Lee Krasner

SELECTED PRESS

Forbes

Lee Krasner's Fall And Rise

CHAD SCOTT
FEBRUARY 14, 2023

Lee Krasner (1908–1984), Number 2, 1951. Oil on canvas 92 1/2 in × 132 in (235 cm × 335.3 cm) CR252. ... [+] COPYRIGHT: 2022 THE POLLOCK-KRASNER FOUNDATION/ARTIST. RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK.

Four of the Carolyn Campagna Kleefeld Contemporary Art Museum's five Lee Krasner artworks go on view in a new exhibition sharing insights into her career and character, and how the two reflect each other. Art making didn't come easy to Krasner the way it did for others. She was no child genius or savant; she worked at it. She studied, she tried, she failed, she retooled, she persevered and ultimately overcame through extreme effort and dogged determination, developing her talent and vision until she finally stood as an essential of American art history.

A 1951 solo show flopped. She took a year off. In 1955 she exhibited again, this time, triumphant.

"Krasner's tenacious character makes her a role model for how to focus on your goals and keep at them no matter what comes your way," Museum director and Krasner exhibition curator Paul Baker Prindle told Forbes.com. "Krasner lost her

husband and her mother shortly after the 1955 exhibition and yet she kept going. So much has happened to so many people over the last few years. Seeing that Lee Krasner kept going after so much had gone wrong in the studio and in her personal life is inspiring to me."

Origins

"Lee Krasner: A Through Line," on view at the Kleefeld in Long Beach, CA through May 19, 2023, provides a context for exploring the artist's important abstract paintings and collages from the 1940s to the early 1960s. That context begins decades earlier with her influences: Picasso, Matisse, Hans Hoffman.

Krasner's untitled work from 1942 hangs alongside Picasso's 1926 print, Scène d'intérieur, and Hofmann's painting, Pure Space (1952), which has not been exhibited since its creation.

"Krasner's unique voice was grounded in her influences. To my mind, all artists ought to be judged through the social context of their work not as individual geniuses," Prindle explained. "Art is in dialogue with its time. Krasner was looking at her influences and giving them something in return to look at and respond in turn. Artists working in midcentury New York City were all talking, visiting each other's studios, exhibiting together, summering in the same places, going to the same parties and bars. They most often worked alone in the studio, but they showed work often. In this era, so many brilliant artists were making art in conversation with each other."

These artists living and working and comingling in mid-century New York included Krasner and her husband, Jackson Pollock, Elaine and Willem de Kooning, Joan Mitchell, Arshile Gorky, Hoffman, Clyfford Still, Mark Rothko, Grace Hartigan, Robert Motherwell and Helen Frankenthaler, who were also at one time married, Franz Kline, Piet Mondrian.

"There is no other artist like Krasner, but she became Lee Krasner as a member of a community of artists," Prindle said. "The influences from Matisse, Mondrian and especially Picasso are always there, but only Krasner added and forged on in the way she did—she didn't merely react, she pushed the work of her influences further just as those artists had built on their influences."

A Rebuke

"A Through Line" positions Krasner's poorly received 1951 exhibition at Betty Parsons Gallery as a main event in her career.

"In ArtNews, a critic remarked that, 'one comes away with the feeling of having been journeying through a vast uninhabited land of quiet color;' that makes a statement for an artist known even then as a bold colorist," Prindle said. "Parsons made only two images of the exhibition, indicating she was not entirely excited by the work. Many of the paintings are believed to have been destroyed, which implies to me that Krasner considered the work ripe for revision—and that is exactly what she did."

The exhibition presents one of two surviving paintings from the Betty Parsons show. On loan from Kasmin Gallery New York, the breathtaking Number 2 (1951) will be on view for only the third time in its history and, 71-years later, only the second time ever in the United States. Number 2 survived destruction by Krasner who used most of the paintings from Parsons for collage scrap or underpaintings for later works presented in 1955.

Following the Betty Parsons show, Krasner seems to have taken more than a year off from the studio, but when she returned, hit a sustained stride that would cement her reputation as a legend.

Also on view in “A Through Line” is an iconic work from the Museum’s collection, Stretched Yellow (1955), painted atop a 1951 painting exhibited at Parsons.

Back to the Lab Again

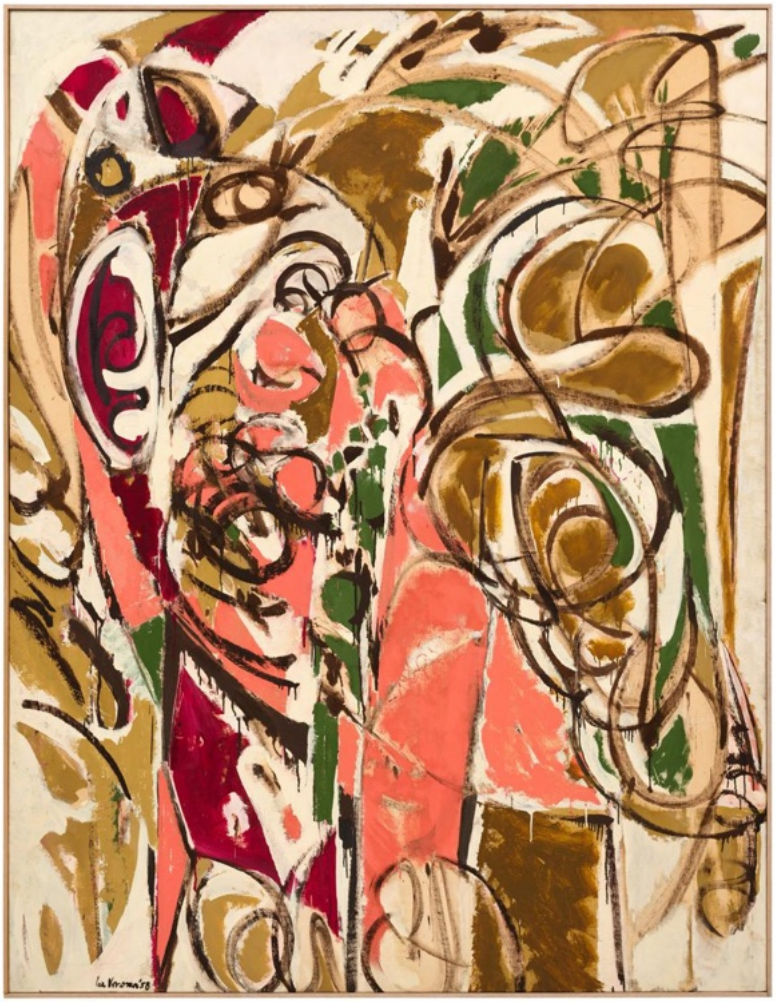
Lee Krasner, Stretched Yellow, 1955. Oil with collaged paper on canvas 82 1/2 in × 57 3/4 in (209.6 ... [+] CAROLYN CAMPAGNA KLEEFELD CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM.

In 1953 Krasner began anew. A collage enters the record in this year, Krasner beginning to collage paper and canvas onto older paintings and, “starting to introduce big gestures recorded in paint. These strategies further deepened the picture’s depth,” Prindle explains.

On loan from Des Moines Art Center, Black and White (1953) is a collage incorporating scraps from her own work and from works by Pollock. The collage illustrates a key step toward new works the artist debuted in a 1955 exhibition.

“In what to me is a powerful lesson in gumption and tenacity, Krasner kept poking at this question of how to represent 3D space on a 2D surface through pure abstraction,” Prindle said. “By 1955, she had painted herself out of the proverbial corner and into success by reusing parts of the 1951 paintings or repainting over them.”

That 1955 exhibition is now recognized as a historic highlight not only for Krasner, but for American abstract painting. Krasner’s creative reuse was later described as “one of the great events of the decade” by preeminent art critic Clement Greenberg.



Lee Krasner, Cornucopia, 1958. Oil on cotton duck 90 1/2 in × 70 in (229.9 cm × 177.8 cm). Gift of ... [+]CAROLYN CAMPAGNA KLEEFELD CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM.

“Her 1955 exhibition at Stable Gallery shows the ultimate breakthrough and the resolve she finds,” Prindle said. “There is no going back after Krasner puts this work up for everyone to see. This is the moment I get really excited about how she reckoned with her central challenge—with the challenge of making dimensional purely abstract work that Kandinsky had famously accepted and so many after him were chasing.”

“A Through Line” demonstrates how Krasner didn’t let the success of 1955 go—Cornucopia (1958) hangs right next to Stretch Yellow making clear she had hit a stride that would last.

Legacy

Krasner's artistic legacy stands on its own, as it does for all of the Abstract Expressionist painters in mid-century New York, but as with the French Impressionists before them, or even artists of the Renaissance, how they collectively revolutionized not only art, but in fact Western culture and Western civilization, is even more important. Thanks to the AbEx painters, art would never be the same, the art world would never be the same. New York became the center, America; Paris and Europe were yesterday's news.

"American abstraction disrupted centuries of a European system that was essentially an expression of theocracy. Monarchs and nobles controlled patronage and promoted figurative and history narratives for ages," Prindle explains. "As the World Wars changed everything about how our world functions, artists like Lee Krasner—a woman, a Jew, and child of immigrants with limited social currency—articulated a new visual language for a new time."

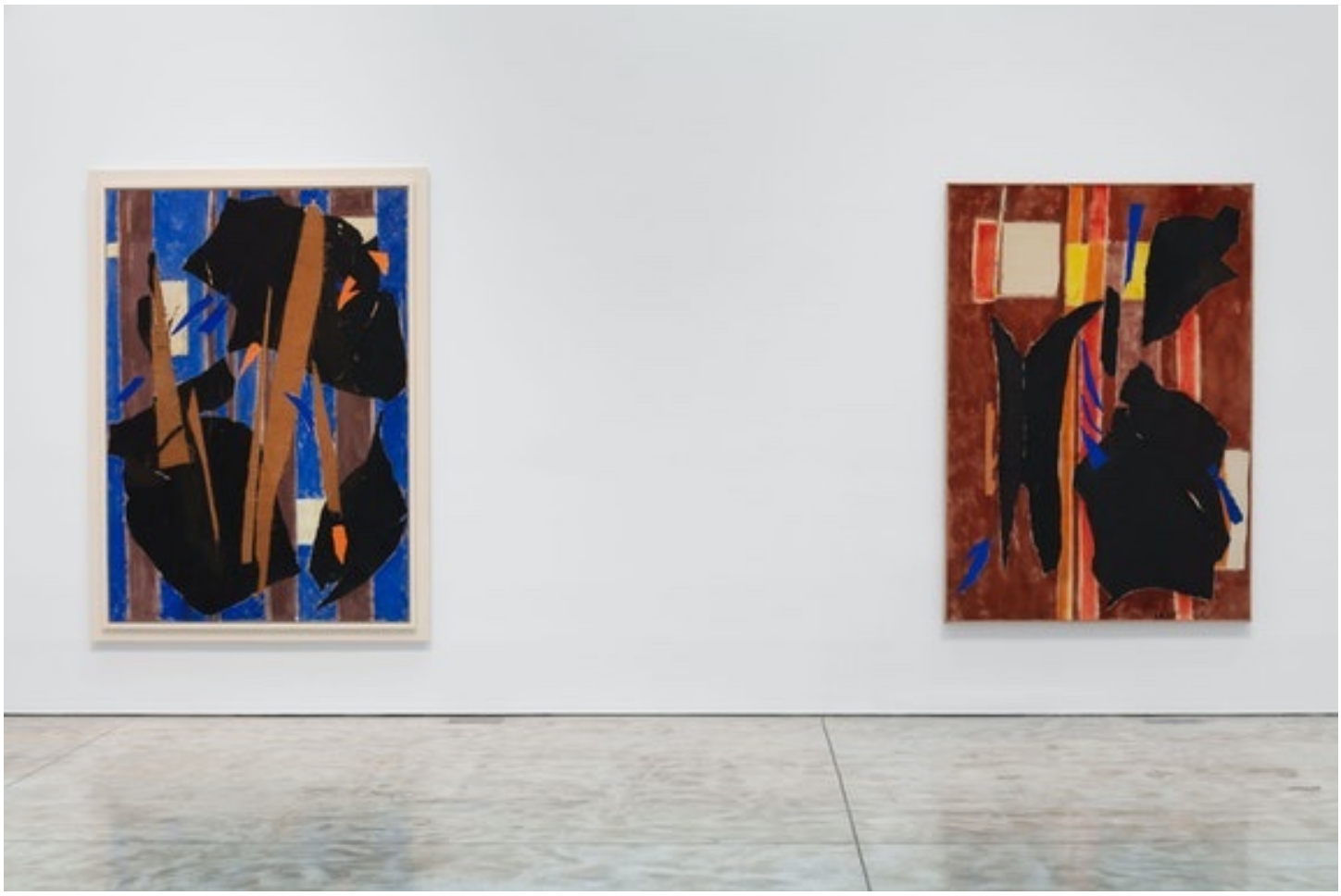
Krasner and her colleagues changed what was expected of art, in fact, what was considered art.

"Krasner's abstraction rejects centuries of big narratives while helping to drive a significant shift in how we think about art and our world. Her paintings and those of her contemporaries rejected the notion of paintings as images of our world—theirs were paintings that were worlds unto themselves," Prindle said. "Her humble beginnings make her success more important. So much of her life is an American story—she is one of our most important artists and should be celebrated as such."

THE BROOKLYN RAIL

Lee Krasner: Collage Paintings 1938–1981

MARY ANN CAWS
APRIL 6, 2021



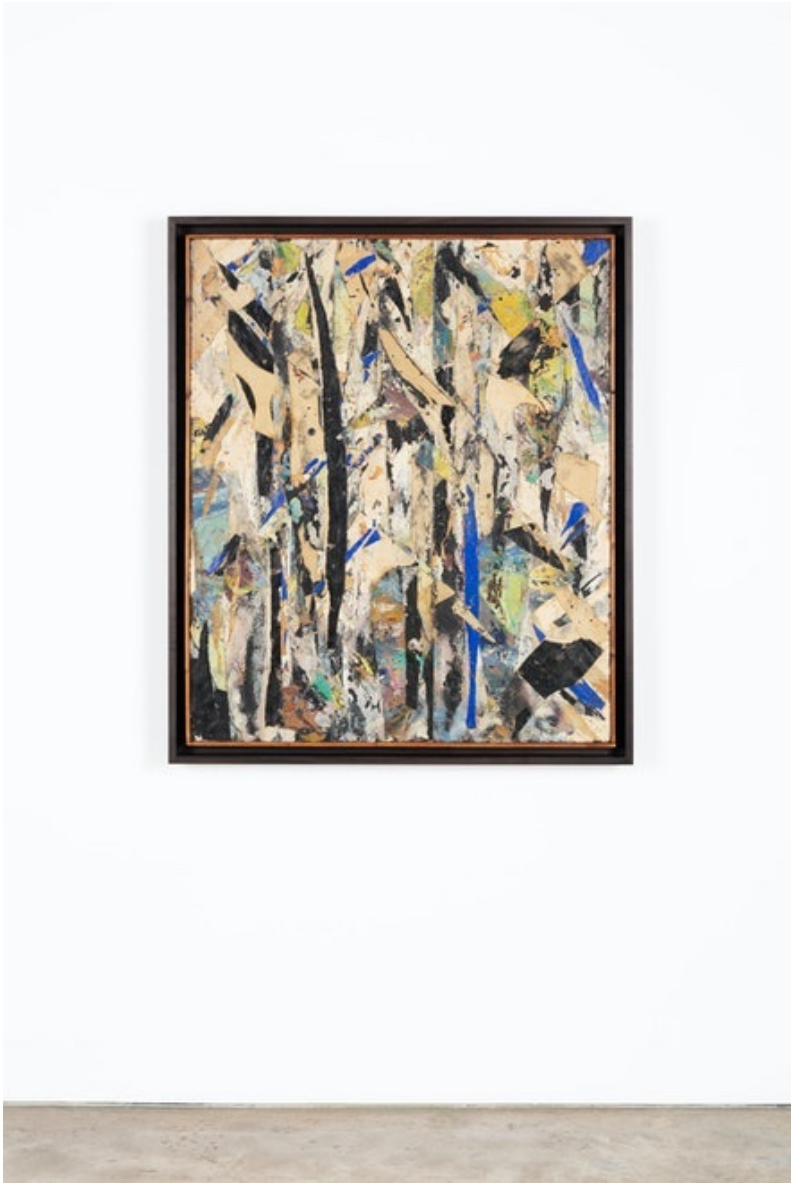
Installation view: *Lee Krasner: Collage Paintings 1938–1981*, Kasmin, New York. March 11–April 24, 2021. Artwork © 2021 Pollock-Krasner Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: Diego Flores.

Lee Krasner, Reclaiming, Rediscovering!

Immediately—for what is collage but immediate?—I was seized by the very idea of Lee Krasner's self re-examination. Good Lord, did this woman genius painter have courage!

Kasmin's current exhibition is presented in collaboration with the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, and although it includes a few works from the Krasner retrospective that travelled Europe from 2019 to 2021, it more importantly

contains several (to my way of seeing, magnificent) masterpieces from the very debut of her collage paintings at the Stable Gallery in 1955. There they appeared as, in Clement Greenberg's words, "a major addition to the American art scene of the era." This was a tremendously successful show, in dramatic contrast to the meager reception of an exhibition at Betty Parson's a few years earlier, which occasioned the artist's depression and a temporary cessation of work. In thinking about the importance of the collage paintings, the term "American" in the Greenberg quotation is crucial, for it says we aren't imitating the French scene, we are doing our own thing—not importing, but being ourselves.



Lee Krasner, *Untitled*, 1954. Oil, glue, canvas and paper collage on Masonite, 48 x 40 inches. © 2021 Pollock-Krasner Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Private Collection, New York City. Photo: Diego Flores.

These 1955 works are particularly fascinating, because they emerge from Krasner's own process of self-examination. She destroyed many works, and only later rediscovered them, along with some of Jackson Pollock's laid-aside projects. Drawing on this recovered trove, Krasner presents us with a startling number of re-compositions, crafted from a disorder that can scarcely fail to intrigue us. So, the idea of reclamation, and several of these works, grabbed me today, and I write instantly, so as not to forget. Something about collage speaks of immediacy to us, obviously: the sticking on of the sticky term "*coller*." What is sticking in my mind here are a very few things.

First (the very word brings up the problem: what is really first in a collage, what is glued or pasted on to what?) we have burlap—I love its texture—and paper and oil, all stuck on linen and cotton duck and Masonite and canvas. With what impact it strikes us! Two get-to-you-right-away vertical compositions drawn from the 1955 Stable Gallery show mark Krasner's real takeoff and demand our full focus, like someone unknown entering a room and immediately commanding attention.

Onwards: *Blue Level* (1955). How the brightness of the blue leaps through, under the stuck-on black paper, with a few white inserts from the painting underneath. The idea of levels and transparency permeates every perspective we could take on this, and, next to it, the astonishing collage-painting called *Stretched Yellow* (1955).

The very title gives us the opportunity to make this work stretch beyond where we were when we were looking. Right now, looking back so recently, I can scarcely remember the moment before I stepped—a big step—into this exhibition, itself layered carefully from 1938 to 1981.

And then the window in *Stretched Yellow's* underpainting, as well as the very construction of the painting, recalls to us Joseph Cornell's celebrated box with its bird perch and open window in *Toward the Blue Peninsula: for Emily Dickinson* (1952). Meanwhile, extending our view, Krasner's yellow, stretched out in another window-shape, pulls us in under black paper angelic wings, which then reminds me of *Bird Talk* (1955), created the same year. What a truly grand year—and also the year that Joseph Cornell's "Night Series" was shown at the Stable Gallery!

These works appeal to the various senses—not just vision, but touch, and even hearing. *Bird Talk*, for example, when you stand there before it, compels both listening and gazing at the open mouths, ourselves a bit open-mouthed as a kind of speech resounds in our own imaginations. At least in mine, for these collages call on the personal, and deeply, in no way simply on the surface. Nothing simple here, and I haven't even mentioned the first work that comes in view, Krasner's very first collage painting, *Seated Figure* (1938–39), "inspired by Picasso's cubist style," in the gallery's words—this work would take us, truly, elsewhere.

As for literary references—and the painter's friend Richard Howard may well have given a nudge to these—I am thinking that Krasner's *To the North* (1980) may be hearing Elizabeth Bowen's 1932 novel of the same title, as its forms point out the direction in a chill, lending a dangerous meaning to the title. Likewise, both *Imperfect Indicative* (1976) and *Present Subjunctive* (1976), which use early charcoal drawings Krasner made when working with Hans Hofmann between 1937 and 1940, belong to a series called "Eleven Ways the Use the Words to See." This presumes a reminiscence of Wallace Stevens's "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," as one poetic sense leads to another.

It is in our minds, then, that the rediscovery by Lee Krasner of formerly put-aside and rejected piles of paper and drawings awakens a personal sense of collage in all its senses, collective and individual, but above all appealing directly to us.

Lee Krasner, *Imperfect Indicative*, 1976. Collage on canvas, 78 x 72 inches. © 2021 Pollock-Krasner Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: Diego Flores.

The New Criterion

The Critic's Notebook

On Lee Krasner, Ralph Vaughan Williams, honoring the memory of Penn Station & more from the world of culture.

ANDREW SHEA
APRIL 6, 2021

Lee Krasner, Imperfect Indicative, 1976, Collage on canvas, Kasmin Gallery, New York.

