

NORMAN BLUHM
Paintings, 1967 - 74

September 15-October 22

Opening Reception:
Wednesday, September 21,
6:00 - 8:00 PM



McClain Gallery is pleased to present a comprehensive exhibition of paintings by Norman Bluhm from the mid 1960s to the mid 1970s. This is the second solo exhibition of Bluhm's work at McClain Gallery following last year's exhibition, *Norman Bluhm: A Retrospective of Selected Works, 1948-1998*.

By the late 1960s Bluhm was confidently defining complex spatial relationships substantially different from the ones synonymous with the Abstract Expressionists, particularly Willem de Kooning and Franz Kline, with whom he has often been linked. It is literally when he moved on from his own Abstract Expressionist background and entered a territory all his own - an alternative world. Whereas de Kooning set his women within a shallow, post-cubist space and Kline stabilized his "painted space," as he called it, on the canvas surface, Bluhm used a hothouse palette of light and dark colors - mostly reds, pinks, peaches, blues, and lavenders, along with black and white, and almost no green - to evoke depthless spaces for his rounded, layered, entwined, interpenetrating forms and rubbery shapes to float within, open onto, and press against. It is a world undergoing constant change while in continual motion...

...As intense as his subject matter is, Bluhm never becomes ponderous or didactic. He could be erotic, funny, and serious all at once, an ability that he and his friend, the poet Frank O'Hara, shared. There is a supple gracefulness to Bluhm's paintings that feels as choreographed and inevitable as Fred

Astaire's defiance of gravity. His hybrid forms often evoke bodies, landscapes, or clouds, but they resist any literal interpretation. And yet for all the masking and deliberate ambiguity that the artist achieves in his painting, the underlying subject, which is to say the perception that you cannot ever get away from, is ecstasy.

--John Yau

Norman Bluhm was born in Chicago in 1921. He served as a US Army B-26 pilot during World War II and flew in over forty dangerous missions over North Africa and Europe before being severely wounded. After recovering from his wounds, Bluhm began his career as an artist in Paris. He moved to New York in 1956 where he became a member of The New York School. Although Bluhm was influenced by his contemporaries in New York, his format, technique, and intensity were distinctly his own. Bluhm's notoriety as an artist grew as his work continued to evolve. He died at his home in Vermont in 1999.

An exhibition catalog with essay by John Yau will be available.

Image: Norman Bluhm, *Oenotria*, 1971, oil on canvas, 89 x 76 inches
Courtesy of the Norman Bluhm Estate, and Loretta Howard Gallery, NY

McClain Gallery

2242 Richmond Avenue

Houston, Texas 77098

T: 713.520.9988, F: 713.520.0055 www.mcclaingallery.com

info@mcclaingallery.com

Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Friday: 10 am to 5:30 pm, Saturday: 11 am to 5 pm

For Press Inquiries: Erin Siudzinski, erins@mcclaingallery.com