The term “action painting” may have been coined to describe Jackson Pollock’s style of working, but it could be just as apt a description of a 4-year-old’s natural exuberance when faced with a blank white sheet, a vivid selection of paints, a turkey baster, and some sticks.

That was the scene last week when Ruby Jackson of the Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center in Springs led 4-year-old prekindergartners in a Pollock-inspired painting session at the East Hampton Day Care Learning Center, one of many school visits she will make this year on the occasion of Pollock’s centennial birthday.

“Kids relate to him in a way they don’t relate to Rembrandt, or Degas, or Van Gogh,” Ms. Jackson said Tuesday. While adult painting students might need to overcome all sorts of inhibitions to tap into the raw energy and emotion that Pollock brought to his canvases, “children are able to get to that space more easily,” Ms. Jackson said. “It’s a very authentic, primal, uncensored painting. . . . Kids do that naturally.”

The younger they are, the truer that is.

“I don’t think people understand how important the arts are to this age group,” said Maureen Wikane, the center’s executive director, who oversees a student body ranging in age from 18 months to 5 years. (The East Hampton School District contracts with the not-for-profit center to provide prekindergarten for district residents.) Art is a big part of the curriculum for all the students. “We’re nurturing these young learners to have a joy in the arts.” And whether in paint, glitter, song, or dance, she said, “Nobody hesitates to express themselves here.”

Since Ms. Jackson’s visit, students in Sandra McLaughlin’s pre-K class have talked a lot about the experience, “about how to interpret the feelings in art: What do you see? What does it make you feel?” Ms. McLaughlin said. “Ruby Jackson was very good at making her explanations kid-friendly.”
Looking at the still-drying paintings on Tuesday, three of those prekindergartners, Ryan Darrell, Lila Gabbard, and Edmar Gonzalez, talked about their artwork and what they saw in it.

“That’s dinosaurs walking around,” Ryan said, pointing to a spot of green, then added, “They’re fake.”

“I see blue,” Lila said. “And that’s the ocean,” Ryan explained. “And the ocean has monsters,” Edmar said. And soon there was Halloween, and volcanoes, and the school, and two water slides, and unfolding stories that evolved the longer they looked at their work, and then were just stories unto themselves.

“They were just so into it,” said Maureen Burns, another of the center’s prekindergarten teachers. “A nice messy project is perfect at this age.”

Ms. Jackson’s next stop, tomorrow, will be in Irene Tully’s fifth-grade class at the Springs School, just around the corner from the Abstract Expressionist’s Springs studio. Pollock’s 100th birthday would have been on Saturday.