



# Jackson Pollock

Abstract Expressionist

# Who was Jackson Pollock?

- Hugely influential 20th century abstract expressionist
- Most famous for his drip paintings which he called “action paintings”
- One of the US’s first art “rock stars,” with significant attention both internally and abroad



## Early Life



Jackson is pictured in the middle

- Born January 28th 1912
- Had a rough childhood, his family failed at a lot and he moved frequently
- Enrolled in first art school at 10
- Family thought he had little talent
- Began drinking at 15
- Expelled twice from an art high school before eventually giving up

# Thomas Hart Benton

- Pollock moved to New York to study under Benton
- Pollock wasn't very interested in his subject matter but was inspired by his individuality
- Benton's unique stylings and approach to painting interested Pollock as well

top: Arts of the West (1932) Thomas Hart Benton; bottom: Going West (1934) Jackson Pollock



# Visiting the Bentons

- Having formed a close relationship with Thomas Benton, he later visited his family and stayed with them for a while
- He said himself that he was happy with them, but his art from the time doesn't reflect it
- Largely consisted of darker paintings or abstract forms with little cohesion
- Began painting what would later be important works, such as Birth (pictured)





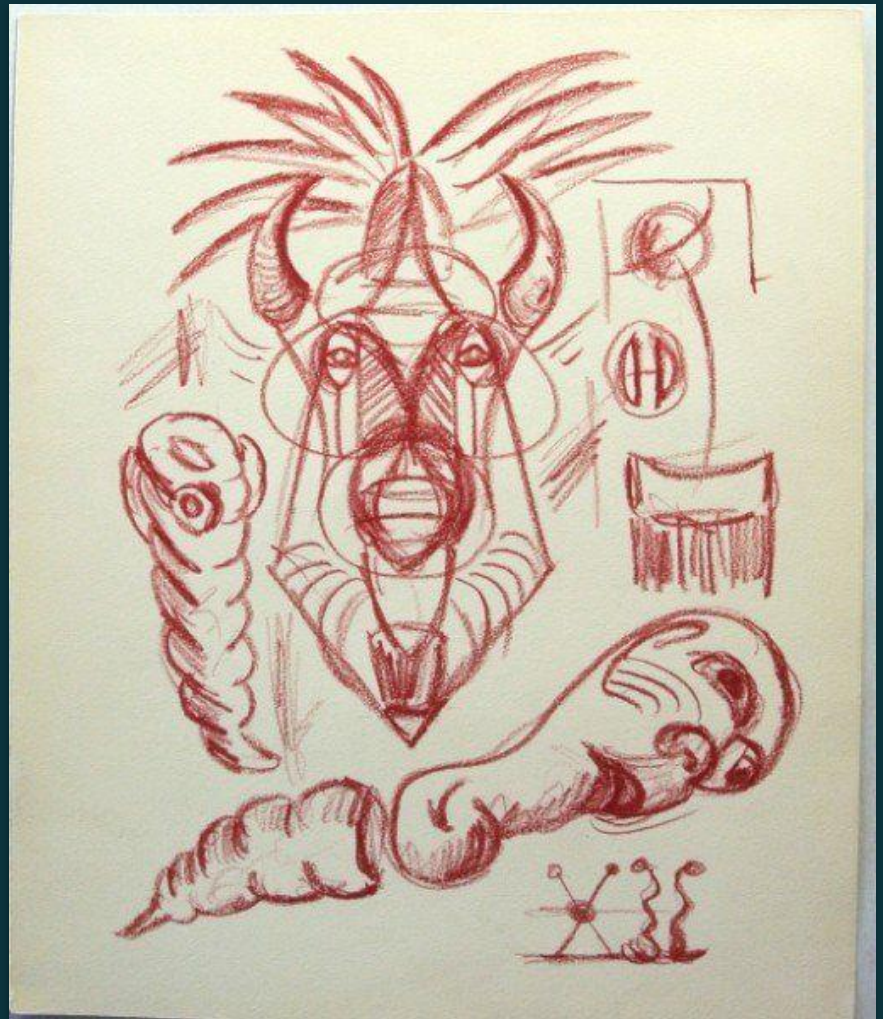
Head (c. 1938-1941)



Man With Knife (c. 1938-1941)

