



WNYC News

## Two Artists Overshadowed in the '40s Get a Second Look

Sunday, September 21, 2014

By Gisele Regatao : Senior Editor, Culture, WNYC News



Norman Lewis Phantasy II, September 23, 1946 (Art © The Estate of Norman W. Lewis, Courtesy of Iandor Fine Arts, New Jersey)

When Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning were transforming abstract expressionism in New York City in the '40s and '50s, they were not alone.

Several artists were showing their work in the same galleries, navigating the same circles. But they often were ignored by critics, and ended up at the margins of art history.

The paintings of two of them are now side by side at the Jewish Museum.

One is Lee Krasner, a Jewish woman, who was Pollock's wife. The other is Norman Lewis, who was African American.



Lee Krasner Self-Portrait, c. 1930 (The Pollock-Krasner Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York)



Norman Lewis Self-Portrait, 1939 (The Estate of Norman W. Lewis, Courtesy of landor Fine Arts, New Jersey)

The exhibit, called "From the Margins: Lee Krasner and Norman Lewis," highlights how they experimented with abstract painting, according to Norman Kleeblatt, who

curated the show. He explained they were both fascinated by culturally-specific references. “For Lee, Hebrew in particular; for Norman Lewis, it was also the locale of Harlem, African textiles — and jazz, as a kind of improvisational means of making abstraction,” he said.

Lee Rosenbaum, an art critic who writes for *The Wall Street Journal* and her Culture Grrl blog, said the work in the show contrasts with the sweeping statements of more famous abstract expressionists.

“These were more intimate works, more densely painted, and somehow seem to have some resonance with each other, so when I saw that they were going to do a whole show of these two artists I was very intrigued,” she said.

"From the Margins: Lee Krasner and Norman Lewis" will be on view until February.



Norman Lewis Crossing, 1948 (The Estate of Norman W. Lewis, Courtesy of Iandor Fine Arts, New Jersey)



Lee Krasner Untitled, 1949 (The Pollock-Krasner Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York)