2/2: “I am Nature:” Hofmann (and other precursors). Pollock, Krasner

OUTLINE

key decade: 1940

I. Transformers

A) John Graham (b. Ivan Dabrowsky, Kiev, 1881) to NY 1920
   System and Dialectics of Art published 1937
B) Arshile Gorky (b. Vosdanig Adoian, Armenia, 1904) to NY 1925
   Breton, “pope” of Surrealism, deemed Gorky to be the first Surrealist to go back
to nature, “treating her as a cryptogram, [revealing] the very rhythm of
life…”
C) Hans Hofmann (b. Saxony Germany 1880, d. 1966) to NY 1932
   1. Not interested in Surrealism
   2. Acted as bridge to European modernism (Cubism + Expressionism)
   3. Important teacher, especially in the years 1938-45 when he influenced Pollock
and the critic Clement Greenberg

II. Jackson Pollock (b. Cody, WY 1912, died a probable suicide 1956)

A. Avowed influences (Mexicans, Benton, Native American sand painters); unavowed
   influences (John Graham, jazz, Matta, Herbert Matter, critic Clement Greenberg)
B. Formal achievements, process
   1. 1930s: Primitivism
   2. 1943 synthesis of Cubist grid and Expressionist gesture
   3. 1947 “breakthrough” drip style (met Greenberg 1942, close friends by ‘46)

III. Codification of the Pollock Myth: Hans Namuth’s Jackson Pollock, 1951 (film)

IV. Lenore (‘Lee’) Krasner (b. NY 1908, d. 1984)

A. Krasner’s challenge
   1. The gender politics of Abstract Expressionism (Pollock to Hofmann “I am
   Nature”)
   2. The gender politics of postwar society: the little woman
   3. The gender politics of art: the oxymoron of a “female master”
B. The influence of Pollock, the influence of Krasner

Q: how much did world war contribute to the emergence of an American avant-garde?

See verso for images
Images shown (selected)

Graham Iron Horse, 1927
Graham, Self-Portrait as a Harlequin 1944
Gorky The Artist and His Mother, 1926-36
Gorky, Organization 1936
Gorky, Garden in Sochi, 1940-41
Gorky, Water of the Flowery Mill, 1944
Hofmann, Apples 1932
Hofmann Idolatress, 1944
Hofmann The Wind 1944
Hofmann Cathedral 1959
Pollock Bird 1938-41
Pollock Moon Woman 1942
Pollock Guardians of the Secret 1943
Pollock Mural 1943
Pollock Alchemy 1947
Pollock No. 1, 1948
Pollock, Lavender Mist, 1950
Matter/Pollock? Untitled, ca. 50s?
Krasner Composition 1949
Krasner Three in Two 1956

http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/artmuseum/exhibitions/archive/pollock-matters/index.html
If you are interested in the Herbert Matter /Jackson Pollock controversy