

NORMAN BLUHM
Seven from the Seventies
July 10 - October 10, 1984

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are very grateful to John Bernard Myers for writing the introductory essay for this catalogue. Norman Bluhm is mentioned in Mr. Myers' current book "Tracking the Marvelous," and it is clear that he includes Norman Bluhm's paintings in that category.

Most of all, we wish to thank Norman Bluhm for sharing his work with the Stony Brook community.

**Rhonda Cooper
Director**

Photographs by Noel Rowe

Cover: PYGMALION, 1979

NORMAN BLUHM: Sensibility Making Sense

Three papers had been handed into the professor of architectural history, each concerned with describing the important stylistic features of the Piazza Michaelangelo in Florence. The teacher had found two of the dissertations acceptable, but not the one by the third student, Norman Bluhm. What was wanted by the instructor was a conventional academic description of the buildings around the square, whereas Bluhm's response to it was a rejoicing in its light, its space, its expressive architectural harmonies. The professor proceeded pedantically to outline the correct interpretation, but young Bluhm spoke up and said "You're wrong. That's not the way it is." Needless to say the professor was annoyed. "Further," he continued, "I'd like to ask if you have ever been to Florence, and in the piazza?" "No," replied his mentor, "nor do I think it's of any importance that I wasn't." "Well," came the quick riposte, "I have. I lived around the corner from the piazza and know it well!"

We may deplore the young man's lack of tact but not his sincerity. I like to speculate about Bluhm as a child in Florence living in an old spacious house between the age of four and twelve unconsciously absorbing an ambiance of high aesthetic interest. He is in his high ceilinged bedroom looking up at the decoration which had livened this room for a few centuries: the blue sky, gods and goddesses, *putti*, all resting and lolling on great cottony clouds that combined Rococo abandon with classical order.

If there is a key to any artist's work, or a clear cut way of "reading" the images of abstract painting, it is first necessary to silently approach the work, letting it "speak" for itself. This is true, of course, for all serious painting, especially where there are seeming ambiguities. Our inner silence is demanded so that what is before us there on the canvas can unfold its non-verbal story. Bluhm is such a story teller. Needless to say he is not recalling the pleasures of Florentine art history, Renaissance splendors, or even the ceiling of his childhood bedroom. He is, however, revealing his way of experiencing the manner, light, space, and color come together or fall apart. His perceptions are lyrical, romantic, intense. Possibly this temperament was molded by hearing so much good music in his childhood. Bluhm's mother was an excellent concert pianist. By the time he was twelve, the family moved permanently back to America, taking up residence in Chicago where Bluhm was educated.

No American city is as interesting architecturally as Chicago, and it is not surprising that the young Bluhm was drawn to the study of architecture at the Bauhaus where Mies van der Rohe was the leading light. But it was not the career that Bluhm was to pursue. During the second World War he became a pilot in the U.S. Air Force; it was only after the war that Bluhm left for Paris to study and paint for several years.

But what must it have been like to be a pilot? Once again the vastness of blue sky, the drama of fields of clouds — white, gray, black and all their intermediary modalities of color sometimes tinted gold, scarlet or violet at sunrise or sunset. Bluhm experienced physically airborne space, the upper reaches of which are infinite. This sensing of space, the movement through it experienced in the eyes, the lungs, the whole body; this was subsumed in Bluhm's deepest self and became integral to his art.

Those of us who have been *aficionados* of the so-called Second Generation of Abstract Expressionists — the brilliant generation that came after such painters as DeKooning, Pollock, Kline, Still, and others of that age group — feel more certain than ever that the successors have sustained as high and ambitious a level of creativity as their elders. If there is a "tradition of the new," Norman Bluhm stands out as one of its finest exponents, certainly one of the most refined, lyrical sensibilities working in the mode of abstraction. The paintings have presence, vigor, and — to use the word precisely — elegance. They are impressive for their abundance, their scale, their swiftness of gesture, their perennial freshness.