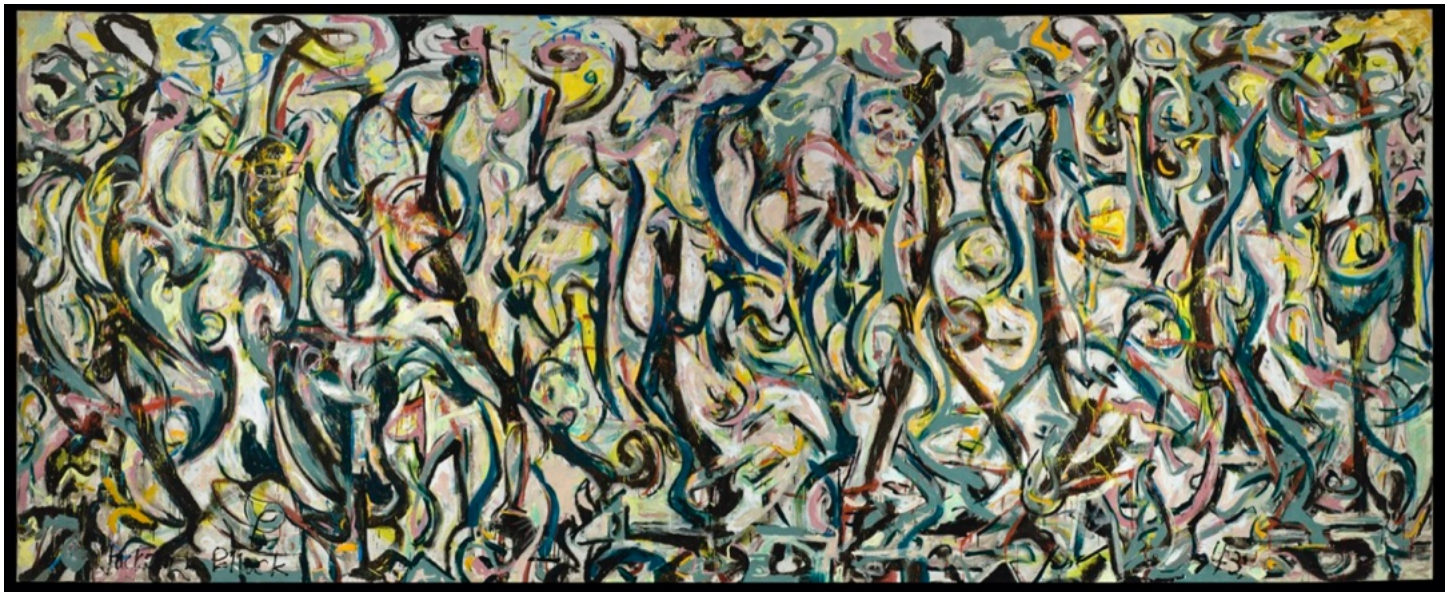
"Lee Krasner: Collage Paintings 1938–1981," at Kasmin Gallery (through April 24): Now on at Kasmin through April 24 is a museum-quality exhibition of "collage paintings" by the Abstract Expressionist Lee Krasner. The exhibition is centered around a group of works originally exhibited in 1955 at Stable Gallery, which earned a positive review from Clement Greenberg, if little other attention. But to these canonical Krasners, Kasmin adds a selection of both earlier and much later paintings that incorporate collage elements, including the 1976 Imperfect Indicative, an all-over composition built out of several cut-and-pasted charcoal studies of the nude model that she had originally drawn while studying under Hans Hofmann between 1937 and 1940. If Abstract Expressionism was all about "exploding" the traditional relationship between figure and ground, here Krasner puts down the dynamite and picks up the scalpel, slicing and dicing her way to novel ideas.

Installation view of “Lee Krasner: Collage Paintings 1938–1981,” at Kasmin Gallery, New York. Artwork © 2021 Pollock-Krasner Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo by Diego Flores.

THE EAST HAMPTON STAR
SHINES FOR ALL

Pollock and Krasner Rule New York

JENNIFER LANDES
APRIL 1, 2021



The Guggenheim Museum has a show devoted to Jackson Pollock's "Mural" from 1943.
University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art/(c)The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Just as it did in the mid-20th century, the work of Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner continues to dominate examinations of Abstract Expressionism and to fascinate viewers. Their evergreen popularity is on evidence this spring as an important show of Pollock's "Mural" continues at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Krasner's collages are on view at Kasmin Gallery.

The Kasmin show, open through April 24, features one of Krasner's strongest mediums and contains several significant works. Some had their Stable Gallery premiere in 1955 and others are back from the recent retrospective of her work that traveled throughout Europe from 2019 through January.

Pollock's show, "Away from the Easel: Jackson Pollock's Mural," is centered on "Mural," his largest work and an early example of his colossal, all-over style of painting. It measures 8 by 20 feet and is part of the collection of the University of Iowa Stanley University of Art. It has not been seen in New York for more than two decades.

The painting was the commission of Peggy Guggenheim, a patron of Pollock in the old school European style of patronage where artists were hired by the wealthy, royalty, nobility, or important clergy as contractual employees. A submission by Pollock of a painting now called "Stenographic Figure" had left a committee of art advisors, assembled by Guggenheim for an exhibition the previous year, "starry-eyed," according to the exhibition curator, Megan Fontanella.

Guggenheim's monthly stipend, which began in 1943 with the commission of this painting, allowed Pollock to be a full-time artist. She also held his first solo exhibition at her gallery, Art of This Century, that year. Not yet committed to floor painting in the way he was in just a few years, this giant canvas was stretched and worked on upright after he tore down a wall in his apartment. He was still working in a style influenced by Mexican muralists and Surrealism, but moving away from it.

Part of the Pollock legend was that the composition came to him and was completed in a single night. Recent restoration efforts revealed that to be apocryphal. It was actually painted over a period of weeks from the summer to early fall, according to the Guggenheim. Once completed, it was installed in a long narrow entryway in a townhouse she occupied.
The exhibition includes a work from the period, "The She-Wolf," and one from his drip painting years, "Untitled (Green Silver)" from around 1949. An additional painting from the Guggenheim's collection, "Ocean Grayness" from 1953, demonstrates Pollock's post-drip style. The show remains on view through Sept. 19.

An installation view of Kasmin Gallery's exhibition devoted to Lee Krasner's collages. *Via Kasmin Gallery*

At Kasmin, the dates of the Krasner work range from 1938 to 1981. These works were the result of the artist's practice of tearing up works of her own and Pollock's and incorporating them into new collaged compositions where painting and drawing were also in evidence.

In a Fairfield Porter review of the Stable show in 1955, quoted in the show's press release, he said "Krasner's art, which seems to be about nature, instead of making the spectator aware of a grand design, makes [them] aware of a subtle disorder greater than [they] might otherwise have thought possible."

An untitled work from 1954 shows her mastery of the all-over composition that marks much art of the period. "Stretched Yellow" from the following year finds its inspiration in the late work of Henri Matisse. In later works from the 1970s, she culls old drawings made while a student of Hans Hofmann.

The exhibition also boasts her earliest known collage, "Seated Figure" from around 1938 to 1939. It evinces the European Cubism that dominated American abstraction prior to the second World War as well as the artist's early interest in this medium. The latest examples, from 1980 and '81, demonstrate both her continued preoccupation with collage as well as her late mature style. She died in 1984.

The Kasmin exhibition is presented in collaboration with the Pollock-Krasner Foundation and is on view at the 509 West 27th Street location.

lyrics in the book. Add to this miscellany a quote from Mozart's aria from "Cosi Fan Tutte," allusions to Sylvia Plath, Anna Akhmatova, notes on yoga instruction, the function of pollen, monarch butterflies, domestic terrorism, and, briefly, Covid-19.

Certainly, these quotes and allusions provide texture as well as depth for her inquiry. But what, exactly, is this inquiry into? The subtitle offers no help. The inquiry seems to be this: How can we learn to transform suffering and pain into meaning and art?

Continued on A15

Tree — received a master's degree in nutrition and exercise physiology at Columbia University. Then in 2013, she started Healthy Hunger, a business helping private clients with chronic illnesses through whole food and plant-based eating. In a similar vein, she worked on recipe development and testing, and product photography for several cookbooks and media outlets (she studied art photography as an undergraduate, and it's well in evidence on her website and Instagram feed). There was even a stint in Louisiana before coming back North and out east.

For the past several months, however, she is baking again, this time for Gail Watson Bread, a micro-bakery she started from her house with a cottage license.

She and her wife, Mary Sculley, have been full timers since September 2019, when Ms. Sculley retired from WarnerMedia. "We actually were out here before the pandemic but then of course, you know, we've definitely been here since the pandemic." Even before their permanent move here, clients, finding out what they like and working with the feedback. "They've been supportive and very enthusiastic. . . . I feel like I'm not doing this all by myself. It's a community effort."

For the past several months, she has been offering plenty of riffs on the traditional sourdough boule made with different stone-milled organic flours from small producers in New York State. "Environmental nutrition was a big part of what I really loved at school," meaning farming practices, distribution, and sustain-

Continued on A15

Pollock and Krasner Rule New York

By Jennifer Landes

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A mini-survey of Lee Krasner's work in collage is on view at Kasmin Gallery.

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University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art/©The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

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the PARIS REVIEW

Lee Krasner's Elegant Destructions

THE PARIS REVIEW
MARCH 26, 2021

Lee Krasner, S*tretched Yellow*, 1955, oil with paper on canvas, 82 1/2 x 57 3/4". © 2021 Pollock-Krasner Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Collection of Carolyn Campagna Kleefeld Contemporary Art Museum of California State University, Long Beach. Gift of the Gordon F. Hampton Foundation, through Wesley G. Hampton, Roger K. Hampton, and Katharine H. Shenk. Courtesy of Kasmin Gallery

Lee Krasner, one of the most phenomenally gifted painters of the twentieth century, often would create through destruction. She had a habit of stripping previous works for materials—fractions of forgotten sketches, swaths of unused paper, scraps of canvas from her own paintings as well as those of her husband, Jackson Pollock—that she would then reconstitute as elements of her masterful, distinctive collages. A new show devoted to her endeavors in this mode, "*Lee Krasner: Collage Paintings 1938–1981*," will be on view at Kasmin Gallery through April 24. A selection of images from the exhibition appears below.

Lee Krasner, *The Farthest Point*, 1981, oil and paper collage on canvas, 56 3/4 x 37 1/4". © 2021 Pollock-Krasner Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Courtesy of Kasmin Gallery.

Lee Krasner, *Seated Figure*, 1938–1939, oil and collage on linen, 25 x 18". © 2021 Pollock-Krasner Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Courtesy of Kasmin Gallery.

Lee Krasner, *Untitled*, 1954, oil, glue, canvas, and paper collage on masonite, 48 x 40″.
 Private collection, New York City. Courtesy of Kasmin Gallery.

Lee Krasner, Imperfect Indicative, 1976, collage on canvas, 78 x 72″.
 Courtesy of Kasmin Gallery.

View of “Lee Krasner: Collage Paintings 1938–1981,” 2021, Kasmin Gallery, New York. Photo: Diego Flores.

THE ART NEWSPAPER

Three exhibitions to see in New York this weekend

From Niki de Saint Phalle's first US retrospective at MoMA PS1 to El Museo Del Barrio's sweeping survey of Latinx art

WALLACE LUDEL, KAREN CHERNICK, GABRIELLA ANGELETI
MARCH 12, 2021

Lee Krasner, *To the North* (1980)

Courtesy of Kasmin Gallery.

Lee Krasner: Collage Paintings
Until 24 April at Kasmin, 509 West 27th Street, Manhattan

"I am not to be trusted around my old work for any length of time," the Abstract Expressionist artist Lee Krasner once famously said, and this solo exhibition illustrates why. Cut-and-pasted scraps of Krasner's gestural paintings and charcoal sketches from her time studying under Hans Hofmann are reinvented as the 12 large canvases in the show, which were created over four decades but during a few specific, concentrated spurts. The exhibition includes Seated Figure (1938-9)—Krasner's earliest experiment with this innovative practice that translates the papier collé techniques of Picasso and Matisse to canvas.

It also reunites works from her landmark 1955 solo show at the Stable Gallery where the artist presented slices of paintings she showed four years earlier at an unsuccessful Betty Parsons Gallery exhibition. The show is an American complement to the two-year traveling Krasner retrospective that recently toured between four European museums and closed at Guggenheim Bilbao in Spain in January this year.

Forbes

A New Exhibit Reveals Why Lee Krasner Was Not Your Average 1950s New York Artist

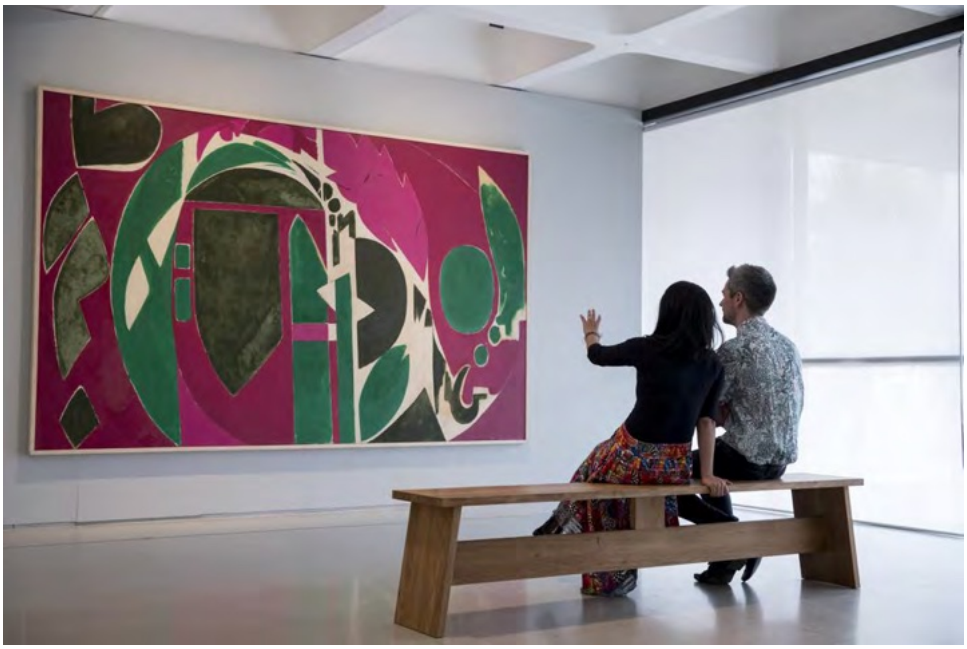
NADJA SAYEJ
JULY 15, 2020

August 1953: Abstract Expressionist artist Lee Krasner (1908 - 1984), the wife of artist Jackson Pollock, seated on a ledge at her home in East Hampton, New York. (Photo by Tony Vaccaro/Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

Lee Krasner is famously known as the wife of modern artist, Jackson Pollock. But what art history forgets is that Krasner was an artist, too. Some might even say that Krasner was a better painter than Pollock.

Her work is being honored in a whopper, blockbuster retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, in *Lee Krasner: Living Color*, which is opening on September 18, and runs through to January 10, 2021.

Co-curated by Eleanor Nairne from the Barbican Art Gallery and Lucía Agirre from the Guggenheim Bilbao, the exhibition sheds light on her much overlooked legacy to modern art. As the artist once said: "I think my painting is so autobiographical, if anyone can take the trouble to read it."



Lee Krasner: Living Colour exhibition at Barbican Art Gallery on May 29, 2019 in London, England. (Photo by Tristan Fewings/Getty Images for Barbican Art Gallery)

The exhibition includes her early self-portraits and life drawings from the 1930s, to her monumental abstract paintings from the early 1960s. Also on view are her *Little Images* from the late 1940s, as well as her groundbreaking collages from the 1950s.

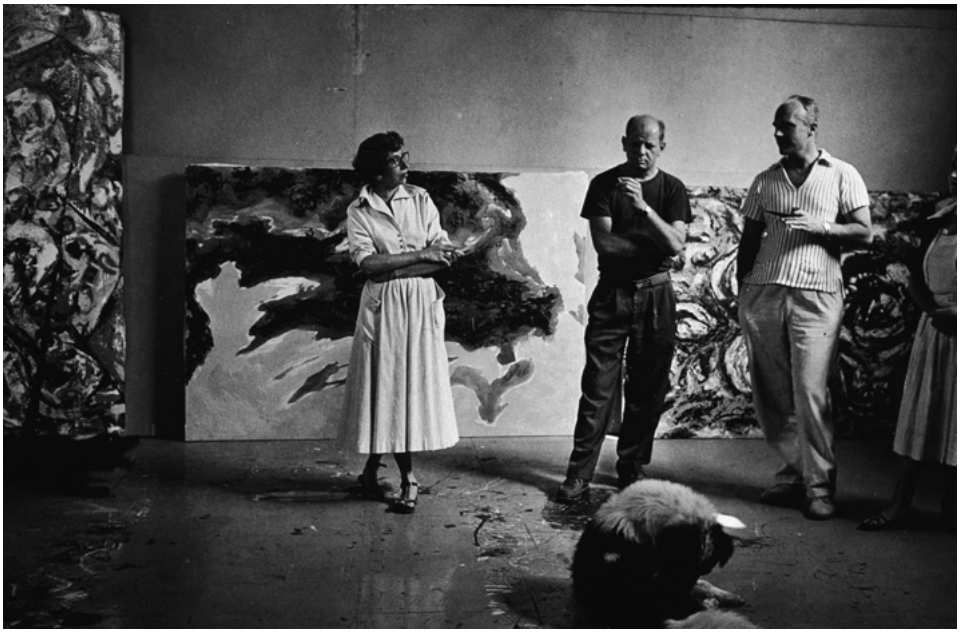
As a pioneer of abstract exressionism, the museum brings together a range of rare pieces, some of which have never been shown before shown in Europe, detailing her 50 year career. She didn't use bright colors into her paintings until the 1960s, as she lost several loved ones in the 1950s, and during that time of mourning, her artworks took on dark, and sometimes murky, earthtones (Pollock died in 1956).

What set Krasner apart from her contemporaries during the modern art boom is this: She rejected the idea of the artist's brand (something wildly popular with creatives today on Instagram, for example), battling against the idea of the "signature image," that being one kind of image or style that would define an artist - and stopped them from being able to go outside of that.

Influenced by artists like Hans Hofmann and George Bridgman, Krasner worked in collage, too, and experimented early on in the style of cubism. During the Great Depression, she painted murals, and ventured out on her own as an abstract artist, a style that was unpopular during the 1930s and 1940s. It wasn't until she joined a liasion of abstract artists that she met her contemporaries, all of which were men, including Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman, among others.

She found the "signature image" idea rather rigid, as she worked in various forms, and didn't want to be defined just by one style of painting. "I have never been able to understand the artist whose image never changes," she once said.

“I like a canvas to breathe and be alive. Be alive is the point. And, as the limitations are something called pigment and canvas, let's see if I can do it.”



American abstract expressionist painter Jackson Pollock (1912 - 1956) (2d left) and his wife Lee Krasner (1908 - 1984) (left) and an unidentified couple stand around a dog and smoke in his studio at 'The Springs,' East Hampton, New York, August 23, 1953. (Photo by Tony Vaccaro/Getty Images)

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

‘Lee Krasner: Living Color’ Review: From Pain to Primacy

A retrospective of the Abstract Expressionist painter contains some of the most exciting modernist works you’ll ever see

PETER PLAGENS
NOVEMBER 9, 2019

Lee Krasner ‘Palingenesis,’ (1971) Photo: Pollock-Krasner Foundation / VG Bild-Kunst Bonn/Kasmin Gallery, New York.

‘While the painter’s mark indicates passion,” an artist I know recently said to me, “shape points to pictorial intelligence.” Lee Krasner (1908-1984) possessed an abundance of both. A superbly cool, concise, complete and—most important—compelling exhibition of her work, “Lee Krasner : Living Colour,” is now at the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt. And it makes the case for Krasner as not only a major Abstract Expressionist, but also an artist whose oeuvre—35 years after her death—argues for the continued vitality of abstract painting in an era of increasingly synthetic and electronic art.

It’s been 20 years since a Krasner retrospective opened in Los Angeles, and over three decades since one in New York. Those shows preceded the veritable avalanche of social and aesthetic reappraisals of the work of women

artists. 'Tis a different time we live in; that this show (which opened at the Barbican Centre in London in May) won't travel to the U.S. is a terrible disappointment. (The exhibition will, however, make stops at the Zentrum Paul Klee in Bern, Switzerland, and the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in Spain.)

The artist was born Lena Krassner, in Brooklyn, N.Y., to an immigrant Orthodox Jewish family from what is now Ukraine. She attended the only high school in New York that allowed girls to take its art curriculum, and later studied at the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art and the National Academy of Design. The onset of the Depression forced her to quit school and earn a living as a cocktail waitress and an art-class nude model.

In 1937, she won a scholarship to Hans Hofmann's famous art school on Ninth Street. Although Krasner couldn't stand Hofmann's confrontational method of reworking student drawings to look like his, she intuitively understood the value of his roughhouse Cubist pedagogy. Late in her long career, she even got out some old Hofmannesque drawings, tore them up in a way he might have, and used them to make the large, forceful collages "Imperative" (1976) and "Future Indicative" (1977). It's a clue to Krasner's keen intellect that this collage series was exhibited with the title "Eleven Ways to Use the Words to See," with each work assigned a grammatical tense.

Lee Krasner 'Imperative,' (1976) Photo: Pollock-Krasner Foundation/VG Bild-Kunst Bonn/National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

Krasner was a struggling artist in the avant-garde art world of lower Manhattan when she met Jackson Pollock in 1941. The two were married in 1945; but in 1956, his drunken car crash widowed her. I mention this only now for the same reason the Kunsthalle buries it deep in the publicity materials: "Lee Krasner: Living Color" (a semi-terrible title)

is about her artistic, not marital, life. That said, it was Krasner who nudged Pollock's art stylistically forward, introduced him to Willem de Kooning and the kingmaker critic Clement Greenberg, and supported him throughout his morose alcoholism.

