

BULKLEY



# ECADES

DeCordova and Dana Museum and Park

L i n c o l n , M a s s a c h u s e t t s

September 19 - November 29, 1987





*Removing the Shroud*, 1986, no. 105



# INTRODUCTION

The DeCordova Museum is pleased to present the exhibition *Morgan Bulkeley: Two Decades*. The show provides the public with an opportunity to view in depth the development, and fascinating visual peregrinations, of a mature artist who has consistently maintained an important presence in Massachusetts and New England for a good number of years. DeCordova has been fortunate to be able to include a number of Bulkeley's works in the Museum's permanent collection, and to exhibit this artist's multifaceted creative production in a variety of thematic contexts. Our following of Morgan's career made it clear to the Museum's curators and myself that a more extensive consideration of his work was opportune. The exhibition is especially appropriate for DeCordova, given the Museum's mission of encouraging the public's understanding of central aspects of contemporary American art, beyond the frenetically commercial atmosphere which characterizes so much of the consideration of recent art.

Bulkeley's work does not conform to any ready categorization; it has managed to exist, and indeed flourish, outside the rapid fire succession of aesthetic tendencies prevalent through the past twenty years. The show allows us to think past the idiosyncrasy with which Bulkeley is frequently identified, and to understand both the direction and the value of his sustained creative inquiry. That inquiry is always uniquely related to a distinctive and secure sense of place, even as it questions standard perceptions of what passes for "reality" and the emotional interpretation of everyday human experience.

The Museum is greatly indebted to Senior Curator, Rachel Rosenfield Lafo, for her exacting research and careful preparation of the exhibition and this catalogue which still allows full measure to the sheer joy and wonderment of Morgan Bulkeley's art.

*Paul Master-Karnik, Ph.D., Director, DeCordova and Dana Museum and Park*



# MORGAN BULKELEY:

*Rachel Rosenfield Lafo, Senior Curator*

from 1967 to 1987 is akin to journeying back and forth from city to country. As one arrives at each locale one experiences a shift of sensibility and attitude. For Bulkeley, the city is more intense, its small, contained, and crowded spaces teem with millions of daily dramas enacted behind closed doors. His paintings provide us with a view behind these doors (and windows), offering glimpses that are suggestive, mystifying, terrifying, and sometimes humorous. We find ourselves privy to visual dramas without accompanying scripts or dialogues, stimulated to provide our own explanations for what we see.

Bulkeley's country scenes are more pastoral, though threatening elements may lurk there as well. Wide open spaces are inhabited by animals and people, frozen in deliberately ambiguous activities. The country is also where Bulkeley has produced the majority of his carved wooden sculpture. The fields surrounding his house are dotted with organic, totemic sculptures whose shapes allude to human or animal forms.

Though his work has occasionally been described as surrealist, Bulkeley shies away from that term because of its association with the fantastic, distorted dream imagery of Salvador Dali. Rather, Bulkeley's work owes more to the magic realism of Henri Rousseau and René Magritte, in its mixture of menace and humor and juxtaposition of elements or events that do not normally belong together. At its core, Bulkeley's work reflects both his belief that there are many levels to reality and his desire to act as an interpreter of events.

Morgan Bulkeley is very much a product of his environment. He grew up in Mount Washington, a small town in the Berkshire Mountains where the population was 32 and there was no electricity until he was seven years old. Surrounded by trees, fields, wildflowers, and animals of all types, Bulkeley early developed a vocabulary of images derived directly from his childhood experiences. His love of Indians and their culture engendered a whole realm of fantasy and imagery, appearing in his work in the form of tipis, buffalos, and bows and arrows. These and many other images used for their symbolic power recur throughout the twenty years of work shown in this exhibition.

Although life on the mountain was somewhat isolated, Bulkeley and his family traveled periodically. After graduating from Hotchkiss School in Lakeville, Connecticut, he attended Yale University where in 1966 he earned a B.A. in English Literature.



# TWO DECADES



Morgan Bulkeley in front of his sculpture, 1987





*Sowing*, 1969, no. 9



In college, Bulkeley studied painting and drawing but was frustrated by those professors who insisted that he get rid of the recognizable image in his work. It was not until after graduation that he felt free to follow his own instincts, and the first works which gave him personal satisfaction were the drawings and boxes he made while living in Newark, New Jersey. Bulkeley had moved to Newark after graduation in 1966. It was a tumultuous time there; race riots had turned the city into a besieged war zone. Bulkeley remembers tanks driving down the street and hearing machine gun fire. The Newark drawings register his shocked response to living amidst such upheaval and his sense, for the first time, that his work was directly connected to world events. In the drawings, figures and objects are dehumanized and contained in compartments, or boxes, as if trapped by their environment. People are rendered as small geometric figures with cylindrical bodies and circular heads, more like playing pieces in a board game than real human beings. Other images which appear are cockroaches, flowers, bottles, buildings, and balls. Colors are close in range and predominantly gray.

During this period Bulkeley made box sculptures out of wood, assembled in grids like the windows of apartment buildings. Each compartment contains different paintings or objects. Referring to these box sculptures, Bulkeley recalls: "I remember going to New York on the train once and looking out at the windows and seeing all these little lights in the night and thinking about how each story had its own separateness." The city became for Bulkeley a stage on which the drama of life's experiences could be enacted.

After moving back to Mount Washington in the late 1960's Bulkeley began work on a series of small gouache paintings on paper which he called miniatures because their size and narrative tone were inspired by Persian miniatures. He had seen an exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York of the Persian *Shahnameh* or epic King's Book of Kings, which tells the story of Persian history with beautiful illuminations, and was awed by its depiction of the whole gamut of life's experiences. This method of telling a story through a combination of the written word and painted image greatly appealed to Bulkeley, for whom the narrative impulse has always been strong.

The imagery in the early miniatures was rural, even tropical. Some recall the jungle settings, naive figures, and strange juxtapositions used by the French painter Henri Rousseau, an artist whom Bulkeley admires. The 1969 miniature *Sowing* visually depicts the shift from city to country in Bulkeley's work. In the foreground, the sower, perhaps representing the artist himself, spreads seed for the birds, while an archetypal cloaked couple (perhaps Adam and Eve or the artist's parents) look on. In the far distance, seen as images from the past, are city apartment buildings, representing a period in the artist's life which temporarily has been left behind.



*Newark Drawing IV, 1970, no. 5*

In the fall of 1972, Bulkeley moved to the Boston area and continued to paint miniatures in a primitive style. His scene became the urban street with buildings serving as the context for a variety of both ordinary and unusual activities. Bulkeley's sources were specific buildings in Somerville and Cambridge near his home. Although he took photographs and made sketches, he was not interested in an explicit rendering of the buildings. Rather, he was attracted to them for their expressive qualities. He found that, like people, buildings aged and had flaws: "I like painting the buildings of Boston. Some are rotting and falling apart and are really a metaphor for a person."<sup>2</sup> Consequently he selected buildings for their oddities of architecture, color, and condition.



