

1988



JOAN SNYDER

*Collects Joan Snyder*





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## EXHIBITION SCHEDULE

The David Winton Bell Gallery  
Brown University  
Providence, Rhode Island  
*September 17 - November 1, 1988*

Fine Arts Center Art Gallery  
State University of New York  
Stony Brook, New York  
*November 10 - December 21, 1988*

Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum  
Santa Barbara, California  
*January 7 - February 11, 1989*

De Saisset Museum  
Santa Clara University  
Santa Clara, California  
*June 25 - August 20, 1989*

University Art Gallery  
Sonoma State University  
Rohnert Park, California  
*September 14 - October 29, 1989*

Cover:  
*Moonfield*, 1986  
oil and acrylic on linen  
4 x 5 feet



# JOAN SNYDER

*Collects Joan Snyder*

*Organized by Betty Klausner*

SANTA BARBARA CONTEMPORARY ARTS FORUM

**Photo Credits:**

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Photographs of Joan Snyder by Larry Fink

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FOREWORD

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FIRST AND FOREMOST I would like to thank Joan Snyder for her complete cooperation and counsel. It was always a pleasure working with her and I value her friendship. The artist's willingness to part with her precious work for over a year while it travels across the country is especially remarkable. Margaret Haight, Snyder's assistant, has been most helpful with myriad details and I am appreciative of her service. Betty Cunningham of Hirschl & Adler Modern, New York, greatly aided the enterprise and CAF thanks her for obtaining support from the gallery. The essay by Hayden Herrera is plainly brilliant and an enriching component of the catalogue as is Ginny Brush's outstanding design. I thank Larry Fink for photographs of Joan and Steven Sloman for the photographs of the work. Also, thanks to Robert Schefman for his time and patience.

For their early and hearty endorsement of *Joan Snyder Collects Joan Snyder* and for their cooperation and suggestions I thank the Directors of the participating institutions, Nancy Versachi, Brown University, Rhonda Cooper, SUNY at Stony Brook, Robert McDonald, De Saisset Museum and Bob Nugent, Sonoma State University.

Finally, I would like to express gratitude to CAF's Exhibition Committee, especially the Chair, Teen Conlon, for enthusiasm about this exhibition and to the Board of Directors for their approval and interest. Last yet important, I thank CAF staff, particularly Rita Ferri and Naomi Ramieri-Hall who helped cope with organizing this travelling show and who facilitate and enhance life at CAF.

BK



## FOREWORD

SIMPLY PUT, the title tells the *Joan Snyder Collects Joan Snyder* premise. The intention of the exhibition and catalogue is to examine what an artist chooses to save from her own output and why.

This unusual exhibition concept is relevant to an artists' organization like Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum (CAF). Our perspective is often innovative, one not commonly found in mainline institutions. This time it is, perhaps, a peculiar extravagant slant, especially since this important American painter has not yet received a major retrospective. Yet, here we are on a maverick byway reviewing over twenty years endeavor solely based on what Joan Snyder deems worthy of possessing.

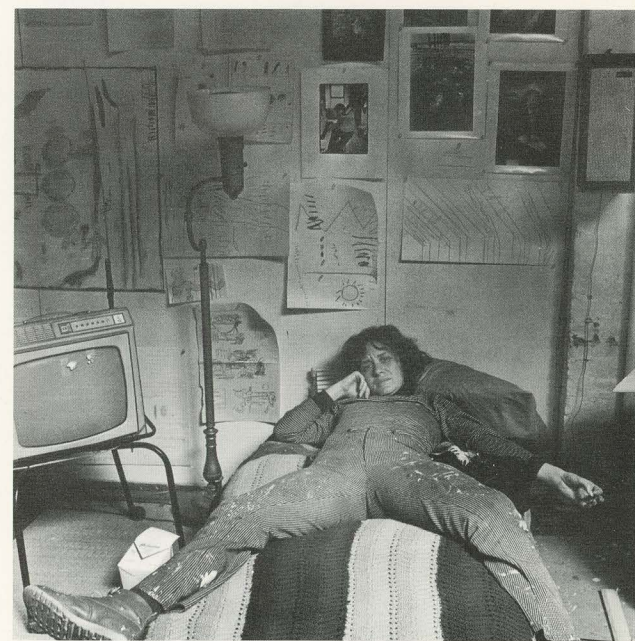
Besides being an intriguing investigation, it is a remarkable opportunity for the public on both Coasts to experience many Snyder works together; to understand and appreciate this underexposed artist.

For years I admired Joan's work. In fact, I too, own a painting. Her rare honesty to reflect viscerally her innermost state wherever it may lead in her work deserves respect. When she visited Santa Barbara several years ago I was excited to learn that she had always reserved particular pictures for herself

(sometimes to the consternation of her gallery dealers). This information was the genesis of *Joan Snyder Collects Joan Snyder*. The thirty-six paintings selected for exhibition are only a part of her collection, located mainly in a Manhattan warehouse. I spent an amazing day there looking at her work which revealed the printout of this woman.

Whether abstract or representational, encrusted with gobs of paint or spare and singular, landscape or narrative, lyrical or discordant, her art is intimately linked with significant personal events and relationships. Snyder's trained hand responds to her world of family, lovers, friends, and ideas to create her distinctive imagery. All her work reflects the hothouse of her moods of joy, anger, and anxiety—but especially the paintings she most loves and squirrels away to share with us in *Joan Snyder Collects Joan Snyder*. This exhibition is her story made with paint, words, sticks, photographs, flocking and whatever else she needed to express her intense emotion. Beyond that, these risky, uneasy and committed paintings make me feel more alive, more connected. They are paradigms of the human condition.

Betty Klausner  
*CAF Director*



*Snyder in her studio, Mulberry Street, New York City, 1971*



## INTRODUCTION

I HAVE CHOSEN TO SAVE these paintings because they were important to me for my own working process and because I loved them. I have loved many of my paintings over the years but wasn't able to keep them in my own collection, mainly for financial reasons and sometimes because it is hard to store large paintings. So I try to sell the bigger paintings. It doesn't always work out that way. Sometimes someone wants to buy a small painting. This happens frequently and then I go through the same struggle with every show. Two or more people wanting the same painting, with one of them being me. I usually persevere and keep what I had originally decided to keep. Not too long ago I had to buy back a painting of mine that I had originally decided to keep. I had donated the painting to an AIDS auction and my gallery (Hirschl & Adler Modern) bought it. I then could not bear the fact that it would be "on the market." I immediately called the gallery and bought it back. The painting is *Oh Marie*. It was painted during probably one of my darkest moments and the writing on the painting was from my dear friend Marie Foley who had written me of her darkest moment. I had to keep it.

