

The Museum of Modern Art

103

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
No. 71

Public Information

November 16, 1984

RETROSPECTIVE OF THE PAINTINGS OF LEE KRASNER TO BE EXHIBITED AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

A landmark exhibition of the paintings of Lee Krasner will open at The Museum of Modern Art in New York City on Thursday, December 20. Entitled LEE KRASNER: A RETROSPECTIVE, this first-ever comprehensive survey will elucidate Krasner's importance as a vanguard Abstract Expressionist. The exhibition will include approximately 50 paintings from 1946 to 1980, chronicling a career that remained vital for over five decades and that today is the subject of growing critical interest.

The exhibition originated at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston under the direction of Consulting Curator Barbara Rose. Its installation at The Museum of Modern Art, where it will be on view through February 12, 1985, will be supervised by William Rubin, Director of the Museum's Department of Painting and Sculpture, in collaboration with Ms. Rose.

LEE KRASNER: A RETROSPECTIVE will demonstrate the range and depth of the artist's work, its innovation and individuality. It will clarify the accomplishment of a painter whose reputation for a long time was unjustly overshadowed by that of her husband, Jackson Pollock. The exhibition

more/

begins with Krasner's dense and small-scale "all-over" paintings of the late 1940s and proceeds to present the airy and exuberant monumental works of subsequent years. Krasner continued to paint until shortly before her death last June, and her work to the end bespeaks unceasing exploration.

The Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States has made possible the New York showing of LEE KRASNER: A RETROSPECTIVE. Additional support has been provided by the New York State Council on the Arts.

Krasner's artistic training was varied and full. She attended the Cooper Union, the Art Students League, and the National Academy of Design. In the 1930s, she worked on the Federal Arts Project of the WPA, as did many other future Abstract Expressionists. Towards the end of the decade, Krasner began study with the artist Hans Hofmann, whose instruction reflected the advances of modern European painting. Krasner was the single Abstract Expressionist to have studied with Hofmann, and her early sophistication distinguished her among her colleagues. Her paintings during this period demonstrate a close understanding of the work of Picasso, Matisse, and Mondrian--a knowledgeability that would remain important throughout her career.

In 1945, Krasner married Jackson Pollock and moved with him to Springs, East Hampton. The earliest work in the exhibition, Blue Painting (1946)--probably the first painting Krasner made at Springs--suggests the important role that improvisational gesture would play in her work and that of her colleagues. Soon after, she began to create her "all-over" paintings, uniting spontaneity with exacting and continuous control.

By the mid-1950s, Krasner had commenced to work on a monumental scale and to reveal the power and concentration of a mature vision. The paintings

more/

of this period pivot upon the interplay of her superb sense of color and use of bold, rhythmic lines, at once lively and disciplined. In the 1960s and 1970s, the inspiration Krasner always found in nature and in autobiography becomes more evident. Her large abstractions during these years are often dominated by organic and floral motifs. Over the last decade, Krasner returned to a favorite medium, collage. Her inspired juxtaposition of disparate units, including shards of her own cut-up drawings, makes the collage compositions among the most compelling of her works.

In conjunction with LEE KRASNER: A RETROSPECTIVE, a number of additional exhibitions and events have been scheduled in the New York area. The Brooklyn Museum will present a selection of the artist's works on paper and the Cooper Union will focus on her early work in a show entitled "Lee Krasner: The Education of An American Artist." On January 22, 1985, at 8:30 pm, Barbara Rose will present a lecture at The Museum of Modern Art on "Lee Krasner and the Origins of Abstract Expressionism."

A catalogue, Lee Krasner, has been published jointly by The Museum of Modern Art and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Written by Ms. Rose and including a forward by William Rubin, the book traces the development of Krasner's career, from art school and work on the WPA in the 1930s, through the emergence of the Abstract Expressionist movement in the early 1940s and the years with Pollock, to the unique, fully realized creativity of later periods. The almost 200-page softcover volume contains 172 illustrations (33 in color) and is available from The Museum of Modern Art.

In addition to the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, LEE KRASNER: A RETROSPECTIVE has been exhibited at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, Virginia, and the Phoenix Art Museum. Partial

more/

funding for the national tour has been provided by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts; Shell Companies Foundation, Incorporated; and the Jesse H. and Mary Gibbs Jones Exhibition Endowment Fund. Additional assistance for the catalogue has been provided by the DeWitt Wallace Fund #3 in Community Funds, Inc.

###

For further information, please contact Pamela Sweeney, Assistant Director, or Patrick Milliman, Press Officer, Department of Public Information, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019....(212) 708-9750.