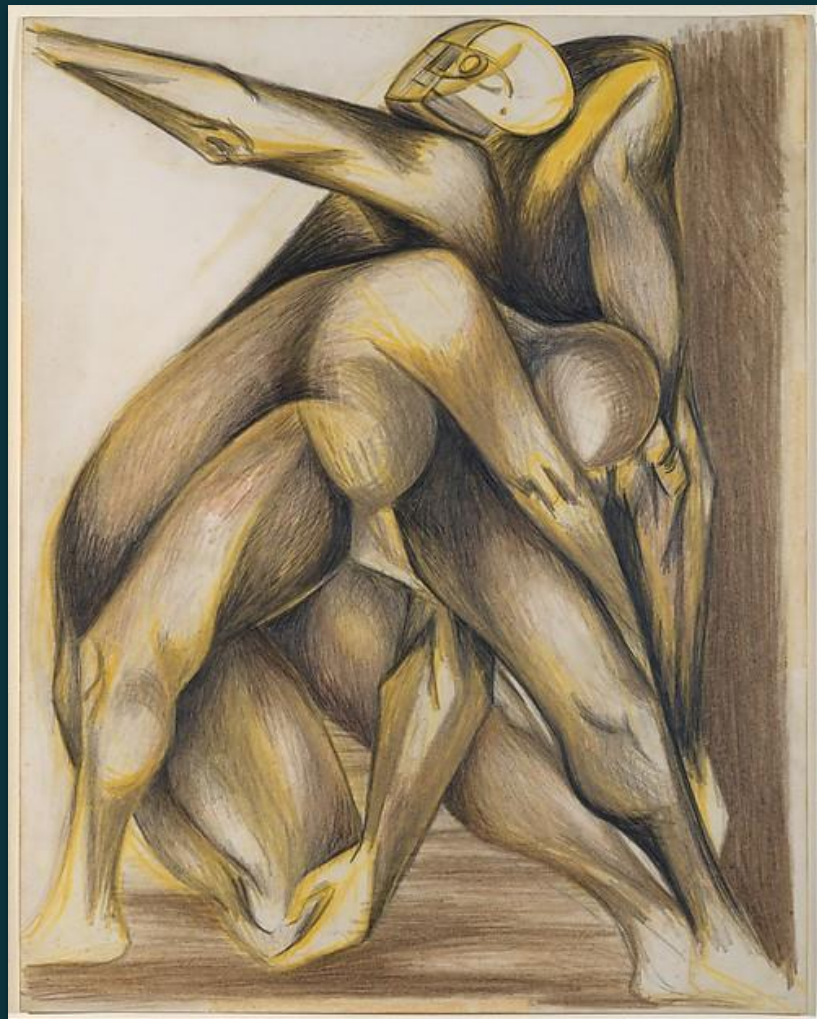
# Development

- Pollock continued to remain largely unknown and spent a lot of time refining his style
- Made many finished works, but his sketchbooks from the time are filled with form studies, composition studies, and other experiments.
- Was heavily inspired by Native American and traditional Mexican art