I kept *Summer Painting* because a long time ago someone advised me to keep some of my early work. I should say that I do not consider myself to be terribly prolific... so it's not as if I have dozens of works each year to be sold. I am lucky if I make 12 paintings a year, including the small ones.

I conceived of *An Offering for Pro* in 1986 while my friend Porfirio Didonna was dying of a brain tumor. I completed the painting after he died. In the case of this picture, it was in a show that I had in Boston at the Neilson Gallery in 1986 and in a group show at Hirschl & Adler Modern in 1987. Because this painting was so central to each show it had to be for sale in both shows. It wasn't sold in either show. I felt absolutely confused and elated at the same time. Confused because I could not figure out why no one wanted this beautiful painting and elated because now it was mine.

I kept *Morning Requiem with Kaddish* because my 8 year old daughter, Molly, walked into my studio, looked at it and said, "Mom, this painting is so delicate and so complicated." So my small painting to keep from that show was thus chosen for me.

Over the years I've developed a thicker hide. I used to be (I am told) quite impossible at show time. There were paintings I could not part with that absolutely had to be sold. Agony for me and my dealers. I think I've gotten much better although the feeling of loss that I suffer after a show is no different, thick skin and all. Of course, I'm always happy when my friends buy a painting for their home. Then it feels as if its staying in the family.

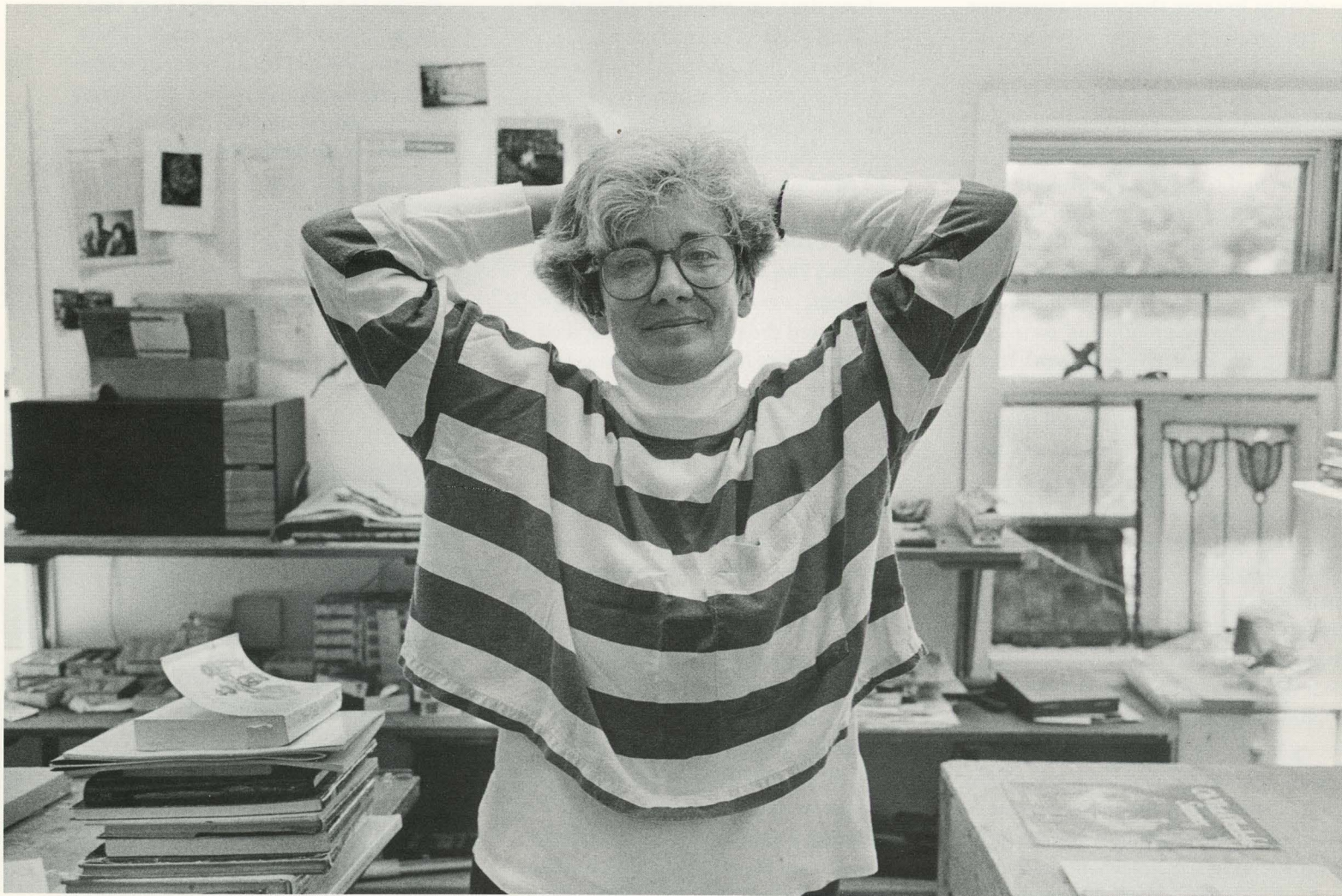
Joan Snyder

9



Joan Snyder with daughter Molly, Eastport, New York, 1988





*Joan Snyder, studio, Eastport, New York, 1988*



## ESSAY by Hayden Herrera

JOAN SNYDER struggles to be a collector of her own paintings and she is an avid keeper of her own artistic past. Like a farmer ploughing a field to prepare for a new crop, she turns over and reexamines the rich visual language she has tilled over the last twenty-six years.

Certain constants characterize her work: intense physicality of surface, a willingness to try anything if it propels her message to the viewer, and an urge to speak that is almost overwhelming. "Tell Me In Any Way You Can" is emblazoned on a banner in a 1959 painting of the same title. The words could be an admonishment to herself. A number of shapes and symbols turn up year after year; circles that can be orifices, breasts, suns, or simply a kind of cymbal-clashing in paint; hearts that are sometimes lacy valentines, sometimes made of real fur and sometimes carved out in bold strokes of paint. A house drawn as if by a kindergarten child is another leitmotiv; usually it is painted a bright yellow. Less sanguine are the curved strokes that are often actual gashes in the canvas. They appear early in her work and continue to this day.

And there are striking parallels between early and late paintings. With its round visceral shapes more or less

evenly distributed over a flesh-colored field, *Flock Painting of Women*, 1969, predicts *Ode to the Pumpkin Field*, † 1986-87, in which equally visceral pumpkins punctuate a field that is tilted so that we feel we are standing in the middle of it looking down at the earth. In both pictures, gashes suggest wounds: as in many of Snyder's paintings, the joy of plenitude is accompanied by the threat of pain.

