englishman, Roger Fry, made it clear in my mind."

"Please don't bring those wordy Englishmen into the polemics, we'll all be bogged down in words."

"Roger Fry was a genius how he described the primitive art and Cezanne. He had a clear point: that somewhere, there was the vitality (his word) that belonged to the artist himself. This is generated in their sensibility and surfaces out as an inner life. And it wasn't stylization, he said!"

"I remember the essay. He said Gruenwald was a great example of expressionism. You know how de Kooning always said he loved the 'ugly' in Gruenwald's paintings."

"What a jump from Mondrian to Gruenwald! I know Gorky loved Roualt and he's in between."

"You need Kaldis, the Greek, to summarize this melting pot. A Dutchman, a German, a Frenchman and an Englishman."

It all comes down to this: that the real inner life of the artwork is the presence of the artist. That's what Roger Fry meant."

"We are sinking into a bog of words again. Let's talk in our language of the sensibilities."

"Yes! I agree. I'm one of those die-hard failures at painting, and I see what you mean. When the giants of

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the Club have a show, Fry or no Fry, there, as if sitting in a chair in his painting is the ## artist smiling or mugging at me."

"Right! He's there with a murderous gaze if you don't like his painting."

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Archives of Amer. Art Journal, Vol. 25, no. 3
1985

The Market for Abstract Expressionism:

Europe
Peggy Guggenheim's coll.
made a tour of Europe
in 1948 — sensation.

Lag Between

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Archives of Amer. Art Journal, Vol. 25, no. 3
1985

The Market for Abstract Expressionism: The Time Lag Between Critical and Commercial Acceptance

DEIRDRE ROBSON

THE IMMEDIATE POST-WORLD WAR II YEARS are taken to be those that mark the emergence not only of the United States as a major world power but also of a new American artistic avant-garde, aggressively different in style and aesthetic from previous European modernism. Recently some attention has focused on how Abstract Expressionism came to critical prominence and on the political and cultural implications of this new avant-garde, due to the apparent congruence between an aesthetic that stressed individuality and vigour and the Cold War liberal ideology of the postwar Truman era, which equated these two characteristics with Western (American) democracy. However, within the context of this reappraisal of Abstract Expressionism and its increasing prominence, little attention has been focused upon this group's performance within the marketplace. Where this subject has been broached, there has been a tendency to equate critical and commercial acceptance. If this equation were true, then it would suggest that Abstract Expressionism achieved commercial success in the late 1940s. My contention is that this reading of the situation creates a distortion, predating such success by a number of years, and that only in the mid-1950s did one see any measurable public willingness to buy the work of Abstract Expressionists.

Such a misapprehension could be based upon a misunderstanding or incomplete reading of economic and cultural factors that indicate that the Abstract Expressionist artists could achieve market success in the 1940s. The early to mid-1940s were years of remarkable war-induced prosperity, with concommitant high levels of liquidity. Between 1942 and 1946, the Gross National Product of the United States rose sixty-six percent, the stock market was newly bouyant with share prices rising by eighty percent, personal income levels doubled for most sections of the population, and despite the introduction of a widely-based income tax system in 1942, levels of disposable income were exceptionally high.[1] This liquidity was accompanied, as a result of years of Depression and war-induced shortages, by a public hunger for consumer durables and luxury goods, and in the mid-1940s one sees a dramatic increase in spending on luxury goods (consumer durables still being unobtainable because of wartime controls on industry). This spending activity was reflected in the art world. In 1943 one auction house, Parke-Bernet, reported a gross for the previous season of $6.15 million—a considerable increase from the $2.5 million spent in 1940—and the total annual value of such sales remained between $6 million and $6.5 million until 1946.[2] The year 1943 also saw the start of a reported boom for the commercial galleries on Fifty-Seventh Street with large increases in sales in successive seasons until, in 1946, they were three hundred percent higher than in 1940.[3] Also present at the time was a belief, propounded by sections of the media (and more particularly the art press), that there was a new, more widely-based middle-class public for contemporary art. This public was thought to be newly willing to concede

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respectability to American art and artists, largely as a result of the federal New Deal patronage of the 1930s, which had for the first time legitimized the fine arts as a profession in America. It was thought to have been familiarized with modern art by institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art (in New York) and to have overcome its prejudices against new expressions in art (a conclusion that was deemed to be proved by greatly increased museum attendance—at the Museum of Modern Art attendance rose from two hundred-nine thousand in 1936 to five hundred-eighty-five thousand in 1940).[4] This public was also encouraged to see that the purchase of art works was no longer the province solely of the very wealthy, particularly via national events such as the federally-sponsored "Art Weeks" of 1940 and 1941 and through the efforts of commercial dealers who encouraged sales of modestly priced work both in their own galleries and in non-conventional venues such as department stores.[5]

The years 1943 to 1947, during which the future Abstract Expressionist artists (among them Baziotes, Hofmann, Motherwell, Pollock, and Rothko) were given their first exposure at Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century gallery, would seem to be auspicious for them, coinciding as they did with the war-induced boom. Prices fetched by major contemporary artists appeared healthy when one compares them to a national mean income of $2,800[6]—a major Picasso could cost $5,000, School of Paris painters such as Modigliani and Soutine generally fetched $1,000 to $5,000, while an established American such as Kuniyoshi was asking $3,000 for large works in the mid-1940s. Theoretically, there should have been another advantage for the proto-Abstract Expressionists in exhibiting at Art of This Century, shown as they were alongside major names in European modernism in the most discussed gallery in New York, something that should have favorably affected their sales. Indeed, their prices, ranging on average from $50 to $750, do seem higher than one might expect for new American artists—during the same period, and at the same stage in his career, Jack Levine was asking $100 to $500 at the Downtown Gallery, while in 1944 Stuart Davis could only get an average of $500 to $700 for large works, though his prices doubled in the following two years.[7]

But a closer examination of sales of proto-Abstract Expressionist work at Art of This Century shows that they were slow and that only rarely did any of these artists get anything close to the maximum asking price for any of their works. Only one painting was sold from Pollock's first exhibition in 1943, *She Wolf* for $400, and during the time he was under contract to Guggenheim (from 1943 to 1947), Pollock's sales never equalled the value of his stipend. Baziotes's sales amounted to nearly $1,430 in the few years after his show in 1944, but only three Rothkos, totalling $265 in value, were sold after his exhibition in 1945. The highest price paid for a Pollock before 1947 was $740 in 1945, while the most paid for a Baziotes was $275 in 1946, for a Motherwell $225 in 1944, and for a Rothko, $120 in 1946.[8] In this situation Art of This Century was no different from the market for modern art as a whole, for despite increased museum attendance and the high total figures of art sales annually in the mid-1940s, sales of contemporary art accounted for only fifteen percent of all Fifty-Seventh Street profits.[9]

In the immediate postwar years, new galleries concerned with avant-garde American art (Betty Parsons, Samuel Kootz, and Charles Egan) opened, and the Abstract Expressionist artists began to receive wider exposure, increased critical coverage, and attention from museums. At the same time, their asking price levels rose gradually. At Samuel Kootz's gallery, from 1946 to 1948 the general price range for work by his Abstract Expressionist gallery artists (Baziotes, Hofmann, and Motherwell) was $100 to $950.[10] At Betty Parsons's gallery, Pollock's prices rose to $250-$3,000 by 1950, while Rothko's asking prices rose from $75-$400 in 1947 to $600-$3,000 in 1951.[11] It is this rise in prices that has led to the suggestion that the Abstract Expressionists were becoming commercially successful in the late 1940s, for it has been taken as indicative of an increased demand for their work on the part of collectors. But in arriving at this conclusion, two factors have been overlooked. First, there was a general inflation in art prices in the immediate postwar years. The increase mirrors the state of the general economy, for in the three years after the end of the war and with the deregulation of the wartime economy the cost of living in the United States rose by sixty percent. Among the Americans, Kuniyoshi's sale prices rose to $6,000 for large canvases, and Stuart Davis's to $1,000-$4,500 for similar works, while paintings by major School of Paris painters could fetch up to $15,000. Second, there has been an apparent failure to distinguish between *asking price* and *selling price* in noting rising prices for Abstract Expressionist work—and in practice the two can be quite dissimilar, particularly in the case of a new artist. In fact, Pollock rarely got more than $900 for any work he sold in the years he was with the Parsons Gallery (1947 to 1951). Among these were *Number 5*, 1948, for which he got $1,500, and *Number 1*, 1948, which sold for $2,350.[12] The highest price paid for a Rothko in the same period was $1,250, for *Number 10*, 1950 in 1951.[13]

The importance of inflation as a factor in the rise in asking prices is reinforced by the knowledge that the art market as a whole was depressed during the late 1940s, with auction sales dropping below $6 million per annum, though the real fall was far greater because of the high inflation. Several dealers, including Edith Halpert of the Downtown Gallery and Betty Parsons, complain about how slow business was in these years.[14] Other galleries fared no better. For instance, the closure of the Kootz Gallery in 1948 was due to financial difficulties caused by commitments to gallery artists far outweighing the amount made in sales.[15] The sluggishness of the art market can be seen as part of the generally uncertain state of the economy (which went into a mild recession in 1948) and widespread lack of confidence about its future. Matters did not markedly improve, either in a general economic sense or within the market for modern art,



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Jackson Pollock, *Autumn Rhythm*, 1950. Oil on canvas, 103 x 207 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, George A. Hearn Fund. The Museum of Modern Art had been reluctant to purchase the painting for $8,000; after the artist's death, the Metropolitan Museum of Art paid $30,000 for it (in 1957), significantly boosting prices for the work of the other Abstract Expressionists as well.

Willem de Kooning, by Harry Bowden, 1946. Harry Bowden Papers, Archives of American Art.



until after the Korean War (1951-1953), for though this conflict stimulated a boom, anticipation of it also generated the highest-ever single rise in the rate of inflation in late 1950. But the cessation of hostilities and the lifting of economic controls in 1953 was not followed by the inflationary spiral that characterized 1946. Instead, a short boom and recession sequence was followed in the mid-1950s by the first period of economic stability and business confidence, not distorted by war, for several decades. This change in economic climate and, more important, the increase in confidence that it generated eventually had a profound effect on the art market, and particularly for postwar American painting.

The first signs of Abstract Expressionist market success came soon after Pollock's death in 1956. Until the mid-1950s the market for modern art continued to be dominated by major European artists and some more established, older American painters. By 1955, a work by a modern "old master" such as Matisse had been known to fetch $75,000, up to $45,000 was being asked for major examples by School of Paris painters, while artists such as Kandinsky, Klee, and Leger fetched $8,000 to $10,000. In the same year, Stuart Davis was asking $7,500 for large paintings, Ben Shahn had a waiting list on works at $3,500, while more established names such as Kuniyoshi and Hopper had active markets in the $4,500 to $7,500 price range. By 1955, only Pollock among the Abstract Expressionists had gotten more than $5,000 for any work: $6,000 in 1954 for *One (Number 31*, 1950) and $8,000 in 1955 for *Blue Poles (Number 11*, 1952).[16] Generally, until this date, top prices for any Abstract

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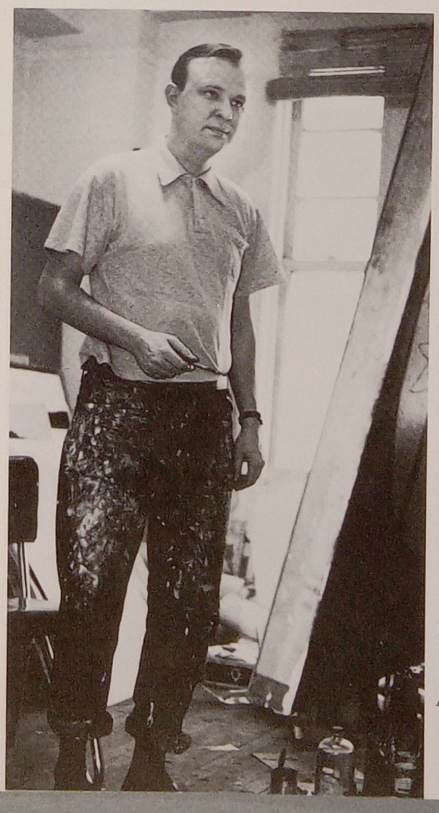
Sam and Janet Kootz with William and Ethel Baziotes, about 1957, in front of *Whirlwind*, by Baziotes. William Baziotes Papers, Archives of American Art.



Mark Rothko in his studio, by Kay Bell Reynal, 1952. Archives of American Art.

Expressionist work seem to have been no more than $2,000 to $3,000. In 1957, however, Pollock's *Autumn Rhythm* was sold to the Metropolitan Museum of Art for $30,000—a painting that the Museum of Modern Art had been reluctant to buy for $8,000 before the artist's death.[17] This sale served as an important validation of Abstract Expressionism, for it was the first time that a major museum had bought a painting in this style for a price commensurate with what it might pay for a work by a major European artist. Although the sum paid was influenced by Pollock's death and thus was not directly applicable to the other artists working within this style, this sale set the ceiling price for Abstract Expressionist work for some years and helped to boost prices for the other artists. Where in 1953 $2,000 to $2,500 was being asked for a large de Kooning, in 1956 a similar work cost $7,500 to $8,500 and had nearly doubled again in price by 1959.[18] Between 1956 and 1958, Rothko's top prices rose to the region of $5,000, Hofmann's to $7,500, and those of Baziotes to $3,500. This rise in prices was accompanied by a sharp increase in the volume of sales, with a number of the Abstract Expressionist artists managing to sell out their exhibitions from 1956 onward, something that none had managed before this date.

In addition to the general economic circumstances already discussed that had some bearing on the market for modern art as a whole and for Abstract Expressionism in particular in the immediate postwar period, there are still other considerations that provide some clue as to why commercial success came to these artists in the mid-1950s and no sooner. On a financial level, where in the early to mid-1940s hopes were pinned on a newly-prosperous middle class as a prospective market for modern,



Robert Motherwell, by Kay Bell Reynal, 1952. Archives of American Art.

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and in particular American, art, those concerned overlooked the fact that in reality less than one percent of the population had sufficiently high incomes (at least $10,000 per annum in the latter half of the 1940s)[19] to enable them to buy more than the occasional minor work of art. Thus, such purchases remained the province of if not solely the very wealthy then at least the most prosperous. This situation was exacerbated by the postwar economic uncertainties. It was not until 1956 that the purchasing power of income recovered to 1944 levels with the help of cuts in personal taxation in 1954. But of more significance were the attitudes of the newly prosperous toward the purchase of art. It remained a low priority and was, as a rule, bought only to satisfy purely decorative needs. There was a general reluctance to view such spending as an investment. In this the monied of the United States displayed a marked dissimilarity to their European counterparts, who, over many years of economic uncertainties, had come to regard art as an investment. For many years in the United States, only a few very wealthy collectors, concerned primarily with the established names of European modernism, were willing to spend large sums of money on art. Also of importance was the generation factor: collectors tend to be much of an age with the artists they collect. Few older collectors, including those known for their support of the more radical European modernism in the 1930s and early 1940s, were able to make the transition to the new American art. Only in the mid-1950s does one see a younger generation of collectors, seemingly better able to empathize with Abstract Expressionism, reach economic maturity.

It is these attitudes that have been overlooked when the ideological and nationalistic links between a new generation of entrepreneurs and Abstract Expressionism have been stressed, creating the mistaken presumption of the former's early appreciation of the latter. Instead, those entrepreneurs most interested in collecting American art per se, at least until the early to mid-1950s, appear to have been more concerned with earlier or more conservative work. A shift in attitudes on the part both of those already collecting and those with the money to do so had to be accomplished before Abstract Expressionism could become commercially successful. On one hand, collectors had to be reassured about the status of this new art by its linkage to European modernism—first by museum exhibitions and purchases that served to validate the new style; second by the juxtaposition of European and American Abstract Expressionist work in the same galleries (in this process Sidney Janis and Samuel Kootz were particularly important). On the other hand, to appeal to a new generation the style had to be strongly identified with the future and with American aspirations. The first process inevitably took some years to accomplish; the requisite shifts in prosperity and confidence that gave a stimulus to the second only occurred in the years immediately after the Korean War. Then, and only then, was Abstract Expressionism in a position to achieve commercial success.

NOTES

This article is based on a paper delivered at the "New Myths for Old: Redefining Abstract Expressionism" seminar, College Art Association Conference, New York, N.Y., February 1986.

1. For information about the postwar economy, see: Lester Chandler, *Inflation in the United States 1940-1948* (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1976); Joseph P. Crockett, *The Federal Tax System in the United States* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1955); Herman P. Miller, *Income of the American People* (New York: Wiley, 1955); Harold G. Vatter, *The United States Economy in the 1950s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

2. "Report on Auction Season," *Art News* XLIII, 10: 21; "Fifty-Seventh Street—a tight bottleneck for art . . .," *Fortune* (September 1946): 145.

3. A. B. Louchheim, "Who Buys What in the Picture Boom," *Art News* XLIII, 9: 12-14, 23, 24; Louchheim, "Second Season of the Picture Boom," *Art News* XLIV, 10: 9-11, 26.

4. D. MacDonald, "Profiles—Action on West Fifty-Third Street—II," *The New Yorker* (12/19/53): 39, 42.

5. "Week of Weeks," *Time* (9/12/40): 59; "Art Week Commentary," *Magazine of Art* 34,1: 42, 50-56; "Art Week II," *Magazine of Art* 34, 10: 534-535; *American Art Annual* XXXV (1938-1941): 17-18; Eugenia L. Whitridge, "Trends in the Selling of Art," *College Art Journal* III, 2:58-64.

6. Miller, p. 111.

7. Prices quoted in this article for European painters are from a variety of sources, including contemporary art periodicals, published auction prices, and various gallery and collectors' papers held by the Archives of American Art. Prices quoted for artists belonging to the Downtown Gallery were obtained from the Downtown Gallery Papers, microfilm rolls ND1-ND71, and unfilmed correspondence, Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.

8. These figures are taken from the annual balance sheets of Art of This Century, 1942-1946. Photocopies of these are in the Bernard J. Reis Papers, Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.

9. *Fortune*, p. 148.

10. Samuel Kootz Gallery Papers, microfilm rolls 1318-1321, Archives of American Art; Kootz to Alfred H. Barr, January 17, 1949, Alfred H. Barr Papers, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

11. For Pollock records, see Betty Parsons Gallery Papers, Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.; for Rothko, Betty Parsons Gallery Papers, microfilm rolls N68-62 to N68-74.

