

started a new way to create art. He changed the way people look and think about art and helped people accept and appreciate different styles of art.

(Present laminated picture #2 “Untitled Mural”.) Jackson Pollock was born in Cody, Wyoming in 1912. **(Have the students locate Cody, Wyoming on a classroom map)** He was the youngest of five brothers. Jackson was very quiet and moody. His mother loved art and always encouraged him and his brothers to work on anything that had to do with art. Three of Jackson’s older brothers also became artists.

The Pollocks moved around a lot while the boys were growing up. When he was eight years old, they moved to California. There were many American Indians in the area. Jackson and his brothers grew to know many things about Indian legends and stories. He and his brothers would sneak up to the Indian burial grounds and watch their ceremonial dances. The Indian art he saw and remembered is found in a lot of Jackson’s earlier art. **(Present laminate picture #3 “Birth”.)**

When Jackson was 18, he left California and went to New York with one of his older brothers to study art. Pollock’s art teacher at New York University was a famous artist named Thomas Benton. **(Present laminate picture #4 “Arts of the West” by Thomas Benton.)** He painted large murals about western living. A mural is a large picture that might take up a whole wall. This also greatly influenced Jackson’s painting style. Many of Pollock’s most famous paintings are very large.

Jackson Pollock was a very troubled person. He once wrote in a family letter, “people have always frightened and bored me, consequently I have been within my own shell”. It was very hard for Jackson to be happy. He went to many psychiatrists and doctors trying to figure it out. Many of them told him that when he found the art he wanted to create, he would find happiness. He searched for many years to find the type of art that would express himself. Here are some of his earlier works. **(Present laminated pictures #5, 6, 7 “Lone Rider”, “Bird”, and “Orange Head”.)**

When Jackson was 29 he met another artist named Lee Krasner. Eventually they were married. Lee helped Jackson with his career. She knew many artists, art collectors and gallery owners. She introduced Jackson to many of them and they began to notice Jackson’s talent.

As Jackson began to combine all of the different styles of art he had studied and loved, he began to create his own style. His art became more colorful and interesting. Everyone wanted to know who he was. Life Magazine called him a “baffling new phenomenon.” **(Present**

laminates #8 – picture of Lee and Jackson in front of a huge painting – and #9 “Convergence Number 10”.)

Jackson and Lee moved to a farmhouse on Long Island in New York State. This was the happiest time of Jackson’s life. He had a large barn that he could use for his art studio. This is where he developed the art style for which he is famous. He wanted to make huge pieces of art. The barn was perfect for this. He believed that the easel picture was dying (art made on an easel) and the way of the future was the large wall picture or mural. ***(Present laminate #10, “Eyes In the Heat”.)***

(Present laminate #11, pictures of Pollock painting.) Jackson Pollock would lay a huge canvas on the floor and dump, throw, splatter and drip painting on the canvas. He would move around the canvas while listening to jazz music and create his paintings. Some writers compared it to a dance. They described the way the usually shy and quiet Jackson became alive while he was painting – walking, running, leaning, squatting. Jackson said that by having the canvas on the floor, he could walk around it, work from all four sides and literally be in the painting. He said, “When I am painting, I am not aware of what I am doing.”

Jackson used all sort of tools to drip and splatter his paint. He used hardened brushes, sticks, knives, spatulas and spoons. Someone once asked him if his painting were made by accident or chance. Jackson said “what makes you think it is an accident when I know what I’m going to drip before I work. I can control the flow of the paint; there is no accident, just as there is not beginning or end.”

(Present laminate #12, “Full Fathem Galaxy”.) Jackson added objects to the paint in some of his paintings. In this painting, Pollock hid pebbles, nails, tacks, buttons, pennies, two keys, combs, torn cigarettes, matches and paint tube tops to the thick, industrial paint he was using.

Jackson Pollock became very famous for this kind of art. It is called “abstract expressionism”. The painting is an expression of Pollock’s inner thoughts, not of any identifiable object. Pollock referred to it as “action painting”. He was featured in magazines, books and film documentaries. Many people admired his action paintings. While he was alive, one of his paintings sold for over \$2,000,000.

Tragically, Jackson Pollock died in a car accident at the age of 45. Even though he died very young, he had made a great contribution to the world. His paintings are filled with light, energy and color. Many people appreciate this and find his art beautiful and exciting. ***(Present laminate #13 “Shimmering Substance”.)***

PROJECT:

Jackson Pollock would sometimes embed small, everyday items into his paintings. If you would like, ask the students to find items they could add to the painting – rubber bands, pencil tips or shavings, string, crayon wrappers, etc. Adding these items can be done at the end of the project, but you may want to gather them before heading to the canvas. In addition, before you begin to explain the project, pour some of the paint from the cans into the plastic cups – this will help keep the cans clean and make the clean-up process a lot easier (just throw away the cups!)

Tell the students that they will be making a painting like Jackson Pollock. Explain how Pollock would dip different objects into the paint and drip or splatter the paint onto the canvas. Show the students the tools they will use. Have the students move to the canvas in groups of four, while the others work on the Pollock word search.

It really helps minimize mess and stained clothing if only one person is dripping paint at a time.

Before they begin to paint, have each student write their name with indelible ink on the reverse of the canvas – around the edge of the wood stretcher would be a good spot. Then you can note the date and class. This way, the canvas will be signed which cannot be done after the painting begins.

Demonstrate the process yourself with each of the three tools. Dip the tool into the paint (only dipping in the tip!) and gently make drips, long lines or even small splatters. Emphasize that we are in the school and must be as neat as possible.

In addition, when the painting is done (or time runs out), please throw away the drop cloth and clean off the tools. The painting will need to dry flat so move it in the box and place under the worktable in the art supply closet.

FAMOUS ARTISTS SERIES

Jackson Pollock

Today in class a volunteer parent presented the works of American artist Jackson Pollock to your child's class. They learned about Pollock's background, as well as made a painting in the style of his work. Ask your student what made Pollock's work unique, and how he would paint his pictures. Ask your child what "abstract expressionism" is.

The five canvases created by the 3rd grade classes will be available for purchase during the Spring Open House through a silent auction, with proceeds benefiting the art program.

The Art Institute of Chicago owns one of Jackson Pollock's last works, "Life and Death on Long Island".

Sincerely yours,

Art Volunteer