From the first portraits that she made in 1962 when, as a college senior, she took an elective in art, Joan Snyder has been an expressionist. "That was all I knew how to do at that point— how to feel. I didn't know anything about color or form. I had never looked at painting. I was really painting what I felt."<sup>1</sup> After graduating, Snyder lived with a family on a New Jersey farm where she painted small landscapes that often included the family's yellow house and that were reminiscent of Vlaminck and Burchfield. During graduate school at Rutgers she made what she calls her "altar paintings," mostly large, pink, flatly painted nudes decked with tacky gold fringe, imitation leopard skin and pink flowered wall paper. Her attraction to funky, vulgar materials, begins here and remains an important part of her palette.

In the aftermath of an unhappy trip to Europe in 1968, Snyder looked at the expressionist landscapes that she had painted five years earlier. "I tried to think what it was about those old landscapes that I used to love so much and that was missing from my work at the time. I began to realize that the barns and subject matter were not what was important to me anymore, but the way I had painted them was... I was feeling very broken up, and I started making tiny paintings with little strokes and gestures in them which felt to me like what being broken up was about." One of these tiny paintings was *Stroke Landscape*, 1968. Although it looks forward to the stroke paintings, its pink sky alludes to the idea of an interior landscape, a notion Snyder went on to explore in what she calls her "flock/membrane" paintings.

These represent female reproductive organs seen and felt from inside the body, and they are usually pink in tone and enriched with gel, paste, lentils, thread and flocking (to thicken the membranes). Although the artist was not aware of it at the time, the flock/membrane paintings focus on the idea of female sensibility, a concern that was to emerge in the mid-1970s in what Snyder calls her explicit feminist statements. Works like *Flock Painting*



of *Women* are disturbingly intimate. Crucial to them and to much of Snyder's work is the identity of canvas and pigment with flesh. When Joan Snyder makes a mark you can almost feel the gesture on your own skin.

The visceral quality is more distanced in *Wedding Painting*, 1969, a canvas that forms a transition between the flock/membrane paintings and the stroke paintings. Here the membrane is transformed into red lines and strokes that define and contain the fullness of a white ground. Soon after her marriage to the photographer Larry Fink in 1969, Snyder produced *Lines and Strokes*, her first stroke painting. In it red strokes that still hark back to the membranes, are stretched over unprimed canvas upon which she has penciled a grid. "I knew while I was doing it that I had made a breakthrough," says Snyder. "I suddenly discovered that paint strokes could be the subject matter. I was painting a paint stroke. I was speaking."

By the time she produced *Summer Painting*, 1971, she had the confidence to discard the grid and to let the strokes go every which way in a complete spatial configuration that examines what she calls the "anatomy of a stroke." Unlike most of her paintings, *Summer Painting* was painted outside. "It was," she says, "the first painting in which I had the freedom to

move the lines around. I started using diagonals. The colors are very light. When you paint outside you keep adding white because in the sunlight you can't see the color." The mood is jubilant, bringing to mind the unhampered movement of mind and body rejoicing in a summer landscape.

Ironically it is in the stroke paintings, her most abstract works, that Snyder began to tell stories and to give her work a temporal dimension. Bored with the single-image paintings that dominated the art scene at that time, she began to make paintings that had the complex, multi-layered, time-bound quality of music. The grids gave her, she says, a beginning, middle and end. They were the staff upon which notes of color sang forth. She began to paint what she has called "symphonies."

Although her focus in the stroke paintings was formal—she was trying to show every phase of her process and to analyze brushstrokes the way a Cubist analyzes shapes in space—the stroke paintings are also interior landscapes in which each stroke has the emotional weight of a word.

The language of Snyder's stroke paintings was heard. "I did them. Everybody loved them, and I stopped doing them. They were easy. They were Snyders. I had to move on." One of the goads that keeps Snyder

changing is her need for adventure. "I would be bored to do the same painting over and over again. I have so many ideas. I trust my creative process implicitly, and I let my ideas take me where they take me." Once again, Snyder looked back at her earlier work. This time she delved into her own iconography, gradually returning to some of the forthrightly personal and female imagery of the flock/membrane paintings.

*Squares*, 1972, is a Klee-like checkerboard of resonant color that signals the end of the stroke paintings. "The paintings had to be richer. I filled in all the spaces. It had to do with wanting to put more paint on, wanting to spend more time on a painting. I thought at the time that I would never do another painting like *Squares*, but it spoke to a need for a more specific type of structure." In many later paintings, similar compositions form one section of a larger painting. Snyder calls these compositions built out of colored rectangles "resolves." They offer a resolution to the more turbulent and painterly sections that accompany them.

*Flesh/Art*, 1973-1974, looks back to the stroke paintings and forward to the explicit feminist statements that followed. "My idea was to pull art out of flesh," Snyder says. As in *Flock Membrane of Women*, the canvas is



covered with a skin-colored ground that is punctuated by a number of orifice-like openings. In *Flesh/Art*, these openings are curved gashes cut into the canvas, and filled with color. Snyder insists that the cuts had nothing to do with vaginal imagery: "When I did *Flesh/Art* it had to do with my relationship to materials. I was tearing those pieces of canvas. I pasted a piece of canvas on the stretched canvas and cut it with a razor and then tore the canvas down. I wanted to paint in the cuts. I wanted to sew on some of

them... I mean, when I'm doing it to canvas, I'm doing it to canvas, not to anything else." In *Flesh/Art* Snyder has made her strokes so tactile, so emphatically physical, that we are thrust head-long into a canvas that is a stand-in for flesh.

Beginning in 1974, prompted by her engagement with the Women's Movement, Snyder's paintings became openly feminist. "In our discussions," she recalls, "everybody was asking, was there a female esthetic or wasn't there? And I was certainly out to prove there

was, that our work comes out of our lives, and that women's experiences are somehow different from men's experiences, so our work is going to be different. Now there is no longer the same kind of anger, but the female sensibility is always going to be part of my language, because I'm a woman."

In the late 1970s and early 1980s Snyder enriched her vocabulary with new symbols. Dead trees, fishbones and totems correspond to changes in her life. "In 1978 I had a miscarriage, and I went straight into my studio in New York, and I started making a painting of the Martins Creek farm. It had a pine tree that looked like a stick figure in it. I took that pine tree and turned it into a totem, sort of like a fishbone totem." When Snyder discovered in a book about the collective unconscious that these images were universal symbols of death she felt the authenticity of her imagery was confirmed. In the trees and totems she had found "a language for all time, like saying the word 'mom' or 'ouch.'"