12. Barbara Harper Friedman in *Jackson Pollock: Energy Made Visible* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972) claims that *Lavender Mist (Number 1,* 1950) was sold for $1,500 on its exhibition in 1950, but no record of this sale appears in the Parsons Gallery Papers.

13. Betty Parsons Gallery Papers.

14. Edith Halpert in speeches given at Chicago (11/9/48) and Boston (n.d.), Edith Gregor Halpert Papers, microfilm roll 1883, Archives of American Art; Betty Parsons to F. C. Bartlett, October 10, 1947, and in typescript, November 30, 1965, both Betty Parsons Gallery Papers.

15. L. Levine, "The Spring of '55," *Arts Magazine* (April 1947): 34; Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne, tape-recorded monologue on the relationship between Byron Browne and dealer Samuel Kootz, n.d., Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.

16. Sidney Janis interviewed by Paul Cummings, March 21-September 9, 1972, Archives of American Art; Friedman, pp. 198-199.

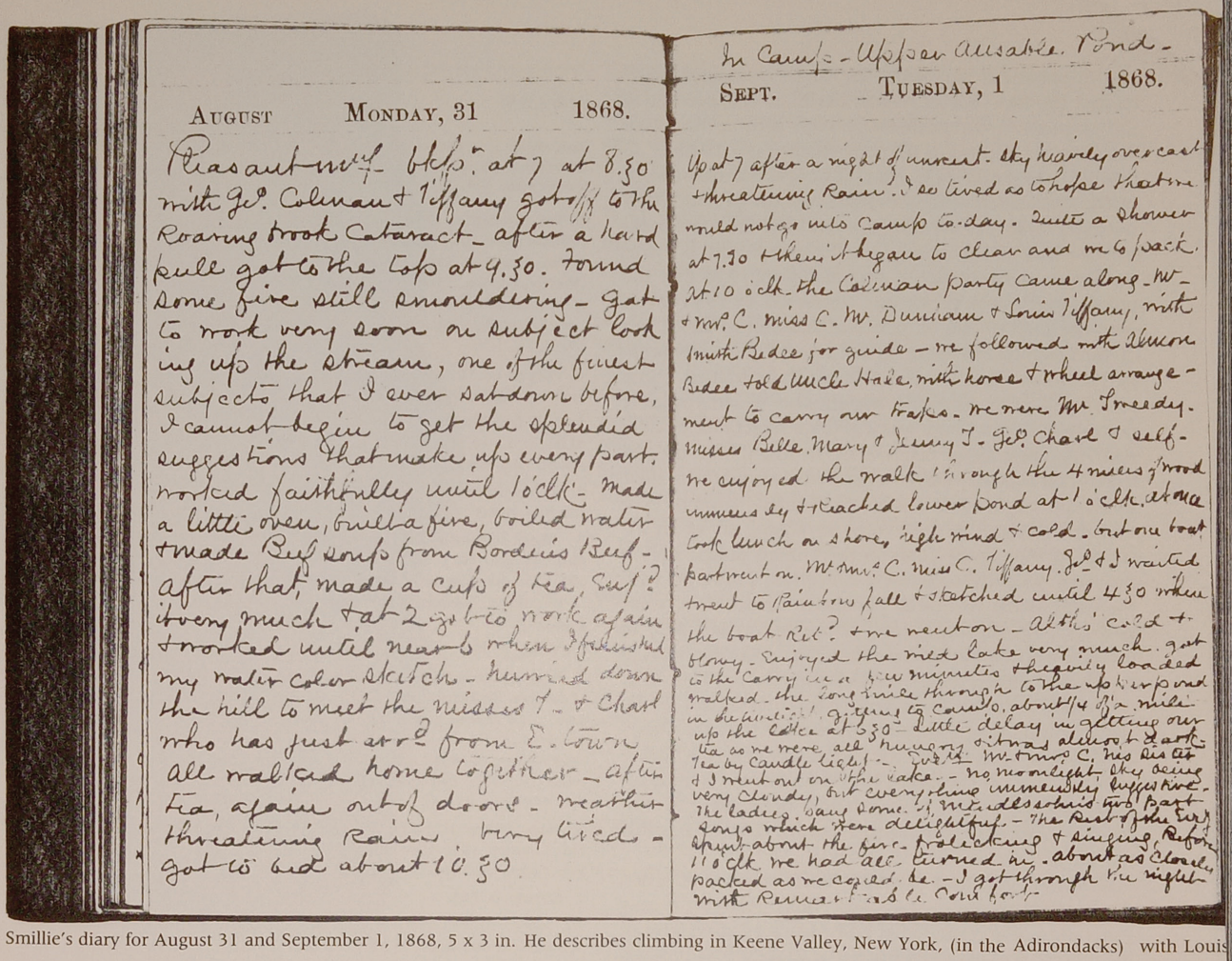
17. Janis, *ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*

19. Miller, pp. 16-26; Edith Gregor Halpert, "Function of a Dealer," *College Art Journal* (Fall 1949): 56.

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August Monday, 31 1868.

Pleasant mg. bkfs. at 7 at 8.30 with Jo. Colman & Tiffany goto's to the Roaring brook Cataract_ after a hard pull got to the top at 4.30. found some fire still smouldering_ got to work very soon on subject looking up the stream, one of the finest subjects that I ever sat down before, I cannot begin to get the splendid suggestions that make up every part. worked faithfully until 1 o'clk_ Made a little oven, built a fire, boiled water & made Beef soup from Borden's Beef_ after that, made a cup of tea, enjoyed it very much & at 2.30 to work again & worked until near 6 when I finished my water color sketch_ hurried down the hill to meet the misses T_ & Chard who has just arrd from E. town all walked home together_ after tea, again out of doors_ weather threatening Rain very tired_ got to bed about 10.30

In Camp_ Upper Ausable Pond_

Sept. Tuesday, 1 1868.

Up at 7 after a night of unrest_ sky heavily overcast & threatening Rain_ I so tired as to hope that it would not go into Camp to-day_ Quite a shower at 7.30 & then it began to clear and we to pack. At 10 o'clk_ the Colman party came along_ Mr & Mrs C. miss C. Mr. Dunham & Louis Tiffany, with Smith Bedee for guide_ we followed with Alonzo Bedee & old Uncle Hale, with horse & wheel arrangement to carry our Packs_ we were Mr Sneedy_ Misses Belle, Mary & Jenny T_ Jo. Chard & self_ We enjoyed the walk through the 4 miles of wood immensely & reached lower pond at 1 o'clk. at once took lunch on shore, high wind & cold_ but one boat partment on. Mr & Mrs C. miss C. Tiffany. Jo. & I waited & went to Rainbow fall & stretched until 4.30 when the boat Rec'd & we went on_ Altho' cold & blowy_ enjoyed the next Lake very much_ got to the Carry in a few minutes & heavily loaded walked the long mile through to the upper pond in the midst of gigantic mountains, about 5 o'clk. after we got up the Lake at 5.30_ Little delay in getting our tea as we were all hungry & it was about 8 o'clk. Tea by Candle light_ just_ Mr & Mrs C. his sister & I went out on the Lake_ No moonlight, sky being very cloudy, but everything immensely impressive_ The ladies sang some_ & Mendelssohn's 2nd part songs which were delightful_ The rest of the evening about the fire_ Protecting & singing. Before 11 o'clk we had all turned in_ about as closely packed as we could be_ I got through the night with Remarkable Comfort_

Smillie's diary for August 31 and September 1, 1868, 5 x 3 in. He describes climbing in Keene Valley, New York, (in the Adirondacks) with Louis

The James D. Smillie Diaries, 1865-1880:

JUNE 16, 1868, MANHATTANVILLE: "Spent the morning catching bumble bees for Mrs. Beers—she is painting apple blossoms and wants some bees for models." Mrs. Beers is Julie Hart Beers Kempson (1835-1913), sister of James and William Hart, artist, and teacher. Her career and works, like those of other nineteenth-century professional women artists, are exceptionally hard to trace. For students of women's art and for researchers interested in any of the more obscure nineteenth-century painters, sculptors, and printmakers, the diaries of James David Smillie (1833-1909) provide a rare resource.

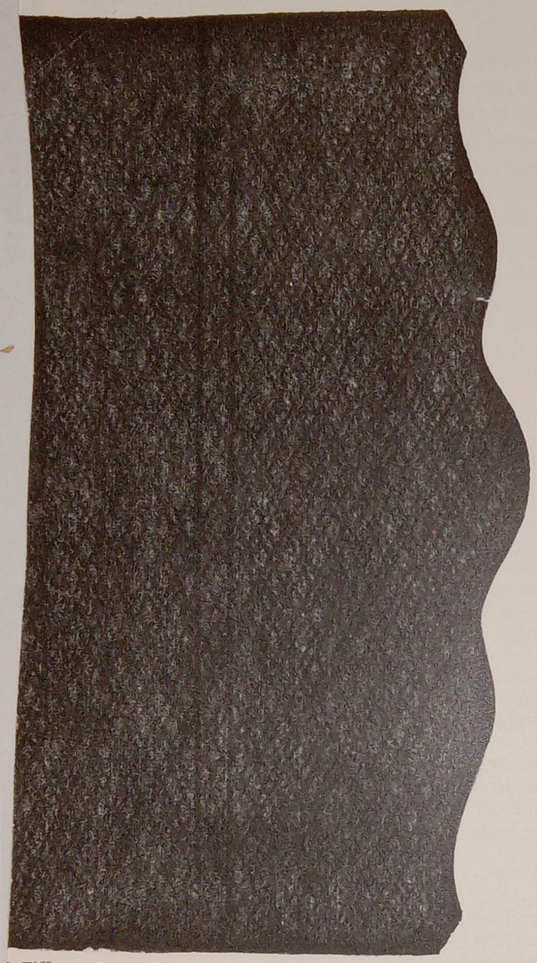
BRUCIA WITTHOFT is professor of art history at Framingham State College. She has recently published an article on George Clough and organized an exhibition, *American Artists in Düsseldorf, 1840-1865*, for the Danforth Museum of Art. She is working on a monograph to include the artists of the Smillie family.

James D. Smillie, son of the noted engraver James Smillie (1807-1885), began to record his life and work shortly after he had rejected a career as a professional engraver in favor of the life of a painter. The diaries were handed down in the Smillie family and given to the Archives of American Art in 1981 (see JOURNAL 1981, 21:4). They include, in forty-five small leather volumes filled with Smillie's minute handwriting, daily recordings of the paintings, drawings, or prints he had worked on. For many years, he also used the diary as an account book. He mentioned social engagements, shopping trips, exercise, illnesses, and most significantly, the people whom he met or who came to call on him.

Because one of Smillie's greatest gifts was his administrative and financial acumen, he often met or was sought out by artists. Smillie held offices in the American

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. Tiffany, Samuel Colman, and George H. Smillie.

Artist Friends

BRUCIA WITTHOFT

Watercolor Society, the New York Etching Club, and the National Academy of Design. He served on ad hoc committees to set up exhibits and aid charities. He represented New York artists in the hanging of watercolors at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition.

While most of the references lack the vivid charm of the picture presented in the above quotation, where we see the gallant artist obliging a fellow painter by chasing bees across his uncle's lawn, they are none the less useful. The references fall into a number of categories. First, there are locators, references proving that an artist was present in New York, indicating where he spent his summer, or recording the receipt of a letter from Valparaiso. Itineraries of well-known artists can be established from other sources; these diaries, however, are a unique source for facts about unfamiliar names. Second, the diaries document artists' presence at meetings of art societies, social clubs, and dinners, and sometimes help to clarify their role in various controversies (elections of National Academy officers, for example). Third, references frequently describe the informal social life of artists who rented studios in the same buildings. Smillie never worked on Tenth Street (although his father had once occupied rooms there), but he and his brother George rented space at 212 Fifth Avenue and later at 334 Fourth Avenue. In each case the building had been designed (or remodelled) for studio use and Smillie saw his artist neighbors frequently: artists shared models, ate together, and helped one another to learn new techniques. Smillie was an exceptionally handsome, charming bachelor, and the frequency with which women made him tea or sandwiches reflects that side of his character. Finally, the diaries show Smillie as a teacher, instructing young people in drawing and painting and teaching etching techniques to contemporaries as well known as Thomas Waterman Wood.

Included in this list are references to all names that can reasonably be identified as artists. The subjects are considered artists if their names appear in standard reference works or among exhibitors at the National Academy, the American Watercolor Society, or the Brooklyn Art Association; if they are described as renting a studio (it is unlikely that a dilettante would go to the length of paying a monthly rent); if they belonged to a professional artist's association; or if they are described unambiguously as an artist. Excluded are members of the Smillie family, who appear too often to record; professional engravers, whom Smillie knew through his father or his own commercial work; students who apparently took up another profession; and names that cannot be identified

James D. Smillie in 1864, Archives of American Art



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as artists (the diary mentions many other people, ranging from social acquaintances to Smillie's bootmaker). The number of references varies from single casual encounters to the detailing of years of intimate friendship. Starred names on the list refer to extensive entries.

Although Smillie continued to keep the diary until the end of his life, this index has been limited to the years 1865 through 1880. In 1880 Smillie became engaged to Anna C. Cook, and their marriage took place in 1881. For several years family concerns and social life almost completely replaced Smillie's artistic activities. When he did resume his career as an administrator and printmaker (his career as a painter was largely over by the mid-1880s), he knew a different group of artists from those who had been his intimates before his marriage; there is relatively little overlap between names in the earlier and later sections of the diary.

Readers who are interested in one of the artists listed below should consult the index to the diaries, available in the Washington Office of the Archives of American Art, which lists the dates of Smillie's encounter with an artist and gives a brief description of the nature of the meeting (at the studio, at a club, at an Adirondack campsite). The date can then be used to locate the full reference in the diaries, Archives microfilm rolls 2849-2851. It is hoped that the index will prove useful in enlarging and clarifying our picture of nineteenth-century American art and artists.

Artists in the Smillie diaries, 1865 to 1880:

Abbey, Edwin A.
Anderson, A. A. [Abraham Archibald]
*Augero, Francesco
Baldwin, A. H.
Bascom, Miss Marie Louise see Brevoort, James R.
Beard, William H.
Beers, Julie [Julie Hart Beers Kempson]
*Bellows, Albert Fitch
Bierstadt, Albert
Blackman, Walter
Blauvelt, Miss H. J. [by 1877 Mrs. Page]
Blodgett, William
Bradford, William
*Brevoort, James Renwick
Brevoort, Marie, see Bascom, Marie
Bricher, Alfred Thompson
*Brown, John George
Brown, Walter
Burling, Frederick see Burling, Gilbert
*Burling, Gilbert
Butler [H. de W.? listed in Marlor]
Calverly, Charles [Calverley]
Carpenter, Francis Bicknell
Casilear, John W.
Champney, Benjamin
Champney, unspecified
Chase, William Merritt
Church, Frederic Edwin
Church, Frederick S.
Church, unspecified
*Colman, Samuel
Colyer, Vincent
Covell, Miss Margaret
Craig, William B.
Cranch, Christopher Pearse
Cropsey, Jasper Francis
Culver "of Chicago"
Culverhouse, Johann Mongles
Dana, William Parsons Winchester
Darley, Felix O. C.
DeForest, Lockwood
De Haas, Maurice F. H.
Delnoce, Lewis [Luigi]
Dodge, W. E.
Dolph, John Henry
Dunn, Alexander Gordon
Durand, Asher Brown
Durfee, Miss Rose
Eaton, Joseph Oriel
Eaton, Wyatt
*Ehninger, John Whetten
Elliot, Miss
Fairman, James
Falconer, John M.
Farrar, Henry
Fenn, Harry
*Ferguson, Henry A.
Fiske, Charles Albert
Forbes, Edwin
Fraser "of Toronto"
Fredericks, Alfred
Freeborn, Miss
Gay, Edward B.
*Gifford, Robert Swain
Gifford, Sanford Robinson
Gifford, unspecified
Gilbert, Miss
Gilbert, G. A.
Gorsuch, Theresa, see Hart, Theresa Gorsuch
Greatorex, Eliza Pratt
Greatorex, Kathleen Honora [Katie]
Greene, Edward D. E.
Grey, unspecified
Griswold, Casimir Clayton
Guy, Seymour Joseph
Hall, George Henry
*Hart, James M.
Hart, Theresa Gorsuch [Marie Theresa]
*Hart, William
Hays, William Jacob ["Hayes"]
Heade, Martin Johnson
Hennessy, [William John?]
Henry, Edward Lamson
Hepburn, [William?]
Hetzel, George, "of Pittsburgh"
Hicks, Thomas
Hill, John William
Hodgkins
Holberton, Wakeman H.
Homer, Winslow
Howland, Alfred C.
Hubbard, Richard William
Huntington, Daniel P.
Inness, George
Jefferson, Joseph
Johns "of Pittsburgh"
Johnson, David
Johnson, Eastman
Johnson, Samuel Frost
King, "an artist" at Yosemite
Kensett, John Frederick
Kittell, Nicholas Biddle
Knowlton, Miss
Knudsen
Kunize, Edward J.
LaFarge, John
Lambdin, George C.
Lang, Louis
Lawrie, Alexander
Leutze, Emanuel Gottlieb
Linton, William James
Loop, Henry Augustus
McEntee, Jervis
Magrath, William
Martin, Charles
Martin, Homer Dodge
Miller, Charles Henry
Moore, Charles Herbert
Moran, Edward
Moran, Thomas
Morse, Samuel F.B.
Mulvaney, [John?]
Nast, Thomas
Nehlig, Victor
Newman, Henry Roderick
*Nicoll, James Craig
Norton, Henry
Ogilvie, Clinton
Ordway, Alfred T.
Page, William
Page, Mrs., see Blauvelt, Miss H. J.
Parton, Ernest
Perry, Enoch Wood
Porter, "painter of scenery", S. Francisco
Reed, T. F. "of Boston"
Reinhart, Charles S.
Reinhart, unspecified (possibly Rinehart)
Rhinehart, unspecified (possibly Reinhart or Rinehart)
Richards, Thomas Addison
*Richards, William Trost
Richards, unspecified
Richardson, Miss Cora
Rimmer, William
Ritchie, Alexander Hay
Robbins, Horace Wolcott
Rogers, John
Rondel, Frederick
Rondel, Louis
Rood, "Prof." [Vassar?]
Ryder, Albert Pinkham
Satterlee, Walter
Scott, Julian
Shattuck, Aaron Draper
Shirlaw, Walter
Shurtleff, Roswell Morse
Silva, Francis A.
Slade, Miss [Helen?]
*Smith, Francis Hopkinson
Smith, Thomas Lochlan
Symington, see F. H. Smith
Tait, Arthur F.
Thayer, "Prof."
Thompson, Launt
Thompson, unspecified
Thurston, [Frank?]
*Tiffany, Louis Comfort
Townley
Troll, Mrs.
Vaini, Pietro
van Elten, Kruseman [Hendrick Dirk Kruseman van Elten]
Vedder, Elihu
Verplanck, Delancy
Waller
Walters, Josephine
Ward, Charles Caleb
Ward, Edgar M.
Ward, John Quincy Adams
Warren, A. "of Annapolis" [Andrew W.?]
Warren, W., see Warren, A.
Weir, J. Alden
Weir, John F.
Wenzler, Henry Anton [or Anton Henry]
West, unspecified
White, Edwin
*Whittredge, Thomas Worthington
Williams, "a Philadelphia Painter"
Willis, William H.
Wilmarth, Lemuel Everett
Wood, George Bacon Jr.
Wood, Thomas Hosmer "of Utica"
*Wood, Thomas Waterman
*Woodward, Miss [Laura?]
Woolsey, E. J.
Wyant, Alexander Helwig
*Yale, Leroy Milton
Young, James Harvey

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Rosenberg "Tenth Street: A Geography of Modern Art," Art News Annual 1959

Saint-Gaudens and Alden Weir, E. A. Abbey and William M. Chase had all foregathered near the village duck pond [in East Hampton, L. I., in the late 1870's]. They had found touches of Europe there, *for they could see America only when they saw it as European* [italics mine], and the lanes brought back England to some of them, while the dunes and windmills suggested Holland and the meadows recalled to others Pont-Aven."—Van Wyck Brooks: *Days of the Phoenix*.

