

JASON MCCOY GALLERY

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Jackson Pollock: A Centennial Exhibition

By **ROBERTA SMITH**

Jason McCoy Gallery 41 East 57th Street Manhattan, Through Dec. 14



*Untitled, 1951. Oil, enamel, and pebbles on board
21 3/4 x 29 1/2 inches 55.2 x 74.9 cm Private Collection CR1038*

Assembled to honor the centennial of Jackson Pollock's birth, this selection of mostly small works, drawn primarily from private collections, trolls the margins of his great achievement. Nonetheless, it manages to diagram his development, sources and styles, and consequently quite a bit of the drive and omnivorous appetite that fueled his ambition.

From the early 1930s, the show offers a haunting self-portrait; a cigar box whose lid is painted with a wonderful windswept western landscape; and also the well-known 1934 "Seascape," which is alive with a patchy turbulence that reflects the influence of Pollock's teacher, Thomas Hart Benton, and the art of Eugène Delacroix.

The strident forms and bright colors of a nearly abstract, masklike painting of a head (1938-41) indicate an admiration for both the Mexican muralists and for Picasso. A 1946 drawing in ink and watercolor shows Pollock experimenting with Surrealist automatism, seemingly with American Indian pictographs in mind, while two works from 1951 in ink on rice paper show him extending his attention to include Chinese calligraphy.

A small, brilliantly made work on board from 1947, the year of Pollock's first drip paintings, features a few loose coils of black paint on a complexly mottled field of silver gray, deftly scraped with a palette knife to reveal underlying bits of yellow, rose and white. In "Number 34," a 1949 painting on paper, the drip technique is so adroitly scaled down that it seems overly refined, almost Rococo. And a small 1951 painting on board explodes the technique, resulting in three isolated, bloblike drips, to which Pollock added gnarly clusters of pebbles. In its own way this is quite a ferocious show.