John Bernard Myers



Death Valley Night, 1977

(not in exhibition)

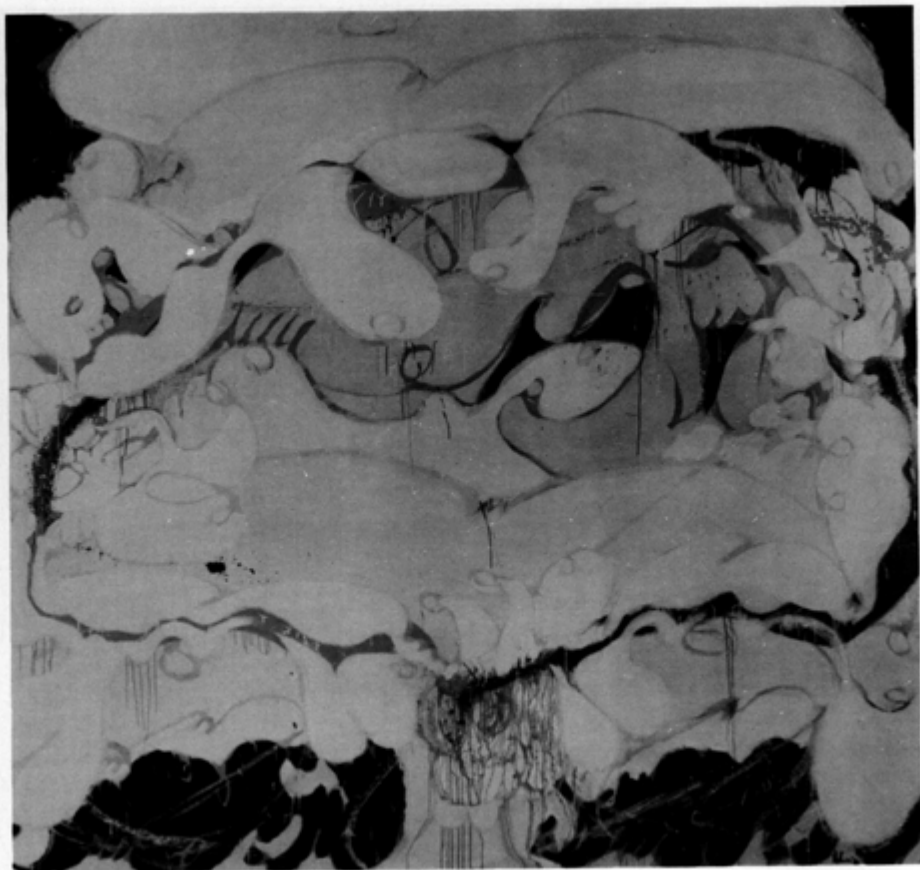