FOUNDING OF A COLONY

Choosing a place to live has been for the American artist a problem of the first order—in Europe it achieves comparable insistence only in the event of invasion or revolution.

Where in this country can one "live like an artist?" "Like" suggests imitation—the question is therefore one of style. The setting chosen by the artist reflects his conception of art.

If the East Hampton group that Brooks recalls saw the United States in the mirror of Europe, they had seen Europe itself in the mirror of Europe's masterpieces. Long Island became visible to them in satisfying their nostalgia for British or Dutch landscape painting. The place for the artist in America was where he could be *encompassed in a picture*.

Someone had written of de Kooning that he was nostalgic for the art of the past. Going by a half-finished apartment house on the site of the Lafayette Hotel, he was reminded of the subject. "Nostalgic for the old art," he snorted. "—I'm nostalgic for cement."

Kids in big cities during the building boom, after World War I, climbed around scaffoldings without floors, drank from hoses running into sand piles in the gutter, watched laborers sprawling on the sidewalk at noon with huge sandwiches and beer pails. This idyll was the same in de Kooning's Rotterdam as in Brooklyn.

American artists mentally importing Holland's dunes and windmills; a Dutchman finding *his* Holland on a street corner in Manhattan—this comedy marks two distinct eras in American art.

New work had appeared by artists who had no more impulse to "find touches of Europe" in their surroundings than to touch things up in their paintings to make them look like masterpieces. De Kooning's *Excavation* (1952) translated neither the landscape of another continent nor the art of another century. It was a creation from scratch.

The big-city artist had emerged in America, an artist whose "roots" are anywhere and who discovers this fact through displacing himself. If anything makes him nostalgic it is the sight of the new—the "surrealist" look of some Broadway signs, the "collage" or "neo-plastics" of a wall exposed alongside an empty lot. A mind of this character is not peculiar to the United States, but it reached expression here without traditionalist *Schmerz*, and this is what has brought world cogency to American art.

The new American "abstract" art, the first art to appear here without a foreign return address, constituted, interestingly enough, the first art movement in the United States in which immigrants and sons of immigrants have been leaders in creating and disseminating a style: Gorky, de Kooning, Hofmann, Rothko, Gottlieb, Lassaw, Reinhardt, Newman, Baziotes, Guston—and, widening the current at random, Vicente, Tworkov, Grippe, Lewitin, Resnick, Cavallon, Schanker, Fine, Marca-Relli, Kaldis, Leslie, De Niro, Schnabel, Kiesler, Sterne, Rivers, Spaventa, Sander, Biala, Brustlein, Cherry, Pavia, Kotin, G. Cohen, Goldberg, Bluhm, Agostini, Ippolito, Stamos, Bultman, Miriam Schapiro, Marsicano, Nivola, Carone, Marisol, Cajori, Pasilis. Earlier American artists *traveled;* the present movement in American art is inseparable from having *moved*. This applies also to native settlers from the Far West—Pollock, Motherwell, Still, Ferren—and other sections—Tomlin, Kline, Smith, Greene, Hare, Brooks, Mitchell, E. de Kooning, Littlefield, Reynal, Little, Hartigan, Zogbaum, Roy Parker—all of whom have figured in the New York development.

Apparently, a role had been left for newcomers in the esthetic affirmation of America as significant as in the physical exploration and building of it. Elsewhere I have connected the new painting in spirit with Audubon.

TENTH STREET: THE METAPHOR

All the artists named in the paragraph before the last have at least for a time been active in the geographical concentration in downtown New York City which now pivots on the art colony on East Tenth Street. In addition there are on Tenth Street and its nearby pockets dozens of younger artists whom I "see around" but don't know by name; but whose work, exhibited in the Tenth Street galleries, testifies to a continuity with the art and influences we have been discussing. It is the sprouting of this later mass of active inheritors that might be said to have changed Tenth Street from a mere congeries of studios into a "colony."

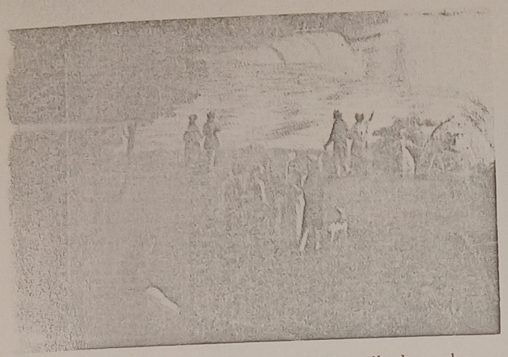
To recognize Tenth Street one must begin by distinguishing it from Greenwich Village, which is adjacent to it and from which, in a sense, it has dribbled down. The Village, too, was big-city, of course, or at least became so in this century, though its name is a reminder that it preferred to be something else. Greenwich Village, however, was not just big-city, not just cosmopolitan, not just "anywhere." The modern Village was imitation Paris—and in a manner which showed that it adored in Paris a smaller town than New York and an older one. Its little trees and crooked streets were décor for the first French stage-landing for pilgrims

Continued on page 184

lass-opening on Tenth Street: December 1957.

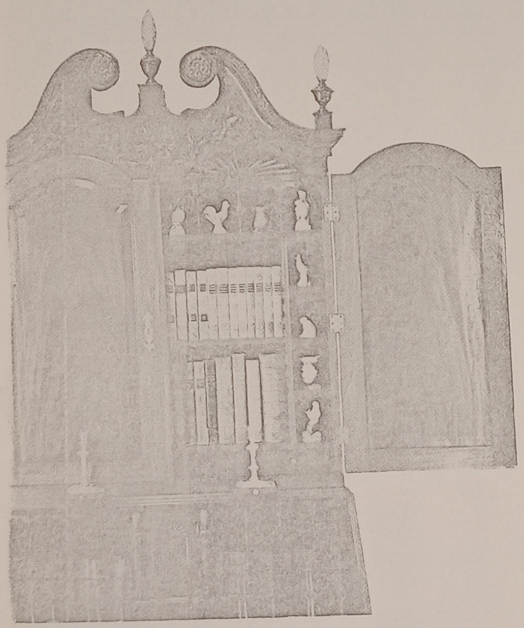
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Niagara Falls, Inman, pinxt. 1841" inscribed on the ck of the canvas—26 x 19 inches. We illustrate detail lower left of the picture, *Henry Inman*, 1801-46.

American and English Antiques



The richly carved upper half of a mahogany secretary-desk with block front. The applied shell and foliage is equal to the great Philadelphia highboy ornamentation. The candlesticks are silver, Edinburgh, 1741; and the figurines are from our selection of early English pottery.

Ginsburg & Levy

ANTIQUARIANS SINCE 1901

MADISON AVE., NEW YORK 21, N. Y. • RH 4-1352

TENTH STREET continued from page 137

to Paris from the West, the Middle West or the Bronx, a grounded *Liberté* or *Ile-de-France*, attested a GENUINE COPY by the Arc de Triomphe on Washington Square. The Village artist was pledged to School of Paris, whether, like Max Weber or Alfred Maurer, he actually went there and entered its contemporary streams, or like the Soyers, stayed home to become New York-scene painters of the era of the Impressionists. Marin proved that the French recipe was also marvelous for Maine lobsters. And even those who, having reached the Village, turned around and retreated to the sagebrush, had trouble deodorizing themselves of the scent of Pernod.

Greenwich Village was a gate through which Americans entered the twentieth century as semi-Frenchmen. United States intellectuals who, seeking a niche today in Anglo-American traditionalism, turn up their noses at the French ought to be mindful that, in owing to Paris the Village, and reproductions thereof in Chicago, St. Louis, Los Angeles, San Francisco, etc., we owe to her the classroom in which Americans learned to speak in the modern idiom instead of in a fake English accent.

Nevertheless, Greenwich Village was still habitation as art-setting and a distraction for the artist who wished to begin with himself. Not so Tenth Street; no one could mistake it for an esthetic creation. Or if one did, by a stretch, associate it with painting, it would be with painting that Tenth Street is not interested in: a Hopper on a dead Sunday morning, a Reginald Marsh aggregation along a basement railing. The block to the east of the artist's block, with St. Mark's Church on the corner, still carries the Parisian flavor—now laced with Puerto Rican pepper—of an earlier Greenwich Village enclave; there are skylights in one or two top-floors of the rooming houses but there are no painters there. The Block of the Artists, in contrast, has not even the picturesqueness of a slum, and East Side beard-and-baby-carriage-painters of two decades ago would find nothing to their taste there.

The last thing conceivable in these low red-brick buildings, hacked and engrafted out of shape, is a bit of "folk." Their desperate metamorphosis has made them hospitable to anything, except what might denote a norm. Apart from the two pawnshops facing each other on the eastern corners, everything on Tenth Street is one of a kind: a liquor store with a large "wino" clientèle; up a flight of iron steps, a foreign-language club-restaurant; up another flight, a hotel-workers' employment agency; in a basement, a poolroom; in another, something stored; in the middle of the block, a metal-stamping factory with a "modernistic" pea-green cement and glass-brick front; on the western corner, to be sure, an excavation.

Identical with rotting side streets in Chicago, Detroit, and Boston, Tenth Street is differentiated only by its encampment of artists. Here de Kooning's conception of "no environment" for the figures of his *Women* (see the piece on him by Thomas B. Hess in the March, 1953, ARTNEWS) has been realized to the maximum with regard to himself.

Devoid of local color, Tenth Street is, at the same time, the antithesis of the abstract locale, no longer a novelty in the America of Mies Van der Rohe and Philip Johnson; one finds there no "composed" studios, no significant planes, no strips of color, no planned bareness, no new-design lampshades or coffee tables, no geometrical nooks. The modernism of Tenth Street has passed beyond the dogma of "esthetic space," as its ethnic openness has transcended the bellicose verbal internationalism of the thirties. Its studios and its canvases have room for the given and for the haphazard, as against the clean-up of the Look or the Idea.

Art world and underworld

Bohemias and underworlds tend to grow into each other like cedars and apple trees; it is almost a century since Rimbaud proclaimed the artist's desire to "walk with an air of crime." Greenwich Village, especially during its Prohibition heyday, was a rookery of gangsters and tough guys, while its artists went in for whacking the bourgeoisie in jest and in earnest.

On Tenth Street the ancient relation between art and the anti-

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What Is A Printer . . . ?

printer is a tradesman and an artist.

He is a tradesman because he works in blue jeans and gets his hands dirty on the job.

He is an Artist because the printed page which is his finished product is indeed a thing of beauty and a work of art.

printer uses typefaces as an artist uses pigments.

Bodoni, Egmont, Baskerville, Kenntonian, Caledonia — the printer knows them all, and how to combine them into an eye-pleasing whole, just as the artist combines his colors.

Few printers possess what is known as "higher education," but they all seem to have a great deal of academic knowledge.

ke Master Grammarians,

they know how to break a long and difficult word at the end of a line, whether to place quotation marks inside or outside of a period and how to phrase a wedding invitation correctly.

o One Thinks of Printers as Mathematicians,

but they can calculate and measure spacing down to the minutest fraction of an inch, in order that a page of printing may have perfect symmetry and balance.

rinters are Men of Pride.

Some men who work with their hands have a deprecatory attitude towards their trades and long for more exalted jobs.

rinters Envy No Man.

I never met one yet who wasn't proud to say

I Am A Printer" . . .

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social has attained a curious evolution. Instead of hoodlums—bums.

Existing on the street, the working stiff is the most conspicuous human feature of the Block of the Artists. This transposition of underworld substances in the environment of its creation reflects the changed social character of art in our day.

The Village lawbreaker was a rooted type, a son of Little Italy. In his person a transplanted Naples jostled an imaginary Montparnasse.

The bum carries upon his person no such communal insignia. He could be from upstate New York, from Poland, from Mexico—as the artist who steps over his body on the Tenth Street stoop might be a gentleman from Spain, an Italian artisan type, a middle-class New Yorker or a Russian Jew of the intelligentsia.

Tenth Street qualifies for all not as their dreamed-of Happy Valley but as a practical accommodation made available by the block's lack of character. In this neutral zone, whose featurelessness would drive a simple criminal into depression, the tramp may pursue his surrender of personality while the artist engages in finding the point at which *his* begins.

The contemporary artist and the contemporary bum—the bum, too, has changed from the injured individualist depicted by O'Neill and one of that inseparable couple memorialized by Samuel Beckett—today's artist and bum are related as opposites, always a dangerous relation. And this partner of the artist is the most dangerous of all.

The criminal has only the law against him; the bum struggles with space. The instant he stops moving, his very right to be on the earth becomes problematical. One might say the criminal is a mere social outlaw, the bum a metaphysical one.

American art used to place itself in opposition to American society; it attacked "Main Street." the "materialist spirit," "bourgeois values." This was a fine, progressive, healthy social service. Today's vanguard has abandoned efforts to offend others or to improve them. It has entered into a kind of metaphysical retirement, a dissident self-insulation from as many areas of social contact as possible. On Tenth Street, politics, news, issues, popular enthusiasms, have been shifted behind a screen, nonetheless impenetrable for being transparent. In the studios and among the sidewalk loungers, public events are noted spasmodically as occurrences "outside." Something like this may be the case with the significantly titled "interior immigration" of intellectuals in present-day Russia and Poland.

Frustration of the band

Tenth Street, however, draws on deeper sources than the negative sociability of West Coast hang-out literature (Kerouac, "Beat," etc.) with its Generation-propaganda. For on Tenth Street, the individual prevails against the band and it is to him that art there owes its inspiration and its vocabulary. "Younger artists" (under 30? 20 to 40?) keep trying without success to affirm themselves apart—most of the local galleries are run by and for them—but their self-definition has less to do with chronology than with reputation and their difficulty is to settle on an obstacle common to all of them.

All Bohemias and underworlds transmute the ranks established by social class into a hierarchy based on talent or daring. The formation of gangs or cliques is a device for controlling this process of natural selection and for re-establishing the traditional claims of mediocrity. The absence from Tenth Street of fixed group identities, whether of nationality, race, class, ideology or age, is one of the superiorities of this colony and its novelty. Bohemias exist on an edge of city life, but within themselves they tend to form mob-centers. The artist thus finds it necessary to exist on the edge of the edge if he is to avoid being swept along by collective currents. For this purpose Tenth Street is ideal.

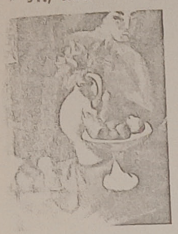
Fashion note

The individualism of Tenth Street is so complete, backed as it is by the mixed histories of its inhabitants, that it excludes Bohemianism itself as a common style. Elsewhere, beards and tight pants publicize professional difference. Tenth Street has no cos-

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tume—neither for its artists nor for its stiffs. Members of the older groups conserve their elegance; some, particularly the lady artists, have assumed for daytime wear a workman-Western garb featuring paint-stained blue jeans and open-neck colored shirts, an aspect of rough-and-ready action-décor popularized by Kazan's proletarian ballets and Hollywood's new Westerns; others could lose themselves in any New York crowd.

Mores and meaning

Every twentieth-century myth flutters about the ideal of The Community: its decline is considered the cause of our "crisis of values"; its instauration is the objective of all modern mass revolutions. Tenth Street is the opposite of a community. No one willed it: its coming into being took everyone by surprise. It has no history—though the neighborhood has—and, as we shall see, it is impossible for it to have a future. No "values" appertain to it: that anyone should put the interests of Tenth Street ahead of his own (imagine an artist sacrificing himself for it!) is inconceivable. No one wants it to be better. Perhaps no one likes it; although, when it has ceased to be, there will be an immense sentimentality about it, especially amid people who were never there.

Tenth Street is not a community, or it is a community of some stage of civilization both earlier and later than ours. In inner structure it mostly suggests a tribe, in that it centers upon its chiefs, its idols, upon the potency of its "medicine" as against that of other esthetic tribes. Yet its chiefs have no authority and no tribesmen ever evinced similar degrees of disloyalty. One might conclude that Tenth Street is a tribe based on the rugged individualism of American pioneering—an impossible contradiction and therefore most likely to fit.

But every Bohemia is also a small town. Tenth Street has its public lounges that serve as gossip exchanges and gardens of romance; its cocktail- and evening-party circuits with their snobberies; its mutual aid. The conversation is not commonly about art, unless one regards as such the chatter about "openings," prizes, inclusions in or exclusions from group shows, "mentions" or reproductions in magazines.

