Jackson Pollock: The Lost Rebel Genius of American Art!

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Pollock, was an American painter and a major figure in the abstract expressionist movement, known as much for his fiery self-absorbed destructive personality as much as for his genius with “drip painting.” He was a true towering figure of American Art who lived fast, full, and maniac, and painted the same way.

Born in Cody, Wyoming, in 1912, he grew up in Arizona and California. He enrolled at Los Angeles' Manual Arts High School in 1929, but was soon expelled (as he had been from another high school), and so in 1930 he moved to New York City to study under Thomas Hart Benton. Even if his Americana subject matter had no real impact on Jack, Benton’s rhythmic use of paint, drinking, and fierce independence had a lasting effect on the wild young man. By the mid-1930s, Jack was essentially Benton’s eldest son, and like all Pollock relationships it was stormy.

Pollock started pouring paint on canvases in the early 1940s, and by the late 1940s he placed his canvases on the studio floor creating his dynamic new "drip" technique. Jack stated “On the floor I am more at ease. I feel nearer, more part of the painting, since this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides and literally be in the painting. I prefer sticks, trowels, knives and dripping fluid paint or a heavy impasto with sand, broken glass or other foreign matter added. When I am in my painting, I'm not aware of what I'm doing. I have no fear of making changes, destroying the image, etc., because the painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through.”

Though in 1956, Time magazine dubbed Pollock "Jack the Dripper", and one critic claimed Jackson just “drank paint and urinated on the canvas”, his rejection of brush and easel as well as figurative representation, challenged Western artistic traditions just as dramatically as Picasso’s cubism. He destroyed the frame of art, and created a new language of art and how it is viewed.

Jack’s most famous paintings were made between 1947 and 1950. He rocketed to fame following an August 8, 1949 four-page spread in Life magazine that asked, "Is he the greatest living painter in the United States?" At the peak of his fame, Pollock manically and abruptly abandoned the drip style. Diagnosed as being bipolar he had serious drinking problems and loved to fight the police which always ended with Jack in jail calling Benton for bail.

His alcoholism deepened but he was kept afloat by his relationship with artist Lee Krasner whom he met in 1942. On August 11, 1956, Jack drunkenly wrecked his car killing himself and one of his female passengers. So ended the life of one of the most complex and troubled geniuses the world has ever known.