Mighty Greek, 1977

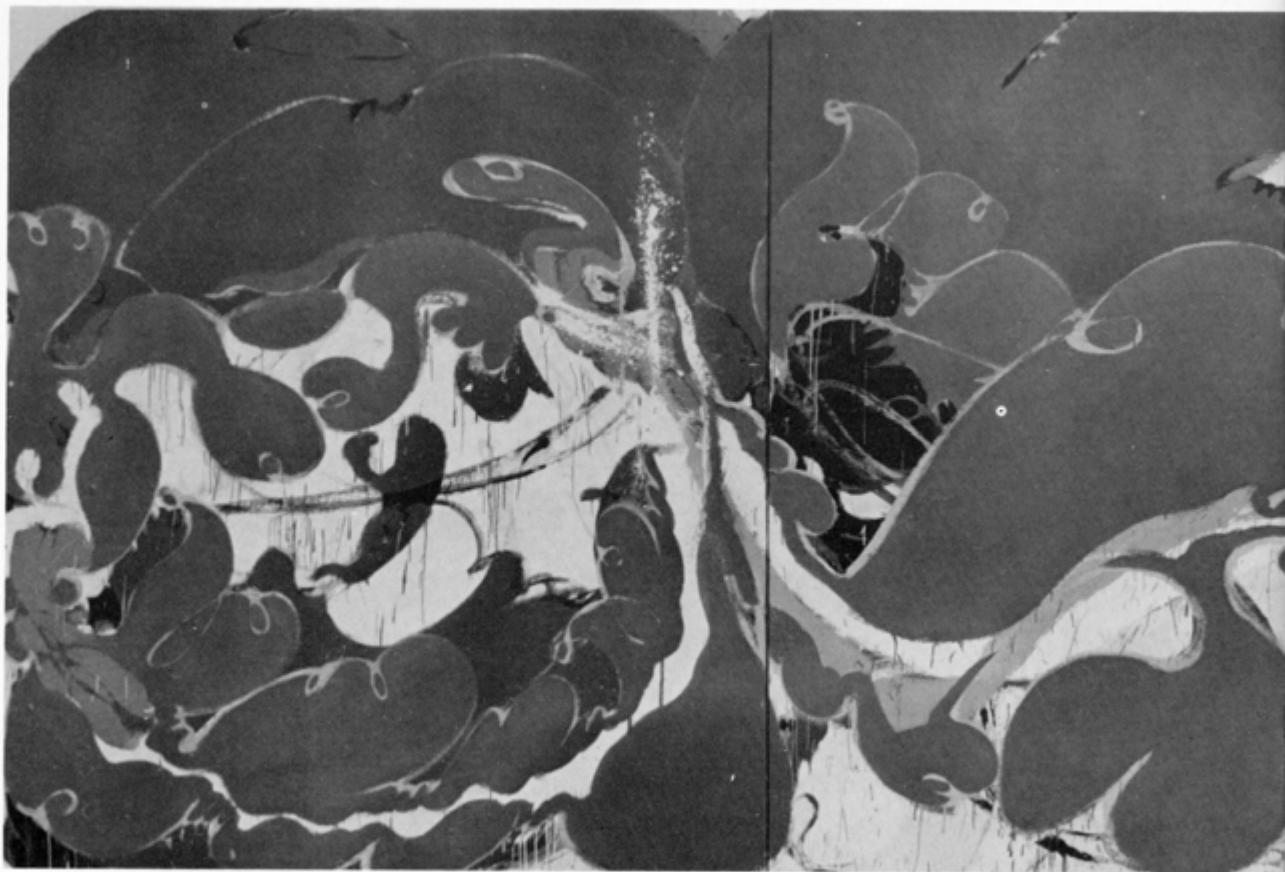