Krasner's first more or less independent works were the mosaic-like "Little Images" paintings she made after she and Pollock moved into a small house in Springs, on the eastern end of Long Island, in 1945. She put several of them into a 1951 solo show at the AbEx-o-centric Betty Parsons Gallery, but it was unsuccessful. Fearlessly self-critical, Krasner destroyed the paintings. A few years later, however, the artist created "Milkweed" (1955) and "Desert Moon" (1955), two large collage-paintings (one almost 7 feet tall, the other just under 5 feet). With their dagger-like shapes, rich deep blacks and vigorous mix of canvas and paper surfaces, they're two of the most exciting modernist works you're ever likely to see. Really.

Irving Penn, 'Lee Krasner, Springs, NY, 1972' Photo: The Irving Penn Foundation/ Irving Penn

Nothing was ever easy for Krasner. She continued to be haunted by Pollock's *death* and suffered from depression in the wake of her mother's dying in 1959. Plagued by insomnia, she began painting at night in the big barn in Springs where Pollock had made his iconic "drip" paintings, and produced some big umber and off-white "action paintings" (as one form of Abstract Expressionism was called). Greenberg didn't like her newer work and canceled his plan to curate an exhibition of it.

She recovered. Indeed, the biggest gallery in the exhibition, containing work from Krasner's "Primary Series," is just about the best roomful of abstract paintings I've ever seen. The pictures—including the overall-ish "Chrysalis" and "Icarus" (both 1964), the chromatically minimal orange-and-raw-linen "Courtship" (1966), and the huge but mysteriously next-to-nothing "Kufic" (1965)—are individually and collectively breathtaking. (The gallery's pairings and oppositions—curators call them "conversations"—are brilliant.)

No exhibition is perfect, of course, especially a museum show that means to document the youth-to-finality work of an artist. Krasner's three small self-portraits from nine decades ago are honest—she knows she's not a conventionally beautiful woman—but hardly precocious. Her requisite early academic figure drawings are competent but unexceptional, and a small room of small abstract works on paper is informative but uninspiring. All of which is to say that pictorially telling the story of a great artist—and Lee Krasner is a great artist—necessarily involves some baseline ordinariness in order to demonstrate how far she came.

In Krasner's case, it was from earnestness through pain to a hard-won peak. In spite of her open, spontaneous method, Krasner's pictures should each be looked at for a good while. The reward? Restore your faith in abstract painting, they do.

The New York Times

Lee Krasner, Hiding in Plain Sight

A major touring retrospective of the American painter brings her out of the shadow of her famous husband.

JASON FARAGO
AUGUST 19, 2019

Lee Krasner's 1965 painting "Combat" is part of "Lee Krasner: Living Color" at the Barbican Art Gallery in London. The show will next travel to Frankfurt, Germany; Bern, Switzerland; and Bilbao, Spain. The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; Tristan Fewings/Getty Images

A tangle of drips in all directions; a hazy rectangle in a field of dark pigment; a rigid zip down an empty canvas … To be an Abstract Expressionist in New York's buoyant first postwar years, it helped to have a signature look. Yet Lee Krasner was suspicious of paintings where telltale marks were like alternative autographs — even when the autograph was her own husband's.

She was proud not to have a single style. You had to figure out each painting on its own, she said, or you end up with something "rigid rather than being alive."

Tough, diligent, and deadly serious about the history of art, Krasner might have been the most intelligent of the painters who convinced the world in the late 1940s that New York had displaced Paris as the epicenter of modern art.

That intelligence expressed itself through an art that ricocheted across styles and media, from tightly massed collages to huge abstractions of Matissean richness.

Lee Krasner circa 1938. In the late 1930s, she studied with Hans Hofmann, the German émigré who was the most progressive art educator in New York. via Barbican Art Gallery.

Intelligence, though, was not enough to reach the celebrity tier of American painting, and it even could be a hindrance if you were a woman in American art's most macho era. Krasner received little attention from museums until her 60s, and she has rarely stepped out of the shadow of Jackson Pollock, her husband from 1945 until his early death in 1956.

It's not wholly right to say she has remained underappreciated. She is one of the few women painters to receive a full retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art: That show opened a few months after her death in 1984. Prices have soared recently; in May, a panoramic Krasner from 1960 was sold at auction for $11.7 million, a record for the artist.

But it's still rare that we get an effusion of her art on the scale of "Lee Krasner: Living Color," which is on view for a few more weeks at the Barbican Art Gallery in London. The first proper retrospective in Europe for Krasner since 1965, it is to travel this October to the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, and continue next year to the Zentrum Paul Klee in Bern, Switzerland, and the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain.

At the Barbican, where the show has been curated by Eleanor Nairne, it appears clean, mannerly, and *very* safe. Its pat chronological presentation has the feel of an introductory course, and the show displays little engagement with either the theoretical challenges of painting or with feminist critiques of American high abstraction.

Still, even if all this retrospective of just under 100 works does is introduce Krasner's oscillating career to new audiences, I'll take it. Her most important paintings, especially the violent loops and sloshes from the months after Pollock's death and the stormlike monochromes of the 1960s, have an authority that can survive even the sleepiest hang.

Lena Krassner, as she was named in 1908, was the daughter of Orthodox Jewish refugees from Odessa, Ukraine, and the first of their children to be born in the United States. At 14 she enrolled at Washington Irving High, the only school in New York that admitted girls to its art curriculum, and took the name Lenore. She began advanced study at the National Academy of Design (a place of "congealed mediocrity," she would later say), but when the Great Depression bit, she dropped out, worked as a cocktail waitress and life study model, and made proficient charcoal studies.

In 1937, she won a scholarship to study with Hans Hofmann, the German émigré who was the most progressive art educator in New York. The life drawings she did in his classes are an early revelation of this show: dense, foggy charcoal circuits, swallowing up Picasso's split perspectives and the erotic machinery of the Surrealists. The lines appear nearly graven into the paper. Smudges and clouds of dark gray reveal the mercilessness of her corrections and revisions.

A 1947 mosaic table by Krasner, who worked in many styles and media throughout her career. The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York

Her first abstract paintings display a deep technical proficiency even when they feel overcalculated — the work of an "A" student still finding her way. Dense, rhythmic nets of black paint over multicolor backgrounds have a decorous quality, while other paintings incorporate glyphs and symbols similar to those of her New York school colleagues Bradley Walker Tomlin and Mark Tobey, as well as early paintings by Pollock, whom she met in 1941.

Weeks after V-J Day, the couple moved from New York to Springs, a rural town at the eastern edge of Long Island. Pollock, working in the barn, found his way to the drip. Krasner, stuck in a little upstairs bedroom they sometimes couldn't afford to heat, made smaller paintings and mosaics that also relied on allover, non-hierarchical composition. She showed many in 1951 at Betty Parsons Gallery, but the exhibition bombed — and Krasner, ever merciless toward her own work, tore the canvases to shreds.

When she went back to the studio, she started to layer her torn abstractions with blank burlap, new drawings, and even some of Pollock's discarded drip paintings. The results were strident, seismic collages, brimming with confidence. For all their debts to her hero Matisse, including backgrounds of rich vermilion and Mediterranean blue, there's a freer, jazzier, more athletic relationship between parts that is pure 1950s-American.

These fantastic collages, completed in 1954–55, go a long way to correcting the misunderstanding that Krasner found her way as a painter only after Pollock's death in the summer of 1956. She was in France when he crashed his car on a Hamptons country lane, and after she got back to America she felt she had to keep working.

Later that year, she completed the hinge painting of her career: "Prophecy," a spastic, savage composition that feels set to burst its narrow, vertical frame. The figure returns, in the form of a broken, collapsed nude woman, her pink flesh dripping past gashed black outlines. Three more paintings that year continue the theme, all more disorderly than Picasso's "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon," their obvious source, and even messier than De Kooning's series of slashed and gashed "Women."

"Polar Stampede" (1960) The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

It's too easy to read these brutal paintings as outpourings of grief. For Krasner, painting had a much higher vocation that personal expressivity, and she was no sentimentalist; by 1957, she had moved into Pollock's barn studio, where she had enough space to work at mural scale. There she executed grand, nearly monochromatic abstractions that are more physical than anything before them. The umber paint, thinner and drippier than the slabs of pigment in "Prophecy," stains the untreated canvas like dirt or blood.

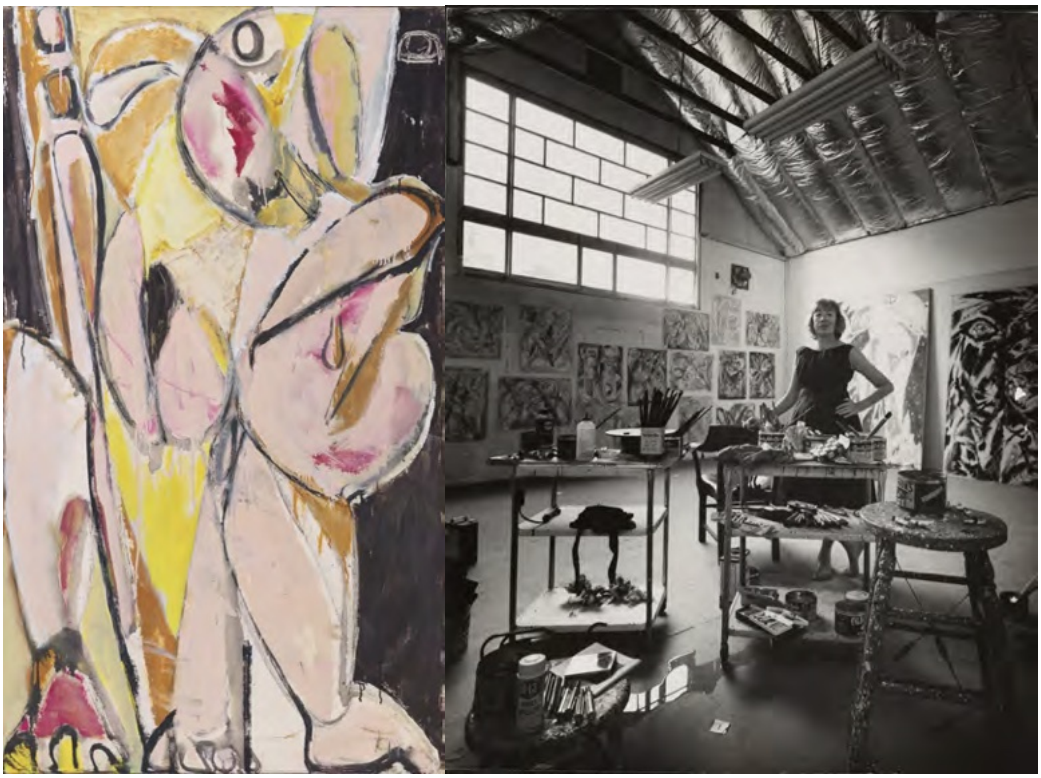
Left: "Desert Moon" (1955) The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; Museum Associate/LACMA/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, NY. Right: "Blue Level" (1955) The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

I find these first large-scale abstractions, christened the "Night Journeys" by the poet Richard Howard, pretty theatrical. More rewards seem to lie in the colorful panoramas of the 1960s — such as the 13-foot-wide "Combat," completed in 1965 and lent from the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, Australia, which channels her love of Matisse's bright hues into a parade of pink bubbles and squiggles.

But Ab-Ex was always a garish mode of painting, and a little theater has always been part of the American package. What Krasner wanted — and proved at her best — was that theatrics and braininess were not at odds, and that a life in painting had room for both.

She put up with a lot. Put up with her husband's temper, put up with the critical and institutional disregard; put up, too, with Job's comforters who could not accept that she wanted to be both Mrs. Pollock and a great artist.

I recently went to the barn in the Hamptons where Krasner and Pollock both painted their breakthrough works, and watched visitor after visitor take pictures of the floor: drips from the master, tailor-made for an Instagram story. Under a trellis, in shadow, were Krasner's painting boots, splattered and weathered. They still await their idolaters.



Left: “Prophecy” (1956) The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; Kasmin Gallery, New York. Right: Lee Krasner in her barn studio in 1962. Her husband, Jackson Pollock, had used the studio before his death. The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Hans Namuth.

London Review
OF BOOKS

At the Barbican

T.J. CLARK
AUGUST 15, 2019 ISSUE

'Three in Two' (1956)

The Lee Krasner retrospective at the Barbican (until 1 September) is not to be missed. It is rare these days to be given a chance to assess the seriousness and beauty of the best Abstract Expressionist painting. The style is unfashionable: it is thought to be overwrought, supersized, 'American' in a 1950s way ('great again') and heavy with male cigarette smoke. Krasner had her opinions about all these charges, which are far from empty: the small room containing four paintings she did in 1956 – *Prophecy*, *Birth*, *Embrace*, *Three in Two* – is about as frightening a pictorial space as can be imagined. Its vision of glamour and nudity and sex is ghastly, which doesn't mean the paintings lack powder-puff appeal. Pin-up grins have never been closer to screams of pain.

The *Prophecy* pictures were made in tragic circumstances. By 1956 Krasner's marriage to Jackson Pollock was all but broken. In August that year, while Krasner was in Europe, Pollock's Oldsmobile came off the road at speed, killing

himself and Edith Metzger, a friend of his lover, Ruth Kligman. Kligman survived the crash. The paintings Krasner made in response to the horror – and this is almost always her strength – are deeply engaged with other people's imagery. Fighting with De Kooning's *Woman*, as she does throughout – fighting and feeding on his colour, the scale and shape of his Cubist body parts, his bad faith fascination with Marilyn Monroe gorgeousness (bad faith because his irony is so obviously an alibi for gloating) – is her way of discovering what 'woman', that terrifying abstraction, meant for her. Out of the engagement comes the originality. Dripping paint, for example, was already a tired Ab Ex trademark by 1956, by no means De Kooning's exclusive property. But no one had made dripped paint so unlovely, so impatient and passionless, as Krasner did the pinks and whites in *Birth*. (The tone of the title is undecidable.) For the fight with De Kooning to end in victory, other painters' weaponry had to be taken out of the closet, some of it distinctly old-fashioned. Krasner was never up to date. *Three in Two*, for example, evokes explicitly, and not just in its title, the savage Jungian splitting and swapping of genders that Pollock had gone in for a decade earlier, during the time of *Two* and *Male and Female*. Behind those paintings lay Picasso, specifically *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*. Krasner was monstrously confident that she could mobilise this big machinery without in the least repeating its moves – or rather, that she could use the moves to deliver an entirely new, and dreadful, sense of closeness and inhumanity. *Embrace*, for example, is *Les Demoiselles* churned into viscera.

The room with the 1956 paintings is not typical of the Barbican show as a whole. Krasner's mood is wonderfully variable, and her revelling in the power of her own pictorial intelligence very often a joy, or at least a consolation. It is crucially wrong to paint her as victim, but callous to brush aside what must have been constant unhappiness: living with Pollock was enduring genius and lunacy day in day out. I'm sure she would have snorted at my 'lunacy' diagnosis, and said – as she did say more than once – that experiencing the genius almost made up for the booze, the self-harm, the harm to others. What she seemed to care about most in life was painting. She knew what hers gained from looking at Pollock's and resisting.

The space at the Barbican is curious, and can be deadening, but on this occasion it has been put to use in just the right way. The gallery is arranged on two levels. On the ground floor, where one enters, there is a cluster of open galleries in a kind of atrium lit from above, where the large abstract paintings Krasner did in the early 1960s are hung. They are magnificent. I found it hard to drag myself away from them and get a sense of what was happening in the smaller side rooms, and then to go upstairs, through a sequence of spaces showing mainly paintings and drawings from the 1940s and 1950s. But eventually I did, and the shape of Krasner's career began to emerge. The two-floor arrangement round the atrium means that a viewer can come out from any one of the rooms upstairs and look straight down at the big abstractions, with the kinds of earlier artistic discipline that fed this final freedom freshly in mind. The discipline had centrally to do with Cubism: it was because she was just as far inside the skin of Picasso and late Braque and early Gorky as De Kooning was that she could turn his means against him. Just before the terrible year of *Embrace* and *Prophecy* she is at her coolest and most delicately balanced: Cubist shards floating in blue or pale green ether; titles like *Milkweed* and *Blue Level* speaking to the mood – the naturalism. There is no lack of anguish in 1955 – the off-key crimsons and oranges of *Desert Moon* and *Bird Talk*are bloodthirsty (profoundly original), and the pinks already sneering at De Kooning's *Woman V* or *VI* – but even in *Bird Talk*, where the coloured pieces look ready to cut anyone daring to touch, the final Cubist precision of placement turns cacophony into call and response.

'Milkweed' (1955)

There is an enormous amount to look at in the Barbican show. The loans are generous – great things from America, but also from Melbourne, Valencia, Bern – the choice of works unerring, the wall texts and catalogue helpful throughout. Recently I heard someone who had written intensely about Krasner some years ago say that the show had helped her finally untie a difficult knot: the way anger *for* Krasner – and who cannot feel it? – had kept company, unconsciously, with anger *at* her. Why had she borne it – the pain, the 'wife of the artist' label, the condescension – so long? Because painting was worth almost anything, she felt; because a good painting was pure delight; and because she believed her painting was on its way to greatness. Neither the first nor the last of these opinions is likely to endear her to a contemporary art audience, but they were her essence.

There seems to have been a lull for four years following 1956. It's not hard to imagine why. Then paintings came with a rush: large paintings – *The Eye Is the First Circle* measures around eight by sixteen feet – and beautifully judged mid-scale accompaniments. *Triple Goddess*, for example, is roughly seven feet high and five feet wide. Truly large scale in abstraction is a trap. Bombast threatens. Kinds of handling or pictorial rhythm that Krasner had made her own in paintings the size of *Milkweed*, say, which has essentially the same measurements as *Triple Goddess*, could easily start to look like mannerisms when magnified by two. They might not register as issuing from a specific kind of whole-body movement that came into being, and dictated its own speed, as the work went on. The painting could look constructed, not made.

'The Eye Is the First Circle' (1960)

None of this happens in 1960. Krasner did not paint large, or preserve the large paintings she did (she was always a ruthless destroyer of work she thought second-rate), until she knew she had in her a movement with the brush that needed vast emptiness as a starting point. Immediately in 1960 there is a consistency of mark in her abstractions wholly unlike any other painter's. The shape of each touch is distinctive, as well as its implied pace and the strangely gentle pressure of the brush – gentle to the point of weakness, but a weakness entirely controlled, deliberate. Even when the marks on canvas are relatively sparse – not as sparse as Franz Kline's, it's true, but much less emphatic, less locally bold, with primed canvas predominating – what is characteristic about the space Krasner creates is that it is stuffed full, close to us, full of feathers, kapok, soft flurries and pillows of light-coloured stuff. It is entirely unlike the space she had seen Pollock invent for modern painting, his tangled, ethereal *Sea Change* infinities, criss-crossed by *Comet* and *Shooting Star*. No wonder she struggled to find titles for the proximity she'd discovered. I'm not sure about *Polar Stampede*. *Assault on the Solar Plexus* ditto. *Happy Lady*, by contrast, is exquisite pictorial comedy with title to match.

I was dreading finding the big 1960s paintings overblown – 'big statements'. Bad reproductions and worse recollections of canvases like *Polar Stampede* littered my mind. The real things are entirely different. At the Barbican the light, and the consideration given to the spacing and grouping in each half-open room, helps immensely. It's the unexpected softness that goes with the showmanship which escapes reproduction: the softness of so many of the marks and the way they cradle and cosset the overall whites and pale brown washes of the canvas, pressing the whole fabric of paint gently forwards. The softness isn't the kind that calls up the word 'feminine'. Part of Krasner's point (forgive me for making her paintings seem like arguments when they are pure discovery, whatever answering-back they contain emerging from the task at hand) is to have softness and hardness coexist in abstract art, and to prize away vehemence of touch from assertion or confession or any sort of reach-me-down heroics. Maybe she hoped that demonstrating her own way of having gentleness and decisiveness float free of each other would encourage people to look again at Pollock's version of unassertiveness, which she went on thinking painting must come to terms with. No such luck.

There are many other great things in the Barbican show, and inevitably some failures. Ab Ex was a hit or miss business. Krasner's advantage was her certainty about her strength and her allegiance to Cubism – her persistence in thinking it the true modern style. The big 1960s abstractions are Cubism reinvented. *Polar Stampede* would be better called *Sorgues in the Snow*.

A room near the beginning of the show is hung with six astonishing life drawings Krasner did in 1940, aged 32, while at Hans Hofmann's School of Fine Arts in New York. The two most abstract drawings in the sequence are ferociously sure of their Cubist means. The nude body in each concedes to (or maybe divulges) an up-front geometry, done in thick bold line. The claim seems to be that the diagram registers the pose's internal stresses. I for one am convinced. Hofmann rightly gets hammered these days for the form of his praise of these drawings – he said something like 'they're so good they don't look to have been done by a woman' – but at least he knew this was Cubism fully fledged. Krasner got her own back on her teacher (whom she revered) and on her own true-believer young self when, much later, she came across some old Hofmann School drawings in her studio and cut them up to make big cantankerous collages, half-laughing at the old 'push and pull' religion. These canvases too are at the Barbican. They may not be Krasner at her best, but they are deeply touching; and their mixture of ferocity and nostalgia, homage to Cubism and impatience at any attempt to turn the style into a 'method', led throughout her life to the beauty she treasured.

