

“Norman Lewis: Looking East” at Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, New York

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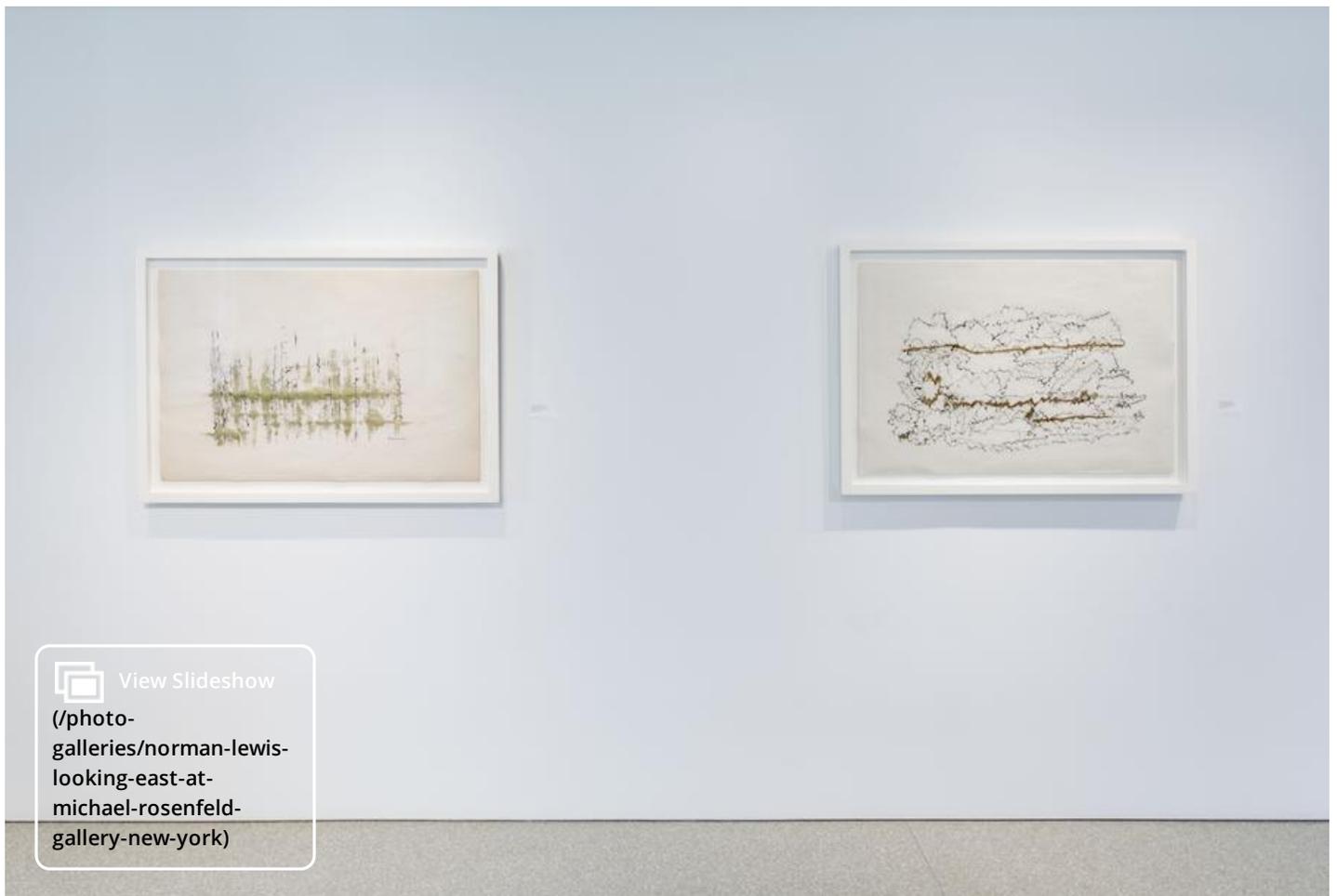
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“Looking East,” 2018, by Norman Lewis (1909 – 1979), Copyright: Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, Michael Rosenfeld Gallery
(Courtesy: Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY)

“Looking East” explores the profound impact of Asian thought, philosophy, literature, and art on the life-long work of [Norman Lewis](/artists/norman-wilfred-lewis-4641) (/artists/norman-wilfred-lewis-4641).

Michael Rosenfeld Gallery presents a selection of works by abstract expressionist [Norman Lewis](/artists/norman-wilfred-lewis-4641) (/artists/norman-wilfred-lewis-4641) (American, 1909-1979), which are on view through January 26, 2019.

“[Norman Lewis \(/artists/norman-wilfred-lewis-4641\)](/artists/norman-wilfred-lewis-4641): Looking East” explores for the first time the profound impact of Asian thought, philosophy, literature and art on the life-long work of the artist. The exhibition features a selection of paintings, works on paper, and never-before-viewed artist sketchbooks (the latter are on loan from the [Norman Lewis \(/artists/norman-wilfred-lewis-4641\)](/artists/norman-wilfred-lewis-4641) Archive). The works span the period from 1948 to 1977.

In a press statement, the gallery states; “Two distinctive elements of Lewis’ abstract practice — calligraphic and atmospheric abstraction — reflect the innovative incorporation of Eastern influences throughout his oeuvre. By way of his own literary and creative education and his immersion in the New York art world, Lewis’ work is a continuation of his intellectual pursuits within these realms.”

Lewis’ extensive library reveals a fascination with Eastern thought and aesthetics.

With certain literary and visual sources on his mind, Lewis joined Willard Gallery in 1946, where his influences were cemented by the artist’s engagement with Marian Willard and her roster of artists, most notably Mark Tobey, whose calligraphic style was influenced by travels to and studies in China and Japan, and Genichiro Inokuma, with whom Lewis developed a close friendship and dialogue and who stated that Willard handled artists with an “oriental feeling.”

Known for his calligraphic abstract compositions, [Norman Lewis \(/artists/norman-wilfred-lewis-4641\)](/artists/norman-wilfred-lewis-4641) (1909-1979) was a vital member of the first generation of abstract expressionists. He was the sole African American artist of his generation who became committed to issues of abstraction at the start of his career and continued to explore them throughout his lifetime. Lewis’ art derived energy from his vast interests in music – both classical and jazz - as well as nature, ancient ceremonial rituals, and social justice/equality issues central to the civil rights movement.

Throughout his career, Lewis pursued his unique artistic vision while also remaining committed to his political beliefs. He was a founding member of the Spiral Group, and from 1965 to 1971, he taught for HARYOU-ACT, Inc. (Harlem Youth in Action), an antipoverty program designed to encourage young men and women to stay in school.

A recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Grant (1972), a Mark Rothko Foundation Individual Artists Grant (1972), and a Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship (1975), Lewis had his first retrospective exhibition in 1976 at the CUNY Graduate Center, New York.

The exhibition is on view through January 26, 2019 at Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, 100 Eleventh Avenue, New York, USA.

For details, visit: <http://www.michaelrosenfeldart.com/> (<http://www.michaelrosenfeldart.com/>)

Click on the slideshow for a sneak peek at the exhibition.

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