

Column 1 Action Paintings and Actions

After World War II, the active art movement that was popular in Europe, North America and Japan began with the all-over poured paintings by Jackson Pollock (1912-56). From around 1947, Pollock started using a pouring method where he laid a canvas on the floor and sprinkled paint all over the surface with a brush without touching the canvas. His work using this method, which had never been used by artists in the West before, was an innovative process that completely destroyed the conventional understanding of paintings up to that time. This included contour lines, center, foreground, background, relationships between figures and grounds, and shapes. Additionally, documentary photos (Figure 2) of his painting process were widely circulated, and as a result, the movement that valued the artist's actions as a new form of expression emerged.

In Japan, the Pollock's artworks were introduced relatively early. In 1951, his all-over works were displayed at the 3rd Yomiuri Independent Exhibition, and one of his works was featured on the cover of an art magazine named "*Mizue*" (Figure 3). Many Japanese art critics harshly criticized this new American trend. On the other hand, YOSHIHARA, the leader of GUTAI, highly praised its uniqueness.

Artists who witnessed after the publication of Pollock's large canvas works and photos of his actions can be divided into two groups. One group searches for the meaning of the acts itself, recognizing the creative act of the artist as art without physical artworks. The other group materializes the traces of their creative acts as artworks. The artists belonging to GUTAI create artworks by using the results of their creative actions, so they are classified in the latter group.