FINANCIAL TIMES

Lee Krasner retrospective: the forgotten genius of Abstract Expressionism

The Barbican's show honours the brilliant but scandalously lesser-known painter

JACKIE WULLSCHLÄGER

MAY 30, 2019

There has never been an art season like this in Europe. In London, Cindy Sherman comes to the National Portrait Gallery, Natalia Goncharova to Tate, Faith Ringgold is at the Serpentine, Paula Rego at Milton Keynes' new gallery. In Paris, Berthe Morisot has the Musée d'Orsay, Dora Maar the Pompidou, Sally Mann the Jeu de Paume. These solo shows by female artists triumphantly swell, in the museum arena, the inevitable 21st-century theme of reviewing the past through the lens of gender. Every one of these artists has something to say about identity and female perspectives.

Except for the magnificently compelling, scandalously little-known Lee Krasner. The best paintings in her stellar retrospective at the Barbican — the first in Europe since 1965 — are as powerfully alluring and beautiful as any abstractions ever made in America: the battle between swooping fuchsia and orange arcs and half-moon crescents in "Icarus" and "Combat", airy, breathless; thrusting umber swerves interwoven with creamy sprays and dense earth-toned pigment, from where hooded, half-lidded eyes peer out, across the five-metre "The Eye is the First Circle". This is named after the opening of Emerson's essay declaring "the universe is fluid and volatile . . . the heart refuses to be imprisoned . . . it tends outward with a vast force and to immense and innumerable expansions".

That was what Krasner believed. Nothing at the Barbican announces the work is by a woman artist. Krasner adopted an androgynous name. She refused to show in Peggy Guggenheim's 1943 Women exhibition. Yet at every twist and turn as her mature paintings evolve, you cannot forget that Lee — née Lena — Krasner was Mrs Jackson Pollock. This makes the show doubly important: unmissable for the history of abstraction, and as unfolding social history, tracing relationships between a woman artist's life, work, reputation and the impact of feminism, then and now.

Stiff mosaic-like shards of colour congest and constrain the hieroglyphic "Little Images" paintings, done in the small house in Long Island where Krasner and Pollock moved in 1945 soon after their marriage. Pollock, by contrast, worked in the huge barn. After his drinking and depression escalated, Krasner picked up the fragments of their lives in collage, cutting up her own works, and sometimes his discarded ones: "Shattered Light", "Forest" (1954), then the more painterly, still jagged "Milkweed", "Desert Moon" (1955).

Self-Portrait (c 1928) © The Pollock-Krasner Foundation,
Courtesy the Jewish Museum, New York

On her wall in July 1956, when Krasner left without Pollock for Paris, to visit the Louvre, was "Prophecy", wreathing, pink forms, touched with deep red, emphasising allusions to the body. "I was aware that it was a frightening image, but I had to let it come through," she recalled. Pollock reassured her: "A good painting . . . just continue." When she returned in August, Pollock was dead — an alcohol-related car accident.

Immediately after the funeral she pushed on from "Prophecy" to more convulsive, similarly vertically oriented images, violent and erotic, of intertwined broken pink shapes, fleshy, heavily lined with black, and disembodied eyes: "Birth", "Three in Two". Formally, they are responses to Picasso's "Demoiselles", and as angry and sharp.

What happened next is the crux of this marvellous show. Krasner, 47, took Pollock's barn as her studio, enlarged her canvases, and during the next few years of insomnia, grief and confusion she worked by night, draining colour to raw and burnt umber, white, patches of amber.

Left: 'Icarus' (1964) © The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Kasmin Gallery/Diego Flores. Right: Lee Krasner created 'Three in Two' after Pollock's death, and is a response to Picasso's 'Demoiselles' © Kevin Candland

"Polar Stampede", most lyrical of the so-called "Night Journeys", is a pattern of icy whites and darkening browns evoking a maelstrom but also rhythmic, rocking like a lullaby; others, such as "The Assault on the Solar Plexus", are bleaker. The titles, Krasner admitted, were "embarrassingly realistic . . . I was going down deep into something which wasn't easy or pleasant".

'Shattered Light' (1954) © The Pollock-Krasner Foundation

She emerged in 1963 with "Another Storm", the Barbican's star of stars: the monochrome palette retained but the umber replaced by blazing alizarin crimson, punctuated by white strokes suggesting froth on fast-flowing water.

Here and in successors including “Happy Lady”, “Through Blue”, “Mister Blue”, lilting, shooting blues, cobalt, ultramarine, and the spring-fresh “Siren” and “Portrait in Green” (1963-69), Krasner is proved a major independent figure of Abstract Expressionism. Her signature language of arcs and curves and loops, voluptuous, fierce, the feathery touch embedded in a tough linearity, is as rich and distinctive as Pollock’s skeins and drips, Mark Rothko’s layered squares or Barnett Newman’s zips.

Left: Her signature language of arcs and curves in ‘Mister Blue’ (1966). Right: The jagged ‘Desert Moon’ (1955)

Brushy yet limpid, unruly though delicate, twice as high and far broader than the body span of Krasner — who just hit 5ft in height and leapt from the floor with long-handled brushes — these paintings are jubilant, gripping, alive because they so vibrantly unpack the struggle of their making.

Matissean colour is the ultimate reference point, but at American scope and scale, and with a sense of both wild landscapes and resolution hard-won from chaos: among Krasner’s favourite lines of poetry was Rimbaud’s “I ended up finding sacred the disorder of my mind”.

The Barbican’s installation, with the ceiling opened to allow a flood of natural light, showcases superbly the glowing high points of the mid-1960s and, in darker sections, the brooding intensity of the night paintings. That contrast is the heart of the show, which has a joyful pulse — jazz, from an excellent film dovetailing archival footage of Krasner’s life and some interviews, sounds throughout. There is a lovely account of Krasner dancing with the elderly Mondrian — both were jazz fanatics — who told her: “You have a very strong inner rhythm. You must never lose it.”

She never did. In the 1970s the forms become harder-edged, concerned with geometry, the compositions more stately and contained, as in the raspberry/green “Palingenesis”, reminiscent of Matisse’s cut-outs. You can see why Robert Hughes described a 1973 gallery exhibition as “rap[ping] hotly on the eyeball at 50 paces”.

Not, though, hotly or close enough. MoMA's first retrospective opened in 1984, months after Krasner's death. What kept her so invisible?

Left: Lee Krasner admires a sculpture in 1940 © Fred Prater . Right: 'Lee Krasner's 'Palingenesis' (1971) reflects the hard-edged, geometric touch of later years © The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Kasmin Gallery

"I was a woman, Jewish, a widow, a damn good painter, thank you, and a little too independent" was her summing-up. In the 1930s, her teacher Hans Hofmann said her work was "so good, you'd never know it was done by a woman". In Pollock's lifetime, much of her energy went to supporting him; her work soared after his death, but a male-centred art establishment failed to notice. Krasner was publicly grateful, in the 1970s, to the feminist movement for garnering her new attention; any woman denying prejudice, she said, should be "slapped". Yet finally she insisted "I'm an artist, not a woman artist, not an American artist" — and from that too we can learn today.

'Blue Level' (1955) © Diego Flores

THE NEW YORKER

Lee Krasner

ANDREA K. SCOTT
OCTOBER 24, 2018

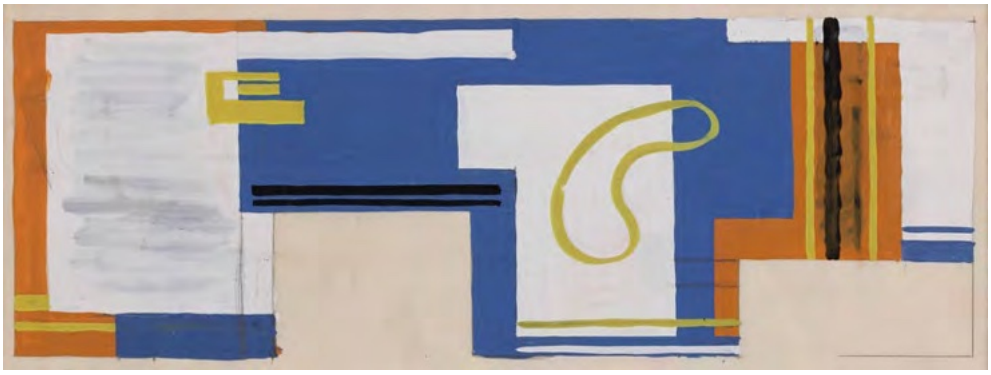
Lee Krasner
Kasmin

CHELSEA The art dealer Paul Kasmin now runs five separate spaces in a one-block range, including a new rooftop sculpture park, on which a jaunty trio of Joel Shapiro's bronzes can be seen from the High Line until the night before Christmas Eve. At the moment, however, the mini-empire's smallest show is the one not to miss: a group of capering gouaches on paper from 1940, eight ways of looking at a mural that never existed. (We know that Krasner created the studies for the Works Progress Administration, but nothing about the intended location.) Linear geometries partner with biomorphic curves in a dominant palette of red, yellow, and blue. Zinging orange and chartreuse have guest-starring turns, and Léger-like black lines maintain order. This was the first year that Krasner committed herself to abstraction completely, and her thrill is contagious.—*Andrea K. Scott (Through Oct. 27.)*

THE BROOKLYN RAIL

Lee Krasner: Mural Studies

HOVEY BROCK
OCTOBER 3, 2018



Lee Krasner, *Untitled Mural Study*, 1940. Gouache on paper, 10 3/8 x 22 inches,

Eight gouache studies from 1940 for a proposed mural mark the second exhibition of Lee Krasner's work at Paul Kasmin since it began representing the Pollock-Krasner Foundation's estate in 2016. There is no record for which space Krasner intended these works, but the evidence suggests Krasner had a specific location in mind given the two rectangular gaps—openings to accommodate window or door frames—that appear in the same positions along the bottom edge of each study. Krasner had taken over a WPA mural project begun by de Kooning in 1937. These gouaches reflect the influences in De Kooning's abstract design for the 1937 project. The themes he borrowed for his work—Fernand Léger's bold black outlines and swatches of primary colors, the carefully nested compositions of the British painter Ben Nicholson—also show up in these studies. To that mix Krasner added the biomorphic abandon of Joan Miró. These gouaches show Krasner compiling an abstract lexicon, which she would subsequently deploy across the length of her protean career. We also see her coming to grips with composing works at the heroic scale that would come to define so many painters of her post-war generation.

One of the pleasures of *Mural Studies* is taking in Krasner's formal inventiveness as the studies cover an expanse of compositional variations. *Untitled Mural Study,* 1940, borrows from the interlocking geometry of Nicholson's abstraction. With the exception of a yellow kidney-shaped outline floating over a white background, Krasner divides the entire surface into rectangles. Planes of white, blue, and red converge in a tight embrace. She adds bands of black and yellow that cross over and under the planes to add lateral and vertical tension. All those right angles make the yellow outline's eccentric movement all the more energetic—a contrast Nicholson would never have countenanced. On the other hand, *Untitled Mural Study,* 1940 (PK 22380), hasn't a single 90° angle, apart from the cutouts for the site. Krasner gives us a sweep of crazy curves blowing from right to left like so many leaves caught in a gale. With its vivid blacks and red shapes on a cobalt background, this work owes a debt to Miró's Surrealist compositions of the '20s and '30s.

Lee Krasner, *Untitled Mural Study*, 1940. Gouache and collage on paper, 7 3/16 x 23 1/4 inches.

The rest of the studies split the difference between these two extremes, some with implied linear perspective to suggest an interior space, as is the case with *Untitled Mural Study,* 1940. It has the most pentimenti, an indication Krasner was thinking something through as she worked on it. Her process led her to pare down the composition to a white and grey background with just a handful of figures: a blue one at far left with a trapezoidal bite taken out of it; at center a red trapezoid stacked on a yellow organic form; and another green trapezoid just to the right. On top of the stacked forms at center is a lattice of Léger-like thick black lines that brings to mind an easel. With that and all the trapezoids suggesting canvases pitched at various angles, it is easy to read this study as an abstracted studio. Whatever the interpretation, in this study Krasner best integrated the site-specific gaps into the overall pictorial structure. At the same time, the image's simplicity makes its internal scale magnitudes larger than its actual 7 ⅛" x 23 ¼" dimensions, and an excellent candidate for blowing up to a mural.

Aside from their particular merits, it bears noting that Krasner likely meant none of these gouaches for public consumption. While not juvenilia, they lack the power and originality of Krasner's mature works. Nonetheless, these studies deserve our attention because they mark an important milestone on her path to large-scale abstraction. They also bring to light a synthesizing intelligence that delighted in pulling from multiple sources to arrive at a range of surprising results. Said trait would cement her reputation as a maverick during her later years, when, unlike her cohorts, she resisted developing a signature style. Today such a desire for stylistic consistency has lost its urgency, leaving us to appreciate, with less prejudice, the full breadth of Krasner's talent.

Lee Krasner, *Untitled Mural Study*, 1940. Gouache on paper, 17 x 22 inches.

Lee Krasner, “Mural Studies”

OCTOBER 22, 2018

Photograph: © 2018 Pollock–Krasner Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

For decades, Krasner’s paintings were overshadowed by those of her much more famous husband, Jackson Pollock. Postwar art critics, who made a habit of turning a blind eye to female artists, often overlooked her work. But in recent years, Krasner’s career has undergone a serious reevaluation as part of a widespread effort to include more women in art history, and her work is now considered the equal of her spouse’s. That much is made plain, in these small-scale, gouache-on-paper studies for an unrealized Works Progress Administration mural painting. Created in 1940 at a relatively early point in Krasner’s development, these exquisite compositions show the influence of Jean Arp and Joan Miro, whose biomorphic abstractions continued to inform Krasner’s efforts as she pushed into monumental gestural compositions during the 1950s.

April 13, 2017

At MoMA, Women at Play in the Fields of Abstraction

By HOLLAND COTTER

Lee Krasner's wall-filling "Gaea" (1966).
Credit
2017 The Pollock-Krasner Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; Nicole Craine for The New York Times

Funnily enough, the Museum of Modern Art has never named the long-running blockbuster show that fills its permanent-collection galleries. So I'll name it: "Modern White Guys: The Greatest Art Story Ever Invented." What the museum does name are the occasional temporary exhibitions that offer an alternative to that story. "Making Space: Women Artists and Postwar Abstraction" is the latest, and a stimulating alternative it is.

Abstraction is a foundational subject for MoMA. The institution was basically conceived on the premise that this is the mode to which all advanced art aspires. But the work in "Making Space," dating from the end of World War II to the beginning of second-wave feminism, is not really representative of the museum historically. For one thing, of course, it's all by women. And it's by artists of diverse geographic and ethnic backgrounds. Unsurprisingly, much of what's here is late in arriving at MoMA. Several pieces from Latin America, given by the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection, came just last year.

In its diversity and in other ways, "Making Space" escapes the old MoMA formula, though in certain other ways it adheres to it. We begin on what looks like familiar ground. The show's first section, "Gestural Abstraction," is dominated by two brushy, wall-filling paintings — one by Lee Krasner, the other by Joan Mitchell — of a kind that has been a staple at the museum since the 1940s. Both artists are big names but, you note, they are not quite big enough to rate fixed placement beside Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning and Franz Kline in the permanent Abstract Expressionist galleries.

Anne Ryan's "Collage, 353" (pasted colored papers, cloth and string on paper), part of "Making Space: Women Artists and Postwar Abstraction" at the Museum of Modern Art.

So the show starts in what feels like honorable-mention mode. But it doesn't stay there. Instead, it goes for difference and sticks with it, introducing us to artists we may not know or have an institutional context for. We meet one right off the bat, the Lebanese-born American painter-poet Etel Adnan, whom many New Yorkers — and possibly MoMA — first learned about only through the New Museum's 2014 survey of art from the so-called Arab world.

Ms. Adnan's painting, with its little central rainbow banner, signals that the abstraction by women in this show will not be just Euro-American, but global. And a second picture, this one a 1960s collage painting by the African-American artist Alma Woodsey Thomas, suggests that it will be racially inclusive, too. So, already, old MoMA barriers are leapt.

Even more interestingly, the Thomas piece complicates the idea of what "gestural" means. It's done in the artist's usual mosaic-like blocks of color, but on narrow strips of paper, joined by staples and masking tape. The result is not painting as a gush of I-am-here ego or emotion. It's a construction, a sort of funky one. And it is personally expressive, though in ways hard to pin down.

Alma Woodsey Thomas's "Untitled" (c. 1968) made of polymer paint and pressure-sensitive tape on cut-and-stapled paper.
Credit
Alma Woodsey Thomas, Museum of Modern Art

A lot about the show is hard to pin down, which is its strength. The famous flowchart of Modern art's evolution plotted by MoMA's first director, Alfred Barr, and still reflected in the show's section labels — "Geometric Abstraction," "Eccentric Abstraction," etc. — simply doesn't apply here. There's too much genius irregularity — aesthetic, personal and political — on view to fit any prefab template.

It's important to know, for example, that the exquisite, centrifugally spinning collages of the New York artist Anne Ryan (1889-1954) were inspired as much by life as by other art. Each of these sparkling visual salads of fabric, paper and thread reflects the artist's work as a seamstress (she made all her clothes) and a cook (she opened a Greenwich Village restaurant) as much as her interest in Pollock and Kurt Schwitters. (Ryan fans will not want to miss a splendid gallery show dedicated to her at Davis and Langdale Company through April 22.)
In a section called "Geometric Abstraction" are several 1950s works from Latin America, though whether they embody Modernist order and balance is a question. The opposite seems to be true in a crazily tilting iron sculpture by the German-born Venezuelan artist called Gego (Gertrud Goldschmidt). And while the interlocking black and white forms in a 1957 painting by the Brazilian Lygia Clark are in perfect alignment, their angled shapes convey a sense of psychological menace — like sharp teeth in a closing jaw — that MoMA's 2014 Clark

retrospective entirely smoothed over.

And what view of Modernist rationality lies behind the work of the Czech artist Bela Kolarova? Working in Prague under a repressive political regime in the 1960s, she created photographs of circular forms that look like drains in a giant sink, and made relief paintings that bristle with potentially finger-slicing grids of metal paper fasteners.

The grid as a form gets an impressive pre-Minimalist workout in 1940s room dividers made of cellophane and horsehair by the incomparable weaver, printmaker, art historian, philosopher, teacher, theorist and life-student Anni Albers. Eleanore Mikus melts and molds the grid in a 1964 relief. And Lenore Tawney bends, twists and lightens it in her "Little River Wall Hanging."

In the 1950s, Ms. Tawney lived in Lower Manhattan, where she counted Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Indiana and Agnes Martin (who is also in the MoMA show) as neighbors. Living in an old shipping loft, she made the most radical work of any of them: towering open-warp fiber pieces that stretched from floor to ceiling and across the loft's wide space. Yet, in 1990, when she finally had a retrospective, it took place not at MoMA, but at the American Craft Museum, which was then across the street.

Have things changed much for art by women at MoMA? Ms. Tawney's work is now visible there, but in set-aside circumstances. This is the way historical work by women is usually shown there, in occasional roundups, like the one assembled by the painter Elizabeth Murray in 1995, or the larger "Modern Women: Women Artists at the Museum of Modern Art" in 2010, or now in "Making Space," organized by the MoMA curators Starr Figura and Sarah Meister, with Hillary Reder, a curatorial assistant.

These shows are invariably moving, surprising and adventurous. The present one certainly is. But they have too easily become a new normal, an acceptable way to show women but keep them segregated from the permanent-collection galleries. In other words, they are a way to keep MoMA's old and false, but coherent and therefore salable, story of Modernism intact.

Things may be changing. The old model may slowly be breaking up as the reality of Modernism as an international phenomenon, pan-cultural yet locally distinctive, becomes more widely known. And that knowledge can't help confirming the reality that work by women, feminists or not, was *the* major inventive force propelling and shaping late-20th-century art.

Ruth Asawa's "Untitled" (circa 1955), foreground center, and Magdalena Abakanowicz's "Yellow Abakan" (1967-68), right.
Credit
Nicole Craine for The New York Times

It's time to integrate that force into the museum fabric, into the permanent-collection galleries that remain MoMA's great popular draw. How to create the new mix? Experiment. Put Anne Ryan next to Schwitters *and* Pollock *and* 1950s fabric designs by Vera (Vera Neumann), and see how that shakes out, historically and atmospherically. Introduce a body-adjusting chair by the great Italian-Brazilian artist-designer Lina Bo Bardi to the body-obsessed sculpture of Constantin Brancusi. Put Ruth Asawa's porous, basket-like wire sculptures up against Richard Serra's fortresslike walls. Let Alma Woodsey Thomas and Mondrian meet and talk about masking tape and useful beauty.

Naturally, some people will have a problem with all this. A politically minded eroticist like the Italian artist Carol Rama (1918-2015), who has a fantastic piece called "Spurting Out" in the current MoMA show (and a retrospective at the New Museum coming at the end of the month), scares the pants off traditionalists, because what do you do with her? Where does she fit in? How can you make her make White Guy sense? You can't.