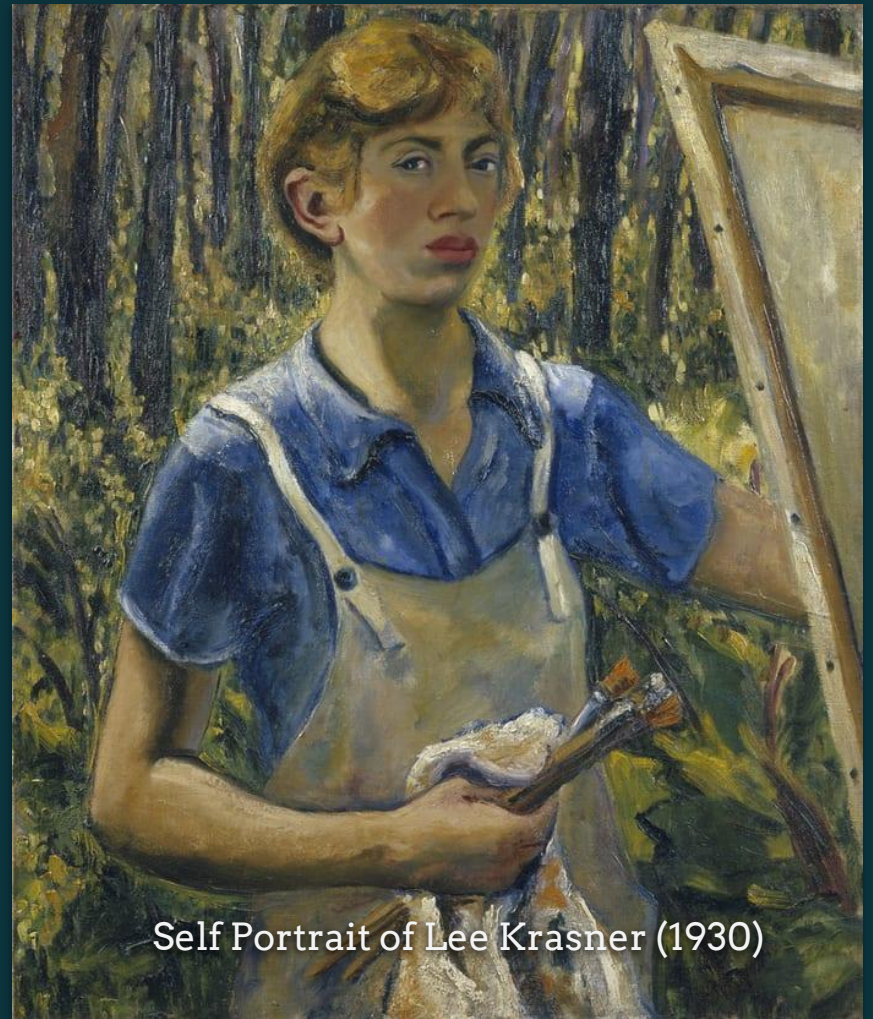




War (1947)

# Discovery

- Shortly after exhibiting his works in an art show intended for “up and coming artists” he was contacted by Lee Krasner in November of 1941
- Lee Krasner was a female painter who was significantly more influential and established than Pollock
- Krasner made it her goal to try to spread the word about Pollock



Self Portrait of Lee Krasner (1930)

# Krasner's Relationship

- Lee was completely enthralled by Jackson
- She was fascinated by that he was so easily able to produce work with so much emotion behind it, when she herself struggled with style
- Lee moved into Jackson's apartment in 1942, leading to an extremely productive period of Jackson's life.



# Pollock Gains Notoriety

- Following his relationship with Krasner, Pollock began to paint a lot more than he previously did
- Consistently produced masterpiece-quality pieces one after the other
- Notable works include Male and Female (pictured), She Wolf, and Mural
- Meanwhile, Lee tried her best to spread the word of Jackson's skill, and he began to grow in popularity





She Wolf (1943)



Mural (1943)  
One of earliest examples of drip-  
techniques

# Moving Away

- Due to his growing problems with Alcohol, Lee decided it would be better for the two of them to move out to the countryside
- Both of them stopped painting for around a year in 1945, as moving left them little time
- They married the same year
- Following the move, Jackson began to refine his drip stylings in his new barn studio





# “Action Painting”

- In his new studio, he was able to place his works on the floor, where he said he found it more comfortable to work on
- Painting became even more so about the process for him, any oddities that happened during the painting were natural
- Full Fathom Five (pictured) is notable for having embedded tacks, buttons, and cigarette butts which both accidentally and intentionally made their way onto the canvas





Summertime 9A (1948)

Unique for its unusual canvas dimensions

Real life painting is 18' 1" by 2' 9"



Number 4 Gray and Red (1948)



Lavender Mist Number 1 (1950)

# Criticism

- Due to both his radical style and problems with alcohol, he attracted a lot of criticism
- Many were dismissive of his work as chaotic drunk messes, but unusually he refused to drink whenever he was in the studio
- Famously, following a critical piece in Time Magazine, he wired them with the message "NO CHAOS DAMN IT. DAMNED BUSY PAINTING."

