

# Pollock



**Written by Fabrice Melquiot**

**Direction Paul Desveaux**

**With Jim Fletcher and Birgit Huppuch\***

# Pollock

Written by **Fabrice Melquiot** (@ L'Arche Editions)

Direction **Paul Desveaux**

Translated in English by **Kenneth Casler & Myriam Heard**

Set design : **Paul Desveaux**

Assistant to the Director **Amaya Lainez**

Lighting design: **Laurent Schneegans**

Composer: **Vincent Artaud**

Recorded music:

*Drums* : **Frank Agulhon**

*Bass* : **Vincent Artaud**

*piano* : **Patrice Cabon**

*saxophone* : **Pierrick Pédron**

Films: **Santiago Otheguy**

Production: Veronique Felenbok

Press: Olivier Saksik

International relations : Inès Da Silva

With Jim Fletcher and Birgit Huppuch\*

\* This actress is appearing courtesy of Actors' Equity Association



## ***U.S. Premiere at Abrons Arts Center - New York***

Thursday, Feb 15 to Sunday, Feb 18, 2018, Thursday, February 22 to Sunday, February 25, 2018

Thurs-Sat at 7:30 pm, Sunday at 3:00 pm

Production Compagnie de la Vallée/L'Héliotrope. Co-presented by the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the United States and Abrons Arts Center, New York.

The production of *Pollock* is made possible with funding from the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in partnership with FACE Foundation; Abrons Arts Center, New York; Institut français-Paris; Le Tangram – Scène nationale d'Evreux; and Compagnie L'Héliotrope. Compagnie La Vallée/l'héliotrope is supported by the Ministry of Culture - DRAC Normandie, and Région Normandie.

*At a time*

*That's what genius is*

*Pollock*

*It's on your face like a mark of shame that you'd like to hide but it's got you in its grip and won't let go and will never let go drink all you like Pollock you'll never get away from it that's how you're made it's there it's*

*It's on your face on every single one of your paintings poor love my poor love and as your face helps you see where to put your feet like the paintings help you stand up straight*

*You keep your beautiful face uncovered and tuck your crutches under your arm and your genius explodes*

*You don't wanna smash your face*

*My love*

*Stumble*

*Slip*

*You'd be ridiculous*

*That's what your genius is waiting for you to be stretched out on the floor of the city*

*I'm at our home*

*At the house*

*Jackson*

*Waiting for you screw you I made fried eggs*

*Pollock, Fabrice Melquiot*

*When I am in my painting, I'm not aware of what I'm doing. It is only after a sort of 'get acquainted' period that I see what I have been about. I have no fears about making changes, destroying the image, etc., because the painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through. It is only when I lose contact with the painting that the result is a mess. Otherwise there is pure harmony, an easy give and take, and the painting comes out well.*

*My painting, Jackson Pollock*

## **A Visit to New York**

It was on a visit to New York in 1998 that I discovered the paintings of Jackson Pollock. The Whitney Museum was presenting a retrospective of his works. I was fascinated by the strength of movement, the immense scale of the paintings. To me they displayed a sensitive abstraction, in particular his drip paintings. The lines and constellations of colors had undoubted evocative power, the same power found in nature when we glimpse a pattern in the organization of trees, blades of grass, and more commonly in the forms of clouds. It is as if a part of our imagination opens up and spools out effortlessly to infinity, because no recognizable form can hold it back.

I started to look more closely at Pollock's method. For his drip paintings Pollock placed a large canvas on the floor, splashing paint directly on it with paint cans punctured with holes and a wooden stick. He appeared to perform a dance, an improvised choreography of sorts, allowing the organic expression of his gestures to emerge in the abstraction on the canvas. I immediately sensed the theatricality of his method, though at the time I failed to grasp how to exploit it. Only after I had read his biography and designed a preliminary stage set did I begin to see that there was material for the theater.

My study of the painter's roller-coaster life introduced me to another character: Lee Krasner, his wife. Without her, Pollock would never have achieved the level of abstraction that he did. She, too, was a talented painter, her own work praised – long before she met Pollock – by Mondrian who, it is well known, was anything but generous with his accolades. I cannot say whether it was to do justice to a woman who had sacrificed, partially at any rate, her own artistic career for the advancement of one of America's greatest painters; or whether it was because Lee Krasner was the person with whom Jackson Pollock had his most penetrating exchanges. Be that as it may, I imagined them in the painter's studio. Alone.

Between Jackson Pollock's genius and Lee Krasner's spirit; between the inhibitions of the former and the frustrations of the latter; between the inherent difficulty of conceptualizing « abstraction » and the painter's own instinctive gestures; between the cowboy from Arizona and the Jewish girl from Brooklyn; a bumpy road leads to Jackson Pollock's death in 1956 at the age of 44. The play might be called « a contemporary tragedy », but , underlying such a classification is one fundamental inquiry which gives the piece meaning: the question of artistic creation. Pollock and Krasner have become for artistic creation what Sartre and Beauvoir are for philosophy and literature. They are no longer merely a man and a woman. Countless studies and inquiries have elevated them until they became the very embodiment of artistic creation.

