



Lee Krasner ponders a question about her philosophy on art.

Artists bridge experience gap

By CORINNE ABATT

From the moment Lee Krasner walked into the midst of the waiting students and artists in the Susanne Hilberry Gallery last week, it was obvious that breaching a time span between the professional painter and the students would be impossible.

There was no magic which would suddenly instill in these young, aspiring artists the point of view which Ms. Krasner had acquired over a couple of decades.

Widow of Jackson Pollock, student of Hans Hofmann, contemporary artist who has been exhibiting her work in the world's great galleries since the late 1950s, Ms. Krasner has moved so far beyond the student point of view that at times it was difficult for her to understand their questions.

THEY WERE CURIOUS about what went through her mind when she began a painting. Did she think about the picture plane? Did she think about the principles of cubism as taught by Hofmann? Did she think about a title? The answer to all of these and similar questions was no. Somehow, she tried to convey that these are basics, and past a certain point, the basics become automatic instead of a conscious concern.

Quietly, she remarked at one point: "I wouldn't know how to transpose my experience to an 18-year-old."

She added she had done "an awful lot of so-called traditional work" before going into cubism and beyond.

After making it clear that she isn't in a creative work period at the moment, she said simply, "I still don't know whether it will be two months from now or six months from now when I go back to work."

She added that she also had no idea what will happen in her work when she does.

Another student question was how did she know when she was finished with a painting? "The point at which I stop is, in some way, when I feel this is it—leave it alone... Some part of you knows when to stop."

Again this was the professional talking from across the years of experience to students who have yet to acquire these subtle skills of judgment.

COMMUNICATION FLOWED more easily when she began to explain the collages in the present show at the Hilberry Gallery. The drawings used for the collages were done when she was a Hofmann student, roughly 1937-40.

The size of the collages has already been designated, so that's one decision she doesn't have to wrestle with. She begins by pinning the cut-out pieces on with thumbtacks and making decisions on the arrangement as she goes.

Once it is pleasing to her, she uses a DuPont product, Rivet, to prime the canvas and later to glue down the pieces.

When she begins, there are a number of factors which necessitate that she work quickly and accurately. The

paper is fragile and water soluble. It tears easily, so plans can't be suddenly changed in mid-project.

Her next comment was also puzzling to some in the group seated around her on the floor.

"I want to knock it out so it will look like anyone could do it."

She reinforced her thought, "No one wants to see the struggle. They should see the statement."

The concept of no evidence of struggle was difficult for a few to

accept, but Ms. Krasner said this was her feeling and intent.

She commented on the Matisse cut-out show at the Detroit Institute of Arts, which she and Ms. Hilberry had just toured.

"I think he's (Matisse) fantastic... And I don't think decorative is a dirty word... Certainly Matisse is a master who would be hard to surpass in that direction."

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