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## THE PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY OF THE FINE ARTS - THE ART OF NORMAN LEWIS - 6ABC LOVES THE ARTS



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Thursday, December 17, 2015 04:37PM

Thursday December 17, 2015 -- The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts is putting on the first ever retrospective of abstract painter Norman Lewis. Lewis was a trailblazing artist for African Americans and Procession: The Art of Norman Lewis has been recognized as one of the most important exhibitions in North America, this fall.

Exhibition curator Ruth Fine says, "Norman Lewis, I think, has been under-appreciated for the importance of his work."

Fine divided the exhibition into six sections that feature about 90 works dating from the 1930s to the late 1970s, "his paintings, his drawings, his prints, and also some very wonderful objects that he made."

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And that includes a handmade doll said to be a self-portrait of the artist that can be seen as soon as you walk in the gallery.

"In a way, we have Norman Lewis himself welcoming you as you enter the exhibition," says Fine.

Lewis was an influential artist in Harlem in the mid-20th century, and his work spans across many styles. While he was considered more reserved about his political pieces, they're said to be some of his most powerful works.

"He was doing these immensely important Civil Rights oriented paintings," says Fine, "Including a work called American Totem, which is a totemic Ku Klux Klan figure."

To add a personal touch, Lewis' family provided pieces for the exhibition.

"Every gallery has cases in it, and in those cases are materials that come from Lewis' estate," and Fine says that includes embroideries he made, letters, and items that help give a sense of who he was, "Many of the works have never been exhibited publicly before."

And most are borrowed from private collections.

"So there are many works here that are here only for the time of the exhibition," says Fine.

Procession: The Art of Norman Lewis is on exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts until April 6th. For tickets, go to [www.TheArtsinPhilly.org](http://www.TheArtsinPhilly.org).

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