

(continued from front flap)

This remarkable volume will be enjoyed by anyone interested in Jackson Pollock and modern art, as well as anyone interested in twentieth-century America. The volume includes original works of art by Charles Pollock and an Introduction by Michael Leja, an expert on Abstract Expressionism and the work of Jackson Pollock.

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AMERICAN LETTERS

1927–1947

“This extraordinary book is more than a fascinating collection of family stories – though it is surely that. It also casts unprecedented light on the young Jackson Pollock, and on the intersections between politics and the arts in mid-twentieth-century America.”

Jackson Lears, Editor, RARITAN

“Spanning the years from 1927 to 1947, these letters between members of the Pollock family, along with some notable figures from the period, bring the Depression and war years vividly to life. This book is of interest not only for scholars of Pollock, but for anyone curious about the material, social, and political realities of the Depression and war years – it is an utterly compelling chronicle of private lives and public events. We find here the soil which nourished Pollock’s art, as well as a great deal more about the emotional and political grounding of this great painter.”

Angela L. Miller, Washington University in St. Louis

“These letters are extraordinary, not only because of the events to which they so pointedly bear witness or the remarkable bond they manifest between all the members of this family, scattered as they are across the US while in search of a job, but for the relentless cultural and artistic aspirations of their authors throughout times of extreme financial distress. There are moments of anger, or despair at the political situation, but overall it is a shared conviction that the world could be made a better place both by art and by political activism, or by the joining of the two, that lies at the core of this amazingly rich correspondence. This vast trove gives us a detailed picture of what it was to be an aspiring artist in poverty-stricken America during the 1930s. It should be a must-read for anyone interested in the socio-political context from which American modernism emerged.”

Yve-Alain Bois, Institute for Advanced Study, New Jersey

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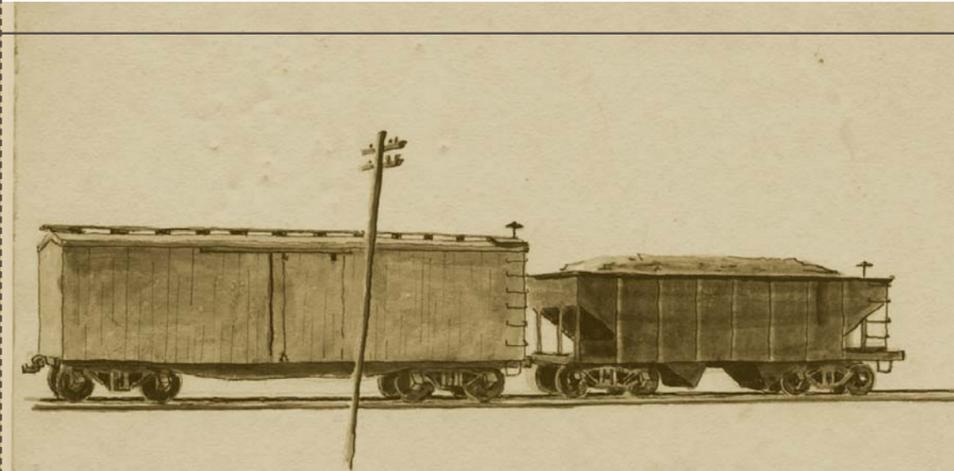
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AMERICAN LETTERS POLLOCK

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JACKSON POLLOCK & FAMILY

AMERICAN LETTERS

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Jackson Pollock, the towering American artist who was to revolutionize twentieth-century art with his “dripping” painting technique, grew up between the late 1920s and the late 1940s, the youngest of five boys born in the American West. Though often apart, whether they were traveling for work or for studies, sons and parents kept in close touch through their regular exchange of letters. Their correspondence offers an invaluable insight into the formation of one of America’s most influential artists, but it also draws a unique portrait of America itself between two momentous events in its history: the Great Depression and World War II.

These letters – many of which are published for the first time in this volume – show that the Pollock brothers took a keen and early interest in art and politics. Their interest in painting was stimulated in part by Thomas Hart Benton, then a teacher at the Art Students League in New York, whose passion and commitment was to influence them profoundly. Jackson followed his oldest brother Charles to New York to study with Benton. While Charles subscribed to many of his mentor’s left-wing beliefs and remained determined to bring art and social justice together, Jackson was far less committed to this ideal – he enjoyed life and traveled across America, hitting the open road and jumping from train to train, finding himself thrown out of school and even ending up in prison for a day, prodded on by his pronounced mystical leanings to search for his own way to express his artistic intuitions.

Through this vivid, lively and often moving correspondence from an atypical yet very American family, we catch a novel glimpse of Jackson Pollock the man, as well as of the various artistic schools and debates that established what has now become modern art.

(continued on back flap)