In *Black Totem*, 1978, the dead tree turns into a totem that looks like a stick figure, a fishbone or a cross. Crosses appear in many of Snyder's paintings. They are not specifically Christian symbols. Rather they are emblems of her personal yearning for redemption. A yellow sun rimmed in blood red does little to illuminate

(continued on page 30)



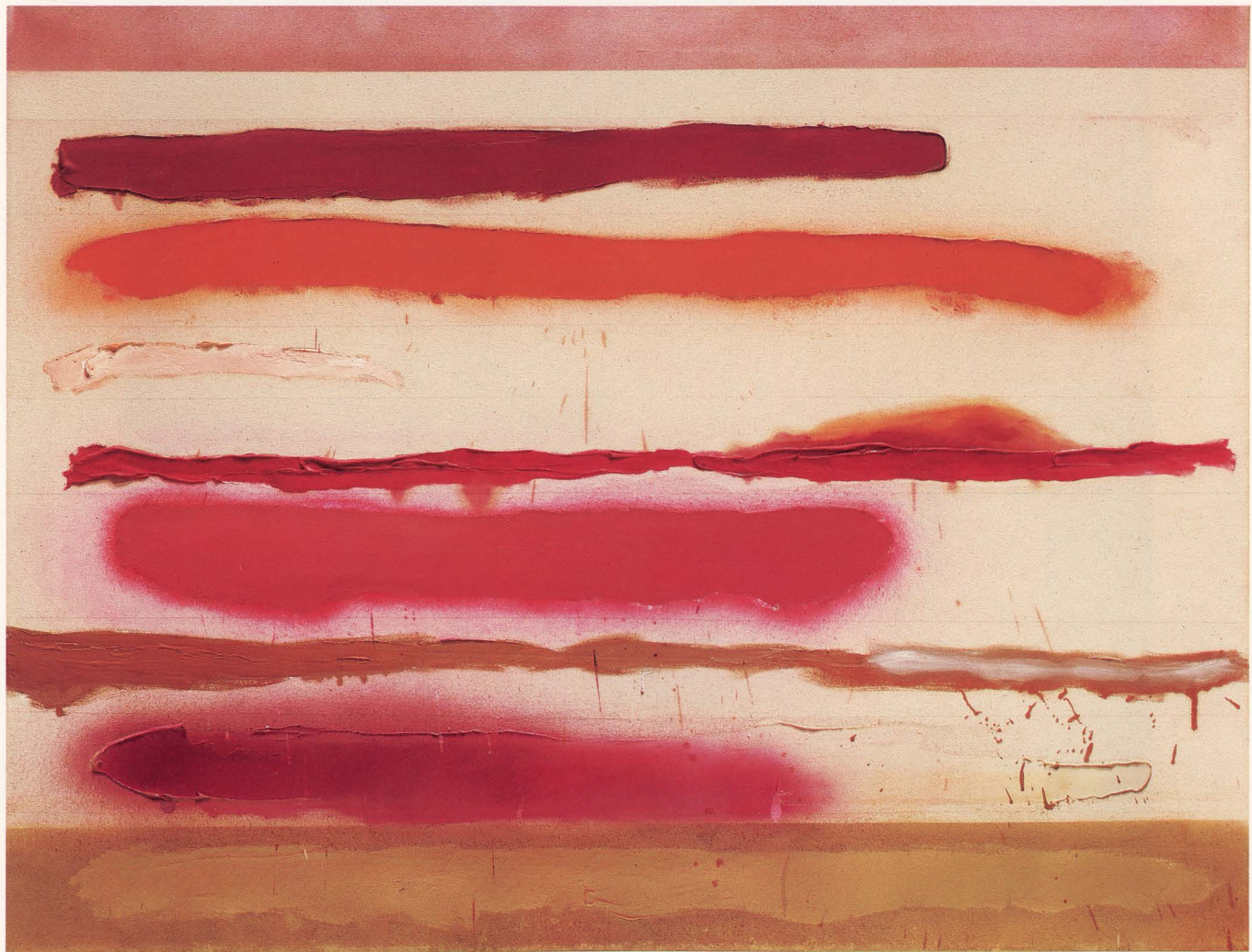
*Landscape*, 1970  
oil on canvas  
8 x 12 inches



*Lines and Strokes*

1969

*oil, acrylic and pencil on canvas*  
40 x 52 inches







*Squares*

1972

*oil, acrylic and paper mâché on canvas*  
4 x 4 feet





*Flesh/Art*

1972-1973

*oil, acrylic, thread, needle and seeds on canvas*

*2 x 2 feet*

*Study* (diptych)

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1981

*oil, acrylic, paper and pencil on linen*  
*12 1/4 x 12 1/4 and 12 1/2 x 12 1/2 inches*





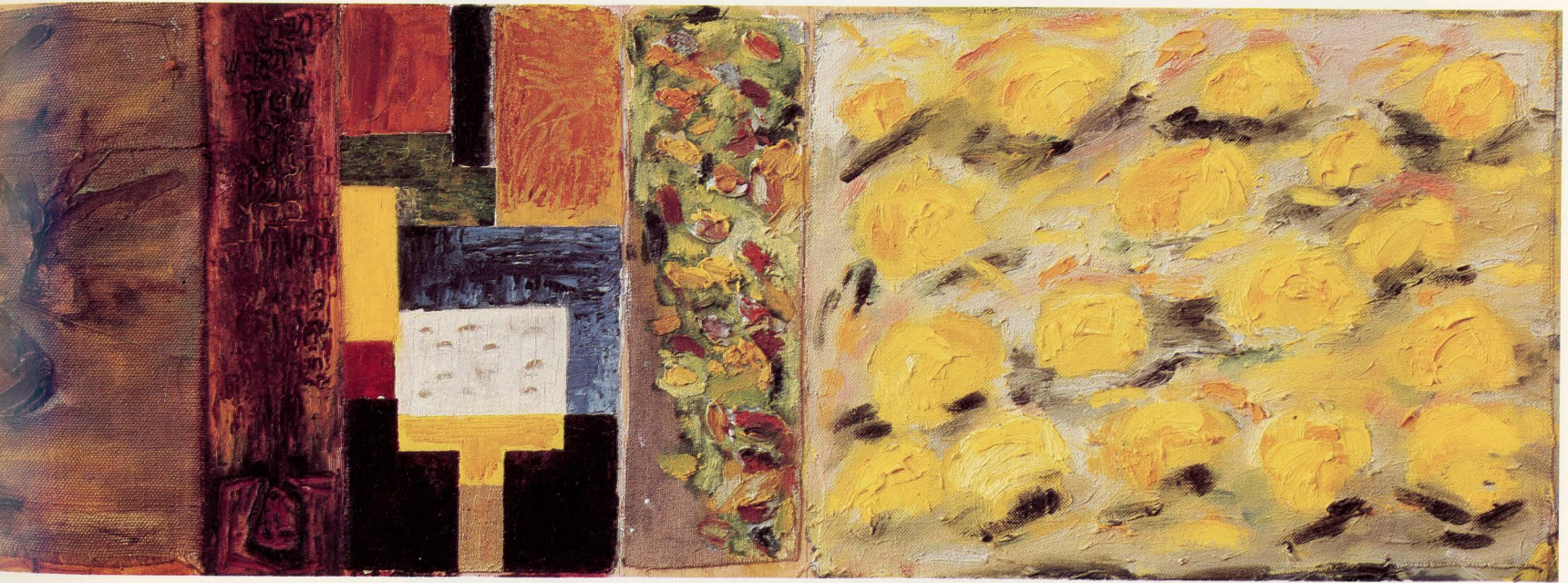
*Study for Morning Requiem with Kaddish*

