

Peter Krasnow

September 21 – November 9, 2024

Opening Reception: Saturday, September 21, 2024, 5-7PM

"For those who have been on the scene and understand art as a constant, there is no question of the extreme importance of Peter Krasnow. I call him both the youngest old artist in Los Angeles and oldest young artist. Because his art doesn't date. It's ever present." – Lorus Feitelstein

Babst Gallery is pleased to announce *Peter Krasnow*, an exhibition of works by Peter Krasnow (1886-1979). The exhibition features over 20 works made between 1920 and 1974, including early portraits, never-before-seen ink drawings, monotypes, and a series of colorful abstract paintings inspired by Hebrew calligraphy and the Southern California landscape.

Peter Krasnow (born Feivish Reisberg) was born in 1886 in Novohrad-Volynskyi, Ukraine. He emigrated to the United States in 1907 at age 20 to escape the pogroms. After graduating from the Art Institute of Chicago in 1915, Krasnow met writer Rose Bloom (1885-1984). They married in 1920, and lived in New York briefly, before driving cross-country to Los Angeles in 1922. They visited photographer Edward Weston, Krasnow's friend and artistic peer, who invited them to pitch a tent on his property in Atwater Village. They eventually bought land next to Weston, where they built their home and studio and entertained some of Los Angeles' most esteemed artists and intellectuals.

Krasnow achieved critical and commercial success with solo exhibitions at the Whitney Studio Club (1922), the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art (1922 & 1928). In 1931 he was the subject of a solo exhibition at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, which to him was "the most successful exhibition in the world...but it made me sadder than ever. They considered me a genius, praised me so high, and bought so much of my work. Yet the more they did for me, the more despondent I was...I wanted to be the big man they said I was."

Later that year, Krasnow left the commercial art world behind, moving to the Dordogne region of France. He notes in his writings, "My first task was to liberate my mind from...'What will they say...Will they like it...will they buy...will they praise...will they reject'... an anomaly which plagues the artist at his easel, at his exhibits, follows him in his waking and sleeping hours and not infrequently annihilates his incentive for originality and daring."

On the cusp of World War II, Krasnow returned to Los Angeles in 1934, and began a series of ink drawings portraying a chaotic, war-torn world. After Pearl Harbor in 1941, Krasnow changed course, embarking on a series of abstract paintings that "breathed joy and light—color structures instead of battles scenes, symmetry to repair broken worlds. A means of protest to ease the pain. When despair reached its highest—zero point—it can hurt no more, and life persists."

In these works, Krasnow began “to eliminate outline, blending of color and perspective,” concentrating on flatness and color by applying the paint directly from the tube so that “color came pure and unadulterated and played upon the surface creating pools of light, giving solidity, depth and texture to Form, and functioning as color is meant to function in painting.”

In the 1950s, Krasnow’s paintings began to be less symmetrical. It was during this time that Art Historian Aimée Brown Price describes, “forms were no longer truly symmetrical or at rest, locked into place, but played off against one another. New, amoebic, or jagged forms appear, sometimes in registers or within rectilinear zones, sometimes loosely looped together with laces of bright color.”

After his retrospective at the Pasadena Art Museum in 1954, Krasnow continued to sell directly to a small group of friends and exhibited solely at non-profit institutions. He remarked, “I was a free man. I had nothing to run away from.” In the 1960s and 1970s, he expanded his visual language with less symmetrical formats of vibrant colors and flat forms inspired by Hebraic characters and Jewish mysticism. Most recently, Krasnow was the subject of the exhibitions *Peter Krasnow: Maverick Modernist*, Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach (2016) and *Peter Krasnow: Breathing Joy and Light*, Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles (2023).

Collections:

Carnegie Museum of Art, Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA
DeSaisset Museum, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA
Herzliya Museum of Art, Israel
Huntington Library Art Collections & Botanical Gardens
The Jewish Museum, New York NY
Judah L. Magnes Museum, Berkeley, CA
Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, CA
Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA
McNay Art Museum, San Antonio TX
Monterey Museum of Art, Monterey, CA
National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C
Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, Logan UT
Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, CA
Oakland Art Museum, Oakland, CA
Palm Springs Desert Museum of Art, Palms Springs CA,
Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix
San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose CA
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA
Sheldon Museum of Art, Lincoln, NE

Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles CA
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.
Spertus Museum, Chicago, IL
University of Arizona Museum of Art, Tucson, AZ
University of Judaism, Los Angeles, CA
University Art Museum, Berkeley, CA
University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA