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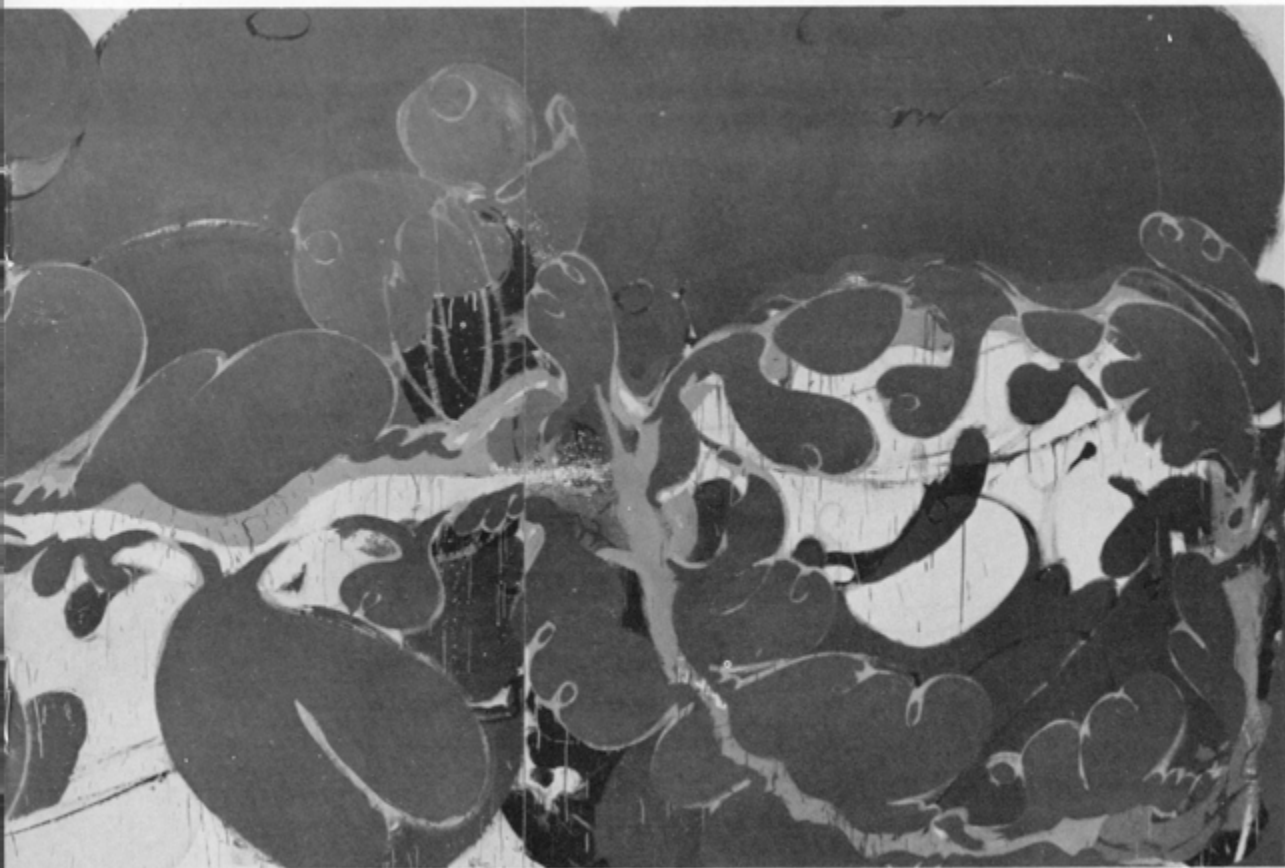
Romulus and Remus, 1979



