

Bockley Gallery



George Morrison

Opening Reception: Thursday, September 12, 5 to 8 pm

Exhibition: September 12 through October 19, 2019

Gallery Hours: Wednesday through Saturday, Noon to 5 pm

To celebrate the centennial of George Morrison's birth (1919-2000), Bockley Gallery presents an exhibition of select paintings, drawings, prints, and sculpture spanning more than five decades of this acclaimed artist's life. Born on Lake Superior's north shore and a member of Grand Portage Band of Chippewa, Morrison is recognized nationally as an artist, a teacher, a mentor, and a cultural leader. This exhibition reaffirms the recent traveling retrospective and publication, *Modern Spirit: The Art of George Morrison* (2013–2015), organized by the Minnesota Museum of American Art, which highlighted the depth and breadth of his Abstract Expressionist practice, and how his homeland and phenomenology of place guided his artmaking in so many ways.

Morrison's paintings, prints and drawings of the North Shore landscape reveal a distinct fusion of Surrealist and Abstract Expressionist ideas and methods, seen clearly in his signature "Horizon Line" works. This effortless melding of the two styles animates his 1997 lithograph, *Surrealist Landscape* (1997) which was created at the print studio Akasha in Minneapolis. Here Morrison's sophisticated understanding of color and abstract space coalesce into a highly organized composition united by a thin, frenetic line. The horizon line is depicted high in the picture plane demarcating the blue of Lake Superior against a red sky. More subdued but equally provocative is *Three Surrealist Forms* (1984) a mixed media work on paper depicting three pale apparitions – Morrison, his artist wife Hazel Belvo and their son Briand. They rise up in the immediate foreground, suspended above an indeterminate landscape that is defined by a luminous red horizon line.

Several *Untitled* paintings feature in the exhibition, including gouache on paper and oil on canvas works, which underscore his keen eye for uniting uncommon hues with tactile gestural marks and brushstrokes. Morrison once explained, “I like the so-called magical surface of a painting, the marks that a painter makes...I am interested in the phenomenon of paint and the act of painting. Using Surrealist ideas and techniques, I let images emerge from masses of paint. So there are hidden associations that become real for me in the final mark.”

The exhibition also includes examples of Morrison’s sculpture, such as the *Untitled (Column)* c. 1993. Here he puzzled together differently shaped and sized pieces of wood, like a fine woodworker, to create a column that is square in shape and evokes an iconic, timeless presence.

Bockley Gallery is particularly pleased to present this show, as we have had a 30-year relationship with George Morrison and his work, first showing it in the late 1980s. Since then we have presented more than five one-person shows, and his work has been exhibited in many group shows. Bockley Gallery has also represented the George Morrison estate since his passing in 2000.

For further information or press photos please contact Bockley Gallery.

Image: George Morrison, *Untitled* (1957) 23 x 35 inches, gouache on paper