



When I am painting I have a general notion as to what I am about. I can control the flow of the paint. . . . There is no accident, just as there is no beginning and no end. **Jackson Pollock**

Jackson Pollock, *Number 1, 1950 (Lavender Mist)* (detail), 1950, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund



“My painting does not come from the easel. . . . On the floor I feel more at ease. I feel nearer, more a part of the painting, since this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides and literally be *in* the painting.”

# 1

## Who? Artist Jackson Pollock

Born in Cody, Wyoming, Jackson Pollock (1912–1956) became one of the most original American artists of the twentieth century. He was the youngest of five brothers, and his mother encouraged her sons to become artists; three of them did. While he was growing up, Pollock’s family moved all over the American West. But when he was eighteen, Pollock moved to New York City to become an artist.

There Pollock discovered a wide range of styles and art forms which influenced his development: the expressive style of contemporary Mexican muralists, the dream images of the surrealists, the lyrical lines of Asian calligraphy, the raw force of the works of Pablo Picasso, and the physical process involved in the creation of Navajo sand paintings. Pollock felt driven to express his emotions through painting.

# 2

## How? A Unique Process

In 1945, Pollock and his wife, artist Lee Krasner, moved to the rural, east end of Long Island. Working in an unheated barn beside his farmhouse, he brought his earlier experiments with various styles together in an entirely new way. Dipping sticks or hardened brushes into cans of house paint, Pollock poured and flung paint onto a large canvas spread out on the barn’s floor. He relied on his intuition and his body to infuse his images with emotional force. His process was not all



# 3

## What? *Number 1, 1950* (*Lavender Mist*)

physical, however, for Pollock spent hours considering the canvas at his feet before setting his paint in motion. By carefully controlling his movements, he could settle gentle spatters, curved thin arcs, and powerful diagonals of color on his canvas. The “drip paintings” Pollock made from 1947 to 1951 were unlike any paintings people had seen before. They created a sensation and established a new way of making art—one that made the *act of creation* visible.

More than seven feet in height and nearly ten feet wide, *Lavender Mist* is one of Pollock’s most impressive “drip” paintings.

### IMAGINE YOU WERE ABLE TO STEP INSIDE THIS PAINTING

**What would it feel like?**

**Is there one line or arc that you’d like to follow?  
If so, where would it take you?**

**How would you move in, around, and under the  
colors? Would you find it a shallow or deep space  
to explore?**

Pollock made dense, intricate layers with white, blue, yellow, silver, umber, rosy pink, and black paint. He didn’t use any lavender paint on the canvas, but where the pink and blue-black meet, it looks like lavender. When Pollock’s friend, art critic Clement Greenberg, saw the painting, he said it felt like “lavender mist,” and this description became the work’s subtitle.

### LOOK CLOSELY AT THE UPPER EDGES OF THE CANVAS

You can see Pollock’s handprints—a very literal trace of the artist’s presence *in* the work.



Photographs at top and right:  
Jackson Pollock painting  
*Autumn Rhythm: Number 30*,  
1950 by Hans Namuth, silver  
gelatin print, © Estate of Hans  
Namuth, courtesy Pollock-  
Krasner House and Study Center,  
East Hampton, NY.

Jackson Pollock, *Number 1, 1950*  
(*Lavender Mist*), 1950, National  
Gallery of Art, Washington, Ailsa  
Mellon Bruce Fund

## book nook

These books featuring paintings by Jackson Pollock can be found at your local library or bookstore.

### Olivia

By Ian Falconer  
ages 4–8

### Anna's Art Adventure

By Bjorn Sortland,  
illustrated by Lars Elling  
ages 4–8

### Action Jackson

By Jan Greenberg and  
Sandra Jordan, illustrated  
by Robert Andrew Parker  
ages 4–8

### Jackson Pollock (Getting to Know the World's Greatest Artists)

By Mike Venezia  
ages 4–8

### Jackson Pollock (The Life and Work of)

By Heinemann  
ages 4–8

### Jackson Pollock (Artists in Their Time)

By Clare Oliver  
ages 8–12

### Express Yourself! Activities and Adventures in Expressionism (Art Explorers)

By Joyce Raimondo  
ages 8–12

### Jackson Pollock (The Essential Series)

By Justin Long  
ages 13 and up

## try this!

# activity

## Paint! Without Brushes!

Jackson Pollock's revolutionary art bypassed traditional painting rules—he invented a method that was uniquely his. It's your turn to experience the action of making a painting without using a paintbrush. Because this activity requires special materials and can be a bit messy, make sure you get permission from your parents first!

### Materials

Newspaper (to cover your work area)

Smock or big, old shirt (to protect your clothes)

Large sheet of white paper or butcher paper

Washable tempera paints

Paper cups or bowls (for the paint)

Since you won't be using paintbrushes, you'll need to look around your house to find materials to paint with—be creative! Here are some ideas:



### Process

After covering the work-area floor with layers of newspaper, place a sheet of white paper down in the center of the space so that you can walk around all sides of it. You might enjoy listening to music while you work. (Jackson Pollock liked jazz.)

Start with one color and dip your Popsicle stick (or whatever item you have chosen) into the container of paint. Then experiment with methods of painting:



**Move** your whole body—not just your arm and hand—to reach all areas of the paper. Fill the paper from edge to edge so that there is an all-over pattern.

**Think** about how to layer your colors. Pause and wait until one color is dry before adding another layer.

**Experiment** with different types of lines—thick, thin, short, long, straight, curved, parallel, diagonal—by varying the height, angle, and speed of your action.

**Remember: there are no mistakes. Chance occurrences are part of art making!**