

replicating such legendary pieces as Rembrandt's *Night Watch* (1642) and Paolo Veronese's *Marriage at Cana* (1562–63), the Mexico City-based artist introduced graffiti, cartoon characters, slashes, holes, and paint spills to the canvases. His gestures mixed desecration, rebellion, and ironic commentary.

Some works seemed to be making art-historical connections, as in the case of the Twombly-esque white squiggles over Frans Hals's *Regents of the Old Men's Almshouse* (1664), cleverly juxtaposing tradition and chalkboard abstraction. In *The Game* (2006), the heads of Tom and Jerry, Shaggy, and other animated characters look like children's stickers pasted over another Hals group portrait.

The Banquet (2006)—a reworking of Veronese's already crowded masterpiece—bursts with cartoon and promotional characters, from Mickey Mouse and the Smurfs to Tony the Tiger and Aunt Jemima. Similarly, in Romero's version of Caravaggio's *Supper at Emmaus* (1601), a red container of KFC french fries hovers over the central feast table. This not-so-subtle twist deflates the picture's solemn, holy mood.

Although the drawings were not as polished and seemed incomplete compared with the paintings, Romero's approach was similar. Brazen and engaging, his upending actions ultimately poked holes in the sanctified artistic concepts of tradition and originality. —Richard Chang

Norman Bluhm

Station Museum of Contemporary Art
Houston

Norman Bluhm (1921–99) studied architecture with Mies van der Rohe before exploring paint's ability to capture three-dimensional space on two-dimensional canvas. His muscular second-generation Abstract Expressionism of the late 1950s and early '60s gave way in the mid-'70s to lyrical, biomorphic forms united by vigorous line. Organized by museum director James Harithas, this exuberant survey of Bluhm's final body of work was dominated by the spirit of Matisse.

The earliest painting in this exhibition,

Pythagorean Icon (1990), uses welters of gesture to subdivide a large vertical rectangle into coherent quadrants. Bluhm would soon change the orientation of his canvases, creating mural-scale horizontal paintings whose enveloping



Norman Bluhm, *Pythagorean Icon*, 1990, oil on canvas, 90" x 78".

Station Museum of Contemporary Art.

proportions—many of them are between 20 and 30 feet long—challenge the limits of peripheral vision.

These paintings are dominated by flat grounds embellished with filigreed arabesques. In *Cappella Ignota* (1997) Bluhm loaded border areas with tightly packed figure fragments that animate the space around the much larger central figures, like side panels on an altar-piece. His distinctive calligraphy organizes increasingly legible figures within bilaterally symmetrical compositions that are ecstatic with lively patterning.

High-key color was a constant throughout Bluhm's career. His palette in these late works is deliciously hot. Pinks, salmons, reds, and yellows are piled atop one another in thin layers, chased with lines of lilac, cobalt blue, and green; spontaneous markings surmount gracefully painted bundles like exclamation points at the end of declara-

tive sentences. Above all, these paintings are alive with female presence, with Bluhm's looping line delineating buttocks, breasts, thighs, and arms arched in a deeply romantic frenzy of dance.

—Christopher French

Larry Snider

Douglas Dawson

Chicago

Larry Snider's photographs of China, Tibet, Nepal, Burma, Bhutan, and Peru were all the more remarkable when shown in the context of antiquities from related cultures.

While much of Snider's work is printed in silvery black and white, his most exciting series captures the glorious colors of Peru. *Santa Barbara, Peru. Market Day* (2006) shows women in vibrant, patterned shawls, hats, and skirts, their weathered skin accentuating the brightness of the fabrics. On display nearby was a Chilean wool hat that, though faded and worn, exhibits the same daring color combinations and designs as those in the photos.

Elsewhere in the gallery Snider's photos were placed beside sculptural figures, creating juxtapositions that highlighted connections between the ancient and the modern. Two black-and-white portraits, *Man with Long Pipe, Yunan Province, China* and *Man with Glasses, Yunan*



Larry Snider, *Man with Long Pipe, Yunan Province, China*, 1990, archival ink-jet print, 20" x 20". Douglas Dawson.

Province, China (both 1990), flanked a headless 14th-century carving of a monk in a meditation pose. The wristwatch, glasses, stylish haircut, and modern dress