Yangtse Baby, 1979



Easter Morning, 1979



NORMAN BLUHM

Born 1920, Chicago, Illinois. Lives in East Hampton, New York. Studied architecture with Mies van der Rohe at Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago. Studied painting at Accademia de Belle Arte, Florence, Italy and Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris, France.

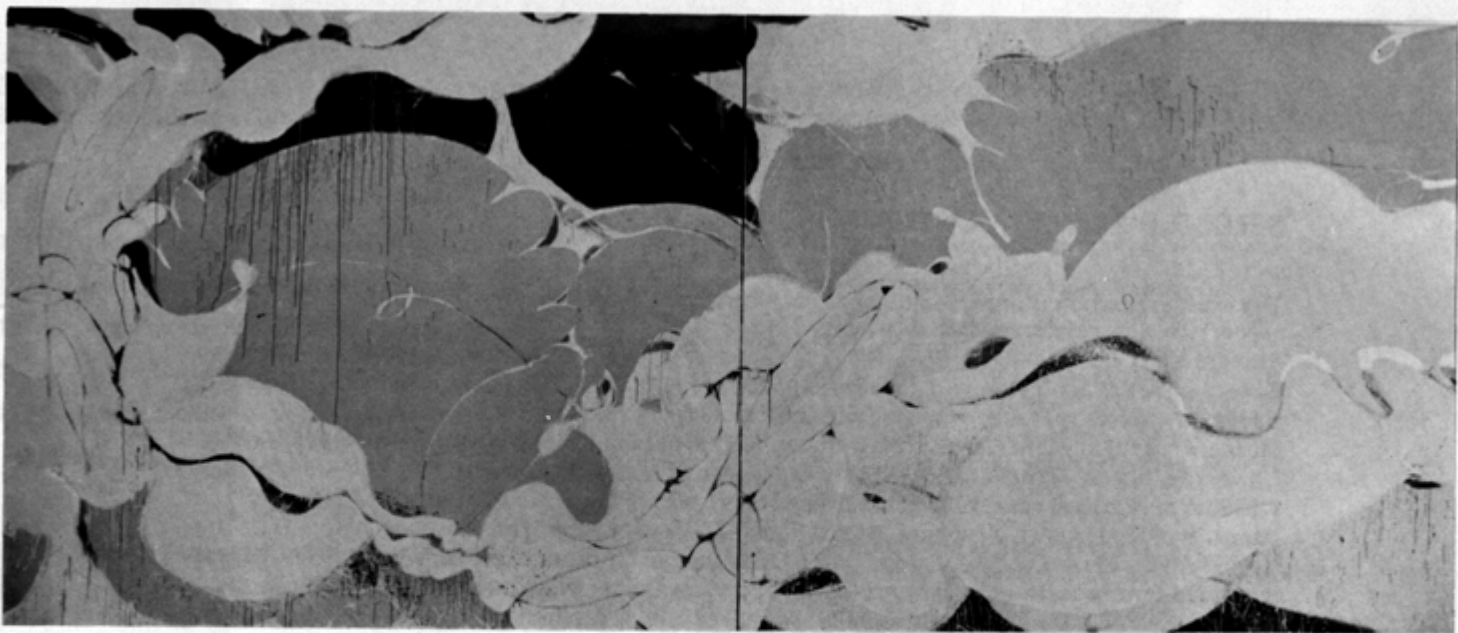
SELECTED ONE PERSON EXHIBITIONS

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|------|---|------|---|
| 1982 | Galerie Stadler, Paris, France | 1969 | The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. |
| 1977 | The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. | 1968 | Galerie Stadler, Paris, France |
| 1976 | Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas | 1965 | Galerie Anderson-Mayer, Paris, France |
| 1975 | Galerie Stadler, Paris, France | 1964 | Galerie Smith, Brussels, Belgium |
| 1974 | Martha Jackson Gallery, New York City
Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York
Circolo Artistico, Palazzo delle Prigioni Vecchie, Venice, Italy
Galleria Il Cerchio, Milan, Italy
Galleria R. Rotta, Milan, Italy | 1963 | Galerie Semiha Huber, Zurich, Switzerland
American Gallery, New York City
Galerie Anderson-Mayer, Paris, France |
| 1973 | Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York | 1962 | David Anderson Gallery, New York City |
| 1972 | Galerie Stadler, Paris, France
Martha Jackson Gallery, New York City | 1961 | Galleria Notizie, Turin, Italy
Holland-Goldowsky Gallery, Chicago, Illinois
(with Larry Rivers)
Graham Gallery, New York City (with Elaine de Kooning) |
| 1971 | J.L. Hudson Gallery, Detroit, Michigan
Martha Jackson Gallery, New York City | 1960 | Leo Castelli Gallery, New York City |
| 1970 | Galerie Stadler, Paris, France
Martha Jackson Gallery, New York City | 1959 | Galleria del Naviglio, Milan, Italy |
| | | 1957 | Leo Castelli Gallery, New York City |

SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

The work of Norman Bluhm is in the following museum collections:

Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; The Chrysler Museum at Norfolk, Norfolk, VA; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, Dallas, TX; Dayton Art Institute, Dayton, OH; Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY; The High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY; University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Amherst, MA; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Michener Collection, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C.; The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO; Neuberger Museum, State University of New York at Purchase, Purchase, NY; The Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, New York University Art Collection, New York, NY; Vassar College Art Gallery, Poughkeepsie, NY; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.



