
RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT

EDB as the laboratory animals did, Americans would have to increase their daily intake 250,000 times. The incidence of cancer among a group of 156 EDB factory workers who were exposed to doses 5,000 to 10,000 times larger than normal "is *not* significantly different from that expected in an unexposed population."

Another perspective: The average human diet contains 10,000 times more natural carcinogens than man-made pesticides.

Why take even a small chance on EDB? Because, Whelan argues, the alternatives are probably worse. Not using any insecticide on stored grain, for example, would guarantee massive waste and dangerous spoilage. And of the four chemicals that have been pressed into service to replace EDB, one was a known carcinogen at the time of the ban, one has since been found to cause cancer, and two have never even been tested.

Most galling of all to Whelan is the fact that EPA officials knew all along that their own frightening estimate that continued use of EDB would cause three additional cases of cancer per 1,000 Americans was grossly inflated—14 times too high. Yet under pressure from environmental lobbyists and a panicked public, they withheld the revised estimate until after the ban was imposed.

ARTS & LETTERS

Genius or Fraud?

"Was Jackson Pollock Any Good?" in *Arts and Antiques* (Oct. 1984), P.O. Box 20600, Bergenfield, N.J. 07621.

Jackson Pollock's famed "drip" paintings have hung in museums across the United States for several decades now. Yet, many viewers undoubtedly still ask themselves whether a five-year-old child armed with a few cans of paint might not have done as well as the founder of abstract expressionism. So *Arts and Antiques* put the question to 23 prominent artists and intellectuals: "Was Jackson Pollock any good?"

There is no consensus. Thomas Hoving, former director of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, writes that Pollock (1912–56) was "a tyro, the primitive of a way. The failing of his work is the lack of humanism, so the paintings will be an interesting footnote in the course of art history; a high point at a low moment." But to painter Andrew Wyeth, Pollock's primitivism, his "complete freedom with paint," was a great breakthrough that paved the way for wide-ranging experimentation by other painters after the late 1940s.

Pollock's colleague and contemporary Robert Motherwell recalls that his old friend was inarticulate and temperamental—except in the studio. There he was "wholly articulate—with his body, arm, wrist, and eye dancing over the canvas on the floor."

Commentary editor Norman Podhoretz perceives Pollock's personality in his paintings, "some force of primitive energy that was unmistak-

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able and that distinguishes them from those of his contemporaries." Playwright Arthur Miller also admires the disciplined wildness of the paintings, likening them to "painted music." On the other hand, Irving Kristol, editor of the *Public Interest*, dismisses Pollock's canvases as "nice decorations." *Harper's* editor Lewis Lapham says of Pollock's pictures: "I studied them dutifully, but failed to find in them what I was instructed to find—namely, beauty or meaning."

Twenty-nine years after the artist's death, debates continue even over what to call his work. *New York Times* art critic John Russell insists that "drip" painting is a misnomer. "Poured, poured, not dripped," he says. Painter Leroy Neiman notes that whatever it is called, it is original: His own attempts to imitate Pollock failed.

Commenting on the fame that eventually overwhelmed Pollock, *Time* magazine art critic Robert Hughes notes, "Pollock was a good painter, but it's not enough to be a good painter in America; you also have to be a cultural hero. Art criticism has become impossibly riddled with hype. Not even Pablo Picasso was Pablo Picasso."



Number 3, 1949: *Tiger*, detail, by Jackson Pollock, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution.

Culture's Prison

"Scholarship versus Culture" by Jacques Barzun, in *The Atlantic Monthly* (Nov. 1984), Box 2547, Boulder, Colo. 80322.

More artifacts of culture are being created, unearthed, collected, classified, exhibited, and analyzed nowadays than at any time in human history. Yet, paradoxically, contends Columbia University's Barzun, true culture itself is in danger of being smothered.

To Barzun, the chief villain is the university, a "concentration campus" where the spontaneity and passion needed to create and appreciate culture is extinguished.

Scholarship as we know it arose during the Renaissance as a method of establishing accurate versions of Greek and Roman classics. Analysis (from the Greek *analysis*, "to break down") shows how "the little bits fit together to produce the whole." Until the mid-19th century, scholars stuck to such "hard" subjects as mathematics, physics, philosophy, and political economy; it never occurred to anybody that there ought to be university courses in literature or art.

Gradually, scholarship encroached upon these fields, and today, specialization has reached absurd heights. Academic subjects are growing ever more narrow (e.g., crime in one English county during the 17th century), and scholars seem to write only for one another. Emulating the experts, even amateurs have specialized: There are now some 300