The topic of largest interest is real estate: tracking down and/or fixing up a loft, spotting "a place in the country" for the summer. This concern with self-location often dismays visiting friends of art who expect discourses on the "philosophy behind the new art," i.e., transcendental sales talk. As if anything could be more profound or appropriate for those whom geography has released from its grip than this eternal theme of migrants and exiles, the question of where to situate oneself. Besides, these critics forget that though artists may not talk to each other about art their pictures do, and in the silences that count.

The importance of a place

Other art colonies have been workshops of *the arts:* the Village, Provincetown, Chicago's Near North Side, Taos, San Francisco are noted at least as much for their writers—Cummings, O'Neill, Anderson, Lawrence, George Sterling—as for their painters. Tenth Street belongs exclusively to painters and sculptors, with a sort of open house for a handful of poets, composers and dancers (all exceptional among the mass of their professions for their investigation of new creative modes). On Tenth Street, a fraction of America's art life has found a place and in doing so has also found its time. Perhaps it happened the other way around; in any case, place and time have come together.

To grasp what this means it is only necessary to take a side-glance at American literature. Unable to locate themselves, writers today have lost touch with their epoch. "Almost every book," writes a *Kenyon Review* critic, surveying a score of new volumes of poetry, "gives notice of others which might have an equal claim to consideration at this time, and I cannot be at all confident that what I have before me is honestly representative of any tendency or movement." Scattered throughout the states and across centuries of literary history, poets can no longer determine which way is forward and their art has disintegrated into eccentric exercises in the medieval science of metrics. One polishes triolets, another fancies himself a Norseman. It is as if painters were to

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begin to grind their own pigments and to discuss method in terms of minute rediscoveries in underpainting and glazing. Such things happen in an art when it has relinquished or been diverted from every creative idea. In this anti-Bohemian literary counter-revolution, emanating from the sickness and remorse of former American Left Bankers and globe-trotters, poetry is ruled by a phantasy of authority and class — of upper class at that, with its parlor games, baby talk and paranoia. In the literary quarterlies nothing has anything to do with anything else, save for the endless birdcalls of academicians across the technical void. Above all, the language in which most of this stuff is written is unbelievable —the worst painting on Tenth Street has a superior esthetic surface to the jogjog of the eternal seminarians and university wits.

In the light of the example of Tenth Street, the present predicament of literature is ludicrous, particularly since its anarchy and helplessness are visible effects of urgings toward "tradition." For what could be plainer than that Tenth Street *is* tradition? If not the tradition of place-and-time politicians, bookworms and neo-Christians, unmistakably in the tradition of more than a century of art creation. Like modern art itself, Tenth Street stands against the university and its passivity and as a counter-concept to esthetic and political reaction. This fact has begun to dawn on the universities themselves, whose scouts increasingly comb Tenth Street for artists to give point to their art courses.

For artists of other regions, Tenth Street is a trading post of ideas and of the latest moves in art. But it is something more—it represents an insistence on being an artist. This insistence materialized by a place is often sufficient to determine between equal talents who shall be an artist, who a teacher or designer "painting on the side." In this connection it would be useful to examine the individual development of those who, after achieving some recognition, fled from Tenth Street to settle at a safe distance, and to compare their work before and after. But for this most proper subject-matter of art history to be received without misunderstanding, we have not yet attained a sufficient objectivity.

Destiny

When the artists' "Club" was still on Eighth Street (it moved to Tenth last year) Joseph Cornell, fabricator of dreaming cabinets, showed there an early silent film named *The Automatic Moving Company*. An express van without a driver pulls up in front of a brownstone, the rear doors open and pieces of furniture come out. They skitter in file across the sidewalk and shimmy up the steps. Inside the house the pieces arrange themselves room by room in conventional order. All except a small tabouret or end-table, which provides the comedy by wandering around in the orderly shuffle vainly trying to find a place. Whenever it is about to come to rest, an armchair beats it to the spot or it is shoved out of the way by a sofa or a piano. At the end, when everything else has settled down, the little table jigs to an uneasy stop.

In Europe's cities, Bohemias grow like fungi among stones untouched for centuries. Here, as with the homesick end-table, a foothold is gained only when things obeying more powerful laws of social motion have come to a momentary halt. Art on Tenth Street is perched in an interstice of time—this became possible only because the block had reached a condition in which no one was prepared to do anything with it or to do away with it. Once its history begins again, artists and bums will have to get out.

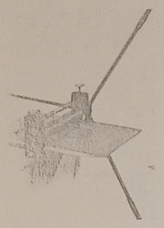
The inevitability of its doom keeps Tenth Street pure. Other Latin Quarters decline through gradual infiltration by remodeled and new "studio" apartments (chalets or glass huts in the country), to which come commercial artists, dealers, school teachers, amateurs. The artists' hangouts turn into night clubs, with price lists, cover charges and crowds that leave no room for simple idling. Masses of proto-Bohemians stuff themselves as wads between the artists and deaden conversation and personal relations. Public and private life become objects of journalistic and tourist prying. Like the American Indians, the artists find themselves aliens on their own soil.

Against this gradual death Tenth Street is insured, though it has experienced the usual sympto..s. Its dilapidated lofts and beer joints hold no promise for sophisticated luxury—its environs are too barren to produce a Bourbon Street or a St.-Germain-des

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Prés. Its social climate will continue to repel the shoals that follow the big fish of art.

The artists' Tenth Street will not deteriorate; it will be extinguished. It will be swallowed in the yawn of a steam shovel. Its future is—an excavation.

Epilogue

At the moment of writing, the skeleton of an apartment house a block wide has been raised on the northeast corner of Tenth Street and Fourth Avenue. By the time you read this, there will be doormen to clear the sidewalks of daytime sleepers. This represents the seizure of about one-eighth of Tenth Street's potential studio territory. The days of the rest are numbered. That everyone realizes this does not prevent artists and galleries from continuing to move in. "Do you know of a good studio?"

MIDAS ON PARNASSUS continued from page 63

$2,800 in 1950, is worth up to $25,000 today. His own late works—landscapes large and small, painted 1925-26, were the first to appreciate in value; in 1949 their range was around $3,000; while today, depending on size, they are worth $10,000 to $12,000. The often grotesquely Expressionist paintings of Nolde, even now not as enthusiastically applauded in America as in Germany, have risen from a $500 average in 1948 to a present $10,000—although in recent German sales his works have brought up to $30,000.

Max Beckmann, after leaving Germany upon the advent of Hitler, survived the war and occupation in Holland, coming to America where he painted and taught until his death in 1950. His peculiar, heroic-scaled Wagneresque symbology, mixed with a raw Germanic satire, had a certain appeal for some Americans from the start, and his pictures—many huge in size, some of them characteristically Siegfriedian trilogies of three enormous canvases—sold regularly, about 1946-49, for around $2,000 each or $6,000 for the triptychs, his smaller portraits for around $750. Today the triptychs are not easy to find and have been sold recently up to $20,000; the portraits bring between $10,000 and $15,000, with the earlier ones (before 1934) the more valuable.

Franz Marc, who as a Prussian officer fell in World War I, had been a member of the "Blue Rider" group, so that his own series of *Blue Horses* has always seemed specially symbolical: one version, brought to America in 1939, was returned to Europe unsold at an asking price of $1,800—and two years ago it was bought in Germany for over $30,000.

Another founding father of Expressionism, Paul Klee, is a special case: because partly a Swiss resident, and because the literally uncountable quantity of his gouaches, watercolors and drawings have been in major part strictly controlled, both in a slowly fed-out supply and in price-range, by a holding trust in Berne somewhat altruistically named the Klee Foundation, his works attained a degree of international currency earlier than his German contemporaries'. His clever, indeed often brilliantly witty titles—brittle literary satires or profound puns—are actually inseparable from his pictures, although most of his audience scarcely knows German well enough to understand them. But the curiously macabre wit is there nevertheless, and it is perhaps no mere coincidence that reproductions of Klee have become more or less standard wall equipment for the waiting rooms of New York psychiatrists. Those Klee watercolors and gouaches, sold before and during the last war at around $100 to $800 apiece, gradually climbed, as the Berne headquarters doled them out; nowadays the standard international Klee price ranges, based on quality and what may be relatively called individuality, from $3,500 to $7,500 apiece. The less frequent Klee oils, selling at $1,500 to $2,000 around 1938-1946, are regularly bringing $15,000 to $45,000 today.

Two significant extremes conclude the Expressionist statistics. The still living Oskar Kokoschka, who as an Austrian gave a more agreeable Viennese touch to the inevitable sadness of the style, was never a strong favorite in American taste and he is only now catching up with the parade. His early portraits (1909-13) moved up slowly from a 1935-40 level of about $850 to some $5,000 in 1954; this year they have brought, first in Europe and now in America, $15,000 to $20,000. His bright Mannerist-like landscapes

1958-59

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DE KOONING: GRAND STYLE

As he walks away one sees a smallish man with radiant hair, a loose striped jacket flopping over black corduroy pants—and the rear view has some of the pathos of a Harpo Marx. Then he turns to present the shockingly perfect classic head and the direct blue gaze in which wisdom is a sort of mobile innocence. If he never painted a picture he would be extraordinary—for one is always aware of the fluctuations of his identity, the ebb and flow of tensions and possibilities.

But he has painted—and his pictures have opened up a new territory other artists have colonized. Some have fenced off small plots in Willem de Kooning's majestic acreage. Others have moved off from it to new country of their own. His impact on the scene has been enormous, his financial success complete. For most people his achievement and reputation make him *the* American painter.

De Kooning exists very much in the present moment, between the pull of the contradictions he feels fan out from every decision. The tension of their drag keeps him teetering—almost dancing—with a high nervosity, as if life consisted of some act of balance, like walking a high wire—or in an image he provides himself, riding a bicycle, as he pedals the roads around Springs, near East Hampton in Long Island. He has lived there since 1961, not in his new house, which is still building, but around it—in other artists' places.

The contradictions come up in everything. "Someone asked me to sign for the release of Siqueiros"—the

nd if you were looking for it. It's *und*." The roof kinks down to meet e upthrust of metal Y-beams, walls e suddenly interrupted by glassy pace, the internal structure is full f catwalks and balconies, beams hur- e abruptly down, elegance is often orced into awkward corners. The uge rectangle of the studio is tilted nto a rhomboid, a memory imprint rom his old studio on Tenth Street, ecause "you get the light better."

"I haven't any illusions about being n architect," says de Kooning, "but I ways wanted to build a house." ets have been placed that he will ever finish it. For the loft-mansion, s expensive and as lavish as the most nate example of East Hampton style, rned out to be subject to the crises testing, just as a de Kooning paint- g. "If you don't like a painting," says e Kooning, "you can wipe it out. This verhang—over the front door—took ve days to build. Now it has to go." he house already contains a history f additions, and erasures—like a ainting. De Kooning's inability to de- ide a work is finished, to separate himself from it, is one of the art scene's prime myths—so there has been otal fascination with the idea of de ooning painting inside a de Kooning ouse, inside a mobile metaphor of is own dilemmas.

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De Kooning has always failed to step into the blueprint for his future. So going backward through his art is as surprising as watching it unfold from the beginning. "Art never seems to make me peaceful or pure," he said once, "I always seem to be wrapped in the melodrama of vulgarity." Going backward (paintings below) one encounters the hurtling pastel pinks and blues of his abstract landscapes (late '50s), the ferocious "Women" wearing the banal all-American smile (early '50s), and in 1948, the year he burst on the scene at the Egan Gallery, those electric paintings of white lines swerving and rebounding in the darkness.

Beginnings: To go back beyond 1948 is to follow him into the Underground, where his talents made him a marked man before the public ever heard of him. Here lie the heroic days of American art, struggling for mere survival—for de Kooning the days of WPA, housepainting and commercial art. In 1926 he is snatched from the scene to reappear, younger, in Rotterdam, where he was trained thoroughly, and going back to the ultimate point, 1904, born.

Running the movie forward again is to discover in all the de Koonings the sense of crisis projected into the labyrinth of contradictions through which he has zigzagged like a bright planet, holding to small certainties of identity. "I have this sort of feeling that I'm all there now," he says, his sentences typically seeming clipped and pasted abruptly together from some continuum. "As to the painting being finished, I always have a miserable time over that. But it's getting better now. I just stop."

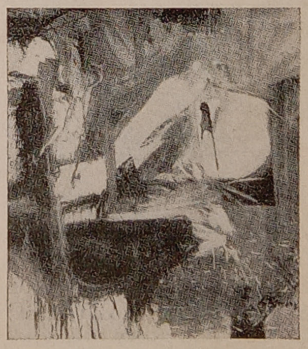


De Kooning: Elaine (1940)





'Women II' (1952-53)



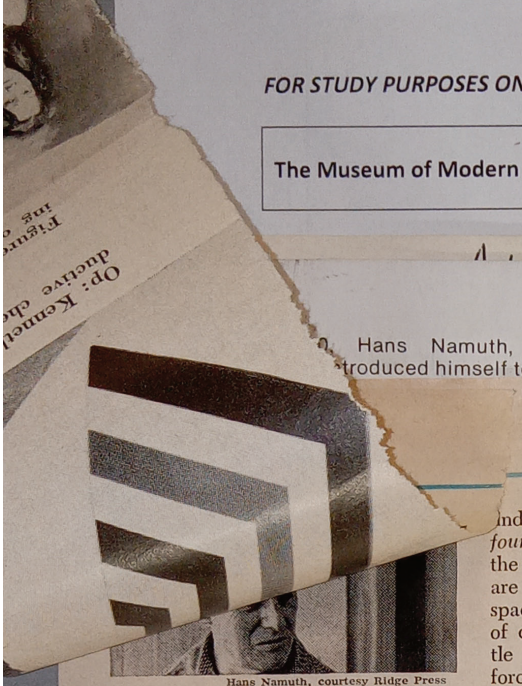
'February' (1957)

cycles. There would be long stretches of work and then times

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Hans Namuth, courtesy Ridge Press

Hans Namuth, a young German-born [illegible] introduced himself to Jackson Pollock at Guild [illegible] the machine than his paintings can be made to assume static patterns by vision whose normal [illegible]

Mexican artist once accused of trying to kill Trotsky, later jailed for "social dissolution," and now released. "I didn't. But I wouldn't sign against him either. I didn't have the details. It's like Trotsky. To one he's a hero. To another he's an assassin." The wish to keep the whole field of experience moving and shifting manifests itself in everyday things. He won't pin down the future by making an appointment, refuses to allow the modern oracle, the telephone, to interrupt his day.

Action: This life style is reflected in de Kooning's work, as it was in the other painters of his generation such as Jackson Pollock and Franz Kline. Their problem was how to *live* a picture, rather than merely painting it safely, how to take *action* (critic Harold Rosenberg called abstract expressionism *action painting*) when all the powerful solutions of art history pluck at every stroke. Unprotected by the past, each stroke becomes a positive action among dangerous alternatives. Like any man of action, de Kooning is fond of sport, especially boxing. ("Are you a painter?" asked Gene Tunney. "Yes," said de Kooning humbly.) Talking or painting de Kooning adjusts to the possibilities like an athlete, shifting his balance, jerking his head around, lunging like a fencer to make or explain a stroke.

From the city to East Hampton de Kooning has transported a monad of the abstract expressionist ethos—himself, his model, his pad. And the pad is the apotheosis of the loft generation's dream. "It's really like a large loft," he says, "the best studio you'd find if you were looking for it. It's *found*." The roof kinks down to meet the upthrust of metal Y-beams, walls are suddenly interrupted by glassy space, the internal structure is full of catwalks and balconies, beams hurtle abruptly down, elegance is often forced into awkward corners. The huge rectangle of the studio is tilted into a rhomboid, a memory imprint from his old studio on Tenth Street, because "you get the light better."

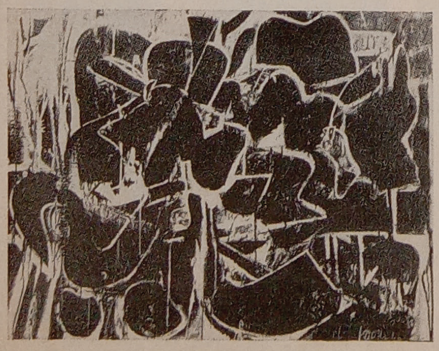
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Running the movie forward again is to discover in all the de Koonings the sense of crisis projected into the labyrinth of contradictions through which he has zigzagged like a bright planet, holding to small certainties of identity. "I have this sort of feeling that I'm all there now," he says, his sentences typically seeming clipped and pasted abruptly together from some continuum. "As to the painting being finished, I always have a miserable time over that. But it's getting better now. I just stop."



'Painting' (1948)



'Women II' (1952-53)



'February' (1957)

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were more interested in themselves than in solving Picasso's problems. In that sort of self-revelatory mood the guys had to back up into themselves. Their paintings had to go off into fantastic tangents." Betty Parsons remembers her artists and their art in symbols of self-revelation: Clyfford Still with "his El Greco face" was the "eagle and the stallion riding over the prairies"; Barnett Newman's vertical horizons in awesomely empty space made him "the great statesman of up and down." Rothko symbolized for her "the endless horizons of the Midwest." Pollock's work was for her the "endless electronic nervosity that went on forever."

This collision of style with life detonated the great idea of art as a process identified with life, through which the artist discovered himself, a process fraught with risk and difficulty. "Jackson," said Franz Kline of Jackson Pollock, "*divined* himself." And this, in effect, was the American discovery.

Culture as Yogurt: The most powerful figure in modern art, Willem de Kooning, is still very aware of the charge of personality that is the real impetus for his kind of art. "You've developed a little culture for yourself, like yogurt," he says. "As long as you keep some of the original microbes, the original thing in it will grow out." In this sense the young artists who followed abstract expressionism were microbe hunters.

In a symbolic moment in 1959, Robert Rauschenberg asked de Kooning for a drawing that he erased and exhibited as "Erased de Kooning." Rauschenberg rejected the abstract expressionist's agony of entry into himself. For this he substituted the flow of all the dissociated experiences that everyone has during an ordinary day. Rauschenberg's work brings together the buzzing fragments of news photos, the debris of daily living. He became the stage designer of the comedy of acceptance.