1987-1988

*oil and acrylic on linen mounted on board with nails and wire*  
1 x 4 feet







*Black Totems*

1978

*oil, acrylic and wooden dowels on linen*

*2 x 2 feet*







Dear Joan, I am enclosing copies of several translations of the Virgil, hoping you have one of them. The translations don't seem as rich as the meaning of the Latin. It is one of the things I miss most about the saying of the Aeneid. I feel very much for your painful feeling of separation & loss. It took me so long to cope with the loss of my daughter - really unbearable. I suffered in it. I forced me to live on a different level - it took every last atom of me. I took a long time.

WITH LOVE  
MARIE



SUNT  
SUNT  
LA-LA  
CRY  
MAE

SUNT  
SUNT  
LACRYMAE  
LACRYMAE  
LACRYMAE  
LACRYMAE  
LACRYMAE

LACRYMAE PERVINCUNT MENTEM MORTALIA TANGUNT

AND NO ONE WILL AN EVER KNOW INTO HOW MANY PEICES MY HEART WAS BROKEN



*Oh Marie*

1984

*oil, acrylic, nails, paper and pencil on woodblock*

*17 7/8 x 18 inches*





*I Felt Like a Virgin Again*

1985

*oil, acrylic and cloth on linen*

*4 x 5 feet*





*Boy in Africa*

1988

*oil and acrylic on linen mounted on board with cloth and nails*  
*10 1/2 x 10 1/2 inches*

ESSAY (continued from page 13)

*Black Totem's* forbidding night sky. "During that whole period," she says, "I was somewhere between death and birth. Not too long after that, Molly was born."

Snyder's joy at the birth of her daughter in 1979 was expressed in her art, but the dissolution of her marriage kept the painful imagery flowing. During this period two new images enter her work. One is a stick figure inspired by watching a friend and the two-year old Molly drawing in the sand. In both *The Tearfulness of Things*, 1982, and *Cape with Stick Figure*, 1981-1984, the stick figure seen against a red background conveys a feeling of conflict and loss. The other new image is a huge open mouth lined with sharp teeth. Sometimes, the mouth is part of a primitive-looking head that is based on an African idol that Snyder acquired in the late 1970s. In *She Sings*, 1981, the mouth has no face. Beside it are three tree/totem/cross symbols that are, Snyder says, symbols of transcendence. Scattered about are brightly colored geometric shapes that one might see as the notes the mouth sings, except that such a ferocious mouth would emit a more abrasive noise. Indeed, the painting's title must be sardonic; the mouth does not sing, it lets out a scream as bone-chilling as the shriek in Edvard Munch's *The Scream*.

Snyder's unhappiness over her broken marriage is expressed again in *Apple Tree Mass*, 1983, painted soon after visiting the Martins Creek farm where Larry Fink continued to live. Moved by an apple tree's struggle to survive despite its great age, Snyder painted the tree leafless but with powerful, life-seeking roots, and she placed it under a funereal canopy made of

plight of children, a concern that would be expressed even more emphatically in her paintings of 1987 and 1988. Part of it reads, "But our children are being kidnapped and raped and going crazy—wandering the streets, committing suicide. Our marriages are dissolving—we are mothers raising our children. We are afraid. AFRAID." Snyder goes on to



*The Tearfulness of Things*, 1982  
woodcut print and oil paint on woodblock  
10 x 30 inches

dark scraps of cloth as if the tree were a pagan altar. To the right a stick figure stands in a red archway, another sanctified space—this is, after all, a mass.

To the left are two panels with writing. "Lachrymae Rerum...the tearfulness of things." The words are taken from Virgil's *Aeneid*. Her own poem, a kind of chant, is the first clear instance of Snyder's grief over the

list all the things that she loved in the home that was no longer hers, among them, her old bedroom, the apple trees, "the fence he built. I loved him." The word "garden" is spelled out in Molly's wooden play letters. Above is yet another arch, this one forming the top of a sepulchral structure upon which she has written, like words carved on a gravestone,



“Lachrymae Rerum.” For all the lamentation, there is hope. The vertical shape in the center of the canvas shifts left and right but moves ever upward, and it is, Snyder says, a symbol of transcendence.

Divorce was not the only cause of misery. Between 1982 and 1984 Snyder was involved in a tumultuous relationship which, like everything else in her life turned up in her art. A series of paintings in which clusters of plastic grapes are attached to the canvas speak of both ecstasy and anguish. Snyder loved the grapes for their outrageous tackiness. “Obviously I was being slightly humorous in using plastic grapes in a painting,” she avows. But the grapes also have a more serious meaning. They suggest “sex, plentitude, fullness, opening up,” she says. “They’re a symbol of life and passion.” Although she was not conscious that grapes are the symbol of Christ’s passion, the reference, she says, is appropriate, for the love relationship was a kind of Calvary.

*Love’s Pale Grapes*, 1982, is like an inversion of *Vanishing Theater*,† 1974, one of the most forceful of the feminist statement paintings. Whereas the cut in the red ground of the earlier work suggests some violent aspect of sexuality (it had to do with severing a relationship with a woman friend), the cut in the soft fleshy tones of *Love’s*

*Pale Grapes* seems a gentle celebration of eros. The cut in *Vanishing Theater*† is stuffed with cotton batting so that it cannot close. In *Love’s Pale Grapes* Snyder has placed a cluster of green grapes in the cut. In both paintings Snyder’s familiar circle appears, and in both the right hand panel offers a “resolve.”