<https://youtu.be/6cgBvpjwOGo?t=73>



"I can control the flow of paint; there is no accident..."











pedestrian  
Mall  
**NO  
VEHICLES  
ALLOWED**  
NO BICYCLING  
NO SKATING  
NO  
SKATEBOARDING



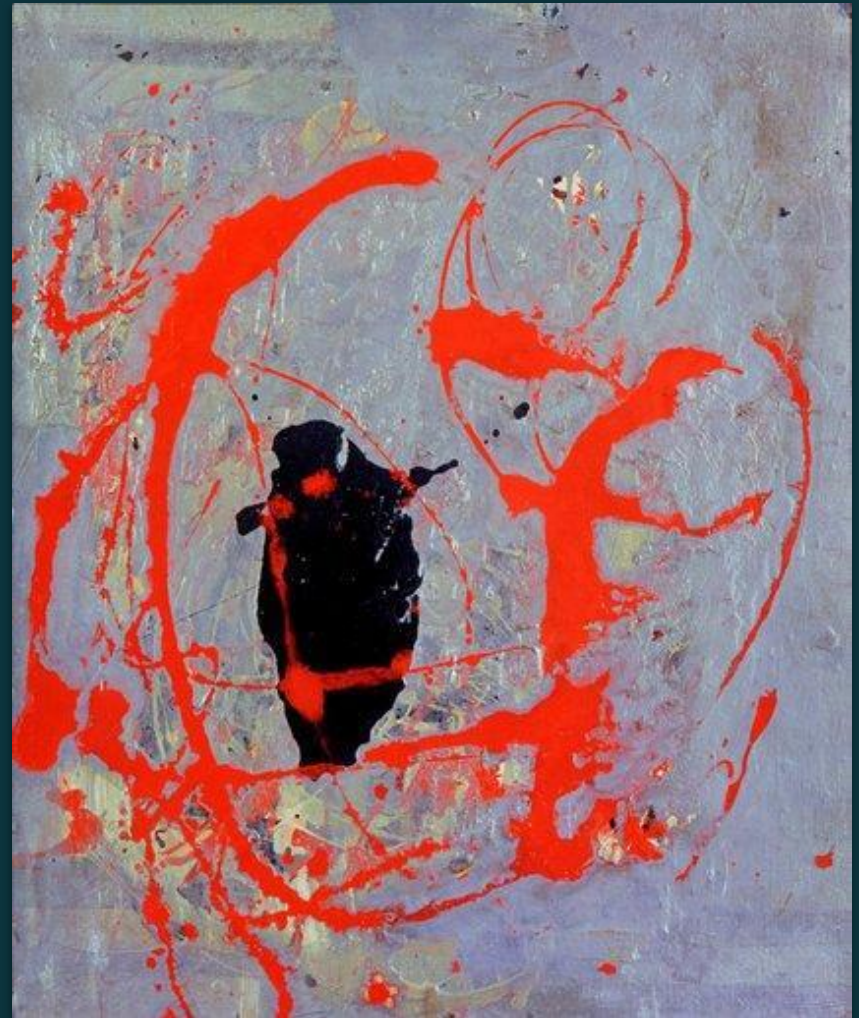
# Filming

- His fame and work attracted the attention of Hans Namuth, a film director who wanted to film his process
- Namuth requested many unusual things, the two largest be that he work outside for the better lighting, and to do a piece on glass shot from below
- Reportedly after shooting the glass scene, Pollock stormed off and began drinking. Later he got in an argument with Namuth and flipped the dinner table that night while Krasner was entertaining guests



# Regression

- Shortly after finishing filming the documentary, Pollock returned back to alcohol
- His rate of work slowed, as well as he began having an affair with Ruth Kligman
- His final piece to ever be produced was Red Black and Silver (pictured), which was made for Kligman