Anyway, it's time to give the White Guys a rest. They're looking tired. And the moment is auspicious. MoMA is expanding; the only ethical justification for doing so that I can see is to show art it hasn't shown before, to write a broader, realer story, one that might even, in truth, be great. Construction is still in progress, but plans for the new history can start right now. Go see the work by women in "Making Space," then go to MoMA's permanent-collection galleries and start mentally moving in their art.
Making Space: Women Artists
and Postwar Abstraction

Through Aug. 13 at the Museum of Modern Art; 212-708-9400, moma.org.

https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/13/arts/design/moma-women-artists-and-postwar-abstraction.html

March 3, 2017

What to See at the Fairs

A SELECTIVE GUIDE TO ARMORY WEEK

The Art Show

Organized by the Art Dealers Association of America
Through Sunday
Park Avenue Armory,
643 Park Avenue, at 67th Street
artdealers.org

This is the smallest, oldest and most exclusive of the fairs. It's on the Upper East Side and proud of it. Only galleries admitted to the A.D.A.A. exhibit here, and it is sometimes noticeably slow to invite dealers it considers too flashy. Gala night, which raises lots of cash for the Henry Street Settlement, is a major event with a finely gradated social hierarchy: How early you get in is determined by your charitable contribution, or your hunger to buy. Since many of the galleries are from New York, the fair increasingly presents single artists, which makes it more interesting for those not buying: Think of the goods as mini-exhibitions. What the dealers wear: fox stoles, Chanel pantsuits, kitten heels (high enough to look formal but comfortable enough to be on your feet for a while).

JASON FARAGO | ART REVIEW

The Establishment Gig

Though somewhat sedate, the Art Show holds surprises.

AB-EXERS IN LOVE Partners in life and art, Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner wrenched New York into the first rank of modern art capitals in the 1940s. An impressive display of Pollock's drawings, at the booth of the stalwart Washburn Gallery, includes both early, Picassoid scribbles — think bulls and ghouls — and a delicately worked sketch on a cigarette box. But a display of late collages by Krasner, in the Paul Kasmin Gallery, here at the Art Show, is dreary; by the '80s, her mélanges of shapes and stains had grown decidedly mannered. Better Abstract Expressionism is at the Michael Rosenfeld Gallery booth, which showcases the stormy paintings of Norman Lewis, and in the Manny Silverman Gallery, where you'll find a jazzy composition of dots and crosses by Bradley Walker Tomlin.

DISCARDED, PRESERVED While New York preened, Paris retrenched. A rip-roaring display of works by the French-American artist Arman, in the Sperone Westwater booth, unites a dozen of his 1960s assemblages, in which everyday junk — light bulbs, doll parts, rusty faucets — is shoved into glass boxes or immured in resin blocks. They are signal accomplishments of Nouveau Réalisme, a more downbeat cousin of American Pop, that is at last winning greater consideration on this side of the Atlantic. Arman's "Accumulations" troubled boundaries between high and low in the '60s, though today they appeal principally for ecological reasons: These are solidified evidence of an economy of waste.

FACES OF FEAR Two adjacent booths jolt this somewhat sedate fair with bad-mannered figuration. In Julie Saul, 17 recent watercolors by Pavel Pepperstein, a sardonic Russian artist, depict Jacqueline Kennedy as a cartoon character in mythological extremis, carried forth by satyrs or kneeling before the goddess Athena. Next door, in Petzel's booth, the take-no-prisoners artist Joyce Pensato shows monstrous yet compelling portraits of other American figures: six paintings of a demented Bart Simpson, rendered in drippy enamel, and a dead-eyed Homer, in smudged charcoal.

LADIES FIRST More smudged charcoal is at the booth of Marc Selwyn Fine Art, from Beverly Hills, filled with drawings by the American master Lee Bontecou. The only woman to show with the dealer Leo Castelli in the 1960s, Ms. Bontecou is best known for her fierce wall-mounted sculptures of burlap and canvas, but her drawings, of eyes and teeth and uncertain orifices, also turn space into absorbing voids, thanks to passages of heavy black. (Another fine work by her is in the Mnuchin Gallery booth, two spaces away.) Selwyn has paired Ms. Bontecou's drawings with others by Jay DeFeo, but the match is uneven: The latter's peculiar, angular graphite works appear lightweight next to Ms. Bontecou's intense capriccios.

INTO THE WOODS A few booths at the A.D.A.A. fair have impressive showcases of art before 1900. Thomas Colville Fine Art is presenting more than a dozen landscapes by George Inness, a 19th-century painter who stands as an American cousin to Corot, Millet and the rest of the French Barbizon school. Where other American landscapists went for Manifest Destiny posturing, Inness favored splotchy, atmospheric renderings of fens and lakesides that may put you in mind of Emerson and Thoreau.

PHOTOS WITHOUT CAMERAS The booth of the photography specialist Hans P. Kraus Jr. contains perhaps the most beguiling work in the fair: "British Algae," a book by the English botanist Anna Atkins that documents aquatic plants via cyanotypes, or impressions on photosensitive blue paper. Dating to around 1850, it's the first book to be illustrated with photographs, though no camera was necessary to make the images. These spectral photograms are the work of an ardent amateur, and a passport to an age when reproductive imagery was still a thing of wonder. They're also a good reminder that, in art as in science, women were pioneers until institutions shut them out.

PHILIP GREENBERG FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

2017 THE POLLOCK-KRASNER FOUNDATION/ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK. PAUL KASMIN GALLERY. PHILIP GREENBERG FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Above, Galerie Lelong at the Art Show features a solo booth of "Topología" paintings by Zilia Sánchez, a Cuban-born artist. Left, Lee Krasner's "Buffon's Parakeet," a 1980 work at the Paul Kasmin Gallery booth.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARY ANN SMITH

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

THE ART NEWSPAPER

March 2, 2017

Female artists make their presence felt at ADAA Art Show

Art Dealers Association of America's fair kicks off Armory week with a feminine touch

Helen Stoilas

Lee Krasner, Buffon's Parakeet (1980) (Image: © 2016 The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/ Artists RightsSociety (ARS), New York. Image courtesy of Paul Kasmin Gallery)

The Art Show, the Art Dealers Association of America's annual fair in the Park Avenue Armory, opened to VIPs and press on Tuesday (28 February) but it is fitting that the public opening fell on the first day of Women's History Month in March. Female artists have a strong showing in the fair, with a number of dealers dedicating their booths to works by women.

P.P.O.W.'s entire stand is given over to the work of the feminist artist Betty Tompkins, including examples of her Cow Cunt series of paintings that depict docile cattle grazing above a field of pubic hair. And of course there is a Fuck Painting—one of the eight original examples, dating from 1972—but even more interesting for long-time fans is a small side display of preparatory works that show how Tompkins cropped and framed pornographic photos to transfer the images onto her large-scale paintings.

At Peter Blum, visitors can see pages from a 1947 artist book by Louise Bourgeois that pairs engravings

of imagined architectural spaces with darkly comic micro-stories written by the artist. Copies of the book are in the collections of MoMA and the National Gallery of Art.

Paul Kasmin is showing a group of late works by Lee Krasner that masterfully mix paper collage, oil painting and lithography. And Leslie Tonkonow has a solo presentation of works by Michelle Stewart, including a richly mineral wall scroll, El Florido, Guatemala II (1978-79), made by rubbing natural graphite and earth onto a sheet of rag paper.

Important examples of historic work, especially from the 1960s and 70s, can also be found throughout the fair. At Sperone Westwater, there is a collection of objects encased in resin by the French artist Arman, including the delicate charcoal of a burnt violin. Hauser & Wirth has brought together a series of drawings by Arshile Gorky, Nighttime, Engima and Nostalgia, in which the Armenian-born artist experimented with automatism, riffing on the same images over and over again, and playing off the work of artists like Picasso and Uccello.

Matthew Marks Gallery has a slew of works by Modern masters, including a small but perfect 1961 Fountain Pen by Jasper Johns, mounted on wood and painted over in monochromatic encaustic and plaster, which would look equally at home next to a collector's desk or displayed in a museum.

The collection of vivid green landscapes by George Inness on Thomas Colville's stand might be the most historical works on show in the fair, but they bring a breath of spring freshness to the Armory's drill hall.

Collectors will also find top-quality contemporary works. Near the entrance at Anthony Meier Fine Arts, a mirrored glass sculpture by Larry Bell, originally commissioned by GE for its Fairfield, Connecticut headquarters, comes onto the market after spending 30 years at the corporate site, which closed last year.

Tanya Bonakdar has a suite of watercolours by Olafur Eliasson made with pieces of melting glacier, as well as a concrete cube sculpture that was cast around another chunk of glacier, with the disappearing ice leaving the crater-like hole in the middle. A stunning lightbox triptych by Rodney Graham takes up most of 303 Gallery's stand, with the artist appearing at the centre of the work as the Antiquarian Sleeping in his Shop (2017), surrounded by the accumulations of his career.

And a wonderfully fantastical suite of watercolours by the Russian artist Pavel Pepperstein with Julie Saul Gallery are the imagined Secret Drawings of Jacqueline Kennedy, made as a form of art therapy. A member of the gallery's staff was fully immersed in the narrative the artist has created, wearing a Jackie-O themed dress painted by Pepperstein on the fair's opening night.

http://theartnewspaper.com/market/art-fairs/female-artists-make-their-presence-felt-at-adaa-art-show-/

ARTNEWS

March 1, 2017

Photos from the 2017 ADAA Art Show

Katherine McMahon

The 29th edition of the Art Show, organized annually by the Art Dealers Association of America, opened to VIPs and members of the press on Tuesday, February 28. Below, scenes of some of the artwork and action around the fair, which runs at the Park Avenue Armory in New York through Sunday, March 5.

Lee Krasner, *Ninety Degrees Temperate*, 1980, at Paul Kasmin Gallery.

http://www.artnews.com/2017/03/01/photos-from-the-2017-adaa-art-show/

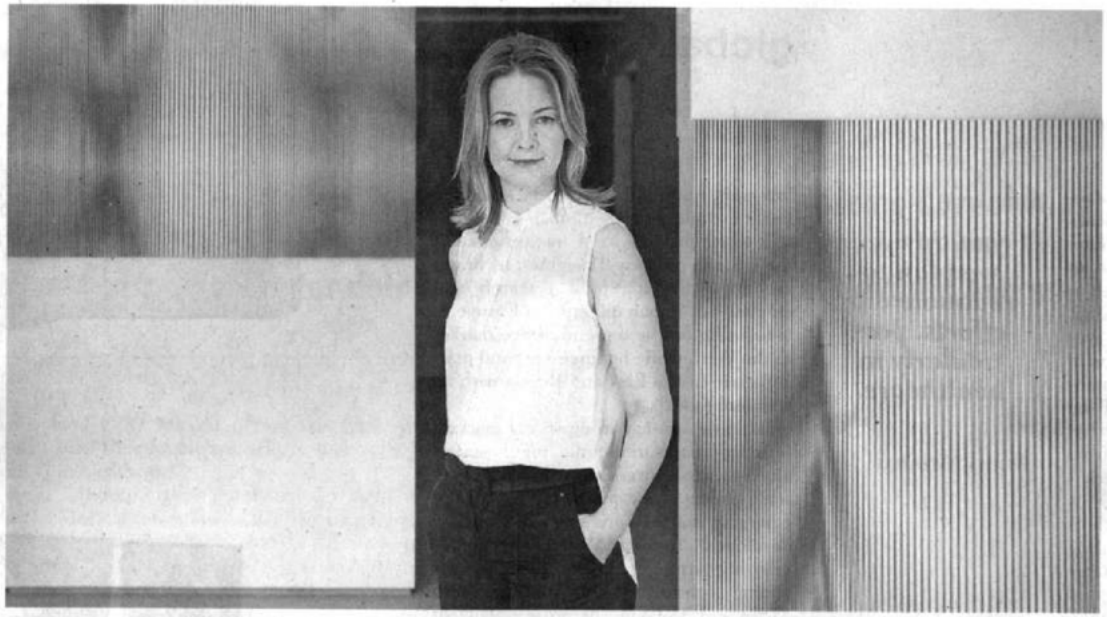
PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

FINANCIAL TIMES

28 February 2017

Manhattan's galleries adjust to a new reality

Art saturation and rising rents have forced a rethink, writes Melanie Gerlis



Above: New York gallery owner Elizabeth Dee, who moved out of Chelsea after 15 years
Below: Bruce Silverstein's former gallery at 535 West 24th Street

As New York's art world gears up for its March season of art, with several fairs and related events opening this week, its many commercial spaces have been feeling the pinch.

Many dealers cite a recent Instagram post by Jerry Saltz, one of New York's best-known and longest-standing art critics, which urged his 200,000 followers to "Support your local galleries simply by going. Many galleries are secretly terrified of closing now. Trump's chaos has brought sales to a standstill."

While it is tempting to blame the new US president for all the cultural world's ills, the reality is that many of the problems that galleries are now facing began before his entry into the political arena.

"New York's contemporary art scene was fabulous for quite a while, there was a huge energy and momentum, and everything bounced back pretty quickly after the financial crisis [in 2008]," says Lisa Cooley. But by 2014, she says, "There was too much art, people were exhausted by too many fairs all over the world and every dealer had the same contacts on their lists." Having opened on Orchard Street in 2008, Cooley is now one of a growing number of gallerists who have had to shut up shop on Manhattan's Lower East Side in the past year; she recently re-emerged as a director at New York's Paula Cooper gallery.

Downward pressures on smaller galleries include superstar artists leaving for the bigger brand traders and the increasing cost of renting a space while also travelling to fairs and other events around the world. The phenomenon is not exclusive to Manhattan — there are parallels in London — but as the centre of the art market's trade in recent years, New York has arguably been hit harder.

The Lower East Side's emergence as a gallery area, with lower rents and an avant-garde attitude, gained momentum from the late 2000s, largely by providing an alternative to the increasing concentration of huge, commoditised converted garages and storerooms of Chelsea.

"You can never underestimate the significance of the relationship between the real estate and art markets," says Adam Sheffer, a partner at Cheim & Read gallery and president of the Art Dealers Association of America, whose annual The Art Show fair opens this week (March 1-5, Park Avenue Armory).

Sheffer's gallery is one of a handful in the Chelsea area that owns its building. Paula Cooper, Matthew Marks and Barbara Gladstone are also among those who were able to get on to the property ladder when Chelsea, then a rundown part of town, emerged as an art market district in the 1990s.

Others, even at the established end of the market, have not been so lucky. The photography dealer Bruce Silverstein says he had a "beautiful space" in Chelsea for 13 years but moved out in January when his rent was due to increase to $60,000 a month. He is now operating out of his much smaller space in the area with a different model. "The world is our gallery now," he says.

Meanwhile, taste for the cutting edge has waned. Prices for younger artists — such as Adam McEwen and Lucien Smith — have fallen at auction as speculation in art has proved a temporary pastime. A more risk-averse appetite for older works with some art historical heft behind them will be evident at the Art Show, Sheffer says, and indeed many galleries are bringing works from the artist estates that they have recently competed hard to represent. Hauser & Wirth is showing Arshile Gorky; Paul Kasmin has Lee Krasner. Even the living artists will be shown in an older, art historical context — Hans P. Kraus is showing photograms by the living artists Hiroshi Sugimoto and Adam Fuss alongside those by the 19th-century photography pioneer William Henry Fox Talbot.

But it's not all doom and gloom. Benjamin Genocchio, who puts his stamp on the Armory Show for the first time this week (March 2-5), accepts that a downside of globalisation is that "there was a time when people had to come to New York to buy contemporary and modern art; today that is not the case." He sees this as a chance "to reconnect with the city". The sentiment extends to the fair's venue, the Hudson River's Piers 92 and 94, which have been criticised for their basic appearance and facilities. "Yes, the setting is tough, gritty and industrial; so is New York," Genocchio says.

Gallerists are also trying to think more creatively. Elizabeth Dee moved out of Chelsea after 15 years in 2016 and into a space in the still edgy Harlem neighbourhood and talks of getting away from "hyper-gentrification". She now has two floors and 12,000 sq. ft of exhibition space, which she says enable her to "use my curatorial skills with more thematic shows that give context, rather than just adding more artists to my roster". Her opening show in Harlem, *Every Future Has a Price: 30 years after Infotainment*, featured 38 artists to explore the social and political issues of the 1980s.

Collaboration is also on the up, creating opportunities for emerging galleries in particular. This week, Dee gives up her gallery's second floor space to the Norwegian non-profit contemporary gallery Entrée to show its artists Ane Graff (until April 16) and Andrew Amorim (until March 14). Dee helped to organise funding from the Norwegian Consulate General in New York, through a residency project organised with the Independent fair she founded, which opens its eighth edition in the city this week (March 2-5, Spring Studios).

The strain of running a gallery in a saturated world has focused dealers, artists and enthusiasts to remember why they were attracted to art in the first place. Dee talks of making more "individualised decisions"; Silverstein of "doing what I want and where I want"; Andrea Rosen, who last week announced she would be closing her Chelsea gallery, of being an "active, kind and connected citizen". "My dream is not to be tortured by the thing I love," Cooley says.

The Armory Show runs March 2-5
thearmoryshow.com

artnet news

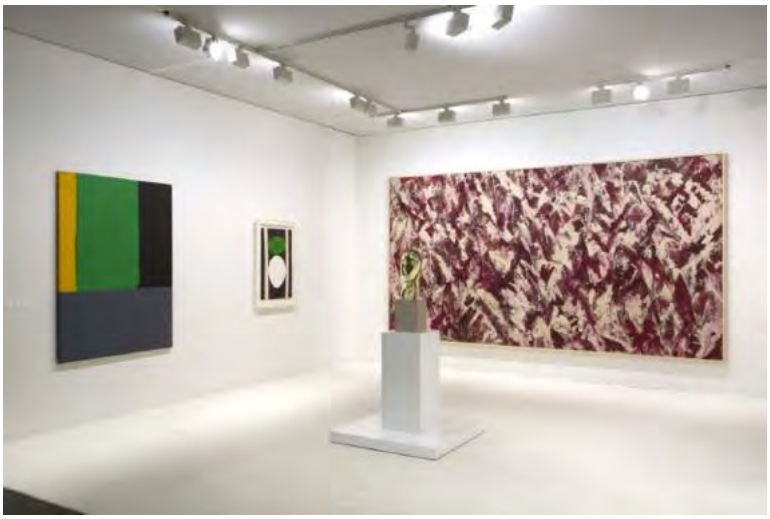
December 1, 2016

Top 10 Booths at Art Basel in Miami Beach
From the looming work of Sanford Biggers to paintings by Asger Jorn, here's what to see

Rozalia Jovanovic

When Art Basel in Miami Beach opened its doors for its 2016 edition, it was clear the mood was a little different than in the past few years. “More quiet,” “more calm” were phrases we heard repeated on several occasions about the general atmosphere. Booths were less flashy than in recent years, and many, like Blum & Poe and Susanne Vielmetter turned out overtly political work. Nonetheless, from the galleries showing established artists to those whose focus is more on the emerging contingent, there was a variety of great work on view.

Here are a few of the ones that caught our eye.



Installation view of Paul Kasmin booth featuring Lee Krasner’s Another Storm (1963) and Constantin Brancusi’s Une Muse (1918). Photography by Dawn Blackman, courtesy of Paul Kasmin Gallery.

5. Paul Kasmin
Paul Kasmin’s booth featured a stunning painting by Lee Krasner (up for $6 million) coupled elegantly with a bronze work by Constantin Brancusi. The combination was killer. Enough said.

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

The New York Times

December 1, 2016

At Art Basel Miami Beach, Fewer Dabblers but Deliberative Sales

Robin Pogrebin

Lee Krasner's "Another Storm," 1963. Credit 2016 The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, Paul Kasmin Gallery

MIAMI BEACH — The signs were subtle but unmistakable: dealers sitting down in their booths, checking their cellphones, even — could it be? — eating a salad.

In the high-octane art market of recent years, the first hours of the Art Basel Miami Beach art fair have generally been marked by a frenzied stampede at the door followed by fierce competition in the more than 200 booths that fill the convention center. Dealers are barely able to steal a bathroom break.

But at the V.I.P. preview on Wednesday, the mood was decidedly more muted, the aisles noticeably less crowded. (Art Basel said attendance was down by 9.4 percent compared with last year.)

"There's a lot of good art, but it's slow," said the New York collector Michael Hort, as he and his wife, Susan, walked through the fair, after buying two sculptures — each for under $20,000. "We don't have to decide right away, because when we come back, it'll still be there."

"Last year, if you looked at something and you did not get it in the first hour," he added, "it was sold."

Dealers and collectors in Miami Beach for Art Basel agreed that this year felt markedly different. The hotels were not full. You could even get a table at Joe's Stone Crab.
"I think everybody has taken a real deep breath before they came to the fair this year," said Adam Sheffer, the partner and sales director of Cheim & Read. "We're at this very interesting moment of learning how to be optimistic in an unpredictable environment."

Still, the important people in the art world were in evidence — there was the billionaire collector Steven A. Cohen checking out Judy Chicago's work in Salon 94 with his art adviser Sandy Heller, and the billionaire financier Kenneth Griffin admiring the works in Richard Gray's booth. Amy Cappellazzo of Sotheby's huddled in discussion with the dealer Barbara Gladstone; the Miami collectors Norman Braman and Martin Z. Margulies chatted in Luhring Augustine's booth; and people crowded into the private room off Thaddeus Ropac's booth to get a glimpse of a large Anselm Kiefer painting.

"There's action — people just take a little longer," the photography dealer Howard Greenberg said. "We had that moment when it was a feeding frenzy: Put something on hold, I'll give you an hour. Things have leveled off."

The reason, many agreed, had to do with several factors: fear of the Zika virus, a tentativeness in the art market around the presidential election and too many art fairs. But the result was a general sense of relief — turmoil in the world has winnowed out some of the dabblers, and purchases are more deliberative.

"I'm having more in-depth conversations with people — for me, it's much more rewarding," said Carol Greene of Greene Naftali. Where a sale used to transpire in minutes, Ms. Greene added, now her associates were spending a half-hour with each client before closing a deal. "People want to be confident in what they're buying," she said. "Even if an artist is hot, that's no longer enough."