Another innovation—and attitude—was introduced by Jasper Johns, who took the most banal everyday symbols—numbers, letters, targets—and in an exquisite bit of surgical separation—detached them from their functional meanings. Such a loaded subject as the American flag—which nobody ever really *sees*—became, when Johns carefully painted its banal *gestalt*, an object, hauled out of the world of symbol into a piece of esthetic furniture one is forced to bump into.

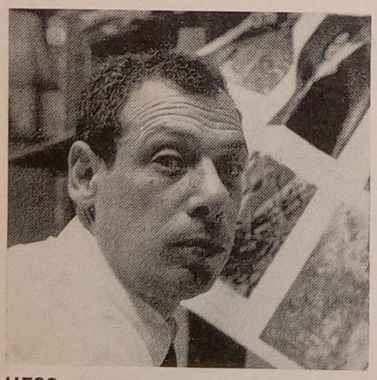
New Armies: Rauschenberg and Johns are the youthful old masters, the Picasso and Braque, of the new age. Their example, amongst others such as the late Morris Louis, helped create the free-for-all atmosphere through which legions of new artists negotiate their work—the pop-men, like James Rosenquist, who make icons out of everything from nickel combs to Lincoln Continentals; the parodists of the past, like Larry Rivers, kidding old styles and nudging old masters such as Ingres and Rembrandt in the ribs; the younger abstract expressionists like Norman Bluhm and his put-up-your-dukes action painting; the makers of elegantly useless objects, vacuum-packing their work in a fury of suppressed nihilism; the stainers and spillers, like Kenneth Noland with his seductive chevrons of naked color; the hard-edge hewers like Jack Youngerman with his vigorous war-bonnet shapes and colors; the figure painters like Paul Georges with his pipe-and-slippers disheveling of domesticity.

Out of all this comes the crucial question of the age—the content and meaning of art now. Much of the new art is mindlessly blank, the art of an age when the artist seems to be looking ahead to the robotized future. Much optical art simply bombards the eye, keeps the cortex sorting out signals and circuits; sensations are experienced, but they do not progress to feeling. Much pop art seems to pass through happily depersonalized artists. The crucial struggle is appearing just now, as both pop and op artists aspire to a new mode of defeeling, to new styles within the cool context of their new age.

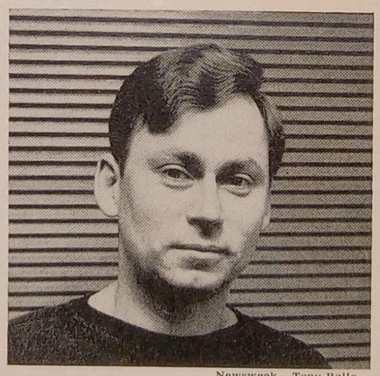
Richard Bellamy, a quiet, unassuming dealer, whose Green Gallery has been an important seminal force among the newest of the new art, admits there is a cool, anti-emotional attitude among most young artists. "It's a reaction to the emotional excess of abstract expressionism. I guess since I am 37 years old and have gone to a head shrinker and a body shrinker I should be aghast at the development, but I have no moral attitude about it."

Breakdown: The abstract expressionists, coming along after most esthetic options had seemed exhausted, had tried to reintegrate personality in the very act of putting paint on a surface—the purest and guttiest kind of art for people's sake. For many of the new generation the mystique of the creative act has largely dissolved. "When I first came to painting," says pop artist Tom Wesselmann, "there was only de Kooning—that was what I wanted to be, with all its self-dramatization. But it didn't work for me . . . I had a kind of artistic nervous breakdown. I couldn't stand the insecurity and frustration . . ."

The new move toward acceptance, whether pop acceptance of mass culture, or op acceptance of physiological sensitivity, is therefore in large part a movement toward security. At the end of this road, of course, stands the ultimate security—dehumanization. "I think everybody should be like everybody," says Andy Warhol, "I think everybody should be a machine." To Peter Selz

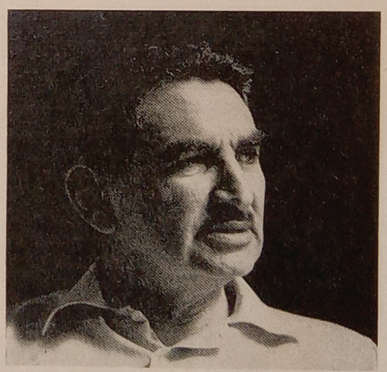


HESS: "Serious American art continues to be the most important cultural tradition in the world today. However, a growing kind of faddist promotion based on sales and gimmicks want to push serious works off the map."



Newsweek—Tony Rollo

JUDD: "There is a breakdown in universal and general values. I don't think the artist believes in them. I think they are happy to help break down general values like any great statement you can make about the way people should live."



Newsweek

ROSENBERG: "By the measure of the twentieth-century context, to establish the value of the new art offers no extraordinary difficulties. It can be stated once terms are found to relate it to the novelty of the art that preceded it."

cycles. There would be long stretches of work and then times

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HANS NAMUTH'S PHOTOGRAPHS AND THE JACKSON POLLOCK MYTH: PART ONE: MEDIA IMPACT AND THE FAILURE OF CRITICISM

BARBARA ROSE

Hans Namuth's photographs made public what was apparently the innermost mystery of Jackson Pollock's art: how such images were created and under what circumstance. Pollock could afford to let Namuth into the studio because he had nothing to hide, no secrets, no tricks.

In July, 1950, Hans Namuth, a young German-born photographer, introduced himself to Jackson Pollock at Guild Hall, an East Hampton art gallery where Pollock was showing recent paintings. Fascinated by the means by which Pollock created his mysterious labyrinthine images, Namuth asked to photograph the artist at work in his studio in nearby Springs. At first, Pollock, who seldom permitted himself to be observed painting, was reluctant. Nevertheless, several times that summer, Namuth visited Pollock and his wife Lee Krasner and photographed both artists. Namuth's photographs made during these visits—of Pollock in his model-A Ford, on the grass in front of his barn studio, engrossed in thought—are remarkable portraits of a great artist. But his sequence of motion photographs capturing Pollock in the act of making his gigantic poured paintings on the floor of his studio constitutes an absolutely unique documentation of an artist at work. This record, completed by the ten-minute color film Namuth made with Paul Falkenburg during the weekends in September and October of 1950 with a soundtrack of the laconic Pollock speaking about his art, was so extensive and dramatic that it has excercised, for various reasons I shall discuss, an important role in forming the artistic as well as the public conception of Pollock.

As photographed by Namuth in the heat of the moment of creation, Pollock projected superhuman energy—a kind of animal magnetism. One of the reasons this is so is because the style of these photographs of Pollock working does not conform to the style of the artist's portrait or the studio interior, but is related to the style of motion photography used in photographing wild animals who are unconscious they are being observed. For it was Namuth's brilliance to make himself invisible and "stalk" his subject. Pollock, totally immersed in his own trance-like activity, was oblivious to the repeated click-click of high-speed film that permitted Namuth to capture Pollock's spontaneity in images that freeze the artist's frenzied movements into a blur of urgency. In these remarkable and daring photographs, Pollock's rhythmic gesture finds a perfect analogue: The man could no more be physically pinned down by the machine than his paintings can be made to assume static patterns by vision whose normal tendency is to perceive legible shapes.

In picturing a new image of the artist in the grip of impulse, driven by inner forces, Namuth, following his own unconscious intuition, provided the material necessary for the creation of a cultural myth of the artist as an inspired shaman, entirely "other" than the pedestrian businessman who dominated American social life. Given the historical context within which they were made, these photographs were destined to have profound reverberations. Eisenhower had become President, but he had ceased to be a hero, although the appetite for heroes had not died with the end of the War. In the immediate postwar period, the American people were understandably casting about for heroic figures to fill the shoes of those who risked their lives in combat. With no suitable political figure such as de Gaulle to fill the void, the country was ready—for the first time—to acclaim a culture hero, with of course the ambivalence that marks the businessman's attitude to culture.

In this context, the publication and diffusion of Namuth's photographs of Pollock was especially propitious, for they provided an image of an artist so novel and remarkable that even an expert such as Steichen could not recognize them within the convention of artists' portraits.[1] First published early in 1951 in *Portfolio*, a short-lived review edited by Franz Zachary and Alexei Brodovitch,[2] art director of *Harper's Bazaar* and Namuth's teacher at the New School, Namuth's photographs of Pollock at work received broader circulation in May of that year when *Artnews* published a series of black and white photographs illustrating "Pollock Paints a Picture" by Robert Goodnough. On June 14, 1951, the Museum of Modern Art screened the color film of Pollock painting. From that moment, the images of Pollock in action attached themselves as additional meanings to his works to a degree that they began to color the perception of his paintings, which remained for most people, including artists and critics who admired their obvious energy and daring, largely incomprehensible.



Hans Namuth, Jackson Pollock, 1950. © *Hans Namuth, 1979.*

cycles. There would be long stretches of work and then times

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photographs was felt in an article published the following year in *Artnews*, Harold Rosenberg's essay "The American Action Painters," which gained world fame as the manifesto of Abstract Expressionism. I recall being puzzled by the article when it was republished in a collection of Rosenberg's writing titled *The Tradition of the New* in 1959. Although it was obvious that Rosenberg was talking about something, I could not identify his subject as painting, and for good reason. According to Rosenberg: "At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act . . . What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event . . . A painting that is an act is inseparable from the biography of the artist. The painting itself is a 'moment' in the adulterated mixture of his life . . . . The act-painting is of the same metaphysical substance as the artist's existence. The new painting has broken down every distinction between art and life."[3]

In retrospect, I realize Rosenberg was not talking about painting at all; he was describing Namuth's photographs of Pollock. All the metaphors were decipherable from the photographs: Pollock attacking his canvas spread out on the floor in front of him like a boxing ring or a bullfighting arena, with paintbrush extended aggressively, in the manner of banderillas—Pollock pictured alone, isolated from any frame of reference save his own creation which obviously dwarfed and engulfed him—what images could more poignantly conjure up a literary vision of the existential hero?

By the late Fifties, Namuth's photographs had been sufficiently reproduced and circulated, and the film screened widely enough to provide an alternative to dealing with the difficulty of Pollock's painting, in the face of which critics grew mute. Even Clement Greenberg, falsely credited with discovering Pollock—a distinction that belongs to John Graham—had little to say beyond asserting Pollock was great and radical. Greenberg's most penetrating discussion of Pollock in *Art and Culture*, his collected essays published in 1961, consists of a brief description of Pollock's relationship to Cubism in

publications on Pollock were two short articles, one dealing with the impact of Pollock's death on the art market, and an article in the April 1, 1967 issue of *Vogue* on the occasion of the Pollock retrospective at MOMA. Illustrated by the requisite Namuth photo, a close-up of Pollock clearly pouring as opposed to "dripping" paint, the article was Greenberg's last attempt to come to terms with the artist he considered "in a class by himself."

Greenberg was hardly the only critic to find it difficult to write about Pollock. Indeed, the state of Pollock criticism, as opposed to Pollock scholarship, which in the hands of William Rubin and Francis V. O'Connor has made substantial progress, has hardly altered since Don Judd, dumbfounded by the grandeur of Pollock's accomplishment, complained: "It would take a big effort for me or anyone to think about Pollock's work in a way that would be intelligible." It was obviously an effort Judd was not willing to make. Judd's article, also published at the time of the 1967 MOMA retrospective, and illustrated by a full-page Namuth photo of Pollock working as well as a clip from the film, is an amazing document, as full of hostility to art critics as it is of monosyllabic admiration of Pollock's singular achievement. A final assault on criticism, the Pollock article was one of Judd's last sorties into that detestable activity. In it, Judd accurately summed up the state of Pollock criticism:

> Not much has been written on Pollock's work and most of that is mediocre or bad . . . Bryan Robertson's book, published in 1960, is the only large one on Pollock; its text is useless. Whatever is accurate is factual and appeared earlier in Sam Hunter's short preface to the catalogue of the Museum of Modern Art's first show of Pollock's work in 1956-57 and in various reviews and general articles. There are only a couple of articles on Pollock, one in 1957 by Clement Greenberg. The rest of Robertson's book is wrong in one way or another, usually just glibly wrong. Frank O'Hara's small book, published in 1959 in the Bra-



(upper left top line)
[The initial response of the art world's reception of the Pollock photographs . . .

(upper right)
"American-Type Painting." Although Greenberg was said to be working on a more extended study of Pollock, his only further

Hans Namuth, Jackson Pollock, 1950. *Hans Namuth, 1979.*

cycles. There would be long stretches of work and then times

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ziller series, has the same biographical and received information as Sam Hunter's preface, some baloney and no real thought.

In this article, written as Judd was about to give up criticism for good to devote himself to his career as an artist, he maintained that "art criticism is very inferior to the work it discusses." Two years earlier, Judd had written a widely circulated essay on "Specific Objects" that expressed a disgust with the limits of painting as an illusion and a preference for literal space, shapes, and materials that came to be characteristic of the Sixties. Here Judd asserted that "a work needs only to be interesting," a remark that announced the refusal to make distinctions in quality that is the essence of art writing of the last decade.

Although he did not claim to speak for others, Judd's stance was typical of the attitude of those artists who assumed that Pollock's painting could not be either critically assimilated or artistically superseded—that it was the *ne plus ultra* of what could be made with paint on canvas. Stained color-field painters had sorted out an element in Pollock's technique that could be used to resolve the problem of how to keep different colors from creating a spatial illusion related to Cubism; but "minimal" artists, who are really better termed literalist artists, took Pollock's use of literal materials—glass, pebbles, wire, etc.—to suggest an art that was completely literal and entirely anti-illusionistic. Again Namuth's photographs of Pollock working were critical means of communicating information. They showed the artist working on the floor, with canvas appearing as unstretched fabric, suggesting to some artists that the stretcher itself was unnecessary.

Judd was central to spreading a literalist interpretation of Pollock, but the origin of the attitude that Pollock signaled the end of painting is actually an essay by Allan Kaprow, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock" (*Artnews*, October 1958). According to Kaprow, Pollock "created some magnificent paintings, but he also destroyed painting . . . With Pollock the so-called dance of dripping, slashing, daubing and whatever else went into a work, placed an almost absolute value on a kind of diaristic gesture."

Looking at photographs of an artist aggressively gesticulating in a paint-splattered studio that was the total antithesis of the tidy studio and disciplined activity of an easel painter like Masson, Kaprow spoke for an entire generation of younger American artists to whom Surrealism meant little, but who yearned for revolution and spontaneity in a drab, repressed, gray flannel era. To Kaprow, Pollock was "the embodiment of our ambition for absolute liberation and a secretly cherished wish to overturn old tables of crockery and flat champagne. We saw in his example a possibility of astounding freshness, a sort of ecstatic blindness." What Kaprow saw, in other words, and I suspect he saw it in Namuth's photographs and not in Pollock's deliberately controlled paintings, was the liberating possibility of uninhibited acting out—catharsis through art. Later, in *Environments, Assemblages and Happenings*, published in 1966, Kaprow underlined the debt of the happening and environmental artists to Pollock. He included two Namuth photographs of Pollock, one of the artist surrounded by his gigantic canvases titled *Little Man in a Big Sea*, faced by a photograph of Kaprow himself lost in an environment of rubber tires, presumably a three-dimensional equivalent of the rubbery loops of paint in a Pollock.

In another photograph from that book of Oldenburg in an early Happening, *Snapshots from the City*, the inspiration of Namuth's images of Pollock at work is equally obvious. More sophisticated and certainly more artistically gifted than his contemporaries, Oldenburg was the only "pop" artist to think seriously about Pollock and to derive his conception of his store reliefs as fragments ripped from a mural by Pollock rather than from Johns' flag, the prototype for the rest of Pop. Oldenburg's appropriation of randomness as a new element in sculpture was derived from an analysis of Pollock's technique, which is documented in notebook entries about Pollock, the only artist for whom Oldenburg has no critical words, as well as in several drawings done in imitation of Pollock's fluid style. Always sensitive to the moment, Oldenburg felt Pollock's paintings receding in a culture dominated increasingly by reproduction and second-hand experience. In the *Bedroom*, an environ-



Hans Namuth, Jackson Pollock, 1950. © *Hans Namuth, 1979.*

cycles. There would be long stretches of work and then times

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prehension of experience of [illegible] Mar–June 1967

of printed textile, a vulgar commercial adaptation of Pollock's image, as a motel decoration.

1967 was a turning point in art, as the minimal styles fell apart into distributional, anti-formal, anti-illusionist, conceptual, process, or body art. All these sub-categories I believe were inspired by the larger than life blow-ups of Namuth's Pollock photographs that accompanied the 1967 MOMA retrospective. In these impressive images that identified the artist totally with his art, paint often looked like scattered objects on the floor, which apparently stimulated Carl Andre, Barry Le Va, Robert Morris, et al., to conceive of environments in which materials were placed in random arrangements on the floor. Soon a raft of performance and "process" artists could think of documenting the process of making, emulating Namuth's record of the process of Pollock's creation, as an end in itself that did not require the final act of producing an object that could be judged, since all that was required by the audience was an "interesting" experience. Formerly I thought of those acts made in the name of art that did not produce an object as expressions of contempt for the art market; but more and more it seems to me they were and are an attempt to avoid critical judgment.

In refocusing the act of art on the artist as actor instead of maker, the art of the late Sixties and Seventies was certainly affected by Namuth's photographs of Pollock. The photographs, with their focus on the act of art, became a way of avoiding analyzing the consequences of Pollock's paintings as a culminating synthesis of the history of Western art. Moreover, because the paintings deliver so little of themselves in reproduction, the photographs of the artist, which are ideally reproduced, had a fullness of informational content which reproductions of the work lacked, and it was through reproduction that most people experienced Pollock. Available as the paintings themselves never were to every provincial and academic audience, Namuth's Pollock photographs and film affected a far larger audience than the paintings had. In this connection, it is significant that in reproduction, the relationship of work to per-

mechanical duplication, the personality of the artist begins to dominate, as conversely his own image is enlarged, blown-up, or projected. As a result of the popularity of Namuth's film and photographs of Pollock, the persona of the artist took on a dimension greater than his works. This could not help but have a devastating effect on the generation of artists who matured in the late Sixties and Seventies, who relieved of the burden of Pollock's art have focused their energy on projecting a persona or self-image that could be as compelling as Pollock's media image.

