

# PREFACE: KEEPING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

**“ YOU ARE A REAL CRAFTSMAN, MOTHER.  
NO WONDER THERE ARE SO MANY ARTISTS  
IN THE FAMILY. ”**

*From an unpublished letter from Frank Pollock to Stella Pollock, 1937*

**C**harles Pollock, the eldest of the five Pollock brothers, was my father, and Jackson Pollock, the youngest of the brothers, my uncle. They were both artists.

When I was born, my father was sixty-four years old. Born so late in his life, I only got to know two other Pollock brothers, Frank and Jay. Still, Jackson, who died eleven years before I was born—his presence, his fame, his art, his name, the stories about him, his letters—has always been a big part of my life. But I have always seen him either through the proud and attentive eyes of my father or through the mystification of others. Because of our family ties and our common heritage, I have seen him more as a man than as a famous artist, more as a human being than as a celebrity.

Until I saw this book, I never knew how much Jackson and Lee liked to cook and entertain, but somehow I am not surprised. That way of life—that simplicity, that taste for nature—evokes perfectly my image of my grandparents. The father I knew was different. I don't think he liked cooking in a formal way or from recipes. What he liked to do with food was to play with leftovers. The only times I ever heard him talk about cooking was when, after a day painting in his studio, he would come home and announce, "I think something is cooking!" Indeed, he painted the same way he cooked: Endlessly using leftovers; keeping and re-using; trying one color or shape and then another. There was never ever any waste. Painting, like cooking, was a way of living.

**W**hat he had inherited from his parents, and maybe most especially from his mother, was an interest in man-made things more than in things found in nature. And in those things, she had high standards; she didn't like "shoddy."

Looking at these elegant and beautiful photographs, I feel, like Alice in Wonderland, that I am peeking through the looking glass into a world that is familiar but that I have never really known. It is a world I only approached briefly, and in some ways too late. The closest I ever got

to that atmosphere (or to what was left of it) was in 1982, when my father took me on a long journey. First we went to Mexico to see his dear friend the artist Mathias Goeritz. I was fifteen, and seeing our picture on the front of the national daily newspaper was quite a thrill. Then we joined my mother, Sylvia Winter Pollock, in Los Angeles, where we spent time with the family. Then, after a few days in New York City, we went to East Hampton, where we visited with Reuben and Barbara Kadish, Jeffrey Potter, Herman and Regina Cherry, Willem de Kooning, and Alfonso Ossorio. Ossorio's studio at The Creeks was the most amazing place I had ever seen; his mixed media and his charisma were anarchic and unforgettable. I think it is the only time in my life that I entertained the idea of becoming an artist!

**T**he way Robyn Lea discovered the recipes for this book reminds me of my own experience of discovering the family letters in the Charles Pollock Archives. My father had kept all those letters out of a highly developed sense of responsibility. Not only was he a key figure in carving a path for his siblings, but all his life people came to him with questions about the family and his famous brother. Often the story he told was too simple, and not romantic or glamorous enough for them. There was no mystification in his accounts. Charles cared deeply about transmission, always insisting that we had to do our best to "keep the record straight." Now, more than twenty-five years after his death, that phrase still resonates, and influences my own approach to family matters. When I discovered those letters, I realized at once how precious they were, since they tell an unabridged story.<sup>1</sup> One of a simple, modest family with very high moral standards and expectations—and no taste for convention.

I am delighted to be able to contribute to this wonderful project, because I know it is honest material and provides another way—unexpected, like a gift—of keeping the record straight!

FRANCESCA POLLOCK