Indeed, many dealers — their habitual positive spin notwithstanding — said that less traffic did not mean fewer transactions.

"Sold, sold, sold," David Zwirner said, pointing to works on the wall in his booth by Sherrie Levine, Kerry James Marshall and Yayoi Kusama. "We've seen dedicated collectors, great curators. It's a healthy market."

Similarly, Paul Kasmin sold a large painting by the Abstract Expressionist painter Lee Krasner — whose estate he has just begun to represent — to a private collector for $6 million.

Mr. Kasmin also for the first time featured work by the American artist Roxy Paine in his booth — a maquette of a commission that will measure 40 feet by 40 feet and that sold for $2 million. Buyers are now looking for three things, he said: "Rare, good or new."

Given the softening in the market, several dealers said that they felt more compelled than ever to bring their A game to the fair and that artists realized the importance of doing the same, "even if the paint isn't dry," said Lucy Mitchell-Innes of Mitchell-Innes & Nash, which featured work by the artists Eddie Martinez, Jay DeFeo and Sarah Braman. "It's not just dealers bringing around old wares," Ms. Mitchell-Innes added. "Now artists get it: It's an opportunity."

The Swiss Galerie Gmurzynska presented works by Russian avant-garde artists in its booth curated by the scholar Norman Rosenthal and designed by Claude Picasso. "It's a slow start — not the rush of the first few hours," said Mathias Rastorfer, the gallery's director. "But it is a healthy thing. We have to take a little bit of the hype out of things, so people can come back and make a considered decision rather than be the one that runs faster than everyone else."

Finding work fresh to market for the fair wasn't easy. Just as the auction houses had difficulty getting collectors to part with their prize pieces this fall, so did the dealers preparing for Art Basel. "Whatever I can get my hands on," Andrew Fabricant of Richard Gray Gallery said. "It's very hard. Everyone's having trouble getting material."

The fair also remained important for new galleries, like Off Vendome of Chelsea, which was admitted to the fair for the first time and featured the artist Jeanette Mundt. "It changes the way people see the gallery," said Matt Moravec, its founder.

Collectors said they were grateful for more space in which to make their decisions. "It's back to looking," said Sharon Coplan Hurowitz, a collector and art adviser, who called this "the quietest fair ever."

"This is the seismic shift we've all been waiting for," she added. "I've liked it."

And while much of the art world may not be happy about the prospect of a President Trump, a number of galleries speculated that he could be good for business. "The rich are going to do well, and the rich are the ones who buy art," the dealer Sean Kelly said, adding: "I abhor everything he stands for socially and economically. But I suspect, for the commercial art world, it could be very good."

https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/01/arts/design/at-art-basel-miami-beach-fewer-dabblers-but-deliberative-sales.html?_r=0

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

FINANCIAL TIMES

December 2, 2016

The Art Market: Miami sales and a ‘shopping channel’ for art

Melanie Gerlis

Carl Cheng's 'Erosion Machine No. 3' (1969) at Cherry and Martin, Art Basel Miami Beach © Jeff McClane

Dealers arrived in Miami with low expectations, but many were pleased by early business.

Art Basel’s 15th edition in Miami Beach opened in unenviable circumstances. A precarious political climate, local health warnings about the Zika virus and the reconstruction of the Convention Center hung over the fair. Plus, dealers say, gallery sales volumes are down by some 25 per cent this year.

In the event, the opening day crowd was quiet, though the appearance of rapper Sean Combs — also known as Puff Daddy — admiring works by Louise Bourgeois and Al Held on Cheim & Read’s booth livened things up. And many of the 269 exhibitors, who had come with low expectations, were pleased by the business done early on.

“The art world is in collective shock about the election result, but the mood is rather upbeat,” said Andrew Fabricant, partner at Richard Gray gallery. “There’s a disconnect, but it’s market boom time when rich people are getting richer,” he said. Fabricant’s early sales included Jim Dine’s imposing “Red Letter from the Siren” from 2015 for around $325,000, and there was interest in one of the more political works on his booth, Jack Pierson’s “Capitalist Decadence” (2016), priced at $250,000.

Works made in reaction to the political climate quickly found buyers early on. Imposing pieces by Rirkrit Tiravanija, made using the newspaper pages printed just after the Brexit vote in the UK and the presidential election result in the US, sold at Pilar Corrias and Gavin Brown's Enterprise respectively ($90,000-$130,000). "People buy contemporary art because it speaks to our own time," said Ron Warren, director at Mary Boone gallery. He brought an edition of Barbara Kruger's "Untitled (Secret)", made for an Art for Hillary auction in September, on sale for $100,000. The work takes a quote from the Austrian writer Karl Kraus (1874-1936) — "The secret of the demagogue is to make himself as stupid as his audience so that they believe they are as clever as he is" — to apply to today's post-truth environment.

Other early sales included some large-scale works — a sign of a confident market. Kehinde Wiley's "Equestrian portrait of Isabella of Bourbon" (2016) sold through Stephen Friedman gallery to a young, Nigerian collector for $300,000. Ibrahim Mahama's "TED IBO" (2015-16) went to a US museum through White Cube (€45,000). And an outdoor commission for Roxy Paine's "Maquette for Compression" (2016) sold through Paul Kasmin ($2m).

Kehinde Wiley's 'Equestrian portrait of Isabella of Bourbon' (2016) at Stephen Friedman Gallery sold for $300,000 at Art Basel Miami Beach This year's fair is the first one fully under Art Basel's Americas director Noah Horowitz. One highlight, he says, has been to make room for eight galleries — including Cherry and Martin from Los Angeles, Gregor Podnar from Berlin and São Paulo's Bergamin & Gomide — to graduate from the fair's subsidiary sections into its central selling zone. This may seem cosmetic, but it makes a huge difference to the galleries in question. "It's a giant jump, I'm very happy," said Mary Leigh Cherry, co-founder of Cherry and Martin. The move — which offers more space but also costs more — seems to have paid off. She made sales of works by all three of the UCLA-trained artists on her booth, including Carl Cheng's "Erosion Machine No. 3" (1969) for somewhere in the $10,000-$30,000 range.

One distinct feature of Art Basel in Miami is the sheer number of other fairs that cluster around the main event. More than 20 satellites add to the mix, with many still on the scene after several years (Nada since 2003; and Art Miami predates Art Basel by 12 years).

Particularly popular is Untitled, the only fair actually on the beach, adding to its anything-goes appeal (its fifth edition closes on December 4). Untitled invites experimentation — it has its own radio station instead of a stage for a talks programme, for example — and offers huge variety among its 128 booths.

Exhibitors like it, not least because they make sales, and quickly. New York's The Hole sold out completely in the fair's opening hours, including six works by tech-savvy artist Matthew Stone ($12,000-$20,000) and pieces by Brooklyn's Adam Parker Smith. His "Crush" (2012), a work that involves human hair blown by a fan, sold for $7,000. "We've had a great response. There's an energy in this fair from taking risks and having surprises," said gallery owner Kathy Grayson.

Away from Miami, we are in the midst of an unusual auction marathon through Paddle8 and Auctionata, the online businesses that merged earlier this year. Some 900 Christmas-ready items — including jewellery, design and fine art, with estimates ranging from €100-€360,000 — are on offer through 10 themed, live-streamed sales. They incorporate video, interviews with specialists and some pre-recorded out-takes. The sales run for a week (ending December 5) and are being filmed from a London townhouse — known as the "Paddle8 Pad" — with prospective bidders all online.

The point is to entertain while selling (think a sophisticated, high production shopping channel) and it is certainly more interesting than watching an auctioneer give cursory information on a work and call out prices until the gavel comes down.

Chief executive Thomas Hesse, who joined in September, describes this first iteration as "setting a standard for online collecting". The merged businesses will now operate as Paddle8, Hesse confirms.

The Artist Pension Trust (APT), which pools artists' works for later-life funds, has merged with its sister company MutualArt.com, an art world information provider. APT has nearly 13,000 works in its inventory; MutualArt has 500,000 registered members.

The plan is not to be another online art sales platform, said Al Brenner, chief executive of the merged MutualArt Group. "There are innate characteristics to art and its market that mean that, for the foreseeable future, the majority of sales will happen offline," he said. Both companies were co-founded by the Israeli tech entrepreneur Moti Schniberg (APT in 2003 and MutualArt in 2007). He steps down as chairman, though will be on the group's board. The new chairman is Mark Sebba, who was chief executive of the online fashion group Net-a-Porter for 11 years and is a trustee of London's Victoria & Albert Musuem. "He comes with a lot of experience, desire and ambition," Brenner said.

Art Basel Miami Beach, to December 4, artbasel.com; Untitled Miami, to December 4, art-untitled.com

https://www.ft.com/content/8540f19e-b87c-11e6-961e-a1acd97f622d

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

November 30, 2016

Five Artists to Watch at Art Basel in Miami Beach

Kelly Crow

A 3,000-gallon bowl of cereal, works by Lee Krasner and Anicka Yi and a charity auction hosted by Madonna are highlights of the contemporary art fair

MIAMI BEACH, Fla.—The big auction houses capped the fall art season with $1.1 billion in sales in New York two weeks ago, but collectors must still have a few blank walls left. How to tell? At least 77,000 people are expected this week at Art Basel in Miami Beach, a contemporary fair that is the year's last art-buying hurrah.

Since the auctions just tested values for blue-chip artists like Pablo Picasso, the stakes and atmosphere at this fair, which opened Wednesday and runs through Sunday, are somewhat more relaxed. It's commonplace to see billionaires and museum directors wearing flip-flops as they navigate the warren of 269 gallery booths in the Miami Beach Convention Center. Amid the $2.5 billion worth of works that insurer AXA Art estimates is on offer, the goal is to make an artistic discovery and reap the rewards before everyone else does.

Beyond the main fair, a playful vibe also imbues the 25 satellite art fairs—a record tally—that have set up shop around the city. Artist duo Jen Catron and Paul Outlaw intend to critique the profusion of satellite displays by swimming around in a 3,000-gallon, makeshift bowl of cereal located outside the Satellite Art Show, according to organizers. Over at the beachfront fair called Untitled, artists Rirkrit Tiravanija and Tomas Vu plan to operate a pop-up surf shop during Art Basel week. The store will be outfitted with 15 surfboards inscribed with Beatles lyrics as well as a shower shaped like a water tower where participants can rinse off after hitting the waves.

Elsewhere, other artists are offering aromatherapy sessions and free tattoos. At Wednesday's VIP preview, attendees included actress Charlotte Gainsbourg, directors Brett Ratner and Yi Zhou, as well as collectors Jean Pigozzi, Dasha Zhukova and Maja Hoffmann. And on Friday, Madonna shows up to host a charity auction at Argentine collector Alan Faena's new cultural center, Faena Forum.
No amount of glitz can mask the fact that the global art market has been sluggish. But Noah Horowitz, Americas director for Art Basel, said he thinks the November auctions gave the market a new floor. "We feel like a baseline has now been established, and we expect collectors to feel more confident," Mr. Horowitz said. "Challenging environments also tend to bring out the strongest art."

Some dealers brought artists who seem safe bets in good markets or bad. New York dealer Emmanuel Di Donna displayed $40 million worth of modern masters, including Spanish artist Joan Miró's 1976 "Painting," a portrait of what appears to be a gaping monster and a nude woman. The Spanish painter gave the work to his compatriot and fellow artist, Eduardo Chillida. Mr. Di Donna was offering it for $12 million. The dealer was asking $8 million for "The Explanation," a 1952 René Magritte depicting a wine bottle morphing into a carrot.

Galerie Gmurzynska, of Switzerland, hired a pair of art-world heavyweights—Picasso's son, Claude, and curator Norman Rosenthal—to design the slant-walled booth and choose the display of works by Kazimir Malevich and other members of the 20th-century Russian avant-garde.

Some dealers brought lesser-known artists, betting on the fair's reputation for transforming young or overlooked creators into international stars. A few highlights:

Los Angeles art advisor John Wolf stands before Lee Krasner's 'Another Storm' in the Paul Kasmin booth at Art Basel in Miami Beach *PHOTO: JOSH RICH*

LEE KRASNER

The artist better known as Jackson Pollock's widow could be making a market comeback of her own, if New York dealer Paul Kasmin has anything to do with it. Since signing on to represent the estate of this abstract expressionist earlier this month, the dealer said he had been considering the right canvas to "properly debut her" in Miami. His choice, which is on sale for $6 million? "After the Storm," a pomegranate-red-pink painting from 1963 that hints at the terror the artist felt during thunderstorms as a child. "She hated them," Mr. Kasmin said. No Krasners have ever sold at auction for more than $3.2 million.

http://www.wsj.com/articles/five-artists-to-watch-at-art-basel-in-miami-beach-1480529146

November 2, 2016

Keeping Lee Krasner Visible: Foundation Chooses New Gallery

By ROBIN POGREBIN

Lee Krasner in Hans Hoffman's studio, in the early 1940s.
Credit
Robert E. Mates and Paul Katz. Lee Krasner artwork: 2016 The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.
Courtesy Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York

Holdings of artworks by Lee Krasner, a leading — though largely unsung — Abstract Expressionist painter and the widow of Jackson Pollock, will now be represented by the Paul Kasmin Gallery, the Pollock-Krasner Foundation announced Wednesday.

"We want the work of Lee Krasner to be seen and appreciated as widely as possible and Robert Miller Gallery no longer has its Chelsea gallery space," said Samuel Sachs II, president of the foundation. "We've enjoyed a long relationship with the gallery, but we must move on, knowing that it's crucial to keep Lee Krasner's work in public view."

Established in 1985 through the bequest of Krasner, the foundation is the successor to the estates of both artists.

The Paul Kasmin Gallery — which represents the estates of Constantin Brancusi, William N. Copley and Robert Motherwell, among others — will present its first Krasner exhibition next fall.
"Lee Krasner is frequently overlooked," Paul Kasmin said in a statement, "but remains one of the great artists of the 20th century."

https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/03/arts/design/lee-krasner-paul-kasmin-gallery.html

Artforum
November 1984

NAMING PICTURES
CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN LEE KRASNER AND JOHN BERNARD MYERS

JOHN BERNARD MYERS

Lee Krasner, who died June 20, 1984, and whose traveling retrospective began at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and will open at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in December 1984, was a painter with a wide range of themes and techniques. Collage compositions, however, were one of her favorite media. She took a keen interest in how she titled her pictures, but like many artists she sometimes ran out of ideas as to what to call what. "Come for dinner," she would say, "I've some new things I want you to see." And I knew we would be having a delicious and hilarious conversation about naming the latest work. In recent years this occurred twice, once in 1977 and then again in 1981. On each of these occasions she had completed a suite of large-scale collages. We would sit and stare at the work in her studio on 79th Street talking about each piece, "freely associating" with the image before us to see if an arresting phrase or word would come forth. Sometimes this happened.

Lee Krasner, *Celestial Equator*, 1980.
Collage, oil paint, ink, and lithographic prints on paper, 22½ × 30". From the series "Solstice."

Our first collaboration began in 1946, when I suggested the title *The Mouse Trap* for one of the "Little Image" paintings. We were sitting in the kitchen; her husband, Jackson Pollock, was with us, when suddenly a wood rat scampered into the room. Pollock grabbed a broom, the rat headed toward the doorway to the living room, across which was placed the painting we had been looking at. The painting stopped the creature, down came the broom, and the rat was exterminated. I was reminded of a picture Meyer Schapiro had lectured on, a 15th-century triptych called *The Mouse Trap*, by Robert Campin. It had something to do with Christ and the trapping of souls. Since it wasn't a big rat we decided "mouse" would be more appropriate for the title. Perhaps the picture would "trap" the imagination of viewers.

Krasner's two remarkable suites of large-sized collages done in 1977 and 1981 were occasions for further titling sessions. The following dialogue between Lee and myself is accurate in spirit but not to the letter, since neither of our conversations was taped nor did I take notes in any detail. It was a marvelous game which we played for weeks.

It is a little difficult to reproduce Lee Krasner's tone in writing. Her wit, humor and fantasy were a fusion quite idiosyncratic to herself. Sometimes acerbic, even harsh, her way of speaking or arguing flashed, sparkled, went always straight to the point like a laser beam. Those of us who danced or laughed with her know that conversation with her was a sheer delight. I hope that the following dialogue catches in some way her presence.

John Bernard Myers: Why do artists fret about the titles they feel must be attached to their work?

Lee Krasner: It would be pleasant if we didn't have to worry about which picture was which, and if, somehow, each piece of work found its name through the public looking at it. However, the public is often not precise. Imagine a picture becoming known as "Whistler's Mother" if you were Whistler.

JBM: The worry, then, at bottom, is identification and the confusions that can easily occur if an identification is vague or insufficient.

LK: Or misleading. This is one of the problems brought about by titling with numbers, Arabic or Roman, or with letters, capital or lower case; confusion often erupts. The confusion can be confounded by clerical errors, incorrect file cards, look-alike photographs of closely related work, and false memory. Numbers and letters tend to create snarls, perhaps because they are so disembodied. But worse, suppose a large number of artists were to thus identify their work—let's not think of it. What a headache it would become!

JBM: During the organization of Jackson Pollock's *catalogue raisonné*, a process that went on for many years, the editors had to keep their wits about them vigilantly to make certain number 10 was not number 23, and so on. Did you like Pollock's taste for utilizing numbers?

LK: It would seem to be an ideal solution for abstract paintings to be abstractly titled. I am often tempted to do so, but do not, to avoid the perplexities already mentioned.

JBM: Have you considered naming a canvas by naming the major color or colors?

LK: If, as some scientists have argued, there exist over three million colors within the spectrum, most of them undetectable by the human eye, I suspect the results would be more vexing than ever.

JBM: What do you think of the titles of the Dadaist and Surrealist artists? Many of them, to say the least, are memorable.

LK: That is true, and perhaps more memorable than the works attached to them. Max Ernst's *The Little Tear Gland That Says Tic-Tac* [1920] is a great one-liner.

but for the life of me I can't remember what it looks like. Paul Klee's titles, are, of course, delightful little poems; the images accompany them nicely, for he was a bona fide fantast.

The titles of Salvador Dali are pretentious and essentially empty of serious meaning, since I don't believe he understood Freud in the least. All of which would be OK if Dali were an interesting painter, except for a few of the early ones, he isn't.

Ernst was a gifted artist, and his titles fit his work like gloves. The same is true of the best of René Magritte's paintings. They are stylish and often humorous in unexpected ways.

Truth to tell, I think most of the Dadaists and Surrealists were "idea" men and rather mediocre artists. The "ideas" have run thin. Duchamp has become so diluted that his work today looks both tired and passé. Few 20th-century artists have been so enthusiastically explicated.

JBM: Surely Picasso has been "explained" even more.

LK: Picasso needs no accounting for. The work says it all. Cubist titles are straightforward, even specific, and Picasso as well as Braque, Juan Gris, and other Cubists simply designated the objects or persons from which their images evolved: bottle and guitar, pipe and newspaper, head of Mme. X.

I may be wrong, but the problem of titling begins to get complicated with pure abstract art, starting as far back as 1906, and continuing with, say, the Rayonists in Kiev, and the nonrepresentations of Kandinsky.

JBM: Don't you believe titles can be helpful to viewer and critic? To mention Pollock again, it seems to me many of his free-association titles are arresting and suggest clues for contemplation. *The She-Wolf* [1943], for instance, and *Lavender Mist* [1950] both resonate in the mind.

LK: I agree. I also think certain modern works are given more presence, more projection through their titles. *The Palace at Four A.M.* [1932–33] by Alberto Giacometti would somehow not be the same without its splendid title. Ivan Le Lorraine Albright's very eccentric painting of a funeral door would be less than memorable if he hadn't called it *That Which I Should Have Done I Did Not Do* [1931–41]. When one remembers how slowly the Albright brothers worked, the way life passed them by in many ways, the title is a whole little novel or autobiography in itself. Remarkable.

JBM: Are you convinced certain abstract paintings are made deliberately obfuscating by their titles? Examples, please.

LK: The most sensational example would be Barney Newman's "Stations of the Cross" [1958–66]. Such a title can imply nothing but the Christian belief in the agony of Jesus Christ's torture, his mortification, and then the resurrection. This is a shared belief among Christians; they have faith in the miracle of Christ's ascension to heaven after the crucifixion, faith that he died on the cross to bring salvation to mankind. Newman, painting vertical bars and allowing no horizontals, destroys the potency of the symbol; the cross disappears along with the crucifixion. Thus the title becomes meaningless and the paintings pretentious. Modern artists who believe they have a direct pipeline to the Sublime ought instead to be teaching creationism in Arkansas. If the critics decide one's work is mystical, religious, transcendental, there's nothing one can do about it. But I think a rational understanding of life and the universe is more in keeping with what an artist of the 20th century *can* do. That's quite a lot. The Sublime will take care of itself.

JBM: Titled or untitled, abstract painting tends to have a tone of ambiguity, don't you think?

LK: I do, but so does good poetry and most of music. Ambiguity, however, is not the same as obscurantism, which, for me, is a sure sign of flawed intelligence.

JBM: Is it then a question of "reading" works of art—that is, that the maker wishes to be in touch with the receiver and offers a clue?

LK: All works of art must be "read," but because they are nonverbal, and because seeing is harder than listening, the artist shouldn't mind helping a little. I don't *try* to be ambiguous; I simply do the work. But I am aware that abstract art is elusive for those who cannot "read," or, shall I say, those who look but don't see.

JBM: Your 1977 exhibition had the overall title "Eleven Ways to Use the Words to See." In the next collage exhibition, in 1981, the whole show was called "Solstice." In the first show who was supposed to be doing the seeing?

LK: Me.

JBM: No one else?

