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A tightly focused exhibit at [McClain Gallery](#) ^[1] presents large paintings made by Norman Bluhm, a second generation abstract expressionist, during a period when the art world had largely moved on from explosive, gestural painting in favor of Pop and minimalism.



Norman Bluhm: *Oenotria*, 1971 Oil on canvas 89 x 76 inches Image Courtesy of McClain Gallery

You can see affinities with Henri Matisse, Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline and Sam Francis, among other 20th-century figures, but Bluhm wields his own brush.

Zen enso painting, the practice of spontaneously rendering circles in ink, comes emphatically to mind, as Bluhm's curves and voids evoke a similar sense of emptiness and interdependency.

But Bluhm's scale is monumental and his Zenlike austerity is mitigated by a soft palette of violets, pinks and creamy tans as well as a lusty temperament that finds inferences of flesh in every curve.

An abridged documentary on Bluhm will be screened at noon and 3 p.m. Saturday at the gallery.

Norman Bluhm: Paintings 1967-74 continues through Oct. 29 at McClain Gallery, 2242 Richmond; 713-520-9988.

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[1] <http://www.mcclaingallery.com>