From the Margins: Lee Krasner and Norman Lewis, 1945 – 1952

Family Guide
Introduction

Make a left as you exit the elevator on Floor 2 and enter the exhibition through the double doors ahead of you.

During the 1940s and 1950s, Lee Krasner and Norman Lewis were among a group of painters who expressed themselves through abstract images. They used simplified shapes, exaggerated lines, and powerful color to create imaginative works of art. In this exhibition, you will see Krasner and Lewis’s works displayed side-by-side. As you walk through the galleries, discover their beautiful paintings and explore the similarities and differences.

Begin in the first gallery. Look at the paintings and photographs showing the artists Lee Krasner and Norman Lewis.

Both artists grew up in New York City; Krasner spent her childhood in Brooklyn while Lewis lived in Harlem. They also worked and studied in New York, where they created artwork and contributed to public-art projects in the city.

Shape, Color, and Texture

Move into the next gallery. Look closely and compare the paintings pictured above, entitled Image Surfacing (1945) by Lee Krasner and Untitled (1946) by Norman Lewis.

What colors do you notice? Where are the colors solid and where do they blend together? How are they similar or different in each painting?

What kinds of shapes do you notice within the colors of each painting?

The texture of a painting is the look and feel of the surface of the paint. How is the texture of each painting similar or different?

Circle the words below that you might use to describe the texture of each work of art based on the way it looks (remember, you cannot touch):

- smooth
- rough
- scratched
- jagged
- velvety
- gooey
- dry
- soft
- hard
Move into the following gallery. Find the paintings on the far wall entitled *Stop and Go* (1949) by Lee Krasner and *Magenta Haze* (1947) by Norman Lewis. At each work of art, discuss the following with your grown-up.

Describe the lines you see. Are they thin or thick? Straight or curved? Sharp or soft? Messy or organized?

Do these lines create recognizable shapes? What are they?

Abstract artists sometimes apply paint to a canvas without using a paintbrush. Can you think of unusual tools or interesting ways you might create the lines you see in this painting? Would you use a toothbrush? A paper clip? Your finger?

Find the painting pictured above and located on the wall to your left: *Untitled* (1949) by Lee Krasner.

Composition is the placement of line, shape, and color in a work of art. What do you notice about the composition of this painting? Does it seem organized or chaotic?

As a child, Lee Krasner studied Hebrew, an ancient Jewish language still spoken by many people today. Her interest in writing and language may have inspired the composition and forms in some of her paintings.

Are there parts of this painting that remind you of letters? Which ones?

Pick a letter from the alphabet. Using the space to the left and below, rearrange the lines to create a new “letter” from your imagination.
Music

Look at the blue painting immediately to your right.

This painting is called *Twilight Sounds* (1947) by Norman Lewis. What kinds of sounds do you think of when you look at this work of art? Why?

Imagine a scene where you might hear these noises and describe it to your grown-up. What kind of place is it? What might you see around you? Would you find people, animals, buildings, or trees in this scene?

In his artwork, Norman Lewis often captured movements and sounds inspired by his experiences on the bustling streets of Harlem or the lively and spontaneous rhythm of jazz music.

What noises might you hear in your own neighborhood? How would you represent those sounds with line, shape, and color?

At Home

Create an expressive work of art inspired by music.

Choose three songs to play out loud. Sit with a piece of paper and your favorite drawing tools. As each song plays, create a drawing inspired by the sounds you hear. Use a new sheet of paper for each song and label them so you remember which drawing goes with which song. After you have finished, place the three drawings side-by-side. Observe how you interpreted the music differently for each drawing. What kinds of shapes, colors, and lines did you create while listening? If you have a friend or family member join you, then discuss together what you drew and why.

Congratulations on completing the family guide for *From the Margins: Lee Krasner | Norman Lewis, 1945–1952*. We hope you enjoyed the exhibition!

Visit [TheJewishMuseum.org/Families](http://TheJewishMuseum.org/Families) for more information on Family Programs at the Jewish Museum.

Images

Page One (Left): Norman Lewis, *Self-Portrait*, 1939, gouache on paper, 22 ½ × 17 ¾ in. (57.1 × 44 cm). © The Estate of Norman W. Lewis, Courtesy of Iandor Fine Arts, New Jersey


Page Two (Left): Norman Lewis, Untitled, 1946, oil on canvas, 36 ¼ × 20 ¼ in. (92 × 51.1 cm). Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York, NY. © The Estate of Norman W. Lewis, Courtesy of Iandor Fine Arts, New Jersey


Page Three: Lee Krasner, Untitled, 1949, oil on canvas, 24 × 48 in. (61 × 121.9 cm). Nancy Margolis King. © 2014 The Pollock-Krasner Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

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*From the Margins: Lee Krasner | Norman Lewis, 1945–1952* is made possible by The Peter Jay Sharp Exhibition Fund, the Boris Lurie Art Foundation, The Rosenblatt Charitable Trust, Roy Zuckerberg, and The Pollock-Krasner Foundation.

Endowment support is provided by The Skirball Fund for American Jewish Life Exhibitions.

Family Programs are supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

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5th Ave at 92nd St, NYC
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Under the auspices of The Jewish Theological Seminary