



STUDY NO 3 FOR BLUE POLLS JACKSON POLLOCK Exhibited at The Fine Arts Gallery Perth March 1978

**J**ackson Pollock was the leading painter of Abstract Expressionism, an American art movement characterized by free-associative gestures in paint sometimes referred to as action painting. During his lifetime he received widespread publicity and some serious recognition for the radical "drip" or pouring technique he used to create his major works. Among his contemporaries, he was respected for his deeply personal and totally uncompromising commitment to the art of painting. His work and example had enormous influence on them and on most subsequent art movements in America. He is also one of the few American painters to be recognized during his lifetime and

after as a peer of 20th-century European masters of modern art.

**P**aul Jackson Pollock, the fifth and youngest son of Stella May McClure and LeRoy Pollock, was born on January 28, 1912, at Cody, Wyoming. Both parents were of Scottish-Irish extraction (the father's original surname was McCoy before his adoption about 1890 by a family named Pollock), and both were born and raised in Iowa. Jackson dropped his first name, Paul, about the time he went to New York in 1930. The family left Cody 11 months after Jackson's birth. He would know Cody only through family photographs. Over the next 16 years the family lived in California and

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Arizona, moving nine times during the period. In 1928 it moved to Los Angeles where Pollock enrolled at Manual Arts High School. There he came under the influence of Frederick John de St. Vrain Schwankovsky, a painter and illustrator who was also a member of the Theosophical Society, a mystical religious sect. Schwankovsky gave Pollock some rudimentary training in drawing and painting, introduced him to advanced currents of European modern art, and encouraged an interest in Theosophical literature. At this time Pollock also attended the camp meetings of the former messiah of the Theosophists, Jiddu Krishnamurti, who was a personal friend of Schwankovsky. This experience of occult religion prepared Pollock, who had been raised an agnostic, to later accept the theories of the Swiss psychologist Carl Gustav Jung and the concept of the exploration of unconscious imagery espoused by adherents to Surrealism, a modern literary and artistic movement.

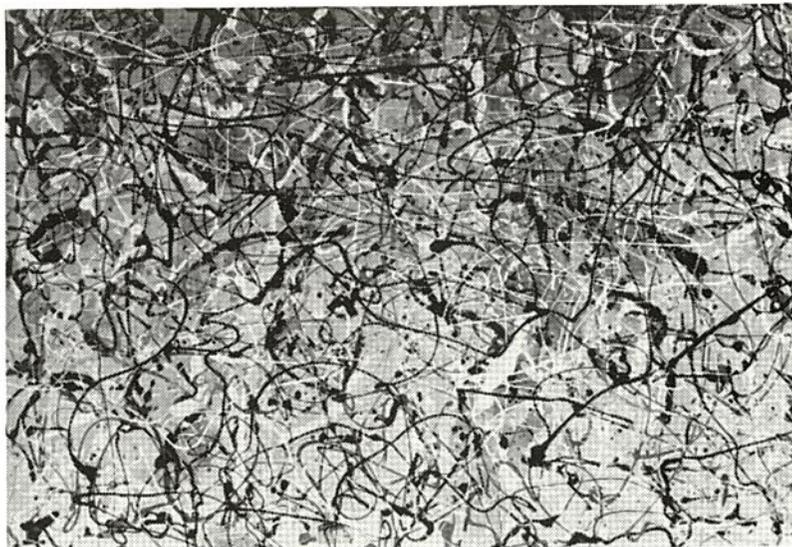
In the fall of 1930 he followed his brother Charles, who left home to study art in 1922, to New York, where he enrolled at the Art Students League under his

brother's teacher, the regionalist painter Thomas Hart Benton. He studied life drawing, painting, and composition with Benton for the next two and one-half years, leaving the League in the early months of 1933. For the next two years he lived in poverty, first with his brother Charles and, by the fall of 1934, with his brother Sanford. He shared an apartment in Greenwich Village with Sanford and his wife until 1942. In the fall of 1935 he was employed on the WPA Federal Art Project as an easel painter. This provided economic security during the years of the Great Depression and the opportunity to develop his art through early 1943. In 1937 he began psychiatric treatment for alcoholism, and he suffered a nervous breakdown in 1938, during which he was institutionalized for about four months. From 1939 through 1941 he was in treatment with two successive Jungian psychoanalysts, who used Pollock's own drawings in the therapy sessions. In 1943 after the liquidation of the Federal Art Project, he was given a contract by Peggy Guggenheim at her Art of This Century Gallery in New York City, and his first one-man show was held there in Nov-

ember. Thereafter he had one-man shows of new work nearly every year in New York, his work being handled by Peggy Guggenheim through 1947, the Betty Parsons Gallery from 1947 to 1952, and finally by the Sidney Janis Gallery. In 1945 he married painter Lee Krasner 1908 – ) and moved to East Hampton on Long Island in New York where he lived until his death in an automobile accident on August 11, 1956.

