

## Jackson Pollock

**Paul Jackson Pollock** (January 28, 1912 – August 11, 1956) was an American painter and a major force in the art world – most importantly the abstract expressionist movement. He is one of the inventors of action painting.

Paul Jackson Pollock was born in Cody, Wyoming. His parents were LeRoy and Stella Pollock. He was the youngest of five boys. A year after Pollock was born, the family moved to Arizona and then California. His father pursued farming, but found it hard to make a living, so he took up work as a surveyor and worked at many scenic locations along the Southwest. Pollock sometimes joined his father on these trips to the Grand Canyon and other such landscapes. This later was credited as creating profound memories which influenced his artistic vision forever.

As a young man, he studied in Los Angeles, and it was there that his interest in art began. Two of his brothers, Charles and Sanford, were also developing as artists. His eldest brother, Charles, soon left for New York to study at the Art Students League, and he urged Pollock to come and study there with him. There, they both studied at the Art Students League. It was during this time that Pollock dropped his first name, Paul, went by his middle name, Jackson.

He met and married another artist name Lee Krasner. They moved into a home with a bar that Pollock made into a studio.

During a workshop he came across a new technique. He perfected working spontaneously with liquid paint. He would try unorthodox techniques such as pouring and flinging the liquid material to achieve unplanned effects. He began painting with his canvases laid out on the studio floor, and developed what was later called his "drip" technique. He used hardened brushes, sticks, and even basting syringes as paint applicators. Pollock's technique of pouring and dripping paint is thought to be one of the origins of the term action painting.

In the process of making paintings in this way, he moved away from the normal way to paint radiation of using easel and brush. He also moved away from the use of only the hand and wrist, since he used his whole body to paint. In 1956, TIME magazine dubbed Pollock "Jack the Dripper" as a result of his unique painting style.

- “ My painting does not come from the easel. I prefer to tack the unstretched canvas to the hard wall or the floor. I need the resistance of a hard surface. 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 continue to get further away from the usual painter's tools such as easel, palette, brushes, etc. 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. It is only after a sort of 'get acquainted' period that I see what I have been about. 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. It is only when I lose contact with the painting that the result is a mess. Otherwise there is pure harmony, an easy give and take, and the painting comes out well. ”



**Jan. 5, 1948**  
**The Big Dripper's Opening**

**By Richard Lacayo**

Jackson Pollock couldn't sleep. The next night would see the opening of the first gallery show devoted to his new drip paintings. For months he had flung lashing tangles of color onto canvases laid across the floor—literally slapdash, yet as intricately woven as a Persian rug, his pictures pointed the way to the future—or would if anyone noticed. So Pollock sat up late with his sister-in-law. To comfort him, she read his palm. He was going to be a very famous painter, she promised him.

That may not have been evident at Betty Parson's Manhattan gallery, where Pollock watched the guests snort in puzzlement. Later came the reviews ("monotonous intensity"). The sales? Two canvases. But within the American avant-garde, a world consumed by disputes that consumed him too, the show was a loudly argued challenge. When the mostly skeptical mass media came around, the Abstract Expressionists, who had been germinating for years, exploded American art onto the world stage for the first time.

And Pollock? He was America's first painterpop star, the drunken angel of an emerging hipster culture in search of new routes to those old American goals, the instinctive and the transcendent. Though the role unnerved him, it was secured forever in 1956, when he died, like James Dean, in a car crash. But by that time the energies he had released were in motion everywhere. The painter Willem de Kooning said it best: "He broke the ice." True enough, but it broke him too.



The print above is the print that we have in the Get Smart with Art file. The name is 1948.

When searching online – try not to get confused with others. The below print is the most popular print online. It is called Number 5, 1948. It is 1.2 by 2.4 meters (4 ft by 8ft), and is one of his first drip paintings. When it was sold by David Geffen in 2006 to a Mexican art dealer, it became the world's most expensive painting in history at a price-adjusted \$149.70 million dollars.



"1948 was his miracle year. It was the year in which he really got into his stride with drip painting," said Jeremy Lewison, the former director of collections at the Tate who has written a book on Pollock and is now an art consultant.