Salome, 1977 (detail)

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

Measurements are given in inches, height preceding width. All works are on loan courtesy of the artist.

Neptune's Orgy, 1975, oil on canvas, 102 x 144"

Sand Lady, 1975, oil on canvas, 102 x 144"

Salome, 1977, oil on canvas, 102 x 480"

Easter Morning, 1979, oil on canvas, 96 x 282"

Pygmalion, 1979, oil on canvas, 108 x 306"

Romulus and Remus, 1979, oil on canvas, 102 x 114"

Yangtse Baby, 1979, oil on canvas, 102 x 108"

PREVIOUS EXHIBITIONS AT THE ART GALLERY

- 1975** FACULTY EXHIBITION
- 1976** MICHELLE STUART
RECENT DRAWINGS (AN AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS EXHIBITION)
SALVATORE ROMANO
- 1977** MEL PEKARSKY
JUDITH BERNSTEIN
HERBERT BAYER (AN AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS EXHIBITION)
- 1978** LEON GOLUB
WOMEN ARTISTS FROM NEW YORK
JANET FISH
ROSEMARY MAYER
THE SISTER CHAPEL
- 1979** SHIRLEY GORELICK
ALAN SONFIST
HOWARDENA PINDELL
ROY LICHTENSTEIN
- 1980** BENNY ANDREWS
ALEX KATZ
EIGHT FROM NEW YORK
ARTISTS FROM QUEENS
OTTO PIENE
STONY BROOK 11, THE STUDIO FACULTY
- 1981** ALICE NEEL
55 MERCER: 10 SCULPTORS
JOHN LITTLE
IRA JOEL HABER
LEON POLK SMITH
- 1982** FOUR SCULPTORS
CECILE ABISH
JACK YOUNGERMAN
ALAN SHIELDS
THE STONY BROOK ALUMNI INVITATIONAL
ANN McCOY
- 1983** THE WAR SHOW
CERAMIC DIRECTIONS: A CONTEMPORARY OVERVIEW
CINDY SHERMAN
THE FACULTY SHOW
- 1984** BERNARD APTEKAR: ART AND POLITICS
ERIC STALLER: LIGHT YEARS

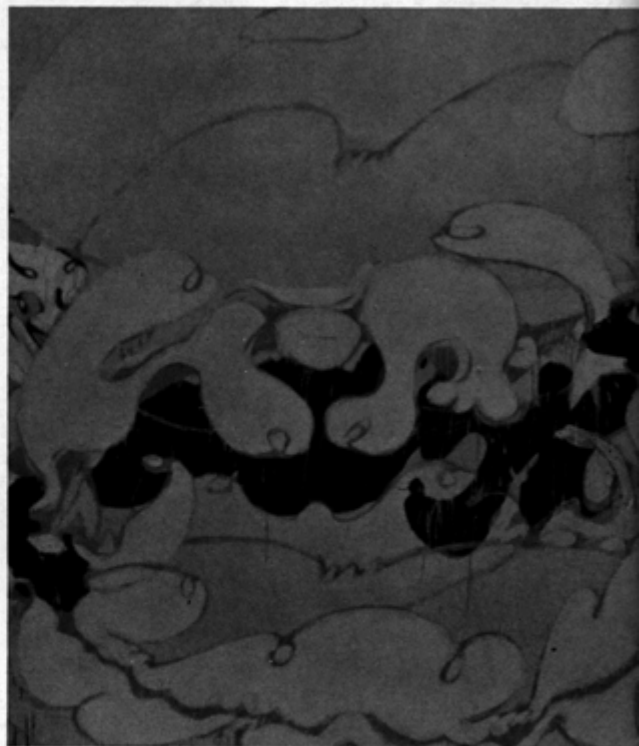
Director..... RHONDA COOPER

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT STONY BROOK

THE FINE ARTS CENTER



art gallery



THE FINE ARTS CENTER ART GALLERY
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT STONY BROOK