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Hyman Bloom: Revealing

July 30, 2019 | Jennifer Vignone

Art is the exploration of the story an artist needs to tell, and the obstacles encountered during the creative process. Hyman Bloom grappled with many barriers. His ideas were seen as too Jewish, limited and not accessible to a universal audience. His interest in Hinduism, Theosophy and the Occult further hindered his work from being taken seriously. In addition, his proclivity to portray death and decay were unsettling. Yet, he persevered.

The result seen in the Hyman Bloom exhibition at the Alexandre Gallery is how his exploration ultimately works on so many levels. His use of paint, color, texture, organic elements and body parts challenge us as we are pushed down and pulled up through layers of subject matter, imagination, beliefs, and symbols to a point of mesmerized exhaustion. The original drive that brought the work to life creates a new experience for each viewer, encouraging them to shape a deeper meaning.



"Torso and Limbs". Oil, 1952. © Stella Bloom Trust, Courtesy Alexandre Gallery, New York

An early work such as "Torso and Limbs", despite the initial depiction of a dismembered body, uses Arthur Dove-like forms and Georgia O'Keeffe saturation of color to say something more about the parts than that they are gruesome. Bloom is making us see something vibrant and colorful about life. He is also challenging what we see and how we see it.

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"Seascape IV". Oil, 1975. © Stella Bloom Trust, Courtesy Alexandre Gallery, New York

"Seascape IV" possesses a deKooning or Pollack like frenzy, with paint strokes creating and breaking apart fish heads, waves, sea creatures, and human forms in a swirl of deep sea blues and foamy whites. Tinged with a reddish-orange that evoke thoughts of blood – he signals both death and life. The Alexandre Gallery's Marie Evans notes the ability to get lost in the layers is endless – the more you look, the deeper you go.



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"Self Portrait with Spider". Charcoal, 1965. © Stella Bloom Trust, Courtesy Alexandre Gallery, New York

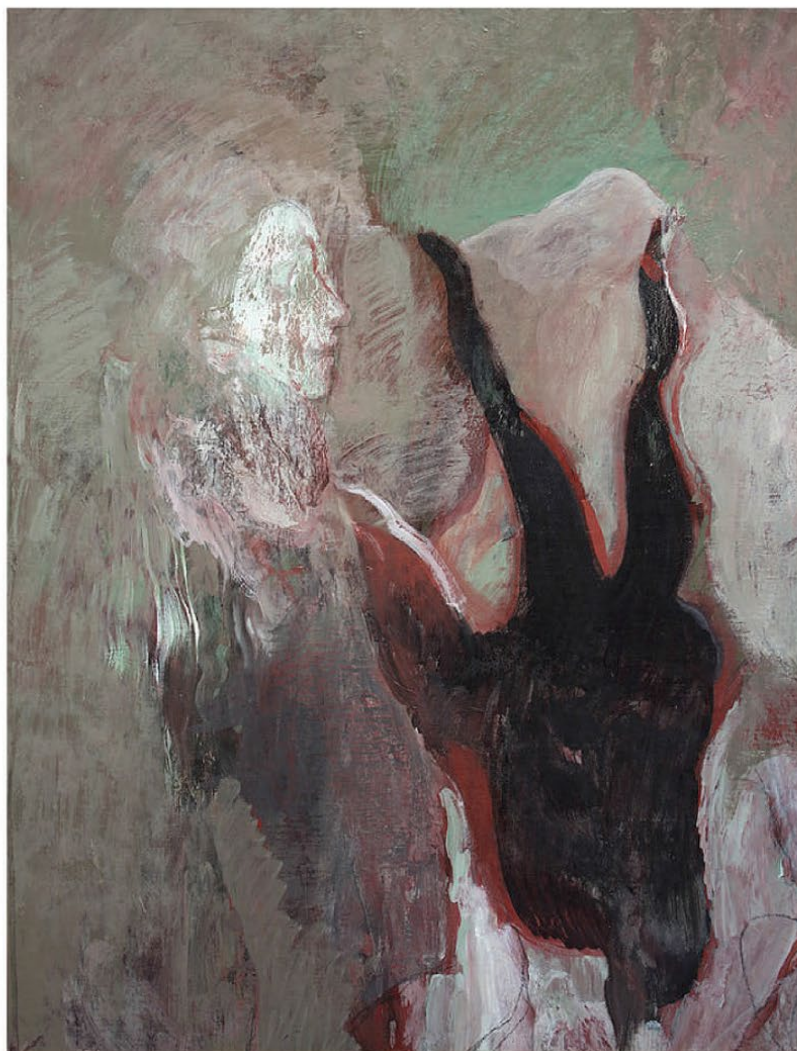
"Self Portrait with Spider" is an unsettling drawing with a giant spider as the main focal point on a deeply layered background. It is only after effort and perhaps reading the title that one is able to make out the presence of a figure in the shadows. The initial effect may be ominous unless the spider is seen as symbolic of mystery, dreams, a connection between the spiritual and natural world, and rebirth. Bloom's pairing of himself with the spider then visualizes his connection to this examination within himself. However, the shadowy appearance of the figure also promotes an "everyman" quality so that the viewer may connect to that figure engaging in their own quest.