Pollock's artistic development can be divided into six periods. From his years with Benton to 1938, his work was strongly influenced by the compositional methods and regionalist subject matter of his teacher and by the poetically expressionist vision of the American painter Albert Pinkham Ryder. It consisted mostly of small landscapes and figurative scenes such as "Going West" in which Pollock also utilized motifs derived from photographs of his birthplace at Cody. After his breakdown and hospitalization in 1938 until the time of his first one-man show in 1943, his work was semiabstract and shows the assimilation of motifs from the modern Spanish artists Pablo Picasso and Joan Miro, as well as the Mexican muralist Jose

Clemente Orozco. Jungian symbolism and Surrealist theory also influenced the works of this period. Paintings such as "Birds," "Male and Female", and "Guardians of the Secret" reflect these influences. Very late in 1943, possibly in the early weeks of 1944, Pollock painted his first wallsize work, called "Mural." This painting is his breakthrough into a totally personal style in which Benton's compositional methods and energetic linear invention are fused with Surrealist free-association of motifs or unconscious imagery. His evolution from this point through the 1940s shows a struggle to find a process by which he could translate his entire personality into painting. The figurative character of works such as "The Totem, Lesson 1" and "The Blue Unconscious" contrasts with the heavily painted all-over design of "Shimmering Substance" and "Eyes in the Heat", indicating the range of imagery and technique he employed during this period. In 1947 he first used the process of pouring or dripping paint onto a flat canvas in stages, often taking weeks of alternating periods of painting and contemplating to finish a canvas. This process per-



*Study No. 1 Blue Polls*



*Study No. 2 Blue Polls*

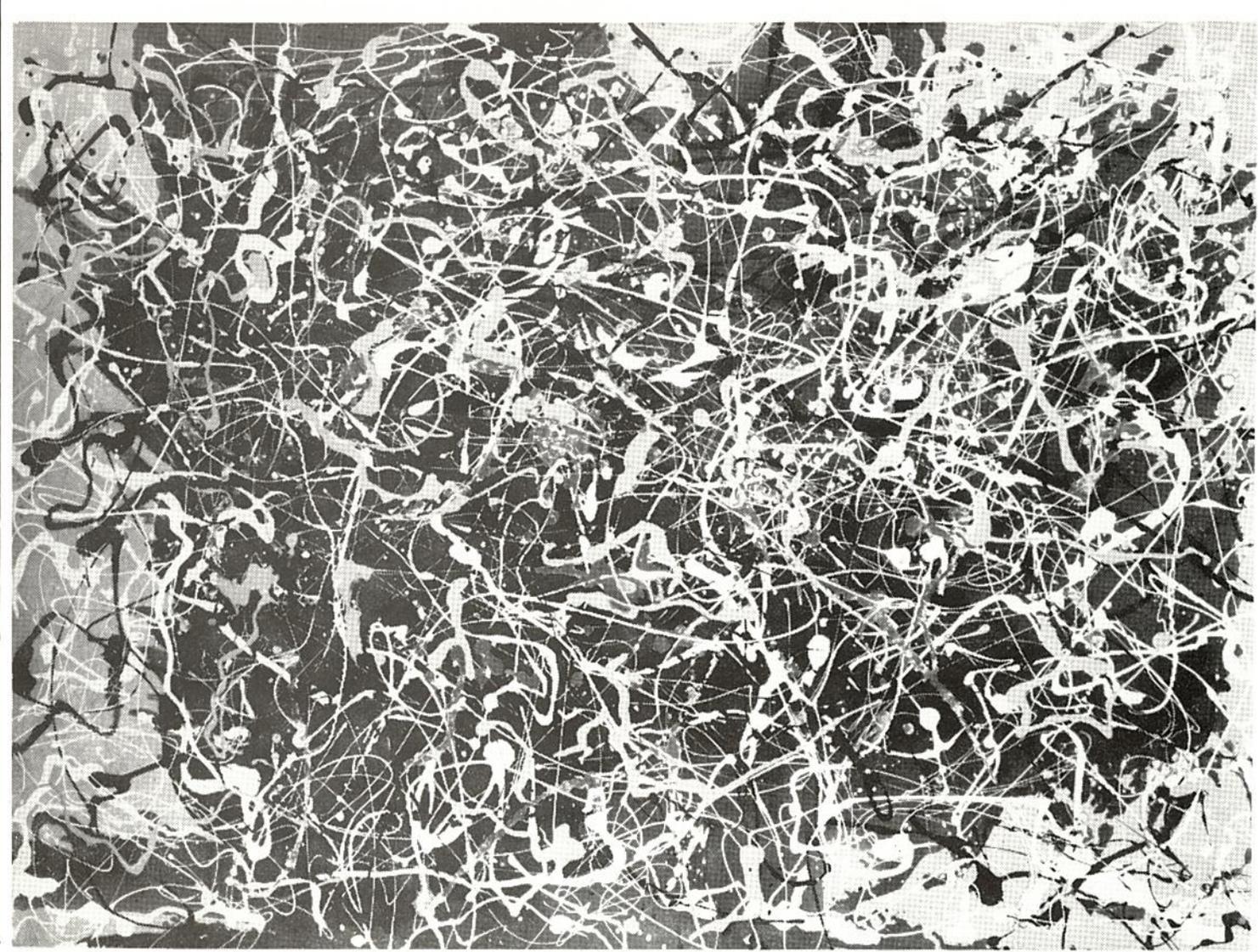
mitted him to record the force and scope of his gestures in trajectories of enamel or aluminum paint that he said "veiled the image" that often appeared in his earlier work. The results, in effect, were huge areas covered with complex linear patterns that fused image and form to engulf the vision of the spectator in their scale and intricacy. A whole series of paintings, beginning with "Full Fathom Five" and proceeding through "Summertime" and "Number Ten, 1949" to the mural-size canvasses of 1950 such as "one," "Autumn Rhythm," "Lavender Mist," and the black and white "Number Thirty-two," display the infinite variety of effect and expression this method—poured painting—permitted him. In 1951 and 1952 he painted almost exclusively in black and white, creating works in which his earlier imagery can be seen. The configuration in "Number Twenty-three, 1951" ("Frogman"), for example, relates to "Bird" and also to drawings Pollock did for his second Jungian analyst. Other important paintings of this phase, painted in black enamel on un-sized canvas, are "Echo" and "Number Seven, 1952." In 1952 he returned to colour and mural-