*Moon in Day*, 1973, no. 15

In *Cambridge Street*, 1972, Bulkeley was attracted to an unusual wood structure on the top of the central building. The painting shows a row of storefronts with apartments above them. In the windows we see a variety of images—an enlarged pear, a boy tossing a ball in the air, the anonymous peg people of the Newark drawings, a woman interacting with a raccoon, a cow's head. We become unwitting voyeurs of segments of life which the artist has invented for us. Birds fly overhead as a lingering reminder of the country. In *Moon in Day*, 1973, the artist becomes the voyeur as he drives by the Legal Sweet Shoppe. A dog confronts him and a Campbell's soup can (a reference to Pop artist Andy Warhol) rolls by on the street. In the windows of the buildings we see animals, card players, a bearded prophetic figure blowing a horn, a shell, an egg, a clown with his arm around Richard Nixon, a nude couple embracing, and other equally unrelated vignettes.

The scenes witnessed through Bulkeley's windows are deliberately ambiguous and are meant to be interpreted on a variety of levels. The artist seeks to achieve a balance between the mundane and the threatening, the terrible and the hopeful. In a May 1983 interview in *Art New England*, Bulkeley explained: "My works are not tales with morals, rather visions of a world threatened with a counterweight of beauty."<sup>3</sup> In the same interview, he discussed his shift from country to city: "When I was a kid, I wanted to be an Indian. I was always playing in the woods, making huts and looking at things. When I came to the city, there was a whole new array of things to observe. Before that, I worked on the mountain where my work was bucolic and, in my view, irrelevant. I needed to be in a place where the problems of the world were."<sup>4</sup>



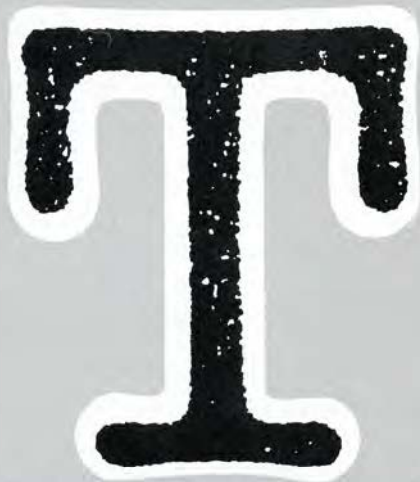


Cambridge Street, 1972, no. 13



1433 Cambridge Street, 1977, no. 19





he apartment to which Bulkeley moved in 1972 was a cooperative in Somerville, which he shared with eight people. He had no studio space and thus painted the miniatures on a board which he set up on his bed. By 1973 he obtained his first studio in Somerville, then in 1974 moved to a larger studio on Otis Street in Cambridge. There he began the “early city and country paintings,” which differ from the miniatures in both size and medium. The studio building on Otis Street was shared with a number of other artists, among them David Phillips, Nan Freeman, Gerry Bergstein, Anne Neely, Mark Cooper, Miroslav and Alexandra Antic, and Toni Dove. Many of his friends and roommates from that time period appear in the windows of his paintings.

The “early country paintings” created in Bulkeley’s Cambridge studio seem bucolic at first glance, but their pastoral calm is disturbed by a sense of uneasy anticipation. In *Sleeping Calf* of 1975, for example, we see a path winding through an opening in an old stone wall. The sun is setting on the lovely mountains in the distance and a calf sleeps in the foreground, sheltered by long blades of grass. But the idyllic scene is disturbed by threatening images. A hawk flies overhead, frozen in flight with talons extended, coming straight at the viewer. A woman sits by the stone wall with her arms around a dog. Her seemingly innocent gesture is charged with tension; she must restrain the rigid staring dog who seems about to pounce. The actors in this pastoral drama have a timeless solidity that separates them from each other, yet their inclusion in the same painting suggests a story line that connects them.

As he continued to work in Cambridge in the late 1970s Bulkeley’s subject matter shifted back to the city. The “early city paintings” are larger than the miniatures which preceded them and provide even more windows through which to see individual dramas. Bulkeley’s actors are friends, relatives, and historical figures. *1433 Cambridge Street*, of 1977, is a large painting in which the building spreads horizontally across the picture plane. The perspective is askew and inconsistent; through some windows we can see the floor and through others we see figures only from the waist up. Many ambiguous scenes take place: the artist’s father makes shadow puppets on a wall, a nude couple embrace on a staircase, Picasso’s Gertrude Stein peers out of a draped window, the artist Richard Serra wrestles in a corner window with George Washington, and the barrel of a gun is seen aimed out of one window. It appears to be a building that it perhaps would be better – and safer – not to enter. The foreground stage space that existed in the earlier miniatures has been eliminated, making access into these city paintings increasingly difficult.



*Sleeping Calf*, 1975, no. 17

Bulkeley's technique in the early city paintings echoed the constriction of space. His painting style was tight and compulsive; the works took a long time to complete. Seeking relief from the rigorous demands of the paintings, and also desiring to explore ideas more quickly, in 1979 Bulkeley began to experiment with a more intuitive and immediate art form, that of drawing directly on his studio floor with chalk. He found that he was able to work on the floor drawings and city paintings simultaneously. The floor drawings allowed Bulkeley to move through ideas very quickly. He would do a drawing, photograph it, perhaps change the drawing, and then take another photograph. He also began to add into the drawings objects which he had carved and painted. Some floor installations referred to specific scientific principles and equations while others were more personal explorations of Bulkeley's familiar vocabulary of forms. The floor drawings were documented in photographs which are exhibited in this exhibition. Referring to the temporal and sequential nature of the floor drawings, Bulkeley said, "It was almost like a film. It had the linear movement of building something or seeing ideas grow."<sup>5</sup>



*Eggs: Contact Sheets, 1979-84, no. 25*

The objects used in Bulkeley's floor drawings were carved wooden organic shapes. These first appeared in works entitled "paint boxes." The "paint boxes" date from 1976 and are wall reliefs containing carved and painted organic wooden shapes, small landscape paintings, fabric, and artist's tools. The organic shapes resemble plant forms and body parts; the artist's brushes and palette knives have carved wooden handles. Earlier in the 1970's Bulkeley had made a series of non-working tools such as the *Circle Brushes*. The "paint boxes" are a combination of Bulkeley's work in different media, and immediately precede the "egg boxes" in date. The latter are wooden boxes with glass tops containing painted and unpainted egg, sprout, and bone shapes. Over the years Bulkeley has rearranged the objects and occasionally altered the boxes as he continues to make new eggs. These provide him with a ready pool of objects for his floor drawings. For this exhibition, Bulkeley has created a new egg installation, combining objects and photographs with chalk drawings done directly on the Museum's wall. The eggs, sprouts, and bones in the egg boxes symbolize the themes of birth, death, and maturation which recur throughout Bulkeley's art.

In 1980 Bulkeley received a commission from the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority to paint a mural for the exterior wall of an old trolley turn-around station on Newbury Street in Boston. Painted on steel panels, the mural is 18 feet high by 45 feet wide and entitled *Tramont*, Boston's original name. In an article in *The Berkshire Eagle* in 1981, Bulkeley wrote that the mural "... was originally conceived as a piece about the fragmentary nature of time and space, an idea reinforced by movement through the city - a continually changing sequence of information and story."<sup>6</sup> Bulkeley's mural integrates his characteristic vocabulary of forms with specific references to Boston's history.





Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority Mural Commission, Newbury Street, Boston, 1980







Iso in 1980 Bulkeley began a series of mixed media

images on paper called "duets" which grew out of the floor drawings. The "duets" paired a black and white photograph, often hand tinted, with a small oil on paper with torn edges. By juxtaposing the images in the photographs and paintings, Bulkeley invites the viewer to look for related meanings. Images that repeat in the "duets" are windows, compartments, couches, colanders, interiors, tepees, piles of sticks, blimps, and tornados. In one duet, two colanders rest on a red couch; their attitude is both human and humorous. Colanders are a constant image in Bulkeley's work. He sees them as containers through which life passes—an image of loss.

As part of his effort to break away from the structure and containment of the city paintings, in the early 1980s Bulkeley painted "fragments," small oils on paper done on irregularly shaped pieces of paper. He was working on the painting *Guber and Sherman* in 1980 when he heard the news of John Lennon's death. He had just finished the building but had not yet filled in the windows. Because it became difficult for him to continue the painting he turned to another format, that of the fragments, whose torn edges epitomized his feelings. Each fragment served the same purpose as a window in one of Bulkeley's city buildings—it became the arena for an event whose meaning was highly suggestive but non-specific. The small oil on paper paintings included in the duets are actually fragments that have been paired with photographs. The torn edges of the paper metaphorically reinforce the idea of an unfinished or mysterious story, as if some of the information needed to decode the story might have been destroyed.

Many of the fragments deal with elements of destruction such as fires and tornados and serve as specific manifestations of inner problems. About the fragments Bulkeley has commented, "I could see very clearly that being an artist has that possibility of talking about images that one couldn't even quite bring to the surface—and suddenly you could have somebody's problem turn into something like a tornado where it had a specific imagery that seemed to be of the nature of the problem." When Bulkeley tacked up the fragments on a wall in a grid arrangement, they resembled the structure of a building.

Occasionally the fragments are grouped in a specific narrative sequence, such as in *Room Aches* of 1981 and *Bomb Fragments* of 1982. In the latter, the narrative opens with a couple embracing in bed in front of a window. Even in the first frame, disturbing elements are present. The male partner is swathed from head to foot in black and white stripes, as if his body is imprisoned by his skin. The top of a mushroom cloud is visible through the window. As the series progresses the mushroom cloud rises and the couple separate and are transformed into organic objects lying on the floor with other Bulkeley organisms. Reduced almost to a pile of bones, they lie in the shaft of light which is the aftermath of a nuclear explosion. The message is grim, yet the metamorphosis of people into objects is so bizarre as to be almost comical.





*Aim*, 1984, no. 24



Morgan Bulkeley's preoccupation with cataclysmic events led him to utilize another unusual object discovered in a book about blimp crashes as a symbol in his work. He was amazed by the mixture of tragedy and insanity in the stories and attracted to the image of the fallen blimp for its quasi-geometric/quasi-organic character. Speaking of the blimp he observed, "I like the image because it is such a curious occurrence. When the blimp crashes, the grid form, the manmadeness, becomes chaotic and appears organic, like something returning to a natural state. The blimp is something that has a presence and weight of reality that is cut loose from our daily lives—like hope."<sup>3</sup>

The blimps began to appear in unexpected places, on egg boxes, in duets, in floor drawings, in fragments, and in a series of pastels which Bulkeley did from 1979 to 1982. The pastels were yet one more effort by Bulkeley to relax his tight painting style. The blimps occurred in both city and country scenes and often replaced the recognizable people of earlier paintings. In *Sky Lab*, the blimp (which resembles a silver cylinder with a coffered, grid structure) rests on Bulkeley's characteristic tall blades of grass, while two pages from what appears to be a galactic manual (a reference to galactic shapes created in the floor drawings) lie open on the grass. Other mechanical parts are scattered nearby. The blimp becomes a symbol of things turning out differently from what was expected.

The pastels succeeded in enabling Bulkeley to loosen up. By the time of the "late city paintings," such as the 1982 *Kiki and Art's*, he was able to paint freehand and less exactly. Yet Bulkeley was still concerned that his city paintings had become oppressive and inaccessible, particularly after he saw them all grouped together at his 1983 show at the Stux Gallery in Boston. Consequently, he began to open up the space again. In the paintings *Things We Do* and *Aim*, both from 1984, the main drama moves outside to the street, although we still see figures and objects in the windows. The buildings, composites of actual structures, are set back and placed at an angle to the picture surface. The figures who do appear in the windows are now featureless and unrecognizable, although their gestures are significant. What is taking place on the street receives our primary attention, and the actors in the dramas are shrouded figures who carry bows. In *Things We Do* the figure also holds a stick from which dangles a cloth, as if he is a shaman who has the power to reveal and conceal meanings. In *Aim*, the shrouded figure sports a Joseph Beuys' hat and cartoon drawings on his shroud. He appears to aim at a soup can full of sticks (or are they Jasper Johns' brushes?), yet in actuality he aims at himself, since the bow is held backwards by an improbable-looking arm. The painting is about the primitive, aggressive, self-destructive qualities endemic to the human condition.

The shrouded figures in *Things We Do* and *Aim* serve the same purpose as the blimps; they take the place of recognizable people and represent a sense of life without being specific. Bulkeley was moving away increasingly from specifics to stories that focused on the actions and relationships of the actors.



*Sky Lab*, 1980, no. 49



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ulkeley moved in 1985 into a new studio on Wareham Street in Boston's South End. There he began working on a series of small oils on paper. Like the paintings which Bulkeley produced later that fall, they had rural settings and were much looser and less defined than his earlier work. Familiar Bulkeley images reappear in these works—Band-Aids, bows, colanders, couches, and buffalo head-dresses. The early paintings, such as *Sunday Afternoon*, *Wounded Couch*, *Nettles and Touch-Me-Not*, and *I Hurt Myself* refer to human relationships and are about loneliness, healing, and salvaging.

