



High Dive

Date

1961

Primary Maker

Norman Bluhm

Medium

Ink and casein on paper, mounted on Masonite

Description

Norman Bluhm studied to be not an artist but an architect—at sixteen, in Chicago, he was one of the famed German architect Mies van der Rohe's youngest students. After being stationed in Europe during World War II, Bluhm attempted to return to architecture but was turned off by its rigidity. Instead, he studied fresco painting in Florence and then moved to Paris, where he

attended the École des Beaux-Arts on the GI Bill. In 1956, he returned to the United States and, pursuing his artistic career in New York's burgeoning art scene, became inspired by the Abstract Expressionist movement. "I think New York gave me a totally different velocity; it gave me another kind of energy," he recalled. Bluhm showed with the Leo Castelli Gallery until 1960, when his brand of action painting was starting to be eclipsed by color field painting and Pop art. Although broadly considered one of Jackson Pollock's artistic progeny, Bluhm saw his practice as akin to Willem de Kooning's, largely because of his reliance on drawing. Bluhm's works on paper are exploratory pieces in which he experimented with gesture and sought to find a balance between surface and the illusion of space. High Dive, like many of his drawings of the early 1960s, is limited in palette to primarily black and white atop brown paper. No matter the size, Bluhm's abstract compositions are quite intimate, implying a human scale—an approach the artist may have learned in his architectural training. High Dive was included in the Emerson Gallery's 1987 exhibition Norman Bluhm: Works on Paper, 1947–1987 and was donated to Hamilton College in 1989, at the close of the exhibition's tour to six other venues, by David K. Anderson, an internationally recognized art dealer and collector with connections to Buffalo, New York. (SOURCE: Alcauskas, INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS, 2017) Abstract painting, primarily white and black with some orange and blue.

Dimensions

Overall: 21 × 24 1/16 in. (53.3 × 61.1 cm)