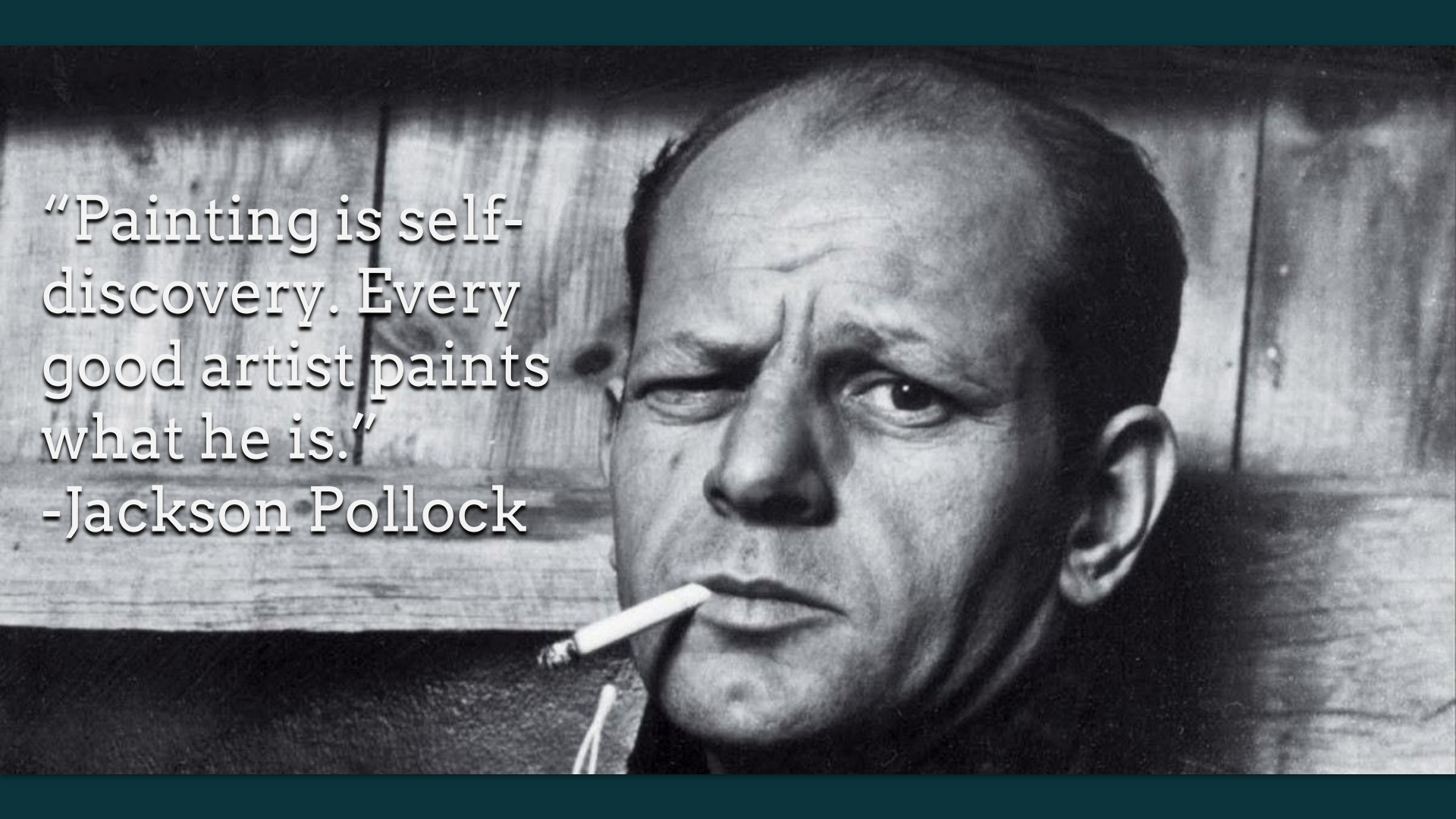


## Death

- Lee found out about his affair with Ruth shortly before leaving on a trip to Europe
- She left him with an ultimatum; Leave Ruth, or I will leave
- She left July 12, 1956
- Four weeks later she would receive a call that Jackson had been in a fatal car crash while drunk
- He had been driving with Kligman, she survived with serious injuries, but Pollock had been thrown from the car and hit a tree
- He was 46 when he died

# Significance

- Changed the way art was produced by putting a large emphasis on the [process of creation](#) instead of just the aesthetic value of the end product
- Opened doors and paved the way for future performance artists, as [performance art](#) can also be described as a process with no end product
- Most iconic and influential member of the [Abstract Expressionist](#) movement

A black and white close-up photograph of Jackson Pollock. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a serious, intense expression. A lit cigarette is held in his mouth. The background is a dark, textured wall, possibly made of wood or stone. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the contours of his face.

“Painting is self-  
discovery. Every  
good artist paints  
what he is.”

-Jackson Pollock