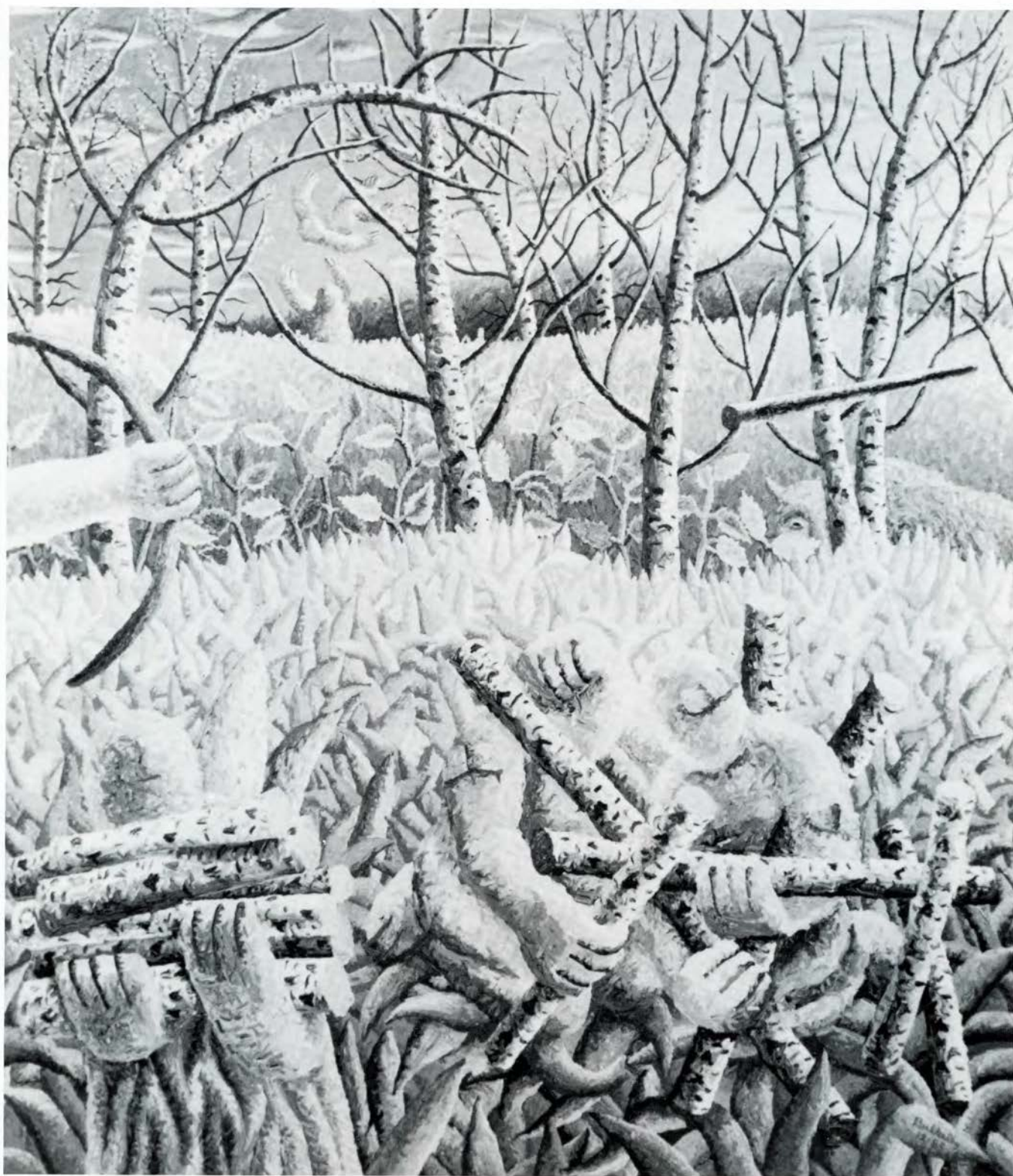
Both the oils on paper and paintings are peopled with anonymous, faceless, and featureless characters engaged in often ambiguous but highly suggestive activities. Flesh-colored, chunky, sexless, and awkward, these figures replace the shrouded figures of the late city paintings. In *Removing the Shroud*, 1986, one figure actually cuts a shroud off another, as if to reveal its identity. Ironically, of course, the creature is no more identifiable with its shroud off, yet the painting is about the revelation of oneself to another. These amorphous, fleshy creatures are left unidentified by the artist in order to focus attention on their actions rather than their identities.

In September of 1985 an incident occurred which served as the catalyst for a large body of work. Bulkeley had described to a friend his childhood practice of birch swinging, which involved shinnying up a birch tree, grabbing the tip, and jumping out into the air as the tree bends down and lowers you to the ground. When the friend tried it, she let go too soon, thinking she had already touched ground. Watching her fall fifteen feet to the ground, Bulkeley experienced that slow motion encapsulation of time when an instant seems to last forever. This traumatic experience served as an omen for the artist, reinforcing his belief that things are not always what they seem to be.

Many of the paintings which were spawned by this incident, such as *Birch Building* of 1985, depict scenes from the accident: a bent birch tree and a figure with upraised arms awaiting a figure who is falling through the air. In the middleground of this painting, a buffalo, who represents the artist, watches the foreground action, which includes a couple covered in Band-Aids, huddled together on the grass and building a structure with birch logs. Another figure with wings on his back carries off a pile of logs. An arm appears at the left side of the painting holding a bow, which has just released a birch stick/arrow. Bulkeley uses the structure of his spatial organization to suggest the passage of time. The birch-swinging incident, which has already happened, is located in a distant landscape zone (the past), while in the front zone (the present) the couple huddles together for mutual comfort, building a shelter to symbolize the reaffirmation of their togetherness.







*Birch Building*, 1985, no. 102





*Wood Wall, no. 55*

In each painting in this recent series, Bulkeley selects a color scheme and spatial structure to create a specific atmosphere. He is very conscious of how one might traverse the space of his paintings. Some are organized with clearly defined and separate activities and are optimistic in their use of color and imagery. In other paintings the color is lugubrious and the space is congested, as if the figures are tangled and trapped by overlapping lengths of grass.

Bulkeley has compared the painting technique which he has used since the mid 1980s, that of "slathering" on paint, to the physical process of carving sculpture. Since the early 1970s Bulkeley has produced a body of large wood sculpture. Totemic in nature, the sculptures are carved in Mt. Washington and installed in the fields outside his house. For many years, Bulkeley's practice has been to spend summers in the country and winters in the city. It is during the summers, when Bulkeley is outdoors and has access to a ready supply of wood, that he works on sculpture.

Although Bulkeley had not studied sculpture in college, he had always whittled and shaped wood as a child, creating objects most of which have since been destroyed. In contrast to the 1967 construction *Box Building*, the totems have a physical presence and life force suggestive of figures, plants, or birds. Thus, they are much less literal than the paintings. Yet the shapes and postures of the sculptures correspond to the often ambiguous gestures of the figures and animals in Bulkeley's paintings.

*Godwit in the City* is perhaps the most directly related to the earlier boxes and miniatures. A bird-like form is entrapped in a transparent, rectangular box with only its long beak protruding. Like figures in the windows of the paintings, this bird which struggles to be free is contained in a structured environment. A more optimistic sculpture is *Mountain Guard*, a large oak piece installed in the DeCordova's Sculpture Park in 1986. It is a benign yet powerful presence in the landscape. In a statement about the sculpture, Bulkeley wrote, "Sculpture, for me, is a way of communing with my unconscious. The wood feels like a primal being, a crude and unhatched life urging me to wrestle and caress it into the world."<sup>9</sup>

By the mid-1980s Bulkeley wanted to break out of the totemic vernacular and began creating sculptures which were pieced together with peg, mortise, and tenon. These led to a series of "missing tree" sculptures in the summer of 1985. They were made from trees which Bulkeley had cut down in order to use the wood for his sculpture. It became important to use the whole tree and to show what had happened to it. Thus, he photographed the tree and then the area where the tree had been. Exhibited along with the sculptures, the photographs provide a sense of time, existence, and death. Because the missing trees are joined together in pegged sections they can bend, roll up, lie on the ground, or hang on the wall.