Another triptych, *Love’s Deep Grapes*, 1983-1984, is a kind of requiem. The right section is a carved woodblock and the left is a print pulled from that woodblock. It depicts stick figure children on the shore of a lake the surface of which is indicated by the wood’s grain. “I saw stones weep,” Snyder writes, again quoting Virgil. “There is a sadness in things apart from connected with human suffering.” In the central panel grapes are framed by a rectangle of midnight blue velvet that has been glued and nailed onto wood covered with gauze. “While I was doing all these paintings,” Snyder recalls, “Mozart’s *Great Mass* spoke directly to me, to what I was feeling.” Then the paintings came. “I was going through major kinds of life crises: acceptance, forgiveness, guilt and happiness. You name it, I was going through it. How can that not be in the paintings?”

In 1984 Snyder began to spend a part of the year in Eastport, Long Island. This move brought the sense

of fullness and renewal seen in the beanfield paintings, a splendid series of works inspired by the beanfield outside her window. Paintings like *Beanfield With Music For Molly* rejoice in fertility, nature’s and the artist’s, and like the “stroke” paintings, testify to a moment of great spiritual release. The move also brought the light-hearted mood that erupts in several nudes, for example, *I Felt Like a Virgin Again*, 1985, and a recognition of nature’s majesty revealed in *Moonfield*, 1986.

This moment of exuberance was followed by more somber paintings that cry out against cruelty to children with a vehemence that recalls the explicitly feminist works of the previous decade. “I started reading a series about the children of darkness in the *Christian Science Monitor*,” she says. “It was about children exploited and in trouble all over the world. I decided it just wasn’t a year to make beautiful paintings. I wanted to make some kind of political statement.” Several paintings, like *Boy in Africa*, 1986, contain collaged photographs of children in distress. In others, like the huge *Morning Requiem (For the Children)*,† and a smaller version of it, *Study for Morning Requiem With Kaddish*, both 1987-1988, a barren vineyard is a metaphor for children’s suffering.

Like Snyder’s leafless apple tree,



the vines are anthropomorphized. They gesticulate like beings in duress. And, like the grape paintings, the vineyards present a pictorial passion play, death and resurrection. There are nails driven into the surface of these Requiems. And, as Snyder points out, "those vines are crosses, but they will bear grapes. The grapevine is an archetypal symbol of life."

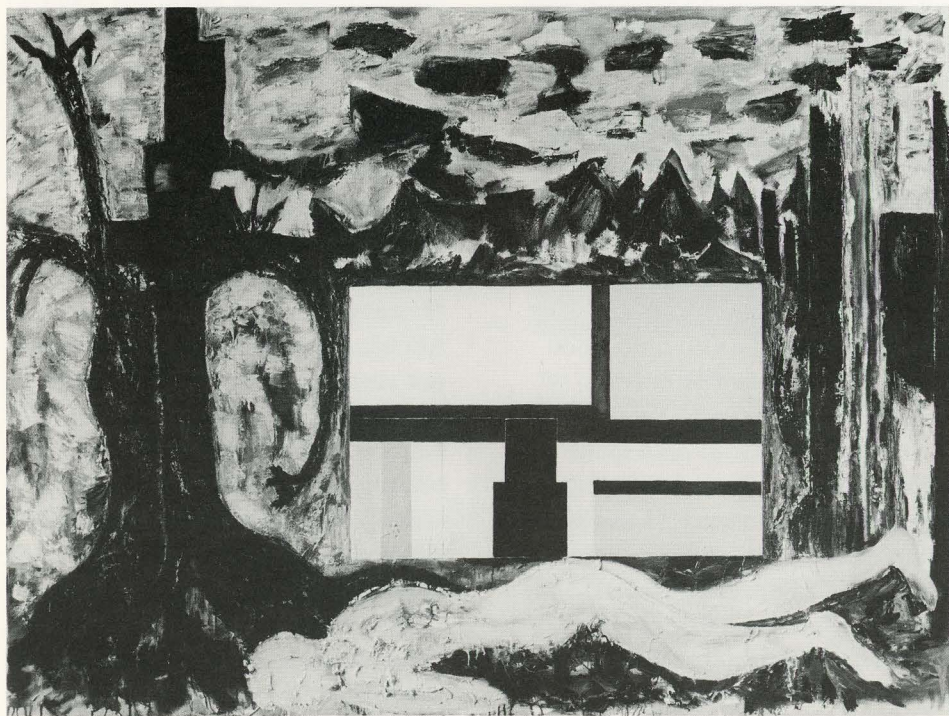
Both versions of *Morning*

*Requiem* move from the darkness and death of a winter vineyard on the left to light and life in a field of sunrises on the right. In the middle of both versions are three vertical sections. In the study, the left hand vertical section contains a woodblock cut with the words of the Kaddish, a Hebrew prayer of mourning, and with a stick figure that must be a suffering child. (In the large *Morning Requiem* the lower half

of the stick figure is an actual vine). The right hand vertical in both versions is a tumult of strokes and the center is a "resolve" in which rectangles create an altar the top of which is a white panel flecked by a few light strokes. This panel appears to be a focus for meditation; an area of peace.

The white panel is perhaps a new kind of "resolve." Starting in 1980, Snyder often places her resolve in the middle of the canvas and surrounds it with turbulent pictorial incident. Placing the resolve in the middle, rather than on one end of a triptych reduces the temporal and narrative thrust. The resolve now functions like the still point in the center of a storm. "I think," says Snyder, "that putting the resolve in the middle started in a small painting called *Meditation*.† If you sit in front of this painting you can come into something very peaceful in the middle. I meditate now twice a day, and that resolve is now centered and focused."

In *An Offering for Pro*, begun before and finished after the death of her friend the painter, Porfirio Didonna, in 1986 Snyder depicts herself lamenting beneath a dead tree that is transformed into an altar and a cross. She is making an offering to her friend. It is, she says, "the most beautiful picture I could think of." In the center of what Snyder sees as a



*An Offering for Pro*, 1986  
oil, acrylic and paper mâché on linen  
6 x 8 feet



“tragic landscape” floats the offering, a rectangular resolve whose yellows are made all the more glowing by a black altar/cross set in their midst and promising transcendence.

The contagious energy of Joan Snyder’s paintings comes from their mixture of specificity and breath. They have the gritty immediacy of lived experience, yet they point beyond autobiography to universal human experience. The intensity of Snyder’s need to communicate give her paintings a primitive urgency. Like Van Gogh when he painted the ploughed field outside his cell window at Saint Remy, Snyder needs to recreate the palpable reality of the field or vineyard right there on the canvas. She does not simply represent her field, she makes it. As Snyder put it, “When I painted the fields I really felt as if I were in my field. It’s a very physical thing. I’m planting my canvas and figuring out the rows and colors. I really did build a pumpkin field.”