More readily intelligible, more widely diffused, accessible, and available than Pollock's rare works, Namuth's photographs had a far greater consequence than anyone has understood in determining the course of recent art history. Only one other sequence of photographs is in any way comparable: They are Man Ray's portraits of Duchamp in various camp masquerades—as his drag alter egos *Belle Haleine* and *Rrose Sélavy*, as the shaving cream satyr on the phony Monte Carlo notes, as the wanted criminal on the ersatz police poster, and as the strategist in the mock war games of chess. If we study Man Ray's portraits of Duchamp, we note they have one thing in common: all are images of inauthenticity, of the artist as something other than himself, of the artist as an intellectual alienated from the physical processes of manual labor.

Both Man Ray's Duchamp and Namuth's Pollock are actors. Duchamp, however, appears always dressed in costume, disguised, committing his acts of art in privacy, as if they were a covert crime or private perversion. There is a distinct and deliberate disjunction, an almost paralyzing degree of self-consciousness regarding the artist's presentation of himself as something other than a worker. We may trace Duchamp's insistence that he never be pictured sweating or dirty to the initial Renaissance distinction between the liberal and the manual arts—of fine arts as a "free" intellectual profession as opposed to a craft guild activity—reflected in Leonardo's assumption that painting was a



Hans Namuth, Jackson Pollock, 1950. © *Hans Namuth, 1979.*

(upper left top box)
ment of 1967 Oldenburg mocked
the assimilation without com-
prehension or experience of
Pollock's work by framing a piece

(upper right top)
ronality becomes inverted; as
the work loses its qualities of
scale, color, surface, and
facture through reduction and

cycles. There would be long stretches of work and then times

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mental activity, whereas sculpture was messy and physical.

In Europe, the idea of the fine artist as a member of the professional class had taken root to such an extent that when Alexander Liberman photographed the leading members of the School of Paris for his classic book *The Artist in his Studio*, the bohemian beret and smock had given way entirely to the ascot, tie, and business clothes of the middle-class professional. In America, however, fine art was not recognized as a legitimate profession until the Sixties, when art became an important element in the university curriculum and academic attitudes began to prevail among artists. In this increasingly academic atmosphere, art became more and more intellectual and conceptual, with the artist assuming more and more the role of industrial designer whose work is fabricated by machines or other laborers. In this climate of alienation, the photographs of Duchamp and Pollock gained even greater resonance as antithetical conceptions of the artist. For even as the artists took up Duchamp's cry for an intellectual art (unaware that Duchamp was secretly continuing his dirty habit of making art with his own hands), the images of Pollock, dressed in paint-spattered laborer's clothes, working in the oblivious absorption of primitive consciousness akin to the tribal artist creating his ritual objects, became articles of a haunting nostalgia for work as unalienated self-expression.

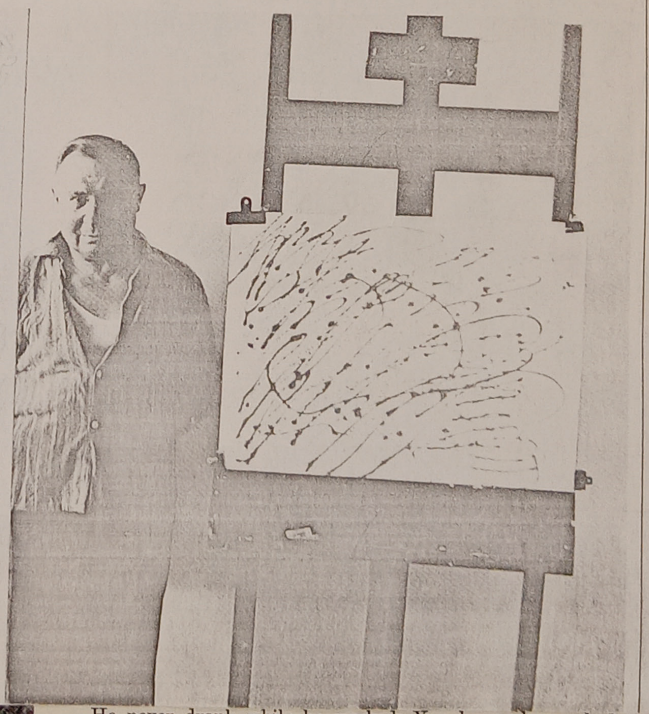
Man Ray's Duchamp impersonates roles rather than expressing an inner life. Namuth's portraits of Pollock as a tormented, agonized man, torn by self-doubt, the victim of an inner *Sturm-und-Drang* nakedly revealed in his contorted face, provided a necessary image of authentic feeling. The picture of the romantic Genius, possessed by demonic *terribilità*, permitted an excited but naive public to turn to the myth of art to supplement the meagerness of its actual experience of an unfamiliar expression with no precedent in the tradition of American Judaic-Protestant iconoclasm.

However, although painting had no place as icon within the American tradition, photographs—specifically photographs of movie stars which served as domestic and public votive images—did. Namuth's pictures of Pollock were perfectly assimilable to this tradition because Jackson Pollock coincidentally looked the part the public needed him to play. George Segal's reaction to Namuth's photographs was typical:

> I had an image of Marlon Brando's brooding pouting profile looking down while Stella ripped his tee-shirt from his sloping shoulders with gouging fingernails. But Pollock's creased forehead in his photographs intrigued me. He had the agonized look of a man wrestling with himself in a game of unnameable but very high stakes. I was reeling under a barrage of words when I first saw Pollock's paintings. The words said, You can't talk about me. You can't explain art.

As I re-evaluate art of the recent past and the way it has accommodated Pollock's myth and image to avoid confronting his artistic achievement, my respect for those painters who did not lay down their brushes and jump off the wall in a desperate attempt to make an image literally more powerful than Pollock's grows. To place Namuth's photographs back where they belong, in the history of photography where they have a significant position, is to return to the problems of painting Pollock left unresolved in 1956. Namuth's photographs made public what was apparently the innermost mystery of Pollock's magic: how such images were created, and under what circumstance. Pollock could afford to let Namuth into the studio because he had nothing to hide, no secrets, no tricks. The paintings are no less miraculous because we see who made them and how, for Genius is inimitable, and Pollock apparently knew it.

1. The discussion with Steichen is recorded in the book of Namuth's photographs, *L'Atelier de Jackson Pollock*, to be published next fall in America as *Pollock Painting*. When Namuth showed the photographs to Steichen, then head of the MOMA photography department, Steichen told Namuth these were not proper photographs of the artist—that the artist should be photographed in his daily routine, waking up in the morning, brushing his teeth, talking to his wife. It is precisely this lack of domestic context, of course, that differentiates (at least until recently) the American from the European artist. The separation of the atelier from domestic quarters is typical of the New York School. Pollock's barn was the country equivalent of the industrial loft—a large, anonymous space with a pre-history that was not artistic. The alternative American conception of the *atelier* is something worth considering. On the other hand, if Namuth had photographed Pollock's house, the photographs would have resembled the interior of Monet's or Matisse's studio: perfect order, a collection of books, records, art, and objects dear to the artist such as rocks and stones. This dichotomy between Pollock's domestic life, a model of order imposed by Krasner's housekeeping ability, and the "mess" of the studio is striking. It is also worth noting, as Hilton Kramer pointed out, that it was not until Krasner inherited the barn studio after Pollock's death that she was able to express the large scale that is inherent in her style.
2. It was originally Brodovitch who brought Pollock to Namuth's attention. Like Frank Crowninshield, Graham's patron, and later Alexander Liberman, Brodovitch was responsible for immediately recognizing and popularizing the American avant-garde.
3. Rosenberg's implicit Dadaism was understood by a generation raised on John Cage for what it was. However, it is interesting that as early as 1952 he was preaching a confusion between art and life that came to dominate the Sixties' art he himself despised.



Alexander Liberman, André Masson in his Studio, Aix-en-Provence, 1956. © *Alexander Liberman, 1979.*

He never drank while he worked. You know, he worked in cycles. There would be long stretches of work and then times

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Art In America, May–June 1967

Even during his lifetime Jackson Pollock became cloaked in myth. His fame was international. But as Rilke wrote, "Fame is nothing but the sum total of misunderstandings that cling to a name." A generation has now grown up to revere Pollock as a revolutionary painter without comprehending his character and the personal conflicts that made his art what it is. The four people who speak here about Pollock were among the few who knew him intimately: his wife, the painter Lee Krasner; Anthony Smith, sculptor, architect and teacher; Betty Parsons, his dealer; and Alfonso Ossorio, painter, art collector and Pollock's neighbor in East Hampton. It is inevitable that these four—all interviewed within one month last winter—do not concur in all details. But what has emerged from their memories makes a vivid and unified portrait of a man tortured by conflicts: a man both gentle and violent, kind and hostile, sensitive and rough, intelligent and guileless, questioning and credulous; a man racked by ill health, poverty and a search for an inner resolution that he was never able to achieve. He was forty-four when he died.

JACKSON POLLOCK: 1912–1956

1912, January 28—Born in Cody, Wyoming; the youngest of five sons of Stella (née McClure) and Le Roy Pollock (né McCoy—Pollock was the name of his adoptive parents). Grew up in the West, mainly Arizona and California.
1925–29—Attended Manual Arts High School, Los Angeles, studied sculpture and then painting.
1929—Arrived in New York City and attended classes of Thomas Hart Benton at the Art Students League.
1935—Settled in New York City.
1938–42—Worked on Federal Art Project, New York.
1943—First one-man show held at Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century Gallery; exhibited there until gallery closed in 1947.
1944—Married Lee Krasner.
1946—Moved to Springs, East Hampton, Long Island.
1947–51—Showed at Betty Parsons Gallery.
1952–56—Showed at Sidney Janis Gallery.
1956, August 11—Killed in automobile accident.
1967—Retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, April 3–June 4; and at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, July 19 through September 3.

WHO WAS JACKSON POLLOCK?

Interviews by Francine du Plessix and Cleve Gray



LEE KRASNER

In a letter of 1929 written from Los Angeles, where Jackson was in Manual Arts High School, he told his brother Sandy, "People terrify and bore me."

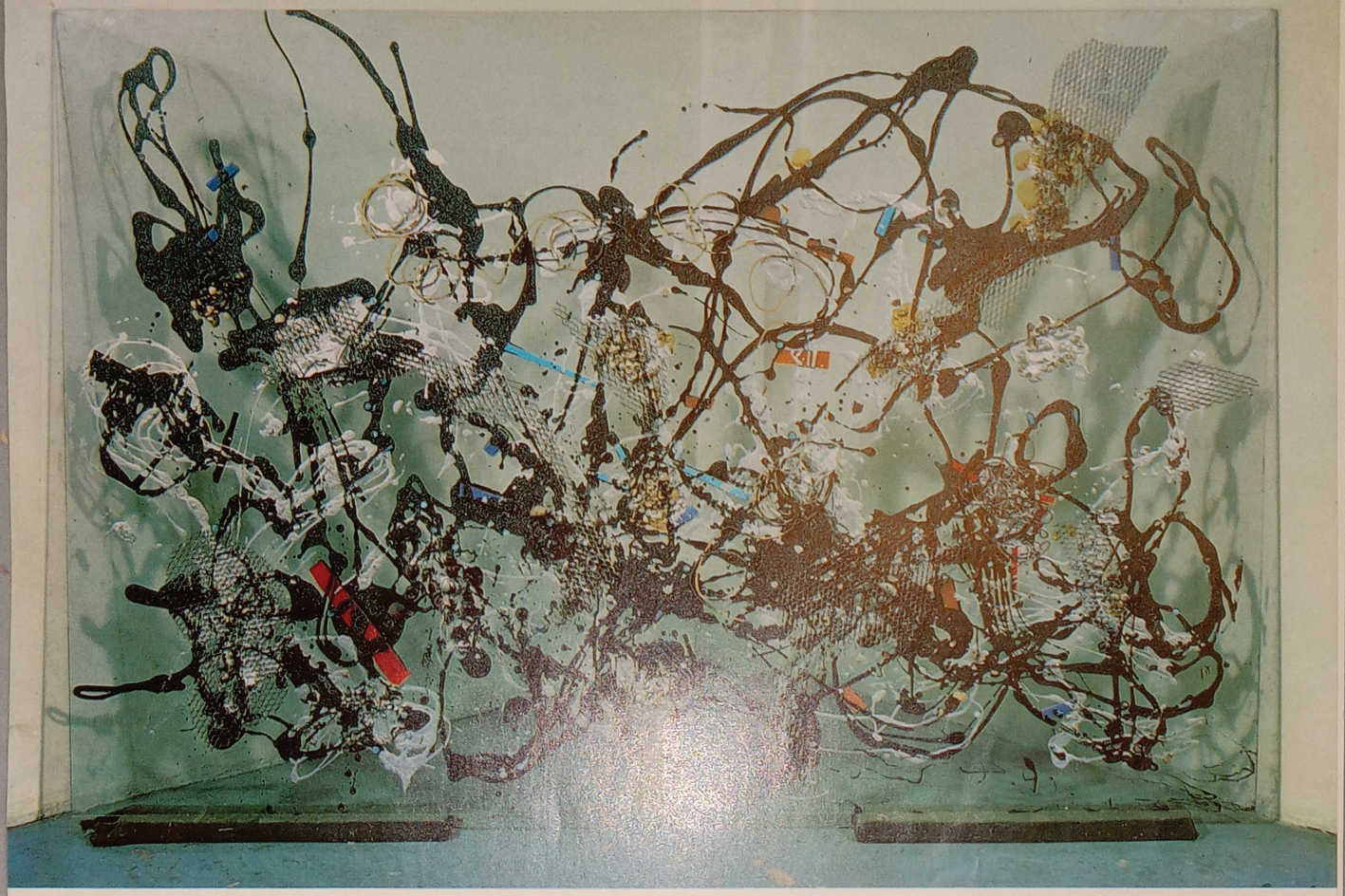
Jackson faced his problems. You ask about his drinking. The drinking was something we faced all the time; wouldn't I be foolish if I didn't talk about it? No one was more conscious about it than he was. Jackson tried everything to stop drinking —medical treatments, analysis, chemistry, everything available. In the late 1940s he went to a Dr. Heller, a general practitioner who had never treated an alcoholic. He was the first man who was really able to help Jackson stop drinking. From 1948 to 1950 Jackson did not touch alcohol. I often asked him what Dr. Heller did, when he saw him every week at the East Hampton Medical Clinic. Apparently they just talked. Once when I asked him about Dr. Heller, Jackson said to me, "He is an honest man, I can believe him." Do you realize what that means? "He is an honest man, I can believe him."

He never drank while he worked. You know, he worked in cycles. There would be long stretches of work and then times

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Jackson Pollock: No. 29, oil paint, wire mesh, string, shells, pebbles on glass, 1950; collection of Lee Krasner Pollock. This is his only painting on glass. He was interested in new techniques and for years he was intrigued with the idea of having space flow around his paintings. This work was meant to hang in empty space—a floating panel—with no wall showing behind it.

when he did not work. He drank before and after these work cycles. In 1950 Dr. Heller got killed in an automobile accident —just like Jackson—and when Jackson took to drink again later that year there was no Heller to go to.

I remember the day I went to his studio for the first time. It was late '41. I went because we had both been invited by John Graham to show in the McMillen Gallery in January '42. I wanted to meet this artist I had never heard about. Actually we had met about four years before and had danced together at an Artists' Union party. But I had forgotten about that first meeting. When he was invited to the McMillen show I was astonished because I thought I knew all the abstract artists in New York. You know, in those days one knew everyone. Well, I was in a rage at myself, simply furious because here was a name that I hadn't heard of. All the more furious because he was living on Eighth Street and I was on Ninth, just one block away. He and his brother Sandy and Sandy's wife had the top floor; each had half. As I came in, Sandy was standing at the top of the stairs; I asked for Jackson Pollock, and he said, "You can try knocking over there, but I don't know if he's in." I later found out from Sandy that it was most unusual for Jackson to answer. When I knocked, he opened. I introduced myself and said we were both showing in the same show. I walked right in.

What did I think? I was overwhelmed, bowled over, that's all. I saw all those marvelous paintings. I felt as if the floor was sinking when I saw those paintings. How could there be a painter like that that I didn't know about? I must have made several remarks on how I felt about the paintings. I remember remarking on one, and he said, "Oh, I'm not sure I'm finished with that one." I said, "Don't touch it!" Of course I don't know whether he did or not.

He was not a big man, but he gave the impression of being big. About five-foot-eleven—average—big-boned, heavy. His hands were fantastic, powerful hands. I wish there were photographs of his hands. All told, he was physically powerful. And this ran through from the first time I met him until the day he died, when there had been quite a change in his appearance.

He was not in the war at the time I met him because he had been classified 4-F. He had spent six months at Bloomingdale's, a White Plains, New York, hospital for treatment of psychiatric cases, when he was about eighteen. And the alcoholic problem had been with him most of his life. One morning before we were married Sandy knocked on my door and asked "Did Jackson spend the night here last night?" I answered, "No, why?" "Because he's in Bellevue Hospital and our mother has arrived in New York. Will you go with me and get him?" We went and there he was in the Bellevue ward. He looked awful. He had been drinking for days. I said to him, "Is this the best hotel you can find?" At Sandy's suggestion I took him back to my place and fed him milk and eggs to be in shape for dinner that night with Mother. We went together. It was my first meeting with Mother. I was overpowered with her cooking, I had never seen such a spread as she put on. She had cooked all the dinner, baked the bread, the abundance of it was fabulous. I thought Mama was terrific. Later I said to Jackson, "You're

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off your rocker, she's sweet, nice." It took a long time for me to realize why there was a problem between Jackson and his mother. You see, at that time I never connected the episode of Jackson's drinking with his mother's arrival. And around then Stella (Jackson's mother) moved out to Connecticut with Sandy and his family so we didn't really see that much of her. I hadn't yet seen anything of the dominating mother.

When we were married Jackson wanted a church wedding; not me. *He* wanted it and we had it. Jackson's mother, in fact all the family, was anti-religious—that's a fact. Violently anti-religious. I felt that Jackson, from many things he did and said, felt a great loss there. He was tending more and more to religion. I felt that went back to his family's lack of it. You know in his teens he used to listen to Krishnamurti's lectures.