*No. 18*



*Autumn Song*



*Study No. 3 Blue Polls*

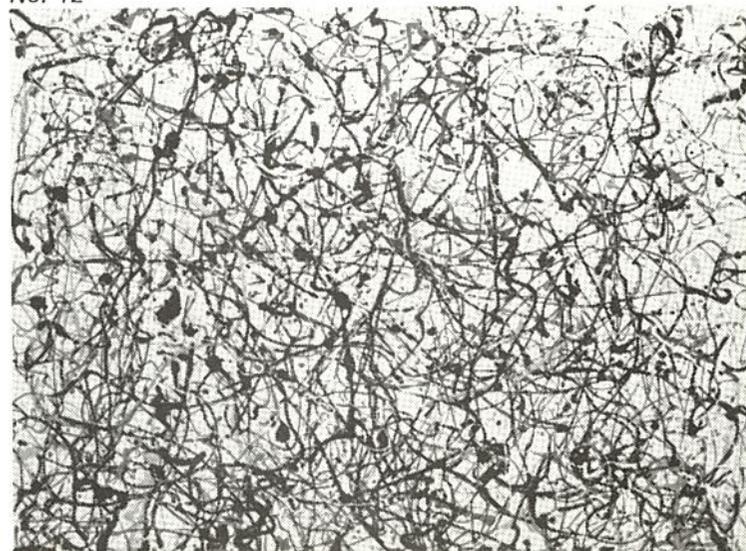
scale in "Convergence" and "Blue Poles." In 1953 he created his last series of major works. "Portrait and a Dream," "Easter and the Totem," "Ocean Greyness," and "The Deep," among other works, recapitulate many aspects of his former styles and images. Though his production waned and his health deteriorated after 1953, he did produce important paintings such as "White Light" and "Scent" in his last years.

**F**rom the early 1940s on, Pollock created numerous works on paper, ranging from drawings to mixed-media paintings that parallel the development of his work on canvas. He created very few prints and only experimental sculpture.