"A Leg With Skull". Oil, 1979. © Stella Bloom Trust, Courtesy Alexandre Gallery, New York

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"A Leg With Skull" serves up a human leg, like a roast on a platter. The symbolism incorporated into the image enriches it. The skull is a reminder of the fleetingness of life. The burst of light streaming from above is the light from God or the cosmos – illuminating life, death, and the passageway to what follows. The human compost provides the sustenance for a new beginning as bright colors sprout along the decaying flesh. A veil hanging on the edge of the table is the separation of life and death; its hanging below the table indicates the pathway is cleared. Despite the initial macabre setting, the circle of life continues in a joyous layering of color, form, and texture.



"Seance". Oil, 1950. © Stella Bloom Trust, Courtesy Alexandre Gallery, New York

"Seance" blurs the foothold in reality. The large, blood red goat head fixes its filmy eye on the viewer. It references Satan while its cryptic shape also suggests a hand, reaching in or pulling away, guiding and resisting. The figure on the left might be a spirit, statue, corpse, or someone taking part in the seance – the pallid complexion tinged with a minty green patina of fear at what is unfolding. Scraped layers of paint emphasizes digging in, uprooting the dead, disturbing the balance of life and death – striving to get to something, somewhere, or to someone. Bloom's interest in the occult and seances does not compromise the painting's ability to be art and have a relevant interaction with a viewer even if they are not as interested in such matters.

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Hyman Bloom's work and career was long and varied. His style shows a likening to artists such as Arthur Dove, Chaim Soutine, James Ensor, George Rouault, Jackson Pollock, Francis Bacon, and Lucien Freud. He explored what interested him and what he knew admitting, "whatever have I ever painted that is not a self-portrait?"* and through that personal lens, exposed art that reaches us in endless ways.

The collection of paintings and drawings at the Alexandre Gallery is Hyman Bloom's journey through a lifetime exploring religion, nature, science, psychology, life, death, spirituality, the occult, and man and woman. Ms. Evans says that it was serendipitous that the gallery was working with Bloom's estate to create this show when the Boston Museum of Fine Arts was preparing theirs. This is one of the first major exhibitions in New York of Bloom's work since 1982 at the Terry Dintenfass Gallery. Spanning from 1950 to 1990, the selection of key works throughout these years expose us to his influences and how they shaped not only his vision, but how his struggle affects us in viewing them. Ms. Evans believes that this show and the major exhibition at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts will be instrumental in taking us all inside and outside of ourselves to enriched meaning.

Hyman Bloom: Revealing

June 27 - September 28, 2019

Alexandre Gallery, 724 5th Avenue, 4th Floor, New York, NY 10019

*References: * "Hyman Bloom "The Beauty of All Things", Documentary. Angélica Allende Brisk*

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