Paul Desveaux

It is impossible to fully understand the brilliance and madness of Jackson Pollock without studying his marriage to Lee Krasner, a talented artist in her own right. This piece exists in the charged empty space between Pollock and Krasner; between his genius and her spirit; between the inhibitions of the former and the frustrations of the latter; between the inherent difficulty of conceptualizing “abstraction” and the painter’s own instinctive gestures. The play might be called “a contemporary tragedy” but underlying such a vague classification is one fundamental inquiry which gives the piece meaning: the question of artistic creation.

Paul Desveaux

*The American Action Painters, by Harold Rosenberg, 1952*

New painting has broken down all distinctions between art and life  
If the artist aspires to continue painting or writing even as he feels the political trap closing in  
on him  
He must have the utmost faith in the pure  
Possibility  
Because he works directly with the materials of his own existence he is the only non-alienated  
worker in America  
The modern painter starts with nothingness  
That’s the only thing he copies  
He creates  
The rest.

*Pollock, Fabrice Melquiot*



## **ABOUT THE ACTORS**

### **Jim Fletcher**

Jim Fletcher has worked with Richard Maxwell and the New York City Players for over 15 years. This past year he performed in the Wooster Group's production of *A Pink Chair* (at Bard College's Fisher Center for the Performing Arts) and in Shaun Irons and Lauren Petty's *Why Why Always* at Abrons Arts Center. He has appeared in the films of Kamal Ahmed, Linas Phillips, Zbigniew Bszymek, and Roland Ellis, and in Tony Oursler's *Imponderable*.

### **Birgit Huppuch**

Birgit last performed at Abrons in Pig Iron's *Twelfth Night*. Credits include *Venus* (Signature), *The Moors* (Playwrights Realm, Yale Rep), *Men on Boats* (Playwrights Horizons/Clubbed Thumb), *The Debate Society's Blood Play* (Bushwick Starr, Public), *A Map of Virtue* (13P), *Not What Happened* (BAM Next Wave), *Neighbors* (Public), *Angel Reapers* (Joyce), and *Telephone* (Foundry, Obie Award).

## **ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT**

**Fabrice Melquiot** has published about forty plays with L'Arche Editeur. Melquiot has received many awards including two from the Syndicat National de la Critique, France. He has worked closely with director Emmanuel Demarcy-Mota for many years, and continues to collaborate with Demarcy-Mota as current Director of Theatre de la Ville, Paris. In 2008, Melquiot received the Prix Théâtre de l'Académie Française for his entire body of work. His texts have been translated and performed in a dozen languages. Since 2012, he has served as director of Théâtre Am Stram Gram in Geneva, International Center of Creation for Children and Youth.

## **ABOUT THE DIRECTOR**

**Paul Desveaux** is the Director of the Company l'héliotrope founded in 1997. Desveaux has staged a large repertoire of works by authors including Frank Wedekind, A. Ostrovski, A. Tchekhov, Nathalie Sarraute, and Fabrice Melquiot. He has also directed trans-disciplinary projects such as Philip Glass' opera *Les Enfants Terribles* (2007), worked with Ensemble Intercontemporain on the opera *Hypermusic Prologue* (2009) by Hector Parra, and collaborated with scientist Lisa Randall and filmmaker Santiago Otheguy on *Vraie Blonde et autres* by Jack Kerouac (2002/2004). Desveaux has developed a regular collaboration with the choreographer Yano Iatridès and the composer Vincent Artaud.

## **ABOUT THE CULTURAL SERVICES OF THE FRENCH EMBASSY**

The Cultural Services of the French Embassy promotes the best of French arts, literature, cinema, digital innovation, language, and higher education across the U.S. Based in New York City, Washington D.C., and eight other cities across the country, the Cultural Services brings artists, authors, intellectuals and innovators to cities nationwide. It also builds partnerships between French and American artists, institutions and universities on both sides of the Atlantic. In New York, through its bookshop Albertine, it fosters French-American exchange around literature and the arts ([www.frenchculture.org](http://www.frenchculture.org))

In the theater field, the Cultural Services of the French Embassy aims to highlight the work of French playwrights – both in French and English translation – for a broad American audience. In recent years, greater attention has been devoted to developing productions of French plays translated to English staged with an American cast. *Pollock* written by Fabrice Melquiot and directed by Paul Desveaux is part of this momentum.

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## **Contacts**

### **FRENCH EMBASSY**

**Nicole Birmann Bloom** *Program Officer; Performing Arts, Cultural Services of the French Embassy*  
Tel: +1 (212) 439.1444 – Cell: 1 (917) 685 1436 / nicole.birmann@diplomatie.gouv.fr

**Camille Desprez** *Press and Public Relations Officer Cultural Services of the French Embassy*  
Tel: +1 (212) 439 1417 / camille.desprez@diplomatie.gouv.fr

### **COMPANY**

**Véronique Felenbok** *Producer*  
+33 (0) 6 61 78 24 16 / veronique.felenbok@yahoo.fr

**Inès Da Silva** *International relations*  
+33 (0) 6 84 48 36 32 / ines\_dasilva@yahoo.fr

**Olivier Saksik** *Press*  
+33 (0) 6 73 80 99 23 / olivier@elektronlibre.net

## **L'héliotrope**

[www.heliotrope-cie.com](http://www.heliotrope-cie.com)

*l'héliotrope* - 8,allée du relais - 27300 Bernay - France