

# MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS ST. PETE

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**MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG PRESENTS OUTSTANDING WORKS OF  
AMERICAN ART FROM THE ART BRIDGES COLLECTION**

*Significant paintings by Jacob Lawrence, Hughie Lee-Smith, Norman Wilfred Lewis,  
Lee Krasner, and Marsden Hartley will be on view through 2022*

**ST. PETERSBURG, FL (February 11, 2021)** — The Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg is embarking on a year-long loan sharing collaboration with [Art Bridges](#) to present five paintings by celebrated American artists from the Art Bridges Collection. The artists represented are **Jacob Lawrence, Hughie Lee-Smith, Norman Wilfred Lewis, Lee Krasner,** and **Marsden Hartley**, each of whom advanced narratives about race, gender, and regional identity through their depictions of American life in the twentieth century.

Art Bridges is a nonprofit arts foundation that creates and supports programs that expand access to American art around the country. It partners with art institutions on projects that deeply engage communities via thematic traveling exhibitions, long-term loan sharing collaborations, among additional initiatives. In addition to the loans, the MFA is also working with Art Bridges to create exciting programs, such as film screenings, lectures, and virtual performances, centered around the five paintings. [Visit our website](#) for regular updates.

With these loans on view, the MFA continues its commitment to share diverse stories, and elevate the traditionally underrepresented voices of Black, female, and gay artists.

“The quality of these artworks is outstanding. Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of Art Bridges, we are honored to share these stories from this inclusive group of artists with our community,” said MFA Executive Director & CEO Kristen A. Shepherd. “Each painting complements and resonates with our collection, and builds upon the greater narrative of this illuminating time in American art. We believe these important works will be a catalyst for many powerful connections with our visitors.”

The MFA, St. Petersburg is the first museum to have both Krasner’s *Re-Echo* (1957) and Lawrence’s *In the Heart of the Black Belt* (1947) on view from the Art Bridges Collection.

The artworks by Krasner, Lawrence, Lee-Smith, and Lewis are on display at the MFA through February 2022. Hartley's painting will be on view from June 2021 to August 2022. The five paintings can be seen in the MFA's Modern and Post-War galleries.

The MFA has prints by Krasner, Lawrence, Lee-Smith and Lewis in its own collection, however due to those pieces being works on paper, they are not on permanent display because of their light sensitivity. One of the great strengths of the MFA's holdings is its collection of modern American paintings from 1920–1960. These five loans will amplify and create new connections among the existing works in the galleries, as well as fill gaps in the MFA's presentation of twentieth century American art. The works of art on view from the Art Bridges Collection include:



[Marsden Hartley, 1877–1943, \*Give Us This Day\*, 1938](#): Considered crucial to the development of modern American art, Hartley's revolutionary work captures the physical world in unique and visionary ways. *Give Us This Day* beautifully melds his expressive depiction of a Maine landscape with Christian symbolism. Hartley's presence in the museum will introduce dialogue about homosexual artists, and their struggle to exist and create in a constrictive world.



[Jacob Lawrence, 1917–2000, \*In the Heart of the Black Belt\*, 1947](#): Lawrence is one of the most important artists of the twentieth century, and one of the first nationally-recognized Black artists. He painted in a distinctive style of abstracted realism, characterized by flattened forms and bold colors. This painting belongs to a series exploring Black southern life commissioned as illustrations for *Fortune* magazine. It shows farm workers—almost certainly impoverished sharecroppers—waiting to be driven to fields.



[Norman Wilfred Lewis, 1909–1979, \*Untitled \(Subway Station\)\*, 1945](#): Lewis began his career with a dedication to social realism, portraying the injustices of racism and poverty that he observed and experienced. Although he remained an activist, in the mid-1940s he turned to abstraction, and was the only Black artist associated with the first generation of Abstract Expressionism. This work is from a major transitional period, bridging the content of social realism with modernist abstraction.



[Hughie Lee-Smith, 1915–1999, \*The Walls\*, 1954:](#) Lee-Smith is often identified as a social realist, exploring inequalities in hopes of bringing about positive change. This painting, set on empty rooftops and amongst crumbling walls, shows a pair of white youths looking down upon two young Black men—one of whom climbs up toward them, while the other walks away. Lee-Smith captures both the inequities of racism, and a sense of loneliness and alienation. In contrast, the

artist conveys a sense of child-like innocence and hope through the fragile balloons which drift skyward.



[Lee Krasner, 1908-1984, \*Re-Echo\*, 1957:](#) Krasner was a female Abstract Expressionist, and served as a driving force for American women in art during the mid-century. *Re-Echo* is part of Krasner's 17-painting "Earth Green" series, which reflects the artistic transformation Krasner experienced after the sudden death of her husband, artist Jackson Pollock, in 1956. *Re-Echo* is one of the earliest paintings in the series, thought by many to be her most

accomplished body of work. Katherine Pill, MFA's Curator of Contemporary Art, describes Krasner's piece as "a stunning, pivotal work that epitomizes emotive gesture and form" and one that serves as a reminder that "the male-dominated narrative of Abstract Expressionism still crucially needs to be expanded."

"I am especially excited to have three major works by Black artists from the mid-twentieth century on display," said Stanton Thomas, senior curator of collections and exhibitions at the MFA. "These paintings by Jacob Lawrence, Hughie Lee-Smith, and Norman Lewis offer penetrating, poignant glimpses into a period which was still rife with prejudice and injustice. At the same time, however, the works—which range from jarring abstractions to poetic realism—point to an increased dialogue about the need for social change."

Four of the five paintings are currently on view. To visit the MFA, admission tickets must be [reserved online for timed entry](#) in accordance with the Museum's COVID-19 safety measures.

### **ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA**

The MFA at 255 Beach Drive NE is St. Petersburg's first art museum, and houses the largest encyclopedic art collection in Florida. The collection includes works of art from ancient times to the present day and from around the world, including ancient Greek and Roman, Egyptian, Asian, African, pre-Columbian, Native American, European, American, and contemporary art. The photography collection is one of the largest and finest in the Southeast. Kristen A. Shepherd is the Executive Director and CEO. For more information, please visit [mfastpete.org](http://mfastpete.org) and follow @mfastpete on social media.

### **ABOUT ART BRIDGES**

Art Bridges is the vision of philanthropist and arts patron Alice Walton. Founded in 2017, Art Bridges has been creating and supporting programs that expand access to American art in all regions across the nation. The foundation strives to bring great works of American art out of storage and into communities. Art Bridges partners with a growing network of nearly 130 museums of all sizes and locations, providing financial and strategic support for exhibition development, collection loans and programs designed to engage new audiences. Art Bridges funds projects that inspire deeper relationships between arts organizations and their communities, develop expanded relationships built on inclusivity and respect, and encourage meaningful personal connections that lead to stronger, more vibrant cities and towns. To learn more about Art Bridges, follow on social platforms @artbridgesfoundation and visit [artbridgesfoundation.org](http://artbridgesfoundation.org).

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