

Charles Pollock, Abstract Painter And Brother of Jackson, Dies at 86

By MICHAEL BRENSON

Charles Pollock, a distinguished painter and teacher and the oldest brother of Jackson Pollock, died of complications following a stroke Sunday in Paris. He was 86 years old.

Mr. Pollock was best known for abstract paintings in which geometric shapes floated in muted, monochromatic fields. His work resembled something of a cross between Color Field painting, with its zones of color, and graphic design. They were gentle, diaphanous works, classical rather than expressionist, in search of clarity and light rather than impulse and invention.

After visiting Michigan State University in 1942 for a mural commission, Mr. Pollock joined the faculty. During his 25-year tenure there he met his future wife, Sylvia Winter, taught lettering and calligraphy and experimented with line and color. When he began teaching, he was a Social Realist, strongly influenced by the Mexican muralists. When he left, he was an abstract painter:

First in Family to Study Art

Charles Pollock was born in Denver in 1902. He was the oldest of five brothers. His father, Leroy, was a jack-of-all-trades and a drifter, described by Mr. Pollock in 1981 as a "craftsman of the soil." The family moved to Wyoming, Arizona and California, where Charles Pollock worked for The Los Angeles Times and attended the Otis Art Institute.

His influence on Jackson Pollock was profound. Charles was the first member of his family to study art. In 1926 he left Los Angeles for New York and studied with Thomas Hart Benton at the Art Students League. In 1930 Charles and another brother, Frank, persuaded Jackson to leave Los Angeles and come to New York, where he, too, studied with Benton. In New York, Jackson's artistic career began.

In 1935, Charles Pollock moved to Washington to work for resettlement communities of miners and textile workers. In doing so he left New York just before the New York School took shape. This later would haunt him. "It was hopelessly idealistic," he said in a 1981 interview in The New York Times.



1979

Charles Pollock

"It's awfully easy to get swept away with enthusiasms here and there. It takes a lot of living to remain focused on the things you can do something about."

From 1938 to 1942, he lived in Michigan, where he worked with the United Automobile Workers and supervised mural painting and graphic art for the Work Projects Administration.

Major Shows in Europe

After retiring from teaching in 1967, he returned to New York. "The free and wonderful association of artists" he remembered now seemed to him absent. When his wife was offered a publishing job in Paris in 1971, they moved to France. Walking the streets, visiting cafes and museums, welcoming visitors, speaking almost no French, he was at peace there.

In the last 10 years, Mr. Pollock had major shows in France, England and Belgium. His work is in numerous collections, including those of the Whitney Museum of American Art and the National Gallery of Art.

He is survived by his wife; two daughters, Francesca McCoy of Paris and Jeremy Capille of Los Angeles, and a brother, Frank, of San Francisco.