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by [Karen Wilkin](#)

On "Action/Abstraction: Pollock, de Kooning, and American Art, 1940-1976" at the Jewish Museum, New York.

The first thing to be said about “Action/Abstraction: Pollock, De Kooning, and American Art, 1940–1976,” this spring’s ambitious survey at the Jewish Museum, is that it is full of wonderful things.^[1] The span of the show—from the period beginning immediately before World War II, through the post-war years, to the upheavals of the 1960s and early 1970s—brackets the crucial years when American artists achieved international recognition as innovators and were acclaimed for dramatically expanding the possibilities of modernism. The show begins with a bang—with first-rate paintings by Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Arshile Gorky, and Hans Hofmann, followed by good Clyfford Stills, Ad Reinhardts, and Barnett Newmans, and, in the section devoted to sculpture, two superb David Smiths. These high standards are largely maintained in the later sections. Th ...

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