

LEUM

Continued from Page 2

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Chief

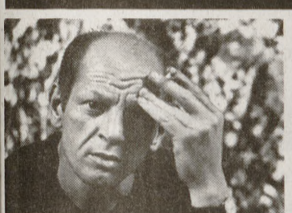
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SEEING LUCIFER

Houston's Museum of Fine Arts brings Jackson Pollock's works closer than ever

When Jackson Pollock died in 1956, he was universally recognized as the man who created American modern art. The Museum of Fine Arts in Houston has brought a collection of Pollock's art to Texas to display his innovative works.

Barry Walker, curator of the New American Vision exhibit, which houses Pollock's paintings, said Pollock represents the most creative era in American art. "Pollock was the first American artist to be taken seriously everywhere," Walker said. "This period, right after World War II, was the first time any American artist was taken seriously in Europe. Before Pollock, art was dominated by the great Europeans of the time, like Dali and Chagall. Pollock put us on the map."

Walker said the exhibit houses some of Pollock's best work, including a sketchbook of studies for works that he released and some that were never painted.

"That is probably going to be our biggest draw," Walker said. "That book looks back over all



Pollock at work on one of his later paintings, "Lavender Mist," using his famed "drip and slash" technique. He was the first American to gain respect on the world art circuit.

he had done — all he had learned. The sketchbook is basically nine pages that show his transformation as he learned lessons from great artists of the past, even Renaissance artists, and how he took those lessons and made them his own."

Pollock was famous not only for his work, but also for his lifestyle. Pollock was a superstar in his own time, on par with the later, more famously eccentric Andy Warhol. Pollock was born to simple roots in Cody, Wyoming, which he soon left to

study at the Arts Student League in New York City. After he graduated, he went on to work in the easel-painting department of the Federal Art Project, the government's first official office to fund art. Pollock worked his way up from humble beginnings to being the greatest artist and personality of his day.

Pollock's obituary in Time Magazine summed up his cult status: "Died. Jackson Pollock, the bearded shock trooper of modern painting who spread his canvases on the floor, dribbled paint and broken glass on them, smeared and scratched them and raked them with razors ... ; at the wheel of his convertible." Though Pollock had been drinking before the tragic car accident that ended his life, it was a fitting way to end a life lived as if there were no tomorrow.

Catherine Hastedt, curator of the J. Wayne Stark Galleries on the Texas A&M campus, said Pollock was "not someone you'd want to model yourself after" due to his heavy drinking and

womanizing, but he painted his own way, just as he lived.

"Pollock was very avant-garde with his action painting," Hastedt said. "He would drip paint on his canvases when they were lying on the floor, or he would tie brushes to a bicycle wheel and just splash paint on a canvas. He was trying to create paintings randomly, but with a mechanical process. It was called action painting, because it implied motion and took almost a physical exercise to create."

David Romei, executive director of the Arts Council of the Brazos Valley, said it is impossible to know American art without being familiar with Pollock's work.

"Jackson Pollock is essential to understanding American art," Romei said. "Pollock created a whole new manifestation of modern art — he changed the entire world's view away from the European perspective."

Romei said Pollock is considered by many artists and critics to be the "founding father of abstract" because his work was

the bridge from old-world aesthetics to the new American ideas of art. Romei said American art took on a new importance in the world after Pollock,



Pollock's "The Deep," painted in 1953.

and everyone, including college students, should experience his work for themselves.

The exhibit in Houston ends Sunday, June 25.

STORY BY JASON BENNYHOFF PHOTOS COURTESY OF POLLOCK-KRASNER INSTITUTE

BORN 1912	Moves to study in New York 1929	Begins working at the Federal Art Project 1938	Marries Lee Krasner 1942	<i>Eyes in the Heat</i> 1944	<i>Male and Female</i> 1946	<i>No. 32</i> 1950	<i>Blue Poles</i> 1952	Dies 1956
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