Solo Exhibitions

1922 Whitney Studio Club (now the Whitney Museum of American Art), New York, NY
1922 Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art (now the Los Angeles County Museum of Art), Los Angeles, CA
1923 McDowell Club Galleries, Los Angeles, CA
1925 The Print Rooms, Los Angeles, CA
1927 Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art (now the Los Angeles County Museum of Art), Los Angeles, CA
1928 Oakland Municipal Art Gallery, Oakland, CA
1928 *Wood Carvings and Paintings*, Seattle Society of Fine Arts, Seattle, WA
1928 Dalzell Hatfield Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
1928 Zeitlin Bookstore, Los Angeles, CA
1928 Los Angeles Public Library, Los Angeles, CA
1929 Scripps College, Claremont, CA
1930 Stendahl Art Galleries, Los Angeles, CA
1931 *Peter Krasnow: Paintings, Drawings, Wood-Blocks, Pastels and Sculpture*, California Palace Legion of Honor, San Francisco, CA
1931 Courvoisier Gallery, San Francisco
1931 Gelber and Lilienthal Book Store, San Francisco
1934 Galerie Pierre, Paris
1935 University of California, Los Angeles
1935 The Print Rooms, Los Angeles
1935 California Pacific International Expo, San Diego, CA
1939 Fine Arts Gallery of San Diego, San Diego
1940 Stendahl Galleries, Los Angeles
1940 University of California, Los Angeles
1943 Beverly-Fairfax Community Center, Los Angeles
1946 Little Gallery, Louisville, Kentucky
1954 *Peter Krasnow: 35 Years of His Art*, Pasadena Art Institute, Pasadena
1961 Ernest Raboff Gallery, Los Angeles
1964 *The Work of Peter Krasnow 1907 to 1964: A Retrospective Exhibition of Paintings, Sculptures, Drawings and Prints*, Lang Art Gallery, Scripps College, Claremont, CA
1975 *Peter Krasnow: Works from 1919 to the Present*, Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery,

Barnsdall Park, CA

1976 San Francisco Museum of Art, San Francisco

1977 *Peter Krasnow: A Retrospective of Exhibition of Paintings, Sculpture and Graphics*. Judah L. Magnes Museum, Berkeley, CA

1977-1979 *Peter Krasnow: A Retrospective Exhibition of Paintings, Sculpture and Graphics*, Skirball Museum, Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles

1984 *Fifty Years of California Prints: 1900-1950*, The Annex Galleries, Santa Rosa, CA

1986 *Peter Krasnow (1887-1979): Paintings, Sculpture, Drawings Prints*. Tobey C. Moss Gallery, Los Angeles

1989 Tobey C. Moss Gallery, Los Angeles

1991 Tobey C. Moss Gallery, Los Angeles

1993 Tobey C. Moss Gallery, Los Angeles

1994 *Peter Krasnow: Sculptor and Draftsman*, Utah State University-Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, Logan, UT

1996 *Peter Krasnow: A Retrospective Exhibition*, Tobey C. Moss Gallery, Los Angeles

2000 *Circles of Influence: Impressionism to Modernism in Southern California*, Orange County Museum of Art, Costa Mesa, CA

2006 Tobey C. Moss Gallery, Los Angeles

2016 *Peter Krasnow: Maverick Modernist*, Laguna Art Museum, Los Angeles

2023 *Peter Krasnow: Breathing Joy and Light*, Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles

2024 *Peter Krasnow*, Babst Gallery, Los Angeles

Group Exhibitions:

1922 *Sixth Annual Exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists*, The Waldorf Astoria, New York, NY

1925 *Whitney Studio Club Annual*, Whitney Studio Club (now the Whitney Museum of American Art), New York, NY

1926 *Whitney Studio Club Annual*, Whitney Studio Club (now the Whitney Museum of American Art), New York, NY

1927 Forty-ninth Annual Exhibition of San Francisco Art Association, Palace of Fine Arts San Francisco

1927 Temple Emmanuel, San Francisco, CA

1935 *Sixteenth Annual Painters and Sculptors Exhibition*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art

1935 California Pacific International Exposition, San Diego, CA

1950 *Exhibition of Artists of Los Angeles and Vicinity*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA

1955 *III Bienal*, Museu de Art Moderna, Sao Paulo, Brazil

1965 *Art Now*, Los Angeles Art Association Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

Peter Krasnow, Max Band, Boris Deutcher, Westside Jewish Community Center, Los Angeles, CA

- 1974 *Nine Senior Southern California Painters*, Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA
- 1976 *Painting and Sculpture in California: The Modern Era*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA
- 1977 *Painting and Sculpture in California: The Modern Era*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY
- 1980 *Los Angeles Prints, 1883-1980*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA
- 1981 *Southern California Artists, 1940-1980*, Laguna Beach Museum of Art, Laguna Beach, CA
- 1996 *New Beginnings*, The Skirball Museum, Los Angeles, CA
- 1997 *Singular Impressions: the Monotype in America*, The Smithsonian, Washington, D.C.
- 2008 *Americans: Paintings and Photographs from the National Portrait Gallery*, The National Portrait Gallery, The Smithsonian, Washington, D.C.
- 2009 *California Calling*, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA
- 2017 *Collecting on the edge*, Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, Logan UT