

# Travellady Magazine <sup>TM</sup>

## Venice: The Artistic Spirit of Jackson Pollack and Peggy Guggenheim

By Larry Bridwell

Jackson Pollack, the great pioneer of abstract expressionism, was a struggling carpenter until the avant-garde Peggy Guggenheim discovered him and made his paintings famous. Following her death in 1979, her Grand Canal palazzo became a museum, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection. Her personal selection of 20th-Century abstract and surreal art can be viewed only in Venice, because her will stipulated that the collection can never be shown outside the museum.



In the sculpture garden after noon church bells, a docent gives a brilliant lecture about Guggenheim's life and places the museum in the context of her fascinating experiences in New York, London, Paris and Venice. Visitors learn that when she was only eleven, her father died on the Titanic after helping other passengers survive. She carried on the family tradition of bravery during World War II in France, when she helped many artists escape from the Nazis. Her collection also has an intimate dimension: several paintings are by her lovers, including Pollack.

One of the most controversial areas of art is abstract expressionism, because paintings of this style often lack traditional representations of people or settings. A common, cynical perception is that the artist is a child engaged in helter-skelter finger-painting. But in the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, five Pollack paintings offer an unusual insight into the subconscious expression of abstract art.

“The Moon Woman” is a colorful and multifaceted depiction of female spirituality, probably reflecting the Native American heritage of Pollack's Wyoming birthplace. This emphasis on nature may have also inspired the other paintings, beginning with “Bird Effort” and its bright depiction of flight. “Enchanted Forest” is a vivid representation of trees, and “Eyes in the Heat” conveys restless eye movements. Finally, “Alchemy” appears to be a mixture of chemicals. In a single intimate room, the mystery of abstract expressionism becomes understandable, because one can see the similarities and differences among five paintings, as suggested by their titles.



A short walk from the museum, slightly off the tourist path, is the rustic Ristorante San Trovaso. It attracts local Venetians, including the gondoliers who sat next to us during their work break. The beef lasagna appetizer was a sensual blend of thick pasta, seasoned beef, and fresh Parmesan cheese. The main course was an attractive mixture of grilled fish. Sightseeing, lunch and wine had caused some drowsiness, but the house dessert of

lemon ice with a vodka twist provided a pleasant wake-up kick

That evening, the spirit of Pollack and Guggenheim was manifest at the splendid Bauer Hotel. Its President, Francesca Bortolotto Possati, has infused this Grand Canal hotel with her own sense of Italian style. Many of the ingredients for the restaurant come from her farm, and the cuisine is fresh and distinctive. We had wine from her vineyard with exquisite hors d'oeuvres. Five delicious works of edible Italian art were arranged in pairs, and presented in colorful display, perhaps inspired by the Pollack paintings across the canal.



**If you go:**

Peggy Guggenheim Collection  
Palazzo Venier dei Leoni  
Dorsoduro 701  
39 041 2405 411  
[info@guggenheim-venice.it](mailto:info@guggenheim-venice.it)

Hours: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily except Tuesdays and Dec. 25  
Presentation on the life of Peggy Guggenheim and the making of her collection  
daily at 12 noon and 4 p.m.

Restorante San Trovaso  
Dorso Duro 967

Venice  
39 041 5230 835

<http://www.santrovaso.it>  
[giorgio.cassan@tin.it](mailto:giorgio.cassan@tin.it)

Hotel Bauer  
San Marco 1459  
30124 Venice, Italy

<http://www.bauervenezia.com>  
Rooms from EUR 240 (\$298) plus 10% tax.

Bauer Il Palazzo - Venezia  
San Marco 1413/d

30124 Venice, Italy  
<http://www.ilpalazzovenezia.com>  
Rooms from EUR 290 (\$360) plus 10% tax.  
Tel 39 041 520 7022

Fax: 39 041 520 7557  
Reservations: 39 041 2406841/08

[info@bauervenezia.com](mailto:info@bauervenezia.com)  
[booking@bauervenezia.com](mailto:booking@bauervenezia.com)

#### Rail Europe

The best way to get to Venice is by train. We had a railpass from Rail Europe, which provides many options for one, two, three or more countries. Go to RailEurope's web site (or call a reservation agent) to decide whether your trip is best done with point-to-point tickets or a pass or combination of the two. Passes are sold only to non-European residents. <http://www.RailEurope.com> or 888-382-7245.

Just past track 1 at the Santa Lucia station is a ramp down which you can wheel out your luggage; there are no signposts to it, and we saw people bumping their bags down the many stairs at the front of the station. When you return to the station, the ramp will be on the right of the building. Vaporettos and water taxis stop just outside the station.

Photos by Lucy Komisar  
The Moon Woman photo from museum website