The energy of Snyder’s paintings comes also from the fact that it is so crucial to her well-being. “My work,” Snyder says, “is my own religion.” During those fallow periods when she is not making art she feels unhinged. “When I’m painting I’m the healthiest person. I’m like a little kid. My paintings are full of hope.” Through painting she wants to share this hope.

“I want my work to...have a feeling of transcendence and in this state to give something, to make an offering.”<sup>2</sup>

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> All quotes from Joan Snyder come from interviews with the author in 1977, 1982, and 1988.

<sup>2</sup> Corcoran Biennial, exhibition catalogue, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1987.

† Paintings thus denoted are not in this exhibition.

## CHECKLIST OF WORKS

1.  
*Grandma Cohen's Funeral Painting*, 1964  
oil on canvas  
18 x 24 inches
2.  
*Yellow Room*, 1967-1968  
oil, acrylic, spray paint and wallpaper  
on canvas  
36 x 68 inches
3.  
*Stroke Landscape with Pink Circle*, 1968  
acrylic on canvas  
10 x 8 inches
4.  
*Stroke Landscape*, 1968  
acrylic on canvas  
8 x 10 inches
5.  
*Flock Painting of Women*, 1969  
oil, acrylic, flock and seeds on canvas  
4 x 4 feet
6.  
*Lines and Strokes*, 1969  
oil, acrylic and pencil on canvas  
40 x 52 inches
7.  
*Wedding Painting*, 1969  
oil spray paint on canvas  
60 x 72 inches
8.  
*Summer*, 1970  
oil, acrylic and pencil on canvas  
22 x 36 inches
9.  
*Landscape*, 1970  
oil on canvas  
8 x 12 inches
10.  
*Summer Painting*, 1971  
oil, acrylic and spray paint on canvas  
5 x 5 feet
11.  
*Squares*, 1972  
oil, acrylic and paper mâché on canvas  
4 x 4 feet
12.  
*Flesh/Art*, 1972-1973  
oil, acrylic, thread, needle and seeds  
on canvas  
2 x 2 feet
13.  
*Red Squares*, 1973  
oil and acrylic on canvas  
4 x 4 feet
14.  
*Black Totems*, 1978  
oil, acrylic and wooden dowels on linen  
2 x 2 feet
15.  
*Untitled*, 1980  
oil, acrylic, paper mâché, wood chips,  
stained glass window, and paint oil stick  
on linen  
2 x 2 feet
16.  
*She Sings*, 1981  
oil, acrylic and paper mâché on linen  
12 x 18 inches
17.  
*Baby Grand*, 1981  
oil, acrylic and paint chips on linen  
9 x 24 inches
18.  
*Cape with Stick Figure*, 1981-1984  
oil, acrylic, wood chips, woodcut print  
on linen  
10 x 24 inches



19.

*Study* (diptych), 1981  
oil, acrylic, paper and pencil on linen  
12 1/4 x 12 1/4 and 12 1/2 x 12 1/2 inches

20.

*The Tearfulness of Things*, 1982  
woodcut print and oil paint on wood block  
10 x 30 inches

21.

*Love's Pale Grapes*, 1982  
oil, acrylic, paper, pencil, plastic grapes  
and cloth on linen  
2 x 4 inches

22.

*Trilogy*, 1982  
oil, acrylic and plastic grapes on linen  
2 x 6 feet

23.

*Oh Marie*, 1984  
oil, acrylic, nails, paper and pencil  
on woodblock  
17 7/8 x 18 inches

24.

*Apple Tree Mass*, 1983  
oil, acrylic, paper, pencil, wooden letters,  
cloth and woodblock print on linen  
2 x 6 feet

25.

*Beanfield with Music for Molly*, 1984  
oil and acrylic on linen  
7 x 9 inches

26.

*Can We Turn Our Rage to Poetry*  
(study), 1984-1985  
oil and acrylic on linen  
9 x 11 inches

27.

*Looking for Miracles*, 1984  
oil, acrylic and cloth on linen  
2 x 2 feet

28.

*Love's Deep Grapes*, 1984  
oil, acrylic, plastic grapes, cloth, and  
woodblock print on woodblock  
2 x 5 feet

29.

*I Felt Like a Virgin Again*, 1985  
oil, acrylic and cloth on linen  
4 x 5 feet

30.

*Can't Give the Lady Away*, 1986  
oil on linen  
8 x 10 inches

31.

*An Offering for Pro*, 1986  
oil, acrylic and paper mâché on linen  
6 x 8 feet

32.

*Moonfield*, 1986  
oil and acrylic on linen  
4 x 5 feet

33.

*Pumpkin Field*, 1987  
(Study for "Ode to the Pumpkin Field")  
oil on linen  
8 x 10 inches

34.

*Study for Morning Requiem with Kaddish*,  
1987-1988  
oil and acrylic on linen mounted on board  
with nails and wire  
1 x 4 feet

35.

*Boy in Africa*, 1988  
oil and acrylic on linen mounted on board  
with cloth and nails  
10 1/2 x 10 1/2 inches

36.

*Tree with Black Marks*, 1987-1988  
oil and acrylic on linen  
15 x 18 inches

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1940 Born, Highland Park, New Jersey  
1962 B.A. Douglas College, New Brunswick, New Jersey  
1966 M.F.A. Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey  
1967 Moves to New York  
1979 Daughter Molly is born on June 4  
1985 Moves studio and residence to Eastport, New York

### One Woman Exhibitions

- 1970 *Three Paintings*, Paley & Lowe, Inc., New York  
1971 *Joan Snyder: New Paintings*, Michael Walls Gallery, San Francisco, California  
Paley & Lowe, Inc., New York  
1972 Douglas College, New Brunswick, New Jersey  
*Joan Snyder*, Parker Street 470 Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts  
1973 Paley & Lowe, Inc., New York  
1976 *Joan Snyder: New York 1974-75*, Carl Solway Gallery, New York  
*Joan Snyder: Works on Paper 1973-76*, Faculty Office Building Gallery, Reed College, Portland, Oregon  
*Joan Snyder: Recent Painting*, Portland Center for the Arts, Portland, Oregon  
*Joan Snyder*, Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, Century City, California  
1977 *Joan Snyder*, Fine Arts Building, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina  
1978 *Joan Snyder: Seven Years of Work*, Neuberger Museum State University of New York, College of Purchase, New York  
*Joan Snyder: New Work*, Hamilton Gallery of Contemporary Art, New York  
1979 *Joan Snyder at WARM: A Women's Collective Art Space*, Women's Art Registry of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota  
Traveling Exhibition, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, California

- 1981 *Nielsen Gallery*, Boston, Massachusetts  
*Resurrection and Studies*, Matrix Gallery, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut  
1982 Hamilton Gallery, New York  
1983 Nielsen Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts  
1985 *Joan Snyder*, Hirschl & Adler Modern, New York  
1986 *Nielsen Gallery*, Boston, Massachusetts  
1988 *Joan Snyder*, Hirschl & Adler Modern, New York  
1988-89 Traveling Exhibition, David Winton Bell Gallery, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island; Fine Arts Center at Stony Brook, New York; Contemporary Arts Forum, Santa Barbara, California; De Saisset Museum, Santa Clara, California; Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, California.