*Godwit in City, no. 56*



*Mountain Guard, 1984, no. 62*





During the summers Bulkeley is very active physically, thus it became difficult for him to make the transition back to painting on canvas in the studio. In order to facilitate this transition Bulkeley began to carve dressers, masks, necklaces, and brushes as an intermediate stage to painting. Using rather ordinary oak and maple dressers, he carved and painted the fronts, moving from the more evenly segmented sections of *Oak Chest III* of 1983 to the overall patterning of *Oak Chest IV* of 1985. The chests became another stage set inhabited by familiar Bulkeley characters—the black and white striped figure, blimps, colandars, soup cans, birds, tepees, flowers, tails, and bones. In some of the chests, Bulkeley has ingeniously used the drawer pulls as eyes or other integral parts of the composition.

Masks have always fascinated Bulkeley, from the time he was a child and wore his buffalo headdress while playing Indians in the woods. He sees them as a symbol of transformation, a personification of ideas. Although the five masks in this exhibition date from 1982 through 1987, Bulkeley has been making masks for many years. The wall of his Mt. Washington kitchen displays an array of wooden masks, some left unpainted, all having a strong primitive feeling. Inspired by native American and African masks, Bulkeley's own creations are perfect showcases for his images of brushes, guns, birds, Band-Aids, and mushroom clouds, some of which metamorphose into facial features.

The necklaces, often done as gifts for particular people, were also the result of his need to change focus temporarily and work in another format for a while. From a practical standpoint, it was easier for Bulkeley to work on necklaces and other small sculptures while away from his studio. Bulkeley's first necklace, resembling a bear's claw, was inspired by Indian necklaces, which appealed to him for their symbolic and spiritual powers. The personalized necklaces contain carved and painted wooden figures and objects of specific reference to someone's life events.

By the mid-1980s Bulkeley had produced a sequence of small painted sculptures which were closely related to his paintings of the same period. They personified feelings about relationships and looked as if they had stepped out of his paintings. The chisel marks visible on the wood correspond to the squiggles of paint in Bulkeley's canvases. Among the figures are a buffalo man, a beast carrying caged wings on its back, and one winged figure offering another winged figure a Band-Aid. In *Rocking Archer*, a fallen Cupid of a figure holds a bow and arrow and lies face up across a rocking chair, aiming his arrow in an improbable direction. Many of Bulkeley's small sculptures rock or move, as if to symbolize life's precarious balance. The small sculptures, by being less abstract than the earlier outdoor pieces, and the recent paintings, by being less specific than the earlier city paintings, have moved closer to each other in spirit.



*Rocking Archer*, 1986, no. 90



ver a twenty-year period, Morgan Bulkeley has experimented with a wide range of artistic forms. His need to make things, to leave his mark on his surroundings, extends beyond the work shown in this exhibition. At his home on Mt. Washington are found carved lamp stands, carved chair backs, and even plates which have been imprinted with original Bulkeley watercolors. Constantly moving back and forth from one medium to another, Bulkeley is able to work on parallel tracks at the same time and often merges painting and sculpture. Although at first glance his varied bodies of work may seem disparate, this exhibition traces the consistent threads that run throughout his art. While existing outside of current fashionable trends in the art world, Bulkeley's metaphysical art is relevant at a time when many artists are questioning man's role in the nuclear age. Morgan Bulkeley sees the artist as an intermediary who can interpret reality on more than one level, making the unworldly seem plausible. A statement that he made in 1983 is characteristic: "I would hope that the images I make would stir some level of desire and fear that linger on the edge of our thoughts. . . . You are what you allow yourself to see."<sup>10</sup>



*Eleanor's Necklace*, 1981, no. 93

#### notes

<sup>1</sup>Morgan Bulkeley, interview with author, October 23, 1986.

<sup>2</sup>Patti Barrett, "Morgan Bulkeley's Fanciful Creations," *The Berkshire Courier*, September 8, 1983, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup>Lois Tarlow, "Alternative Space: Morgan Bulkeley," *Art New England*, IV, No. 6 (May, 1983).

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>Morgan Bulkeley, interview with author, October 23, 1986.

<sup>6</sup>Morgan Bulkeley, "Gigantic Mural in Boston Created by Morgan Bulkeley IV," *The Berkshire Eagle*, November 12, 1981, p. 11.

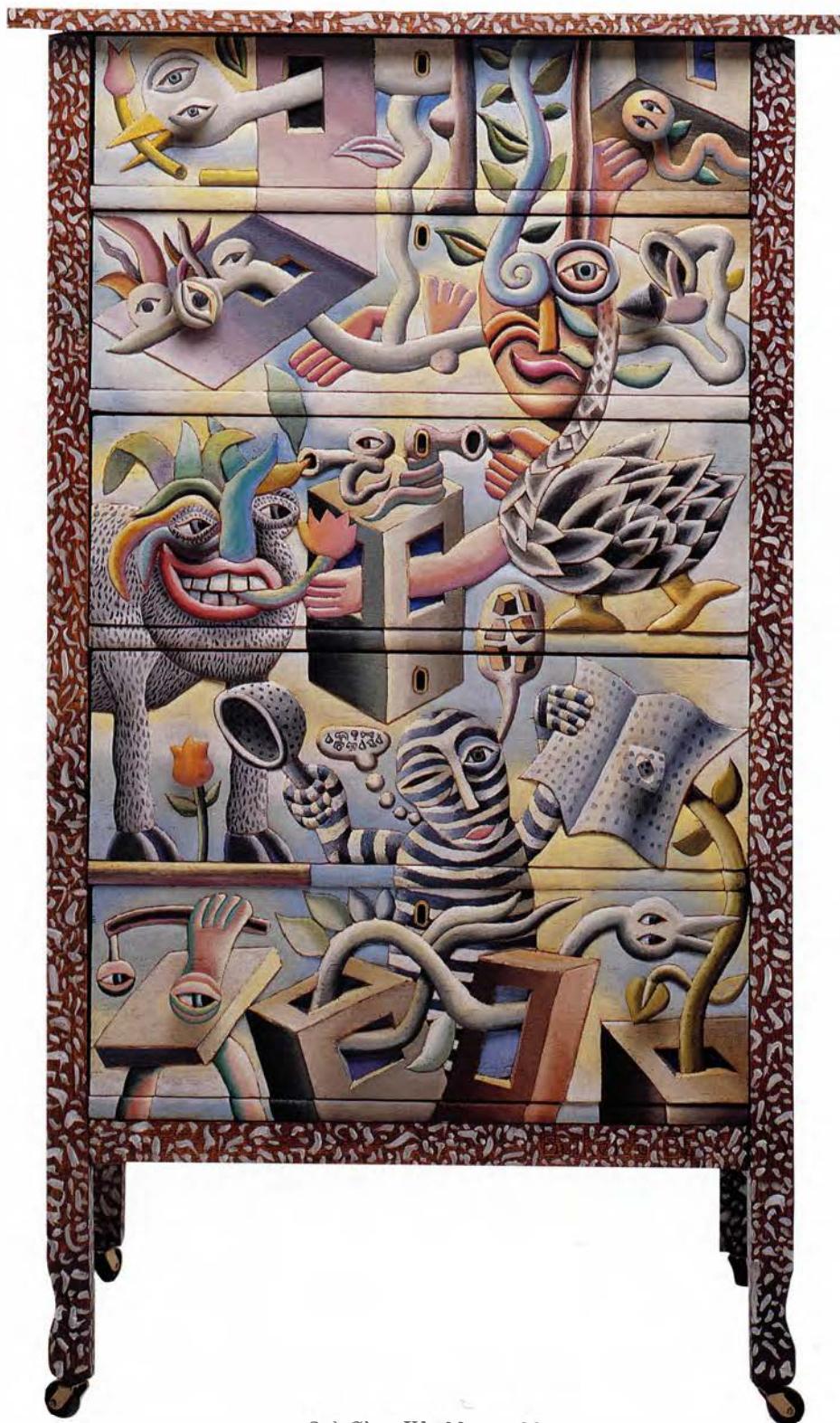
<sup>7</sup>Morgan Bulkeley, interview with author, October 23, 1986.