If I conjure up the gentle part of Jackson, that was one part. But there was the other part, the other extreme, the angry man. Both of them existed in extremes. But Jackson's violence was all verbal. There never was any physical violence. He would just use more four-letter words than usual. Or he would take it out on the furniture. One night we were having ten or twelve people for dinner. Jackson and Hans Namuth were at one end of the table. I don't know what the argument was about, but I heard loud voices and suddenly Jackson overturned the whole table with twelve roast beef dinners. It was a mess. I said, "Coffee will be served in the living room." Everyone filed out and Jackson went off without any trouble. Jeffrey Potter and I cleaned up.

I will tell you a story about de Kooning. Jackson and he were standing at the Cedar Bar, drinking. They started to argue and de Kooning punched him. There was a crowd around them and some of the fellows tried to egg Jackson on to hit de Kooning back. Jackson turned to them and said: "What? Me? Hit an artist?" He was *not* violent. Angry, yes. Bitter, yes. Impatient, yes. Not violent.

This is how we got to live in Springs: We had friends, the Kadishes, who rented a house out there in the summer of '45. They invited us to spend a weekend with them. Jackson loved city life. I was the one who had an aspiration to live in the country. At the end of that weekend I said to Jackson: "How about us looking for a place to rent and moving out there for one winter? We can rent that house we saw for forty dollars, and sublet our own place." He thought it was a terrible idea. But I remember when we got back to Eighth Street he spent three days stretched out on the couch just thinking. Then on Friday he leaped up and said, "Lee, we're going to buy a house in Springs and move out!" Well of course we didn't even have the forty dollars to pay rent, not to speak of *buying* a house, so I said, "Jackson, have you gone out of your mind?" His answer was: "Lee, you're always the one who's saying I shouldn't let myself worry about the money; we'll just go ahead and do it." We went back to Springs. The house we wanted had just been sold, so we asked the agent to see what else there was. He showed us a place we liked. The price was $5,000. We could get a $3,000 mortgage and had to raise $2,000 in cash. I went to Peggy Guggenheim, but she wouldn't consider a loan and said sarcastically, "Why don't you go ask Sam Kootz?" I went to see Kootz, and he agreed to lend us the money but only with the understanding that Jackson would come over to his gallery; he had heard that Peggy was closing her gallery. When I got back to Peggy's and told her what Kootz had said, she exploded. "How could you do such a thing and with Kootz of all people! Over my dead body you'll go to Kootz!" I said, "But Peggy, it was your idea to ask Kootz." Well, we eventually reached an agreement by means of which Peggy lent us the $2,000. She did this by raising Jackson's monthly fee to $300, deducting $50 a month to repay the loan and having rights to all of Jackson's output for the next two years. This, incidentally, was the agreement that gave rise to her recent lawsuit against me.

I think that living in Springs allowed Jackson to work. He needed the peace and quiet of country life. It enabled him to work.

The first two years we lived in Springs we had no car. You know, before I met him, there was an existence of dire poverty, about as bad as it can be. This was sometime between the time he arrived in New York and when he got on W.P.A. In the deep Depression he used to get a meal for five cents. I know that when he lived with Sandy he had to work as a janitor in the Little Red Schoolhouse in The Village. Later Jackson got a Model A Ford, but in the beginning we had to bicycle to do all the errands; that would take a good part of the day.

He always slept very late. Drinking or not, he never got up in the morning. He could sleep twelve, fourteen hours, around the clock. We'd always talk about his insane guilt about sleeping late. Morning was my best time for work, so I would be in my studio when I heard him stirring around. I would go back, and while he had his breakfast I had my lunch. His breakfast would not set him up and make him bolt from the table like most people. He would sit over that damn cup of coffee for

Krasner: "Jackson's mother, Stella, was a terrific cook, but when this photo was taken in the kitchen at Springs, we gave the dinner."



Krasner: "Our neighbors at Springs had four kids who came and played with Jackson; they had a ball together." Photo by Willard B. Golovin.



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two hours. By that time it was afternoon. He'd get off and work until it was dark. There were no lights in his studio. When the days were short he could only work for a few hours, but what he managed to do in those few hours was incredible. We had an agreement that neither of us would go into the other's studio without being asked. Occasionally, it was something like once a week, he would say, "I have something to show you." I would always be astonished by the amount of work that he had accomplished. In discussing the paintings, he would ask, "Does it work?" Or in looking at mine, he would comment, "It works" or "It doesn't work." He may have been the first artist to have used the word "work" in that sense. There was no heat in his studio either, but he would manage in winter if he wanted to; he would get dressed up in an outfit the like of which you've never seen.

He often said, "Painting is no problem; the problem is what to do when you're not painting."

In the afternoon, if he wasn't working, we might bicycle to town. Or when we had a car, he would drive me to town and wait in the car for me while I shopped. When he was working, he would go to town when the light gave out and get a few cartons of beer to bring home. Of course, during those two years (1948 and 1949) he was on the wagon. He didn't touch beer either. We would often drive out in the old Model A and get out and walk. Or we would sit on the stoop for hours gazing into the landscape without exchanging a word. We rarely had art talk, sometimes shop talk, like who's going to what gallery.

One thing I will say about Pollock; the one time I saw temperament in him was when he baked an apple pie. Or when he tried to take a photograph. He never showed any artistic temperament. He loved to bake. I did the cooking but he did the baking when he felt like it. He was very fastidious about his baking—marvelous bread and pies. He also made a great spaghetti sauce.

He loved machinery, so he got a lawn mower. We made an agreement about the garden when he said, "I'll dig it and set it out if you'll water and weed." He took great pride in the house. One of the reasons for our move to Springs was that Jackson wanted to do sculpture. You know, it was his original interest in high school and art school. He often said, "One of these days I'll get back to sculpture." There was a large junk pile of iron in the backyard he expected to use.

He would get into grooves of listening to his jazz records—not just for days—day and night, day and night for three days running until you thought you would climb the roof! The house would *shake*. Jazz? He thought it was the only other really creative thing happening in this country. He had a passion for music. He had trouble carrying a tune, and although he loved to dance he was an awkward dancer. He told me that when he was a boy he bought himself a violin expecting to play it immediately. When he couldn't get the sound he wanted out of it, he smashed it in a rage.

He was secure in his work. In *that* he was sure of himself. But I can't say he was a happy man. There were times when he was happy, of course; he loved his house, he loved to fool in his garden, he loved to go out and look at the dunes, the gulls. He would talk for hours to Dan Miller, the grocery store owner. He would drink with the plumber, Dick Talmadge, or the electrician, Elwyn Harris. Once they came into New York to see one of his exhibitions.

It is a myth that he wasn't verbal. He could be hideously verbal when he wanted to be. Ask the people he really talked to: Tony Smith and me. He was lucid, intelligent; it was simply that he didn't want to talk art. If he was quiet, it was because he didn't believe in talking, he believed in *doing*.

There is a story about Hans Hofmann related to this. It was terribly embarrassing to me, because I brought Hofmann to see Pollock. Hofmann, being a teacher, spent all the time talking about art. Finally Pollock couldn't stand it any longer and said, "Your theories don't interest me. Put up or shut up! Let's see your work." He had a fanatical conviction that the *work* would do it, not any outside periphery like *talk*.

There is so much stupid myth about Pollock, I can't stand it!

There is the myth of suicide. There is no truth in this. It was an automobile accident like many others. That was a dangerous part of the road; just a while before, I myself skidded on that part of the road. The state highway department had to fix it soon after Jackson's death. That speaks for itself.

I'm bored with these myths. Jackson was damn decent to his friends no matter what the situation was. He saw few people, he didn't have a lot of friends. He was not interested in contemporary artists' work—except for a few—but, as it turned out, most of the people he saw had a connection with the arts. Among those who recognized Pollock's work, John Graham preceded everybody. One night when we were walking with John, we saw a little man with a long overcoat; it was Frederick Kiesler. John introduced Pollock by saying: "I want you to meet the greatest painter in America." Kiesler bowed low to the ground, and as he came up he asked, "North or South America?" Jim Sweeney was the first to go into print for Pollock; he introduced Pollock's first show. It was a fine introduction, but in it he called Jackson "undisciplined." Jackson got furious. He was really angry, really mad, and he painted a picture, *Search for a Symbol*, just to show how disciplined he was. He brought the new painting to the gallery where he was meeting Jim Sweeney and said, "I want you to see a really disciplined painting."

Herbert and Mercedes Matter brought Sandy Calder to see Jackson in '42. After looking at the paintings, Sandy said, "They're all so *dense*." He meant that there was no space in them. Jackson answered, "Oh you want to see one less dense, one with open space?" And he went back for a painting and came out with the densest of all. That's the way he could be. But he had deep understanding of his friends. One day I asked him, "Why is Jim Brooks so terrified of you when you are drunk?" Jackson explained sympathetically to me why Jim might be reacting that way. When I would speak to him about my own troubles with his drinking, he would say, "Yes, I know it's rough on you. But I can't say I'll stop, because you know I'm trying to. Try to think of it as a storm. It'll soon be over."

Krasner: "One night we all went into Rosanne Larkin's workshop. She's a potter, and both she and Jackson took a wheel to work at. Larry Larkin ran around snapping photos; this one was a double exposure."



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ANTHONY SMITH

One of the things that possessed Jackson was his feeling for the land and, related to it, his sense of property. He was always doing something to his place to keep it up, and he was full of projects for developing it, or adding to it. One day we were sitting in the house at Springs looking out of the window. Jackson said that he wanted to put up a white post-and-rail fence. I said, "What do you think you have here, a Maryland horse farm? You just have a dinky little place. A white fence would be asinine!" He admitted that he had wanted to make the place seem to stretch out along the road, to make it look more like a farm. I thought a fence would reduce it. He was disappointed. He was obsessed with this damn thing along the road; he said he wanted more privacy—all sorts of things. He really wanted to do something with the land, with the earth itself. We often talked about ditches, cairns, barrows, and all that. I had given him a book about Irish prehistoric monuments, and he knew that Barney [Barnett Newman] and I had each gone to see the Indian mounds in Ohio. I think he had seen mounds somewhere in the West.

At any rate, Jeff Potter had gotten some earth-moving equipment. Jackson said, "You know, I could get Jeff to bring some dirt and make a bank along the road." I asked him how high. He thought maybe six feet. I burst out, "My God, it would take up half the lawn; there wouldn't be any space left in front of the house." I thought that the whole idea had been dropped, and I guess the fence part had been; but one of the last things that Jackson did was to have Jeff dump a pile of big rocks in the yard near the back porch. The mud was still on them when he died. This is as typical as anything I know about him. He identified with the land, and in making this pile he established himself upon it. This was elemental; painting is always to some extent cultural. I never heard anyone mention it, but I think that his feeling for the land had something to do with his painting canvases on the floor. I don't recall if I had ever thought of this before seeing Hans Namuth's film. When he was shown painting on glass, seen from below and through the glass, it seemed that the glass was the earth, that he was distributing flowers over it, that it was spring.

Did you ever see Jackson walk? His head and shoulders fell forward, his arms hung free, his feet hardly left the ground. He had that cowboy way of relaxing; he became tense only when he had to do something. Instead of sitting on a chair, he would sit on his haunches like a cowboy. It was a perfectly natural position for him to get into. When he walked in the fields, it was as if he had his head in the weeds. He used to find things in them. When he looked up, it would be with a sweep of his head and eyes. He was conscious of looking up at the sky; looking down, he was relaxed and could be quite passive.

Jackson made a piece of sculpture. It was like a rock, a primordial thing, a woman. He pasted layers of the drawings he had done on rice paper over a wire armature. The paper was somewhat transparent so that the colors came through like veins in a rock, or under the skin. Someone said that he damaged the piece while putting it into a car trunk, and that he then smashed

The photographer Hans Namuth caught Pollock in a quiet moment. "After Jackson got through working he went outside the studio," says Namuth; "he was exhausted, very thoughtful and concentrated."



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it. I don't think he destroyed it, because I was told that he later put it out in the yard to see if it would weather. It fell to pieces, probably returning to the earth.

I don't think that Jackson painted on the floor just for its hard surface, or for the large area, or the freedom of movement, or so that the drips wouldn't run. There was something else, a strong bond with the elements. The earth was always there.

If he had had more money, Jackson wouldn't have done anything really different; only more of what he was already doing. He would never have moved out of that little house of his. He would have fixed it up more, and added to the property. A while after Clem Greenberg had been quoted about Jackson in Life magazine [in 1948, Greenberg suggested that Pollock might become *the* great American painter], we were in the kitchen looking out the window. The Model A was in the driveway. Jackson asked if I had seen the article, and then he asked if I didn't think he should have a better car. I didn't have any car, and I said, "The Model A's a good car. What the hell kind of car do you want?" "Oh, I don't know, maybe a Cadillac or something . . ." Well, he did get a Cadillac, a convertible, and later he bought some land that was next to his. I don't think it occurred to him to live anywhere else. He wanted to build a good studio, to add to the house, to get more land. He was talking about substantial additions, real investments.

My first meeting with Pollock was a disaster. I met him at Fritz's [Fritz Bultman] apartment on Eleventh Street. [Fred] Kamrowski and Tennessee [Williams] were there when Jackson walked in. I had heard about him, and a girl had asked me to go to the Pepsi-Cola show in order to see his painting *The Flame* (1937). I hadn't liked it; at the time it seemed too hot, hotter than it does now. I remember saying "Schmaltz!" The expressionistic quality was of no interest to me, and I wasn't happy about having gone uptown to see something I had known I wouldn't like. Do you know what Jackson looked like then? He hadn't started to get bald, and his brow was heavy and deeply ridged. He was so sullen and intense, so miserable, that I said to myself, "I've got to get out of here. I can't stand that guy."

After that first encounter, I don't think I saw Jackson again for years. I had seen his work at Peggy's [Peggy Guggenheim] and thought differently of it by then. It was great, thrilling. When I saw him again, it was for a specific purpose. Kamrowski had done about a dozen small paintings on both sides of some panels, and I had made a couple of supports for them in the middle of the gallery. Jackson saw them, and he also saw the model of a museum Peter Blake had designed. Peter had used bits of Pollock reproductions to represent the paintings, and had hung them out in free space. Jackson was about to have his first show at Betty's [Betty Parsons] and he had asked her if I would design some floating panels for him. Sometime in the winter or spring before the show, Betty took me out to talk to him about some way of hanging the paintings. There was nothing to it. The paintings had to be hung on walls, just like any other paintings. In space they would have become objects. Kamrowski's paintings had been small, intimate. They had gotten some visual backing, as well as physical support, from the framework. It wouldn't have worked for Jackson's paintings because of their large size.

From that time on I saw a lot of Jackson. He had a great sense of humor. It was very quiet—something in his eyes. He was so gentle. You felt that there was no end to his strength, yet he could move deftly, gracefully. He moved so that you couldn't see it. One day he drove us to Montauk. Lee was sitting on my lap because she was the smallest. My wife Jane was between Jackson and us. It was terribly hot. When we were halfway there, Jane noticed that Jackson had opened the door and was almost out of the car, his foot on the running board. No one had been aware that he had moved at all.

Pollock had a strong face, a rugged physical presence. Still, next to his mother, he looked like a little boy. She was a monolith, the great stone face; she was a real pioneer. Toward the end of his life Jackson seemed to swell up, his skin became coarse, his eyes withdrawn.

Jackson was detached and analytical. This led him to compartmentalize things. He had relatively few interests, but they were intense. He saw them as having no real connection with one another; the only way he could connect them was through some kind of action. I don't know if booze helped him in this. Anyhow, the way he looked at the physical world was characteristic of how he saw things—separately. He had a distinct posture for looking at the ground, another for looking at the horizon and a third for looking at the sky. You might say that that's just the way it is, but for him these seemed to be totally different modes of perception.

Another example of what I mean: Jackson was puritanical. I've never known anyone who was more so—I mean stern. On the other hand, I have heard that he was fascinated by all sorts of things which he considered perverse. He seemed to be pretty familiar with Krafft-Ebing, and although he didn't advertise it, he thought it important. The subject was a factor in his art, in the forms in his paintings, animal and human, male and female, in the metamorphoses of his shapes, in his conception of the links between things. There were real conflicts, partly due to the manner in which he kept things apart in his mind. In many ways Jackson was a straight American boy. He wanted what most people want. Once, when he had been drinking and was pretty wild, he said, "Let's go to the Stork Club." "Come on, Jackson, we can't get in there." "Why not?" "You don't have a tie. They won't let you in." "I can get in." "On what basis?" "On the basis of my reputation."

Jackson was aware of the whole scene—what was going on in Europe and in America. I don't remember if he read the papers, but he knew what was going on, especially in the art world. He also had a special interest in his own bailiwick. He was always telling me the local news, what everyone was doing, people I had never heard of. He would give me a thumbnail sketch

Smith: "One of the things that possessed Jackson was his feeling for the land and, related to it, his sense of property. He was always doing something to his place . . . was full of projects for developing it."



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to fill me in. He seldom talked about art, but when he did it was often in relation to his own community—as if it were a form of therapy, or religion. He'd mention some old lady, or a retired broker, who had taken up painting. He would say it in a quiet, solemn way—they had had the call. He cared that they were painting. I would say, "What of it? What the hell difference does it make to you?" He would tell me everything that was going on from one side of the island to the other. He saw himself as part of the local scene.

Jackson loved the landscape out on the island, anything beyond Riverhead. While driving, he said, "You look at every house we pass, don't you?" "What's wrong with that?" "I don't know. I look at every painting, but people are always telling me that I should only look at good paintings." He would take me for rides to show me building sites, or just to places that he liked. Sometimes we would just sit and look and not say anything. On clear nights we would get out of the car and look at the stars.

Once, sitting at Louse Point and listening to the water, he said, "I'm in analysis, you know. Fred doesn't believe in analysis. He says that art springs from neurosis; that the neurosis should be left intact." I didn't know anything about analysis, but I imagined that art sprang from something quite primitive. I thought it might be something like yelling, and then hearing the echo. He seemed relieved, but the incident is typical of the way in which he checked things out. He was conscious of different attitudes and approaches to things. He mused aloud about esoteric religious ideas, Oriental philosophy, things I knew nothing about. I once made a casual reference to Western man. He straightened right up and said, "What's the matter with Eastern man?"