LK: The audience—of course—but essentially it was what I was seeing that made the overall title relevant. The pictures are not, however, didactic, and I hope viewers will enjoy seeing them as much as I did making them.

JBM: What did you "see"?

LK: During a weekend visit, an old friend, the critic Bryan Robertson, while poking through the racks of my Long Island studio discovered several portfolios of drawings. I had done them so long ago I had quite forgotten them. They surprised me.

JBM: I gather Bryan liked the drawings and urged you to do something about them, perhaps to exhibit them in some sort of retrospective. But did you like them?

LK: What can I say? They did set me to thinking about my work—for instance, what it was I was feeling at the time I made the drawings, in what ways I, as an artist, differed now from then. They were, after all, produced between 1937 and 1940, while I was studying with Hans Hofmann.

JBM: There are three self-portraits from that early period done at least four years before which must also set you thinking when you look at them. They are concrete evidence of the changes in face and body, attitudes toward daily experience brought about by the passage of time. Do they disturb you?

LK: I don't think "disturb" is quite the word. They have been interesting to me as clues to former work methods, and my search for a style. They reveal to me my desire about how I wanted to paint. Probably all painters learn something by casting a cold eye over early work.

JBM: But do they reveal what you wanted to paint?

LK: The self-portraits and the 1937–40 portfolios make it clear that my "subject matter" would be myself. The "what" would be truths contained in my own body, an organism as much a part of nature and reality as plants, animals, the sea, or the stones beneath us.

The words "subject matter," let me quickly say, are a useful verbal ploy for discussion. There is no separation between style, or forms, and so-called "subject matter."

JBM: Do you make no separation of mind from body?

LK: Never! Such a dualism is the curse of Western religions. It is unscientific and from my point of view the cause of much that is retrogressive in all civilizations.

JBM: In other words, you are attempting to express directly, without fuss, the essential unity of body-mind, the unity of man and nature.

LK: I hope so. But artists are not philosophers, and can only afford small doses of introspection. A little is surely forgivable. For instance, looking at the self-portraits, I am forced to think of time and its inexorable passage. Was I any different then from what I am now? The old drawings in the portfolios brought this home to me even more poignantly.

JBM: Are you the same? What does the title "Eleven Ways to Use the Words to See" mean to you?

LK: All of the pictures in that exhibition were collages, a recycling of the 1937–40 drawings, most of them nudes of a studio model. I used charcoal on paper approximately 31 by 25 inches. The first collage of the new work is called *Imperative* [1976]—meaning I experienced the need not just to examine these drawings, but a peremptory desire to change them, a command, as it were, to make them new. *Past Conditional* [1976] describes a pause, a hesitation in which I am asking myself, is there a precedent which must be fulfilled? What kind of bargain am I trying to strike? Am I being induced by habit to follow a stimulus other than a natural, spontaneous spur to action? *Imperfect Subjunctive* [1976] denotes an action going on, but not completed, and very dependent on other possibilities. The subjunctive, which we don't really use in English, is the mood of doubt, uncertainty, feeling, will, or desire. It expresses something which is rarely a hard fact.

JBM: Are you trying to say you could not know what would happen to these drawings after tearing and cutting them up for use in collage?

LK: How could I help thinking it might be a mistake to slice them up? Why destroy perfectly good drawings? But the next title gives you a clue. I make the decision to go ahead. *Present Conditional* [1976], a big one, 72 by 108 inches, with lots of white, near-white, blurred overlayers of white, is a signal that the action has occurred, but it is still conditional. *Imperfect Indicative* [1976] is replete with the past; you can see quite clearly much of how I worked in the early days, as it really looked then.

JBM: I am amused by the title *Future Perfect* [1976]. For instance, if we say, "I shall arrive at your house in the country, before you get started," the meaning seems quite clear. Yet if you wanted to write a short story, all of it in the future perfect, it would boil down to a series of unfulfilled wishes. But in your *Future Perfect*, the future and the past seem to collide.

LK: I'm glad you got a notion of what I meant. Let's hasten over *Past Perfect Subjunctive* [1976], *Present Subjunctive* [1976], and *Future Indicative* [1976–77]

Each of these titles is self-explanatory, denoting the continuous experimental nature of the whole series.

JBM: But I have not asked you about the most ambitious collage in the suite. It is your triptych, *Past Continuous* [1976], consisting of three panels, one 72 by 48 inches, the middle one 72 inches square, and the third, 72 by 60 inches. Again there is a grid, but the largest panel contains a square of flat, scuffed red, and irregularly placed rectangles broken by swooping arcs. The early drawings are visible, yet more than any other of the collages in this series they have been subsumed into the picture plane and form a neat unity. Is this a Proustian insight that the past has been recovered?

LK: It would be pretentious of me to compare my modest search with the grand revelations Proust experienced when indeed he discovered a way to recover the past, and made it into a work of art.

JBM: But this was a journey into the interior of the self.

LK: Actually, I'm not that subjective. I think this is apparent in my next series, where again I utilized old materials for new purposes, this time a bunch of lithograph discards.

JBM: What exactly was on your mind when you were producing the "Solstice" collages?

LK: What was running through my *head* was another title—alas, famous—*The Rite of Spring*.

JBM: Pictures to illustrate Stravinsky's music?

LK: No. [Loudly] No. I don't illustrate. I was thinking about the seasons and the ways they change. In particular, I was musing about the equinox, equinoctial transformations, the first day of spring, the beginning of autumn.

JBM: Are these pictures, then about weather, the climate?

LK: Again, no. What was on my mind was my same concern with old work, things I did years ago, things I've discarded—or thought I had.

JBM: What has that to do with meteorology or the movement of planets?

LK: Well, the year is divided into cycles, four seasons, and the cycles recur over and over—endlessly. Yet the weather, even the climate, is never exactly the same. As an artist I realize I, too, am always the same, and yet I am always different. I change, my work changes—but both remain within cycles that are peculiar to me.

JBM: Atmospheric change is one thing, art is another.

LK: Art is always about something, especially abstract art.

JBM: But isn't abstract art basically concerned with forms and what you do with them, or colors as expressive in themselves?

LK: Abstract art in that case would be very much as E.H. Gombrich claims it is: designs that come from other designs. And since there are no designs or even patterns that don't have a long genealogy, thousands of years of lineage—

JBM: [interrupting] But surely you don't agree in any way with Gombrich when it comes to 20th-century abstract painting or sculpture.

LK: How could I agree and be an abstract painter? The good professor is right when it comes to dissecting the nature and impulses, psychological, social, or biological, behind designs and patterns. What he is incapable of imagining is that a contemporary artist, contemplating the forms which come to him or her, could arrive at highly personal and serious works, as inventive in their way as any other expression known in past art.

JBM: Do you mean by "contemplating" something like meditation?

LK: Let's not get too heavy. As I've said, I'm not a mystic and not a philosopher. I deal with what's in front of me—in this case a bunch of old pictures I've never quite put out of my mind, nor destroyed. They were very present for me.

JBM: Gertrude Stein never threw away a word of anything she wrote. She maintained that everything could be used in a lifetime.

LK: To tell the truth, I've painted a few stinkers I've gotten rid of. Is there an artist who hasn't?

JBM: Plenty.

LK: [ignoring the remark] Perhaps, since you like to cook, you take delight in inventing new dishes with leftovers. There's a little of that in me. "Waste not, want not."

JBM: Let us be candid. Don't you think your motive lies deeper than frugality? Your largest oil paintings in the past tend to be opulent, some even extravagant. May we confront your true motive, your deeper desire?

LK: If I reveal what that is, I'm sure to be misunderstood. Artists are better off when they keep their mouths shut. What do you suspect is my deeper motive?

JBM: Pleasure. I don't think you like to do anything that doesn't afford you a grand time while doing it.

LK: Well, that's true. I see no point in grinding out work unless one's heart is in it.

JBM: Another motive I think critics have missed in your

Lee Krasner, *Between Two Appearances*, 1981.
Oil and paper collage on canvas, 47 × 57¼". From the series "Solstice."

work is the element of humor.

LK: I would hope there are a few smiles; I would like to think that what I do is as good-humored in approach as, for example, Miró and Matisse. Humor is an aspect of many Modern paintings, even the most abstract. But let's draw the line there. Art is not entertainment; pictures tend to mean many things to different people.

JBM: Let's get back to where we began, titling. How do you understand "Solstice"? What does it mean?

LK: The solstice means a turning point, a culmination; it indicates stopping points. It is the furthest limit, a crisis. It marks an interval of time between two appearances. This happens when the sun is farthest from the equator and appears to stand still, either June 21 or December 22. In the polar areas, you get 24 hours of sunshine, or 24 hours of darkness.

JBM: How did you learn all this?

LK: I looked it up in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. I also read in this same dictionary two sentences which struck me as relevant to myself. The editors use quotations to illustrate word meanings and one is from a sermon by John Donne, "A Christian hath no solstice . . . where he may stand still and go no further." I, of course, substituted the word "artist" for "Christian" and thought Donne was correct. But then there was another quote, this one from Ralph Waldo Emerson, "There is in every constitution a certain solstice," and I thought—that's also me, I am my own solstice.

JBM: It seems to be that each aphorism contradicts the other.

LK: When Walt Whitman was accused of contradicting himself, he answered, "So does the universe."

JBM: Are these verbal gymnastics what you mean by meditating on your work? How do these titles tie it up?

Lee Krasner, *Twelve Hour Crossing, March Twenty-first*, 1981.
Oil and paper collage on canvas, 68 × 75". From the series "Solstice."

LK: My titles are simply part of an overall image. One title is the date of the solstice, two others are of the equinoxes. Two have to do with zones of the earth's surface, degrees describing where the sun is at. Three titles refer to the drama of the solstice. I thought of what I was doing, making something new out of the old, as a parallel corresponding to renewal in nature, a reflection of it.

JBM: Is that why you are making collages instead of paintings?

LK: I long ago asked myself what collages can do. The Cubists made collages to emphasize the ambiguity of flat surfaces, to indicate volume, even depth, in order to abolish conventional perspective. The Surrealists used collage for purposes of surprise and irrationality, sometimes to fool the eye. Other serious artists, Kurt Schwitters for instance, composed abstract structures with refuse, *Merz*, and still others created lyric sensory images, as Anne Ryan did so enchantingly. My collages have to do with time and change, and are for me the appropriate means to express such experiences. I have other things in my head when I paint, or make new prints, or do a mosaic.

JBM: Once again, let's get back to your titles. Don't you think some of them are esoteric? For instance, *Jonas Gourd* [1979]?

LK: That refers to a short-lived herb described in the Bible which came and went during solstice. I also have *The Solstitial Beetle* [1980], an insect that becomes very noisy during this period. *Buffon's Parakeet* [1980] is sometimes called the Sun or Solstice Parakeet, and lives exactly on the equator, near the area where Venezuela meets Guyana, at the upper part of the Amazon. He is mostly brilliant yellow, but is also marked with other very vivid colors. Wouldn't it be marvelous to see a flock of such birds?

JBM: Do you think such titles will cause your audience to think of you as some sort of bookish bluestocking?

LK: Come, come. I've spent at least half my life in the country, near the ocean. I still sit on my back porch observing both sky and water, and I see a great deal of sky, the evening star at clear twilight. I can observe when the water is high and when it is low. I notice the colors of spring and fall; hence *Vernal Yellow* and *Autumnal Red* [both 1980.] *Highest Tide* and *Lowest Tide* [both 1980]—to mention more titles—are daily experiences for me.

JBM: Am I to understand, then, that these pictures are your metaphors for such observations?

LK: Yes. But as you can see, I'm an almost completely nonverbal type. I hope my pictures will carry my notions without further explanation. By the way, are you intending to make some sort of written "interview" out of our talks?

JBM: Yes, an imaginary one. You see, I don't think you're as inarticulate as you would like us to believe.

LK: But if this is an "imaginary interview," remember that I'm responsible for nothing but my work, so write what you please. As I mentioned before, artists tend to talk too much. ■

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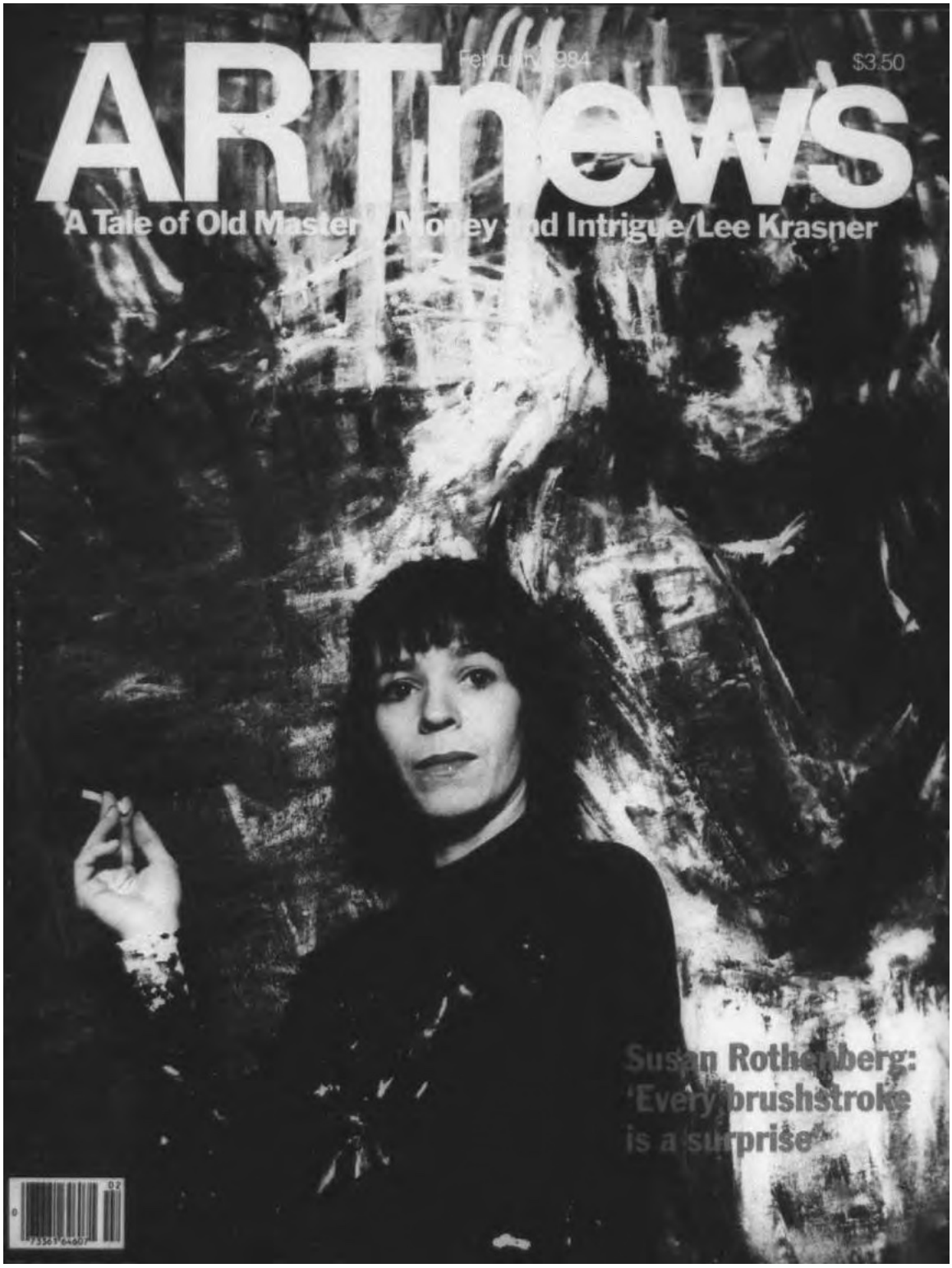

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Cover: Susan Rothenberg. Photograph © Harvey Stein 1984. For an article about the artist, see page 46.

LEE KRASNER'S PAST CONTINUOUS

BY ELLEN G. LANDAU

OF THE FIRST GENERATION OF ABstract Expressionist painters, Robert Motherwell, Willem de Kooning and Lee Krasner are the only members still alive and actively at work. By coincidence, retrospective exhibitions of the work of all three artists have recently opened: Motherwell's last October at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, Krasner's the same month at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston and De Kooning's in two parts in December at the Whitney Museum of American Art. But whereas for both men these new shows were simply the latest in a series of retrospectives mounted during the course of their distinguished careers, the show just held in Texas (and opening February 16 at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art) is only Krasner's second retrospective ever—and her first in America. Until very recently, as a matter of fact, although she has been painting professionally for over 50 years, Krasner has been at best summarily treated, and often left out altogether, by historians of the "heroic years" of the New York School.

It seems that her other, better-known role—as Jackson Pollock's wife—has made it extremely difficult for Krasner to achieve artistic recognition of her own. Prior to her relationship with Pollock, which began in 1942 and lasted until his tragic death in 1956, Krasner was developing at an impressive rate into an accomplished painter. Her work in the late '30s and early '40s, during the time she was a student at the Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts and employed on the WPA Mural Project, showed an unusually advanced understanding of modernist European concepts. She was numbered among only 12 women out of 71 artists

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Her first American retrospective presents Krasner as an artist in her own right. Dismissed at one time as 'the wife who also paints,' she has now emerged as one of the founders of Abstract Expressionism, which remains for her, after 30 years, a vital medium of self-exploration

featured in 1944 in Sidney Janis' landmark book and exhibition *Abstract and Surrealist Art in America*. Two years previously, the influential painter, theorist and art entrepreneur John Graham had also chosen to include her in his assessment of who was up and coming on the New York art scene in a show titled "French and American Painting" organized for the design firm McMillen & Company. It was through this presentation, whose stated purpose was to prove that young American painters could stand up to great European artists, that Krasner met Pollock.

In 1960 Lee Krasner told an interviewer, "Unfortunately, it was most fortunate to know Jackson Pollock," summing up her historical position and the dilemma caused by her connection with the most celebrated American painter of the 20th century. As Pollock's fame grew, Krasner increasingly came to be dismissed as merely "the wife who also paints." Although for many years Krasner voluntarily submerged her work to a certain extent in order to promote his, it did continue to develop; and it is now beginning to be grudgingly acknowledged that her own breakthrough series—the "Little Images" of 1946-49—although somewhat less momentous than Pollock's poured paintings of the same years, not only may have been influenced by those works but may have influenced them as well. It has also been recognized, moreover, that certain aspects of the "Little Images" explore concerns that prefigure color-field abstraction.

"Abstract Expressionism: The Formative Years," an exhibition organized in 1978 for the Whitney Museum by Gail Levin and Robert Carleton Hobbs, included Krasner for the first time as an equal collaborator in the important generative phase of that style and stimulated the realization that she is the only member of the group who had direct contact with all the persons and influences seen as key to the evolution of New York School art. Although not represented in the famous 1951 *Life* magazine photograph of the "Irascible Eighteen," whose cast of characters has been canonized as making up the leaders of the Abstract Expressionist movement, Krasner shared with those artists the same motivations and interests and the same early struggle for success. Given the symbiotic nature of her association with Pollock—the member of the group credited by the others with artistically "breaking the ice"—she might well be acknowledged not just as a pioneer but also as a catalyst in the development of a new mode.

Lee Krasner at her summer home in East Hampton.

COLLECTION GORDON HAMPTON, LOS ANGELES

*In **Cornucopia** (1958, oil on canvas, 90½ by 70 inches) Krasner demonstrates a color sense reminiscent of Matisse and a gestural quality evocative of Pollock.*

One of the foremost proponents, and certainly the most vocal, of a revisionist view of Krasner has been the critic Barbara Rose, who in the past decade has written articles on Krasner in both popular-circulation and art-audience magazines, has produced and directed a film about her and has redefined, in a small but highly publicized 1981 show at New York University's Grey Art Gallery, Krasner's "working relationship" with her more famous spouse. "The pair made history" is how a typical review (ostensibly of Krasner's work) appraised their partnership in 1958, "one with commotion—Jackson Pollock; the other with devotion—Lee Krasner who became his wife." Some 20 years later, during which time the women's movement irrevocably altered many such preconceptions, Rose proclaimed that the time had come to reassess Krasner in a broader historical perspective. The final maneuver in her well-orchestrated campaign to achieve this goal—Krasner's first U.S. retrospective—was planned to open on the artist's 75th birthday.

In addition to offering a comprehensive overview of Krasner's mature work from the 1940s to the present, Rose's show sets up Krasner's preparatory years as a paradigm of the education of an American painter of that generation. The portion of the show devoted to Krasner's education, a component funded separately by the Rockefeller Foundation (the rest was sponsored by Shell Companies Foundation), traces her early growth from practical and academic training at the Women's Art School of Cooper Union and at the National Academy of Design in the 1920s, through her experiences at the Hofmann School during the Depression, to working on the Federal Art Project and allying herself with radical thinking in art and politics. Many of her contemporaries shared at least some of these experiences; the task implicit for the viewer of Krasner's retrospective is to try to discern why her career turned out so different.

For starters, Krasner's personality was far from typical for a girl of her upbringing in that era. She remembers that her Russian immigrant parents neither encouraged nor discouraged her desire to become an artist, although her mother periodically lectured her for being too "independent-minded." Scrawled on one of the documents included in the educational section of the show, Krasner's 1928-29 National Academy record card, is the clearly annoyed notation "This student is always a bother—insists on having her own way despite school rules," and in the catalogue essay accompanying the exhibition Rose puts forth the thesis that a primary reason for Krasner's lack of proper recognition and success over the years has been the artist's aggressive, often belligerent personality and—with one major exception—her refusal to do anything to please anyone but herself. Her independent-mindedness is graphically illustrated in the show's almost defiant self-portrait of around 1930, which Krasner painted for what she knew would be an unsympathetic committee of her teachers in order to achieve promotion to life drawing at the academy. The visitor to the show is also able to experience her contentiousness more directly in Rose's filmed interview, *Lee Krasner: The Long View*.