<sup>8</sup>Tarlow, *Art New England*, IV, No. 6.

<sup>9</sup>Morgan Bulkeley, statement in *Outdoor Sculpture Guide (Lincoln: DeCordova and Dana Museum and Park, 1987)*.

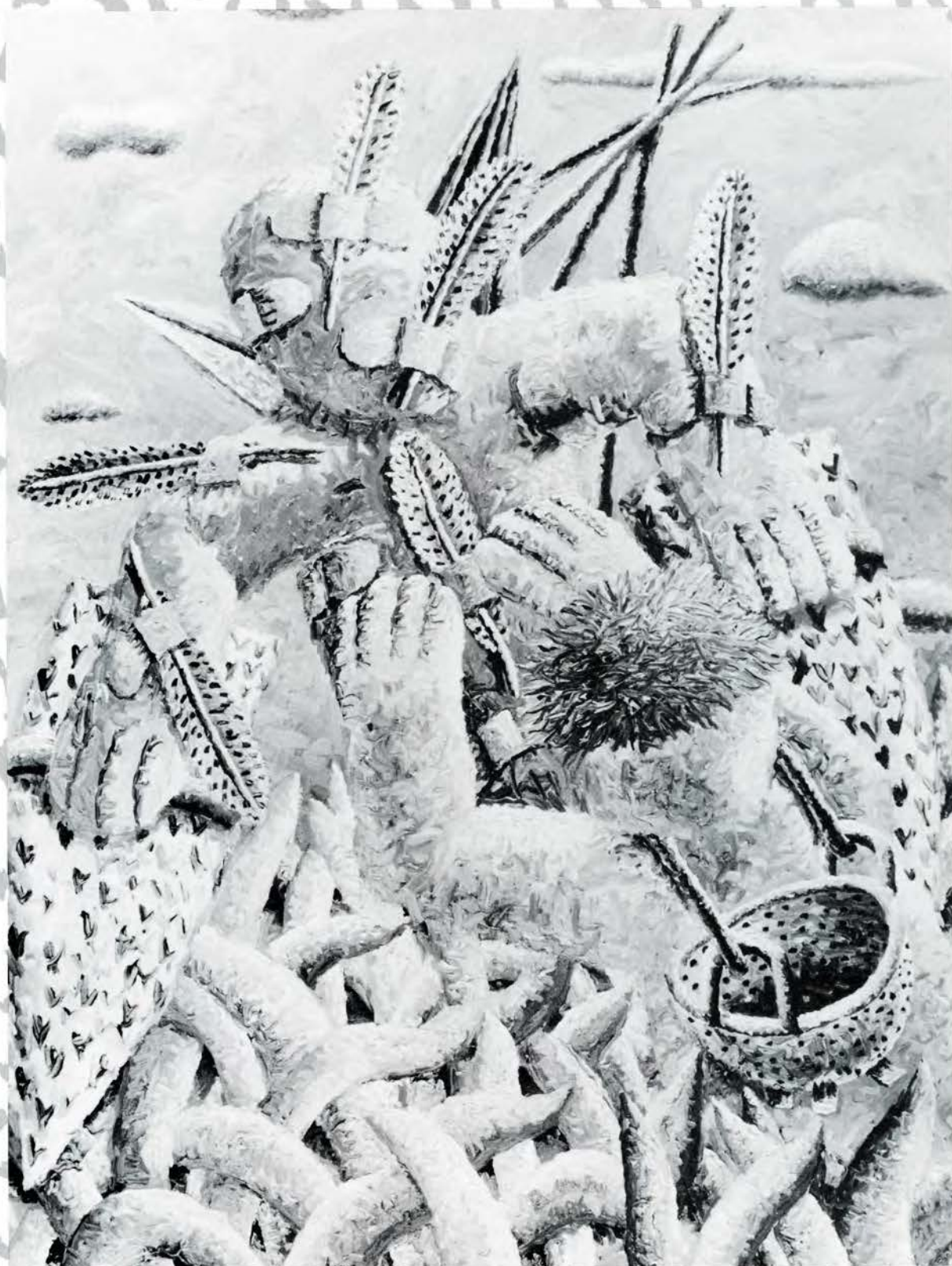
<sup>10</sup>Tarlow, *Art New England*, IV, No. 6.





*Oak Chest IV*, 1985, no. 96





*Preparation for Flight I*, 1986, no. 106



# BIOGRAPHY

## Morgan Bulkeley

Born 1944, Pittsfield, Massachusetts

### Education

B.A. 1966, Yale University, New Haven, CT, English Literature

### Solo Exhibitions

- 1973 The Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, MA
- 1974 Cleveland Gallery, Boston, MA
- 1981 Lopoukhine-Nayduch Gallery, Boston, MA in collaboration with Clark Gallery, Lincoln, MA
- 1982 Lopoukhine Gallery, Boston, MA
- 1983 Stux Gallery, Boston, MA
- 1986 Stux Gallery, Boston, MA  
Stux Gallery, New York, NY

### Group Exhibitions

- 1973 Graphics Arts Gallery, Springfield, MA
- 1974 Newbury Street Galleries' Show at City Hall, Boston, MA  
Boston Visual Artists' Union, Boston, MA, *The Sensuous Eye*  
Boston Visual Artists' Union, Boston, MA, *At the Goethe Institute*, (traveling exhibition)
- 1975 The Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, MA, *The Sculptors' Workshop*
- 1976 Boston Visual Artists' Union, Boston, MA, *Sculpture and Drawing*
- 1978 Chesterwood, Stockbridge, MA, *First Biennial Sculpture Invitational*
- 1980 Nesto Gallery, Milton, MA, *Drawing from Different Points of View*, catalogue  
Boston University Gallery, Boston, MA, *On the Verge*, catalogue  
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Brockton-Fuller Memorial Museum, Brockton, MA, *Third Triennial*

