It can be argued that over the course of American history, no one artist has garnered quite the criticism and critique as painter Jack Pollock attracted over the short span of his life. Born in 1912, Pollock became an extremely influential part of the abstract expressionist movement that was just beginning to plant its roots in modern art culture. Pollock’s paintings, which usually consisted of splashes and splatters of seemingly random paint dripped over various backings such as canvas or glass, were the subject of myriad debates that essentially asked where we draw the line when it comes to the definition of art.

One such painting was his later 1950 acrylic mural *Autumn Rhythm*. *Autumn Rhythm*, like so many of Pollock’s paintings, depicts a variety of drips and splashes against a faded sepia background. Here, his color palette consists of earthier colors such as browns and blacks, contrasted with the occasional bright splash of white. The painting exists on a singular plane, and the lack of visual depths creates a feeling of “sameness.” There are few, if any, obvious points of focus, and the initial reaction upon viewing the work is one of confusion.

The random splashes of color and tone, however, do manage to compose a feeling of autumn, one that may merely exist in suggestion due to the painting’s title. The painting is entirely abstract, and its muted colors help restrain it from becoming an attack on the eye. Though abstract, there exists within the painting a certain balance and even tone. No one corner is any heavier, lighter, or darker than the any other, and because of this, a sense of calm equality can be drawn from it.

*Autumn Rhythm*, along with the vast majority of Pollock’s paintings, comes under heavy criticism due to its initial aimlessness. To a few art critics and much of the public, it appears a
childish mass of color and line with no purpose or orientation. To them, this work is nothing worth paying attention to and the fact that it and other similar works had skyrocketed Pollock to fame was just proof that the world of art was one that could be easily duped. However, I feel that the mere fact that Pollock’s works caused such a stir was exactly the reason they could be deemed art. To me, art exists for two purposes: to intrigue aesthetically and to cause one to think. Though the aesthetic appeal of Autumn Rhythm is entirely up to individual opinion, it certainly caused critics to either expand or clearly define what could be deemed “art.” This question is one that has never been fully resolved, for where one critic comes up with an answer, another disagrees. There is no ultimate opinion that can be called absolute.

*Autumn Rhythm* is not a painting to be viewed and dismissed at a moment’s notice. While many see it as yet another example of the art community’s snobbishness, I believe Pollock truly believed in his work, and this belief is reason enough to grant this painting more than a cursory glance. While its visual appeal is certainly up for debate, it does succeed in conveying a sense of autumn, and the consistency throughout can potentially represent a rhythm of falling leaves, changing weather, and brisk breezes that occupy the final few months of the year.