We were crossing Sixty-fifth Street one day, and we passed Garbo coming in the other direction. I said, "Still looks great, doesn't she?" "Who? Who was that?" "Cut it out." He was completely blank. Finally I told him. About five hours later, we were on a subway platform. He said, "That was funny about Garbo . . . I don't know about love . . . I've only experienced it three times . . . one of them was when we passed that woman . . . Was it really Garbo?"

Pollock was very curious about children. He couldn't imagine our having them. He was always asking what it was like. Did they seem part of you, an extension of you? All sorts of things like that. It was almost as if he thought you could have some kind of control over what they would be like—even as babies. It must have been the way he thought about art.

The financial pinch must have been terrible. Especially when you realize how generous the Pollocks were. I think Jackson started to drink again, in 1950, or so, just out of despair. Despair at his plight. He had done so much, and so little had come out of it. At about that time he gave me a sketchbook to draw on while going to New York on the train. He had figured out his income tax on the cover; the whole income was only $2,600 or something like that.

Jackson had been very tired and depressed during those last days. We talked on the phone for a long time on Thursday night—very late. We were planning to meet at Luchow's at three on Friday—that is, only a few hours later. He said that if he didn't show up, it would be because he had been drinking a lot of beer and didn't like to drive when he had been drinking! No, I don't subscribe to the suicide theory at all. Absolutely not. To begin with, that part of the road was terrible. When Clem told me about it on the phone, I knew exactly where it was. Jackson was a very good driver, but he sometimes pushed his luck.

He was reckless. I remember his driving on sidewalks. It was the source of many arguments. I would ask him why he didn't drive among pros if he was so good, instead of scaring women and children. I would get furious. Suicide? No. That's not to say that he wasn't obsessed with death, or that he wasn't tired, depressed and possibly angry.

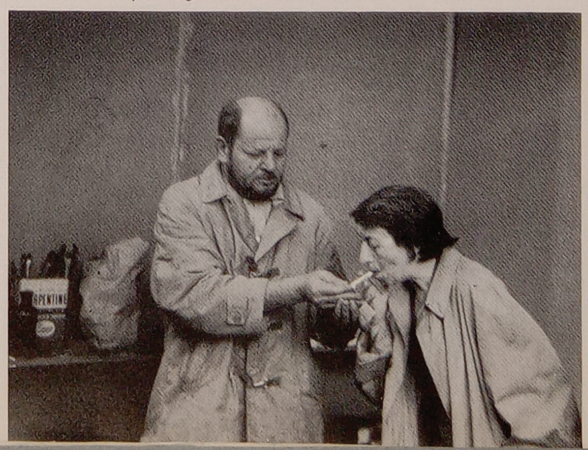
Jackson was disinterested. Sure, he was ambitious, but there was nothing calculating about him. He didn't scheme or plan. He was direct. Direct about everything. He used the word over and over, and that's how he was.

At the funeral, someone said, "He was just like the rest of us." Well, it wasn't true. He had more of the hero about him, and everyone knew it.

Pollock is shown with two of his closest friends, Barnett Newman, left, and Tony Smith, right, in a photo by Hans Namuth, who says: "I took Tony, Barney and Jackson at Barney's opening. It was Barney's big show in 1951 at Betty Parsons."



Smith: "Toward the end of his life, Jackson seemed to swell up, his skin became coarse, his eyes withdrawn."



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BETTY PARSONS

I loved his looks. There was a vitality, an enormous physical presence. He was of medium height, but he looked taller. You could not forget his face. A very attractive man—oh very.

He was always sad. He made you feel sad; even when he was happy, he made you feel like crying. There was a desperation about him; there was something desperate. When he wasn't drinking, he was shy; he could hardly speak. And when he was drinking, he wanted to fight. He cussed a lot, used every four-letter word in the book. You felt he wanted to hit you; I would run away.

His whole rhythm was either sensitive or very wild. You never quite knew whether he was going to kiss your hand or throw something at you. The first time I went out to see him at Springs, Barney brought me; we were planning Jack's first show. After dinner we all sat on the floor, drawing with some Japanese pens. He broke three pens in a row. His first drawings were sensitive, then he went wild. He became hostile, you know. Next morning he was absolutely fine.

I had met him around New York since 1945. One day in '47 he telephoned me and said he wanted a show in my gallery. I gave him a show the next season. In all the time he was with me he was never drunk either during the show or during the hanging. At Sidney Janis' it was different; once they waited for him until four in the morning to hang a show.

Another year he telephoned me and asked me to give Lee a show for her paintings. I said I never showed husbands and wives, but he insisted. He was charming with Lee when he was sober; she ruled the nest. But when he was drunk, *he* ruled the nest. Lee always protected his business interests. Business ideas bored him, though he was fairly wise about them.

He was either bored or terrified of society. He thought most women were terrible bores. He needed aggressive women to break through his shyness. He liked very few artists. He liked Barney Newman, Tony Smith, Franz Kline, Alfonso Ossorio and Bradley Tomlin. He thought artists were either awful or terrible—it had entirely to do with their work.

He thought he was the greatest painter ever, but at the same time he wondered. Painting was what he *had* to do. But he had a lot of the negative in him. He was apt to say, "It didn't work—it'll never work." When he got in those terrible negative states, he would drink.

He associated the female with the negative principle. The conflict showed clearly in *The She Wolf* (1943). Inside himself there was a jungle, some kind of jungle, because during his life he was never fulfilled—never—in anything. Of course this didn't diminish his power as a painter. His conflicts were all in his life, not in his work.

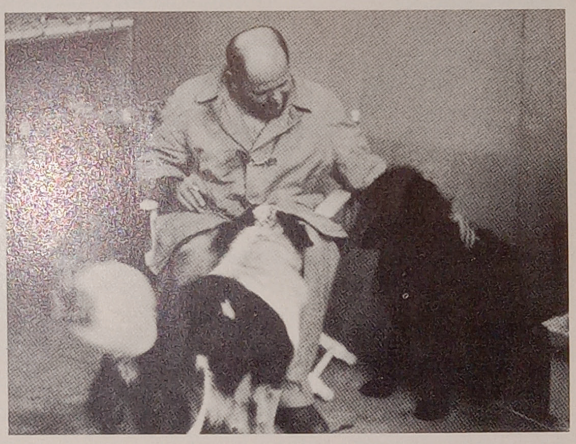
He was a questioning man. He would ask endless questions. He wanted to know what I thought about the world, about life. He thought I was such a jaded creature because I'd traveled; he wanted to know what the outside world was like—Europe, Asia. He was also extremely intrigued with the inner world—what is it all about? He had a sense of mystery. His religiousness was in those terms—a sense of the rhythm of the universe, of the big order—like the Oriental philosophies. He sensed rhythm rather than order, like the Orientals rather than the Westerners. He had Indian friends, a dancer and his wife [Mr. and Mrs. N. Vashti], with whom he talked at length and who influenced him greatly.

His most passionate interest after painting was baseball. He adored baseball and talked about it often. He also loved poetry and meeting poets. He often talked about Joyce. He loved architecture and talked a lot about that too. He adored animals; he had two dogs and a crow—he had tamed the old crow. He had that kind of overall feeling about nature—about the cosmic—the power of it all—how scary it is.

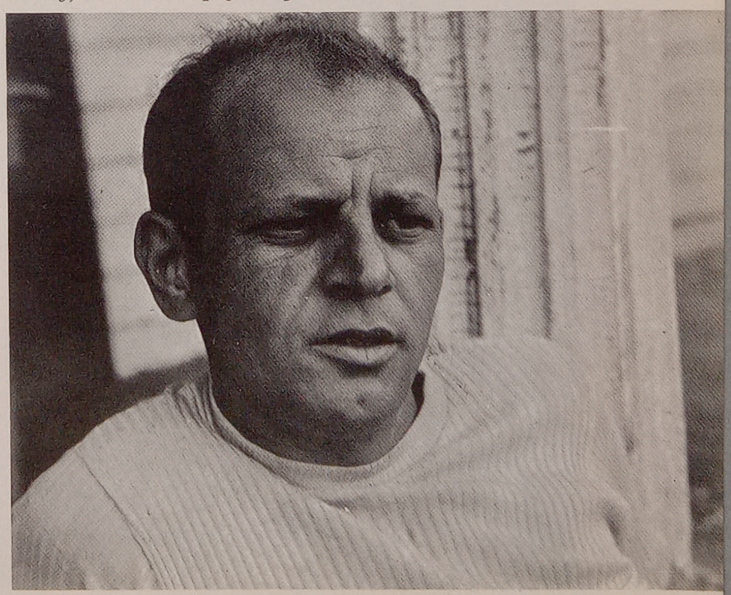
I could never relax with Jack. He certainly was pursued by devils.

Life is an endless question mark, but most of us find a resolution. He never did. But I loved him dearly. The thing about Pollock is that he was completely unmotivated—he was absolutely *pure*.

Parsons: "He adored animals; he had two dogs and a crow—he had tamed the old crow."



Parsons: "I loved his looks. There was a vitality, an enormous physical presence."



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Jackson Pollock: No. 5, oil on composition board, 1948; collection of Alfonso Ossorio. This painting was shown at the Betty Parsons Gallery, New York, in 1949; it was there that Ossorio saw and bought it. Until then he had not liked Pollock's work, but the 1949 exhibition was a revelation: in it, Ossorio saw the merging of two cultures, a meeting of Eastern contemplation and Western action. The painting arrived damaged, and Ossorio took it to Pollock (whom he had not previously known) to repair. Pollock kept it a month, and when Ossorio got it back, it had been changed, becoming "much richer." The moral, as Ossorio states it, is: "Don't let an artist repair his own picture unless you want it to be improved."

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When you think of the way he was brought up, painting was the most unlikely career. It was a brutal childhood—all that uprooting and moving around, little security, no traditional feasts. All his problems stemmed from his family, which centered around his mother—a large, firm, substantial matriarch, a dominating woman. The father, a land surveyor, was in and out, not home enough. It was the classical Oedipal complex. Jackson had ambivalent feelings toward his mother. Once when his mother was due to arrive East—he was staying with his brother Sandy in New York—Jackson disappeared for three days. His whole family was mean about his work; they did not take it with the seriousness it deserved. Only his brother Sandy was sympathetic. In his will Jackson made sure that Lee got everything, his family nothing. The will read that his mother and his brothers could borrow one canvas if they wished. They did not choose to do so.

Jackson had no intention of dying when he died. It is curious that people say it was suicide. He had just put lights and heat into his studio; he had new rolls of canvas, buckets of paint; he was all ready to work. Do you realize that in all the preceding years he could only paint in summer? In winter, not having heat in the studio, he could only putter around the house repairing things. Another curious thing that people say is that he wasn't working in those last three or four years. He was just working a little *less* than he had been in the preceding years. He had had twelve shows in ten years; it had drained him. It was time for a recapitulation. He was forty-four years old, in midstream; but he was physically not well.

The last time I saw him was in Penn Station; he could not move properly, he could barely walk. He wasn't drunk that day, but he was in appalling shape. He was sick, but his doctor had gone off on vacation, leaving him without supervision. Jackson said to me bitterly: "The M.D. has gone off. I am free." He knew that he shouldn't have been left alone.

During that time he was with Ruth Klegman. Lee had gone off to Europe. I also had been in Europe during the last month of his life. I returned a few days before he died. He was due here, at my house in East Hampton, the evening of the accident. I was giving a charity concert that night. He telephoned around nine P.M., as I was introducing the concert. I couldn't go to the phone, so the maid took the message that Mr. Pollock called and would arrive here soon. It seems that on the way to my house he stopped for a glass of beer and a sandwich with his two friends—Ruth Klegman and another girl. For some mysterious reason they turned around and went back to Springs instead of coming in my direction. He was killed about a half mile away from his home.

Aside from painting, machinery was a major passion of Pollock's life. Especially cars. Partly because he was so poor and he had to make everything work. He was good with all tools. He was very American in that sense—the do-it-yourself logic. The idea "Does it work?" goes over into his painting. You know that funny phrase American artists use about a painting: "It works." He used this as a complimentary phrase. He may have started the use of "it works" as applied to painting. You can't imagine a Frenchman saying *"ça marche"* about a work of art.—

(*continued*)

Ossorio: "His mother was a large, firm, substantial matriarch, a dominating woman." With Stella, their mother, the Pollock sons are, left to right in front: Charles and Jay; in the back are Frank, Jackson and Sandy. One of Jackson's paintings hangs on the wall.



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Another American idea—Jackson believed that there was some shortcut that would make him physically super-efficient. He had been on numerous faddist or pseudo-medical kicks throughout his life: homeopathy, vegetarianism, goodness knows what. In the late years when he was drinking, he had a fad for a Park Avenue "biochemist." This biochemist was not an M.D. Part of his treatment consisted of drinking several quarts a day of a protein emulsion. The emulsion came in plastic bottles and the problem of getting Jackson into a car a couple of times a month with those dozens of plastic bottles was a nightmare.

Of course he wasn't a verbal person. He never did talk very much. The few art criticisms he made were couched in psychoanalytic terms rather than in esthetic ones. His remarks were in terms of "What are you saying?" The psychiatrist's vocabulary was the only trained, technical vocabulary he had. He had been in and out of psychoanalysis since he had been seventeen. This was a form of mental discipline, he knew its terms. Once he looked for a long time at a large new painting of mine without saying a word. A few days later he said to me, "This painting of yours, it's all about *this*," and he pointed to a corner where there was a melting form, like a hand holding a melting ice cream cone. In a sense he was right; I hadn't thought of my painting that way. But it was a psychological criticism.

As far as his attitude toward other painters—it's hard to say. I had a couple of Fautrier and Wols paintings; he looked at them and said, "I don't know where painting is going, but it certainly isn't going that way." He liked Dubuffet. He cut a Dubuffet out of Life magazine and pasted it on the wall of his john. He loved Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, *Guernica* and the studies for *Guernica*. I gave him a facsimile edition of Goya's *Disasters* and *Capriccios* and reproductions of the black paintings from Goya's house; he was very enthusiastic about these.

This is how I met him; I had bought a painting of his from his show of '49 at Betty Parsons, the big red *Number 5,* now hanging in my living room (reproduced on page 56). It had been damaged and I brought it to him in Springs to repair. We became friends very quickly. The summer of '49 I saw him two or three times a week. Of course for the first year I knew him, he never touched a drop of alcohol. That was when he did his classic paintings. It is curious that he did his most abstract and highly distilled paintings when he was not drinking. The minute he resumed, he went into the black and white images filled with figurative, very human elements.

We would spend hours together on the beach; we would just sit looking at the dunes, the gulls, the water, or watching the fishermen. He knew every inch of the island, the dunes, the northwest woods, the beaches between here and Montauk, all of them. Fifteen years ago no one went to these beaches. He was very silent when he was sober. Whether sober or drunk there was very little social chitchat in him. He had a quiet, relaxed, rather dour sense of humor. He had a pleasant, far-Western, deep voice. He was totally unexcitable when he was not drinking—he was slow in that sense. When he was drunk of course he could be quite violent; but it was not a physical violence; on the contrary, I have seen him stop fights in bars. The violence was all verbal. He would tell people what he thought of them. He was noisy, repetitive, childish, the classic drunk; he might knock over a table as he did that Thanksgiving when he started drinking again.

He resumed drinking one autumn afternoon in late 1950. It was the night Hans Namuth had finished his movie on Pollock. They came into the house together about four-thirty or five in the afternoon. They came in out of the cold and Jackson went straight to the bar. He took a bottle of bourbon, filled a tumbler-ful and poured it down. Lee went white in the face. From that night on, he drank.

Jackson had an intense contact with the local scene. He was enormously liked by the local people. The local fishermen, the plumber and the policemen loved him and were very good to him. The owner of the grocery store in Springs, Dan Miller, gave the Pollocks groceries in exchange for pictures. It was ironical that this local general store man gave him food to live on and Rosenthal, the art supplier, refused to give him paints on credit.

Jackson loved his garden, animals, the beach, shells; he liked especially things he found on the beach. For instance, for years he had hanging on his barn wall an old anchor that he found on the beach; it looked like a cross. He owned d'Arcy Thompson's *On Growth and Form,* a big early twentieth-century book that investigated organic forms of nature; shells, cells, wave patterns, and so on.

He had an enormously catholic appreciation of the art of the past: Indian sand painting, Eskimo art or the baroque. I think at one stage, when he was younger, he went to museums. He certainly knew the anthropological collection at the Museum of Natural History very well. And he knew the art of the American Indian because he had lived part of his life in the Southwest. He had the fifteen volumes published by the Smithsonian on American anthropology—he once pulled it out from under his bed to show me—I remember being surprised that someone so poor could have such a publication. He had a good ear for music. He collected recordings of jazz, baroque music and Gregorian chant. He was very moved by the ballet. He read "Finnegan's Wake," and you felt that he was in tune with the idea that one word could mean many things. You felt he thought on several levels. He loved the Joyce recordings of his collected works, the music of Joyce's voice.

He certainly was planning to do sculpture. He did one piece that he destroyed. In 1949 the Peridot Gallery had a show called "Painters as Sculptors"; Jackson did a thing for it about the size of a coffee table. It was made of chicken-wire covered with layers of Japanese paper which were his drip paintings pasted one on top of the other. It was the start of something. The show was a disaster. Nothing sold, and whenever his piece was noticed at all it got stepped on. The show closed; Jackson and I went in my car to call for his sculpture. It wouldn't fit into the trunk. He got so angry about it, trying to stuff it in, that he threw it into the street and stamped on it, really destroyed it. But he had heaps of stuff in his barn and behind his house—driftwood, parts of cars, machinery—all materials for sculpture.

Certainly in those days it was a question of buying materials. The Pollocks lived up to the limit. It was literally a question of how to get materials to work with. Lee had one pathetic cloth coat for winter and summer. But they were both very generous. He was as generous as he was gentle. Whenever you admired something—it could be a drawing or a piece of driftwood—he would appear with it in a few days.

The thing that was very hard on him toward the end is that he had had a successful show in 1950. Some museums bought. Robert Coates gave him six pages in The New Yorker. It was not necessarily a financial success, even though some things were sold, but it was a great critical success. This was followed by a black-and-white show with Howard Devree's damning review; only one painting was sold from that show. One day at the black-and-white show, as Kootz was leaving, he said: "Well now, my boy, let's see you do it in color." Jackson had no answer. He was slow, he never tried to make an answer or have the last word.

When Jackson was sober he was devoted to Lee. He was very puritanical in his talk, very restrained and completely chaste;