Federal Reserve Bank, Boston, MA, *Art of the State*

- 1981 DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, MA, *New England Relief*, catalogue
- 1982 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA, *A Private Vision: Contemporary Art from the Graham Gund Collection*, catalogue  
Van Buren/Brazelton/Cutting Gallery, Cambridge, MA, *Fear and Affirmation: Artists Against Nuclear War*
- 1983 Tufts University Gallery, Somerville, MA, *Private Lives*, catalogue  
Brockton-Fuller Memorial Museum, Brockton, MA, *Fourth Triennial*  
The Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, MA, *The Suspended Object*  
DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, MA, *Art of the State*
- 1984 Chesterwood, Stockbridge, MA, *Fourth Biennial Sculpture Invitational*  
The Berkshire Museum, *Aspects of New Narrative Art* (traveling exhibition), catalogue  
The Currier Gallery of Art, Manchester, NH, *The Figure Again*  
Boston College, Newton, MA, *Four Inclined*, Installation, catalogue  
*Chicago Art Fair*, Navy Pier, Chicago, IL
- 1985 Stux Gallery, Boston, MA, *Gallery Artists: Part I/Sculpture*  
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Chesterwood, Stockbridge, MA, *Sixth Biennial Sculpture Invitational*, catalogue  
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- 1986 Stux Gallery, New York, NY, *Inaugural*  
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- 1987 Art Complex Museum, Duxbury, MA,  
*Private Visions*  
The Brockton Art Museum, Brockton, MA,  
*Fifth Triennial*  
Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, MA,  
*The Tree Show*, catalogue

### Awards and Fellowships

- 1978 Berkshire Art Association, Prize for Painting
- 1979 Finalist, Massachusetts Artists Fellowship Program, Boston, MA
- 1980 Berkshire Art Association, Prize for Painting  
Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority Mural Commission, Newbury Street, Boston, MA  
Finalist, Massachusetts Artists Fellowship, Boston, MA  
Massachusetts Artists Fellowship in Painting
- 1981 DeCordova Museum, Annual Appeal Commission
- 1983 Massachusetts Artists Fellowship in Painting

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- Temin, Christine, "Morgan Bulkeley's Urban Dramas," *Boston Globe*, December 29, 1983.
- Temin, Christine, "Ft. Point Area Blossoms," *Boston Globe*, October 28, 1982.



# CHECKLIST

## Newark Drawings and Boxes

- 1 *Box Building*, 1967, mixed media, 43 × 18 × 5
- 2 *Newark Drawing I*, 1967, pencil and watercolor on paper, 17 × 23
- 3 *Newark Drawing II*, 1968, pencil and watercolor on paper, 17 × 23
- 4 *Newark Drawing III*, 1968, pencil and watercolor on paper, 17 × 23
- 5 *Newark Drawing IV*, 1970, pencil and watercolor on paper, 17 × 23
- 6 *Cowboy and Engine*, 1970, gouache and collage on paper, 14 × 14
- 7 *Indians, Cowboy*, 1970, gouache and collage on paper, 12 × 12

## Miniatures

- 8 *Silent Jungle*, 1967, watercolor on paper, 16 × 18
- 9 *Sowing*, 1969, gouache on paper, 16 × 16, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Morgan Bulkeley
- 10 *Tilling*, 1969, gouache on paper, 16 × 16, Collection of Klaus and Bobbie Hallig
- 11 *Reaping*, 1969, gouache on paper, 16 × 16, Collection of Klaus and Bobbie Hallig
- 12 *Ranger and the Sanderlings*, 1971, gouache on paper, 15 × 11, Collection of Mason Smith
- 13 *Cambridge Street*, 1972, gouache on paper, 15 × 11
- 14 *Norfolk Street*, 1972, gouache on paper, 14 × 10
- 15 *Moon in Day*, 1973, gouache on paper, 15 × 11, Collection of Klaus and Bobbie Hallig
- 16 *David Sweeps Pears*, 1974, gouache on paper, 16 × 11, Collection of Charles and Frances Webb

*All dimensions are in inches. Height precedes width precedes depth. Unless otherwise indicated all works are from the collection of the artist; courtesy Stux Gallery.*

## Early City Paintings-Country Paintings

- 17 *Sleeping Calf*, 1975, oil on canvas, 42 × 44, Collection of Klaus and Bobbie Hallig
- 18 *Still Afternoon*, 1976, oil on canvas, 40 × 48, Collection of Charles and Frances Webb
- 19 *1433 Cambridge Street*, 1977, oil on canvas, 48 × 72
- 20 *Guber and Sherman*, 1980, oil on canvas, 48 × 54, Collection of Charles Guber

## Late City Paintings

- 21 *Kiki and Art's*, 1982, oil on canvas, 48 × 60
- 22 *The Rose Door*, 1982, oil on canvas, 70 × 84
- 23 *Things We Do*, 1984, oil on canvas, 60 × 78
- 24 *Aim*, 1984, oil on canvas, 60 × 78

## Floor Drawings

- 25 *Eggs: Contact Sheets*, 1979-84, 12 silver prints, total dimensions: 88 × 72
- 26 *Egg Box I*, 1977, paint on wood, 3 × 38 × 12
- 27 *Egg Box II*, 1978, paint on wood, 5 × 14 × 14
- 28 *Egg Box III*, 1979-87, paint on wood, 11 × 12 × 12
- 29 *Eggs: Installation*, 1987, mixed media, 136 × 30 × 2
- 30 *Room Aches*, 1981, nine oils on paper, 48 × 41, Collection of Allan and Miriam Haven
- 31 *Fragments*, 1980-84, oil on paper, installation; dimensions variable
- 32 *Bomb Fragments*, 1982, six oils on paper, 36 × 30
- 33 *Duet: Colander*, 1980, tinted silver print and oil on paper, 20 × 16
- 34 *Duet: Tornado*, 1980, tinted silver print and oil on paper, 20 × 16
- 35 *Duet: Brushpile*, 1980, silver print and oil on paper, 20 × 16
- 36 *Duet: Studio Tepee*, 1980, silver print and oil on paper, 20 × 16

- 37 *Duet: Blimp Meets Tornado*, 1980, tinted silver print and oil on paper, 20 × 16
- 38 *Duet: Tepees*, 1980, silver print and oil on paper, 20 × 16
- 39 *Duet: Containers*, 1980, silver print and oil on paper, 20 × 16
- 40 *Duet: Two Colanders*, 1980, tinted silver print and oil on paper, 20 × 16
- 41 *Duet: Comfy Chair*, 1981, silver print and oil on paper, 20 × 16
- 42 *Duet: Couch; Antics*, 1981, tinted silver print and oil on paper, 20 × 16
- 43 *Duet: Stick in Light*, 1981, silver print and oil on paper, 20 × 16
- 44 *Duet: Hillbilly Ranch*, 1981, silver print and oil on paper, 20 × 16