A crack in Krasner's carefully nurtured self-reliant facade is introduced by Hans Hofmann's remembrance of his pupil and friend during the years she was with Pollock: "Lee was very feminine," Hofmann once recalled, "and gave in all the time." Krasner herself has admitted that for a long while after she met Pollock her own work seemed "irrelevant"; "I couldn't do enough for him," she has said.

Priding herself on being her own person did not prevent Krasner from knowing how and when to accept outside influence. In fact, she seems to have taken the ideas and accomplishments of others as a challenge. Barbara Rose identifies Hofmann and Graham as Krasner's mentors. Unanimously agreed on by friends who knew her well in those days, such as Lillian Kiesler, May Rosenberg, Ilya Bolotowsky and Fritz Bultman, is the fact that Krasner also perceived very early the importance of making the most of her friendships. For example, they point out that, in what was to prove a rehearsal for her alliance with Pollock, she benefited noticeably from the cosmopolitanism and savoir-faire of her first love, a portrait painter named Igor Pantuhoff whom Krasner met at the academy. Pantuhoff, a White Russian émigré and a cousin of the deposed czar, was an odd but astute choice for a tenaciously ambitious girl from Brooklyn. Interestingly, from the point of view of its implications for the future, Pantuhoff broke off their liaison in the late '30s, when Krasner's ability and success as an artist had begun to outstrip his.

In the film *Lee Krasner: The Long View*, the artist flatly states, "All along the line decisions are being made." Without a doubt, the most important decision of Krasner's personal and professional life was to love and believe in Jackson Pollock. Most observers confirm that this decision was to drain her physically, emotionally and artistically. One critic has likened Krasner's life with Pollock to an obstacle race; based on Krasner's liking for the Rimbaud poem of that name, Rose characterizes these years as "a season in hell." Rose believes that one reason Krasner never bailed out was that she had taken to heart Hofmann's frequent reit-

eration of Matisse's advice: "Study the reigning master." Immediately on meeting Pollock in 1942, and long before anyone else realized it, Krasner knew that was what he was destined to be. She has recalled that her first encounter with his work, in conjunction with Graham's McMillen show, convinced her that, although still unknown, Jackson Pollock was "a living force" that adventurous painters were going to have to reckon with.

Krasner has described her initial discovery of modernist innovation in painting in the works of Matisse and Picasso, which she saw at the Museum of Modern Art during its early years, as constituting "a freeing, an opening of a door." Comparing her experience of Pollock's work with the earlier impact of these heroic figures, Krasner explained, "Once more I was hit that hard with what I saw." Some years later, in a reprise of what obviously struck her as an apt metaphor, Krasner went on to characterize Pollock as a rare individual, one who "appears on the horizon and opens a door *wide*," noting that for a long time to come others can "live" where that door has led. She has defined what Pollock did for her as helping to free her from preconceived ideas about art and nature, allowing her to accept her own personal experience as the primary basis for her painting. Jackson Pollock is notorious for having been nonverbal, but in a rare interview in 1956 with Seldon Rodman he expressed what he and Krasner must have spoken about: "Painting is a state of being. Painting is self-discovery. Every good painter paints what he is."

Throughout the years, by dint of repetition in numerous interviews she has given, Krasner has embraced Pollock's esthetic principle as her own. "I am preoccupied with trying to know myself in order to communicate with others," she has said. "Painting is not separate from life." Or, similarly, "The key is what is within the artist. The artist can only paint what he or she is about." Further, in her pugnacious way, Krasner has turned this credo into a challenge to those who would discuss her art, charging art historians and critics: "My painting is so biographical, if anyone can take the trouble to read it."

On one level such a reading of her art might involve sorting out the visible tracks left by her mentors and heroes, and this is not difficult even for the relatively casual viewer of the retrospective exhibition. Paintings clearly in the mode of Matisse, Picasso, Graham and Mondrian are all included, in some cases side by side with their sources of inspiration, but Rose took pains in the catalogue and large panels of text on the wall (which, unfortunately, are in the educational section only) to explain Krasner's integration of their innovations into a flexible vocabulary she could manipulate to her own use.

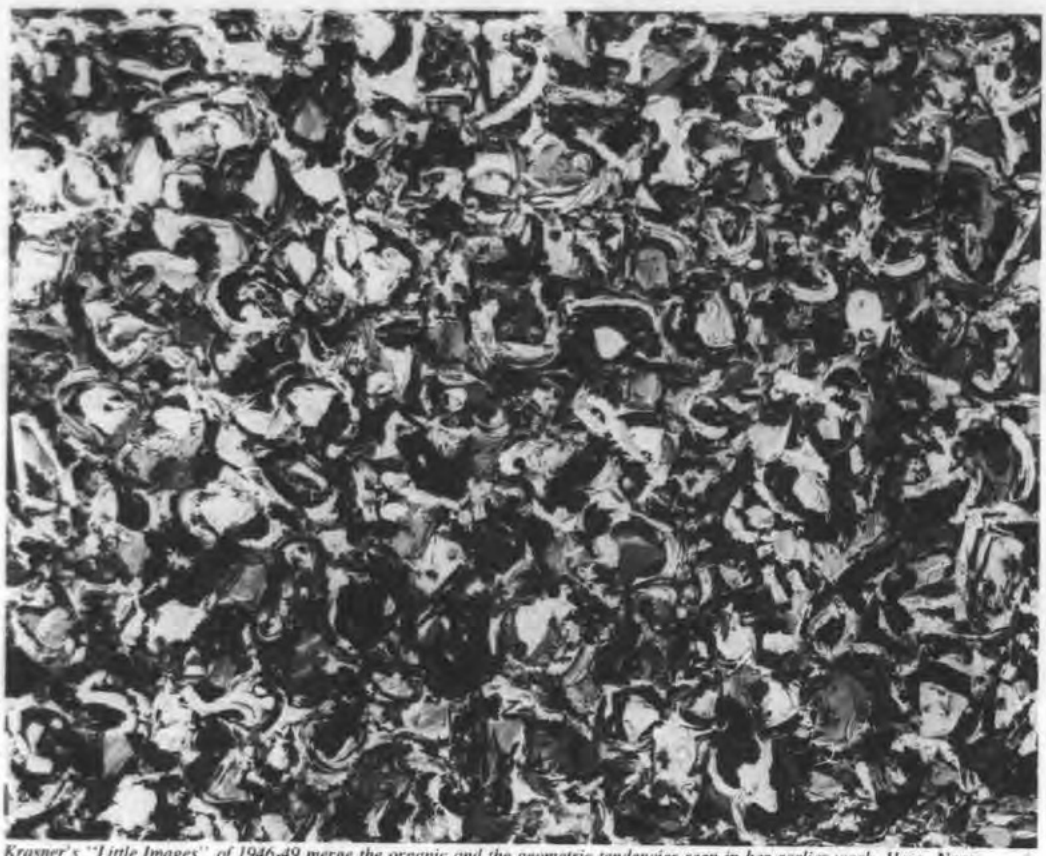
Much has been made of the courageous originality of Arshile Gorky's self-imposed "apprenticeships" to modern European masters in the hostile climate of Social Realism. In the retrospective, Krasner's approach and even some of her actual paintings of the late '30s and early '40s are revealed to the educated eye to be strikingly similar to those of Gorky, who was a good friend. Her most important teacher, Hofmann, is celebrated for having instilled the notion that young painters should strive toward what critic Harold Rosenberg once dubbed "the tradition of the new." Original work, Hofmann maintained, should emerge from an alloy of one's own ideas and the best features of others'. In her catalogue essay, Rose pointed out, as she has a number of times, that Krasner's understanding of this concept was actually more radical than Hofmann's. According to the critic Clement Greenberg, an astute observer of the New York art scene, in that period Krasner had "the best eye in the country for the art of painting."

Although Pollock is inexplicably not identified in the exhibition as a major component of Krasner's artistic education, no viewer of the Krasner retrospective could fail to recognize his influence on her work. The autobiographical roots of her artistic impulse are especially evident, and poignant, in the alternately ferocious and lyrical gestural paintings on view from the period during which she was trying to come to personal and artistic terms with his loss. In works such as the formidable *The Eye is the First Circle* of 1960, Krasner seems almost to have been acting as a medium, expressing the ongoing and to all appearances death-defying continuity of their relationship. Painted in a palette restricted to umber and white (which considering her predilection for sensuous color must have been a form of conscious or subconscious self-abnegation), the works of this period have an explosive quality, projecting the turmoil and rage that stimulated their creation.

COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

Krasner's early self-portrait (ca. 1930, oil on linen, 30⅛ by 25⅛ inches) illustrates her almost defiant independent-mindedness.

A less obvious but nonetheless credible view of the intertwining of the events of Krasner's life with her art concerns the apparently long-lasting repercussions of the political experiences that complemented her art training during her formative years. Like so many of her peers in New York in the '30s, Krasner, although never a Communist Party member, was a strong leftist sympathizer. Despite the fact that she was a Trotskyist and disagreed vehemently with Marx's prescription that art should be realistic in order to appeal to the masses, one important feature of Marxism—its dialectical methodology—has had an enduring effect on her. An examination of the chronological progression of her



COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

Krasner's "Little Images" of 1946-49 merge the organic and the geometric tendencies seen in her earlier work. Here, **Noon**, *1947, oil on linen, 24 by 30 inches.*

work in the show reveals that it is not successive but rather cyclical—the rhythm of nature, Krasner points out. Furthermore, many of her cycles were triggered in opposition to what preceded them, with their seemingly antithetical polarities to be resolved in short order into a fresh and original synthesis.

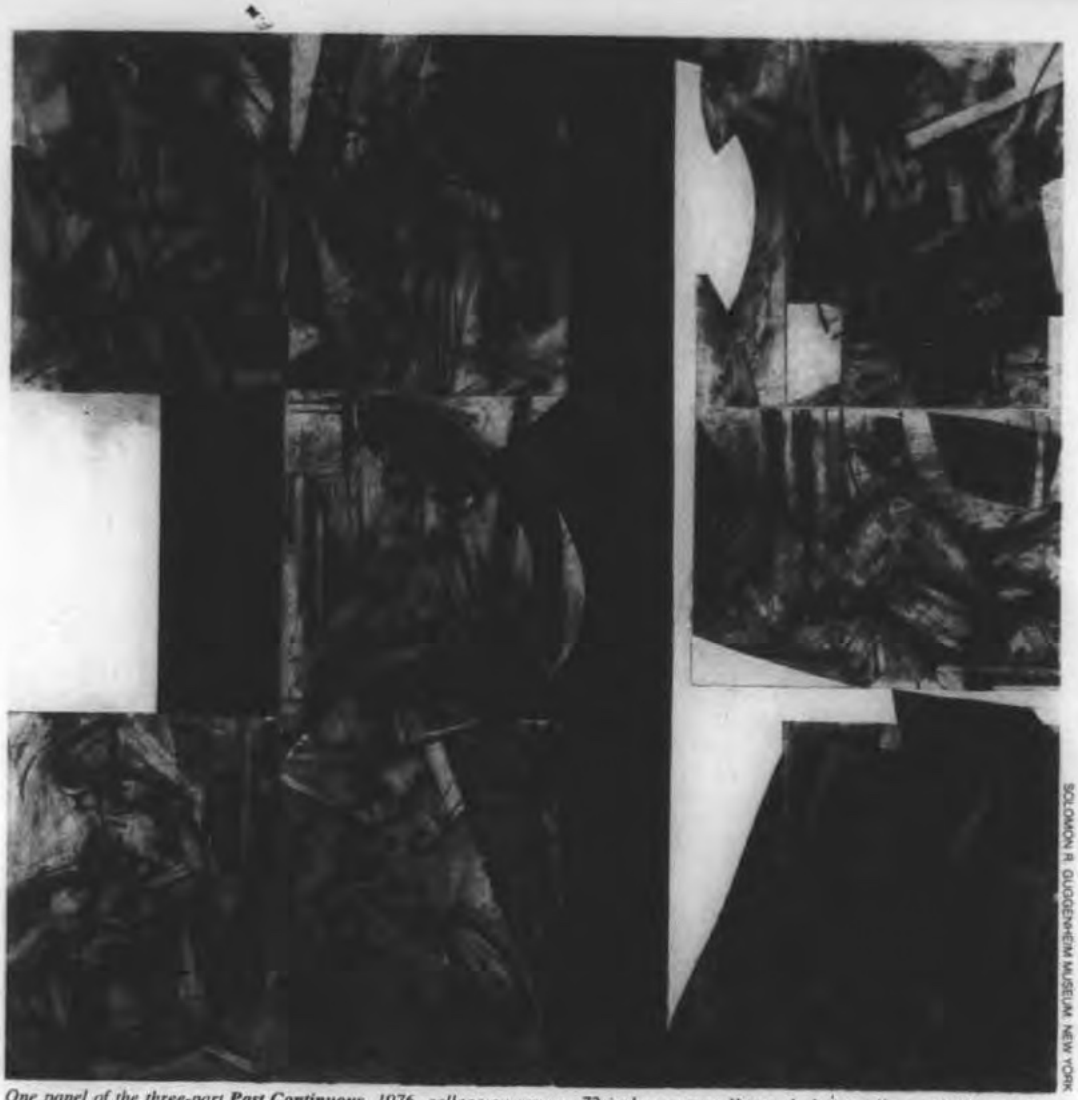
One of Krasner's favorite quotations from literature, a quatrain by T. S. Eliot, may shed some light on her unusual artistic trajectory:

> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time.

Krasner has explained her own dialecticism in a kind of gloss on these lines: "I am never free of the past. I have made it crystal clear that I believe the past is part of the present which becomes part of the future. I believe in continuity."

Krasner's "Little Images," such as *Noon* or *Nightlife* (both 1947), by merging her pendulum swings up to that point between the organic and geometric (Matisse vs. Mondrian), constitute a summation as well as an anticipation, making them pivotal to any interpretation of her work within the esthetic perimeters she herself has defined. Probably the most radical demonstrations, however, of her belief in the continued viability of the past in the present are found in the two cycles of collage she went through, separated by more than 20 years. In the mid-1950s and again in the late '70s, Krasner produced original new work by literally destroying (cutting up) and then reusing elements from her own old drawings and paintings. In the first set she even employed some of Pollock's discards. One of the most striking works in the exhibition, which was included in the more recent, highly acclaimed collage series shown at Pace Gallery in 1977, Krasner aptly titled *Past Continuous*. In such works as this large collage (which now belongs to the Guggenheim Museum), she moved from mining the esthetic potential of the innovations of others to brilliantly synthesizing her own.

One important result of dialectical thinking is the habit of self-criticism it encourages. Krasner's ongoing self-evaluation—a trait she shared with her husband—seems to have helped her to avoid a pitfall that snared many of her colleagues: hers is definitely not a reputation based on endless variations on the same image. A comparison of the evolution of her work displayed in this show with that of Motherwell's in his concurrent retrospective underlines this point. In the '30s Krasner was probably the most advanced of any of the nascent Abstract Expressionists, but, paradoxically, this was



SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, NEW YORK

One panel of the three-part ***Past Continuous****, 1976, collage on canvas, 72 inches square. Krasner's large collages of this period integrate elements cut from her old works.*

to prove an inhibiting factor later on. In the subsequent decade and a half, when Motherwell, Adolph Gottlieb, Franz Kline, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman and Clyfford Still, for example, were evolving and refining their famous trademark styles, Krasner was now struggling, pushing in different directions and countering almost every advance with a self-defeating retreat. But whereas the progress of her male peers was reduced for the most part to running in place in the '60s, Krasner was just beginning to hit her stride.

"Abstract Expressionism: The Formative Years," the show organized six years ago, proved that Krasner could hold her own with the others in the context of the initial phase of their joint creation of a new style. The obvious purpose of the current Krasner exhibition was to go further, demonstrating that she has been able to maintain a level of quality on a par with her more celebrated colleagues. An all too easy inference from this much-needed new look at Krasner's position might be that her relation to Pollock should be recognized as one of total parity. Such a facile claim, however, could not be supported by historical evidence or by an objective look at Krasner's work and would not do justice to the reputation of either artist.

Those who knew Krasner and Pollock together remember that, despite their radically different ethnic and artistic backgrounds and personalities, they were (in the words of the wife of William Baziotes) "psychologically embedded" in each other. Even more important than the points of convergence that can be discovered between them is the certainty that they benefited the most from their differences. Despite the fact that we now recognize what Krasner gave to Pollock not only on a personal but also on an artistic

COURTESY ROBERT MILLER GALLERY

The Eye is the First Circle *(1960, oil on canvas, 92¼ by 191⅞ inches), which Krasner painted four years after Pollock's death, seems to express the ongoing continuity of their relationship.*

level (primarily in the direction of order and refinement, according to Rose), it still remains that her stamp on him is a good deal less obvious than the major impact he had on her career and work.

What is most fascinating for viewers of the Lee Krasner retrospective, however, is not to pick out the similarities between her and Pollock but to try to identify what characteristics differentiate these two artists from each other, even at the points where they appear the most alike. One clue might come from an investigation of the influence of Krasner's other heroes on her work. In describing one of her greatest influences the artist has said that "the impact of the first Matisses I saw is still with me. It has always been a part of the background of my work." The spectator can find this passion (which was reinforced by Hofmann's similar high regard for Matisse) in Krasner's occasional employment of a divisionist touch, her almost oriental feel for pattern, her similar penchant for floral forms and of course the fresh, surprising, highly sensuous and sometimes intentionally dissonant color sense displayed again and again in the works on view. The only effect on Pollock that Krasner will readily admit she had was to transmit to him her love of Matisse, although the decorative was never to become such an integral component of Pollock's sensibility.

Rose finds an important wellspring of Krasner's mature style in the extremely physical cubist drawings she did at the Hofmann School before she knew Pollock. This accords

with Rose's frequently expressed interpretation that the preeminent formal innovation of Abstract Expressionism was the discovery that major art could be made by enlarging drawings to a big surface and creating them directly with paint. In Krasner's 1938-40 charcoal nudes, a representative sampling of which is included in the education section—they also turn up later as pieces of the 1977 collage paintings—there is an emphasis on the rhythmic movement of form as well as the rhythmic movement of execution (the physical motion of her arm and wrist as it moved across and around the paper). Piet Mondrian, whom Krasner met through their participation in the American Abstract Artists group in the early '40s, praised her strong innate rhythm, an assessment comparable to Thomas Hart Benton's appraisal of the major strength of his student Jackson Pollock, and the two partners clearly reinforced the gestural expression of energy in each other.

But Krasner's rhythm, which alternates noticeably between the aggressive and the lyrical, has a contrapuntal feel in comparison to Pollock's. Part of this is no doubt due to Pollock's involvement of more of his body in his gestures. Another related factor was pointed out by Marcia Tucker in 1973 while she was putting together Krasner's large works for an exhibition at the Whitney. Studying the movement in Krasner's oversize action paintings from 1953 to 1973, Tucker realized that they must have been painted from right to left, almost as if Krasner were writing in Hebrew, a youthful skill the artist thought she had repressed. (After Tucker pointed this out, Krasner realized that her "Little Images" had been, unconsciously, painted this way too.)

Krasner in her studio.

As a child filled with stories of her Russian grandmother's powers of prophecy, Krasner remembers that she devised her own language for secret message writing. This led to a fascination with all types of calligraphy—Hebrew, Arabic, Persian, Oriental, Celtic—and the magical, oracular implications of the written alphabet, much later enabling her to base paintings on her own automatic *écriture* (as Graham called it), or personal improvisatory handwriting. Indeed, many of Krasner's most impressive works in the show seem as much written as drawn.

Another important distinction between Krasner and Pollock has to do with her relative deemphasis of content in her paintings. For example, although she and Pollock both on their own became interested in Picasso in the late 1930s, Krasner most admired Picasso's formal innovations while Pollock was mesmerized by his psychological force. Krasner's deep-seated antipathy toward Surrealism (again, similar to Hofmann's) has caused her to make such remarks as "Any painter that arrests me with their content I feel is failed," which she followed with the assertion that, in her opinion, a work must transcend its content to be "real" painting. Her most important consideration with respect to content has been to maintain its inseparability from a painting's esthetic basis.

Although some of her cycles clearly involve readable images with possible psychological implications (eyes, beasts, figures), these were not employed as intentional focal points. "No one was more surprised than I was when the beasts appeared," Krasner once remarked, and Barbara Rose's assertion that Krasner is a prototype for current subjective trends is not supported by any real evidence. A survey of Krasner's paintings reveals decorative images from nature (*Milkweed*, *Desert Moon*, *Palm Garden* and *Bird Image*, for instance) to be far more prevalent than images of angst.

Krasner herself would probably argue that it is not important to try to read meaning into each one of her works; the content of her art emerges from the whole. In a number of interviews given in conjunction with the opening in Houston of this show (which travels after San Francisco to the Chrysler Museum at Norfolk, Virginia, the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Pompidou Center in Paris), Krasner lamented the fact that artists too rarely have the opportunity for the kind of self-assessment that only a retrospective provides, and that she has had significantly fewer occasions for a comprehensive overview than most. Under these circumstances and considering her age, the key issue for any thoughtful viewer (including herself) to consider is how Lee Krasner has managed to keep a 30-year-old style a vital medium of personal expression. "To say that Abstract Expressionism is dead has more to do with public relations than with art," she maintains. That stubborn independence Krasner was once warned against might just be her saving grace. ■