### Group Exhibitions

- 1970 Dayton's Gallery 12, Minneapolis, Minnesota  
The New Gallery, Cleveland, Ohio  
A Clean Well Lighted Place, Austin, Texas  
*Small Works*, The New Gallery, Cleveland, Ohio  
Bykert Gallery, New York,  
1971 Paley & Lowe, Inc., New York  
*Into the 70's*, Mansfield Fine Arts Museum, Mansfield, Ohio  
Glauber-Poons Gallery, Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
*Joan Snyder, Paintings: Laurence Fink Photographs*, Paley & Lowe, Inc., New York  
1972 *1972 Annual Exhibition: Contemporary American Painting*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York  
*Grids*, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia  
*Three Artists: Mary Heilmann, Joan Snyder, Pat Steir*, Main Gallery, Department of Art, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island  
*Gedok American Woman Artist Show*, Kunsthaus Hamburg, German Federal Republic



- 8 *New York Painters*, University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, California  
*Paintings on Paper*, The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, Connecticut  
*12 Statements: Beyond the 60's*, The Detroit Institute of Arts, Michigan
- 1972-73 *Ten Artists\* (\*Who Also Happen to Be Women)*, The Kenan Art Center, Lockport, New York traveled to Michael C. Rockefeller Arts Center Gallery, Fredonia, New York
- 1973 *1973 Biennial Exhibition: Contemporary American Art*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York  
*Women Choose Women*, The New York Cultural Center, New York  
*American Drawings: 1963-1973*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York  
*Image of Movement*, Stamford Museum, Stamford, Connecticut  
*Norfolk 73: An exhibition of paintings, prints, photographs and drawings by the resident faculty of the Art Division of the Yale University Summer School of Music and Art*, The Art Gallery, Norfolk, Connecticut  
*Options 73/30: Recent Works of Art*, Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, Ohio
- 1973-74 *28 Painters of the New York Avant-Garde/28 Peintres de l'avant-garde New-Yorkaise*, The Saidye Bronfman Centre, Montreal, Canada
- 1974 *Recent Abstract Painting*, Pratt Institute Gallery, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York  
*The Levi Strauss Collection*, San Francisco Museum of Art, San Francisco, California  
*Women's Work: American Art 1974*, Museum of the Philadelphia Civic Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
*Ten Painters in New York*, Michael Walls Gallery, New York  
*Joan Snyder/Pat Steir*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, Massachusetts
- 1975 *Fourteen Abstract Painters*, Frederick S. Wight Art Gallery, University of California, Los Angeles, California  
*Thirty Artists in America, Part 1*, Michael Walls Gallery, New York
- 1976 *Recent Abstract Painting*, Fine Arts Gallery, State University of New York, College at Brockport, New York  
*American Artists '76: A Celebration*, Marion Koogler McNay Art Institute, San Antonio, Texas  
*Joan Snyder/Laurence Fink*, The Broxton Gallery, Westwood, California
- 1977 Carl Solway Gallery, New York  
*Contemporary Women: Consciousness and Content*, The Brooklyn Museum Art School, New York  
*Drawing on a Grid: Eva Hesse, Agnes Martin, Katherine Porter, Joan Snyder, Susan Caldwell, Inc.*, New York  
*Twelve from Rutgers*, Rutgers University Art Gallery, New Brunswick, New Jersey
- 1978 *Perspective '78: Works by Women*, Freedman Gallery, Albright College, Reading, Pennsylvania  
*A Benefit for the Yale School of Art: Works by Members of the Yale Faculty 1950-1978*, Harold Reed Gallery, New York
- 1979 *Generation: Twenty Abstract Painters Born in the United States Between 1929 and 1946*, Susan Caldwell Inc., New York  
*The Implicit Image: Abstract Painting in the '70's*, Nielsen Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts  
*Color and Structure*, Hamilton Gallery, New York  
*Exchanges I*, Louis Abrons Arts for Living Center, Henry Street Settlement, New York  
*The 1970's: New American Painting*, organized by The New Museum, New York, traveled to Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, Rome, Copenhagen, Budapest, Bucharest, Warsaw
- 1980 *New York*, Hamilton Gallery, New York
- 1981 *Painter's Painters*, Siegel Contemporary Art, New York  
*Whitney Biennial*, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York  
*New Works on Paper I*, Museum of Modern Art, New York
- 1982 *Art of the 80's*, WWAC Gallery, Westport, Connecticut  
Hamilton Gallery, New York  
*Fast*, Alexander Milliken Gallery, New York



- Rutgers Master of Fine Arts 20th Century Anniversary Exhibition*, New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, New Jersey  
*The Abstract Image*, Hamilton Gallery, New York  
*American Abstraction Now*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Virginia Museum, Richmond, Virginia
- 1983** *Stroke, Line and Figure*, Gimpel Fils Ltd., London  
*Brave New Work*, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts
- 1984** *Nature as Image*, Organization of Independent Artists, New York  
*American Women Artists: Part II, The Recent Generation*, Sidney Janis Gallery, New York  
*Aliens*, Art City, New York  
*Heroic Poetic*, School of Visual Arts, New York  
*Location*, Nielson Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts
- 1985** *Male Sexuality: Expressions and Perceptions*, Art City, New York
- 1985-86** *American Art: American Women*, Stamford Museum and Nature Center, Stamford, Connecticut
- 1986** *A Look at Painting*, R.C. Erpf Gallery, New York  
*American/European Painting and Sculpture 1986*, L.A. Louver, Venice, California  
*Painterly Abstraction: Eight New York Artists*, Simard Halm & Shee Gallery, Los Angeles, California  
*Symbolic Expressions: Five Women Artists*, Summit Art Center, Summit, New Jersey  
*Protest*, Plymouth State College, Plymouth, New Hampshire  
*Thanks for the Memories*, The Portia Harcus Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts  
*Square and ...*, Ruth Siegel, New York
- 1986-87** *Boston Collects: Contemporary Painting & Sculpture*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts
- 1987** *Corcoran Biennial*, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.  
*Work from the Seventies*, Christine Burgin Gallery, New York  
*Beyond Reductive Tendencies*, Michael Walls Gallery, New York  
*Therese Oulton, Norbert Prangenberg, Joan Snyder*, Hirschl & Adler Modern, New York

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