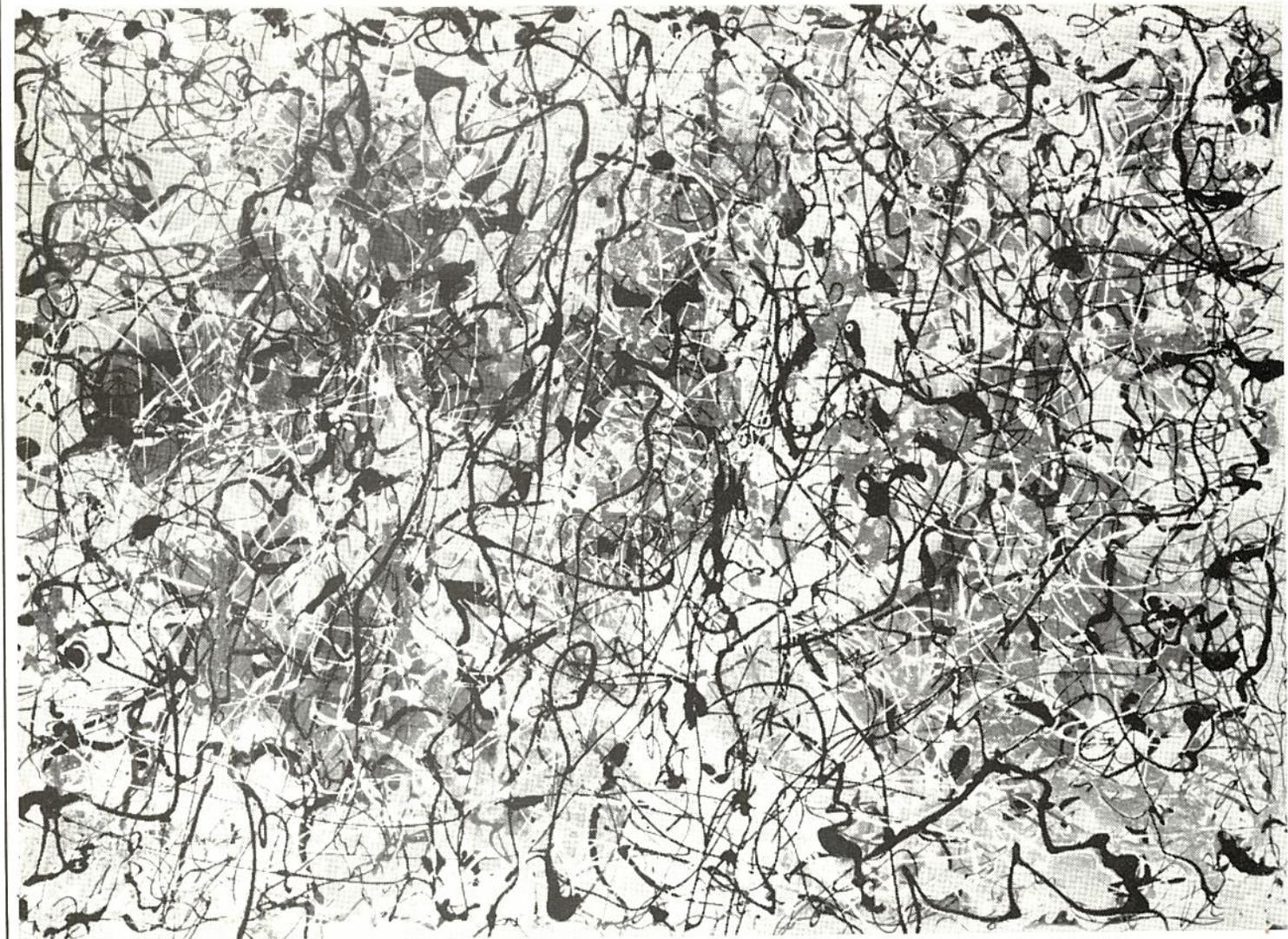
**A**s a man Pollock was described by his contemporaries as gentle and contemplative when sober, violent when drunk. These extremes found equilibrium in his art. He was highly intelligent, widely read and, when he chose, incisively articulate. He believed that art derived from the unconscious, saw himself as the essential subject of his painting, and judged his work and that of others on its inherent authenticity of personal expression.



*No. 12*



*Vacant Spaces*



*Study No. 4 Blue Polls*

**J**ackson Pollock will probably be viewed in Australia at large through a thick veil created by the Governments decision to purchase Blue Poles for \$1.200,000

**W**hen viewing Blue Poles, do not let the enormous expense of the acquisition obscure this truly magnificent painting. It is an extraordinarily beautiful painting, bristling with energy and filled with light through its high keyed colour. Pollock, with his strangely coloured pigments, enamels, and aluminium paints that he dripped or splattered directly onto a canvas, with its total freedom from brushstrokes has brought with it an incomparable purity and directness. He more than any other Artist has revitalized the Art World.



*Arabesque No. 2 Detail*