### Pastels

- 45 *Father and Bluebirds*, 1978, pastel on paper, 22 × 30
- 46 *Baneberry Night*, 1979, pastel on paper, 30 × 40, Collection of DeCordova Museum: Museum Purchase
- 47 *Night Crash*, 1979, pastel on paper, 30 × 40
- 48 *Crash Behind Star Market*, 1980, pastel on paper, 30 × 40
- 49 *Sky Lab*, 1980, pastel on paper, 30 × 40
- 50 *They Were Surprised*, 1980, pastel on paper, 30 × 40
- 51 *Odd Occurrence for Julian*, 1981, pastel on paper, 25 × 36, Collection of DeCordova Museum: Museum Purchase (Commissioned by DeCordova Museum as 1981 Annual Appeal Print)
- 52 *Miro and Blimp*, 1982, pastel on paper, 30 × 40

### Outdoor Sculpture and Missing Trees

All outdoor sculpture was made between 1978–1986

- 53 *Figure with Bone*, cherry and oak, 48 × 36 × 30
- 54 *Grosbeak*, cherry and oak, 42 × 54 × 18
- 55 *Wood Wall*, cherry, 24 × 108 × 18
- 56 *Godwit in City*, oak and black walnut, 30 × 18 × 18
- 57 *Yell*, red oak, 54 × 48 × 36
- 58 *Bird with Weight*, cherry and black walnut, 30 × 42 × 36
- 59 *Chain Figure I*, cherry, 72 × 36 × 24
- 60 *Chain Figure II*, cherry and black walnut, 54 × 24 × 12
- 61 *Phobia*, cherry, 18 × 36 × 36
- 62 *Mountain Guard*, 1984, white oak, 114 × 29 (installed on Museum grounds)
- 63 *Missing Tree: Cherry*, 1986, color photograph, 20 × 30
- 64 *Missing Tree: Cherry*, 1986, color photograph, 20 × 30
- 65 *Missing Tree: Cherry*, 1986, cherry, 188 × 48 × 72
- 66 *Missing Tree: Ironwood*, 1987, color photograph, 20 × 30
- 67 *Missing Tree: Ironwood*, 1987, color photograph, 20 × 30
- 68 *Missing Tree: Ironwood*, 1987, ironwood, 168 × 42 × 6

### Masks

- 69 *Artist's Mask*, 1984, oil on wood, 26 × 15 × 11, Collection of Alan Dinsfriend
- 70 *Isee*, 1985, oil on wood, 18 × 16 × 9
- 71 *Isaw*, 1985, oil on wood, 18 × 16 × 9
- 72 *Birdperson*, 1987, oil on wood, 18 × 16 × 9
- 73 *A Brush with a Gun*, 1987, oil on wood, 18 × 16 × 9



## Small Sculpture

- 74 *Paint Box with Striped Figure*, 1976, mixed media, 24 x 20 x 6, Collection of DeCordova Museum: Museum Purchase
- 75 *Paint Box: Palette Knife*, 1976, mixed media, 25 x 18 x 6, Collection of Klaus and Bobbie Hallig
- 76 *Paint Box: Palette and Tube*, 1976, mixed media, 24 x 16 x 6
- 77 *Ranger and Consomme*, 1980, oil on wood, 18 x 11 x 3/4, Collection of Klaus and Bobbie Hallig
- 78 *Moonlight After the Crash*, 1980, oil on wood, 17 1/2 x 11 x 3/4, Private Collection
- 79 *Blind Fox*, 1981, oil on wood, 17 1/2 x 11 x 3/4, Collection of DeCordova Museum: Museum Purchase
- 80 *Rocker with Snake*, 1986, oil on wood, 11 x 7 x 5
- 81 *Rocker Hair Blowing*, 1986, oil on wood, 9 x 11 x 5, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Bulkeley
- 82 *Bird Stroller*, 1986, oil on wood, 12 x 10 x 8
- 83 *Link Figure Jousting*, 1986, oil on wood, 16 x 10 x 6
- 84 *Rocker with Fork and Empty Spoon*, 1986, oil on wood, 10 x 14 x 5
- 85 *She Changed Me*, 1985, oil on wood, 18 x 10 x 10
- 86 *Buffalo Figure*, 1985, oil on wood, 20 x 10 x 10
- 87 *Caged Burden*, 1985, oil on wood, 16 x 12 x 8, Collection of Robert Gordon
- 88 *Miro Bird*, 1985, oil on wood, 16 x 13 x 12, Collection of Meredyth and John Moses
- 89 *Band Aid?*, 1986, oil on wood, 18 x 20 x 4
- 90 *Rocking Archer*, 1986, oil on wood, 20 x 16 x 12

## Necklaces, Dressers and Brushes

- 91 *Mask Necklace*, 1981, mixed media, 15 x 7 x 3
- 92 *Wipe that Grin Off Your Necklace*, 1981, mixed media, 10 x 10 x 5, Collection of Meredyth and John Moses
- 93 *Eleanor's Necklace*, 1986, mixed media, 16 x 16 x 2, Collection of Eleanor Tillinghast
- 94 *Maple Chest I*, 1983, oil on wood, 47 x 32 x 18
- 95 *Oak Chest III*, 1983, oil on wood, 35 x 38 x 20
- 96 *Oak Chest IV*, 1985, oil on wood, 48 x 28 x 16
- 97 *Maple Chest IV*, 1987, oil on wood, 30 x 31 x 19, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Bulkeley
- 98 *Circle Brushes*, 1976, mixed media, 12 x 14 x 4, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Graham Gund
- 99 *Brush Box I*, 1985, mixed media, 11 x 22 x 2, Private Collection, Boston
- 100 *Brush Box II*, 1985, mixed media, 11 x 21 x 3
- 101 *Brush Box III*, 1985, mixed media, 11 x 16 x 2, Collection of Eleanor Tillinghast

## Late Paintings and Oils on Paper

- 102 *Birch Building*, 1985, oil on canvas, 76 x 66
- 103 *The Letter and the Lobster Claw*, 1986, oil on canvas, 76 x 66
- 104 *We Hold On*, 1986, oil on canvas, 76 x 86
- 105 *Removing the Shroud*, 1986, oil on canvas, 76 x 86
- 106 *Preparation for Flight I*, 1986, oil on canvas, 48 x 36
- 107 *Preparation for Flight II: Molting Tanager*, 1986, oil on canvas, 48 x 36, Collection of Milton and Renée Glass
- 108 *Photos and Feathers*, 1986, oil on canvas, 60 x 48
- 109 *Sticks and Lights*, 1986, oil on canvas (diptych), 84 x 168
- 110 *In the Teepee*, 1985, oil on paper, 22 x 30
- 111 *Sunday Afternoon*, 1985, oil on paper, 22 x 30

- 112 *Wounded Couch*, 1985, oil on paper, 22 × 30,  
Collection of Nancy Smith
- 113 *Nettles and Touch-Me-Not*, 1985, oil on paper,  
22 × 30
- 114 *I Hurt Myself*, 1985, oil on paper, 22 × 30,  
Collection of The Prudential
- 115 *Embrace II*, 1985, oil on paper, 22 × 30
- 116 *After Falling I*, 1985, oil on paper, 22 × 30
- 117 *Buffalo Watcher*, 1985, oil on paper, 22 × 30,  
Collection of Eleanor Tillinghast

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*Rachel Rosenfield Lafo, Senior Curator*





