

For Immediate Release

JONATHAN SILVER | Matter & Vision | plaster, bronze and drawing

May 11 – June 30, 2022

VICTORIA MUNROE
fine art

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Opening May 11 through June 30, 2022, Victoria Munroe Fine Art is pleased to present *Jonathan Silver: Matter and Vision, Plaster, Bronze and Drawing*. The gallery last exhibited Jonathan Silver in 1992, in a 30-year survey of his drawings. In collaboration with the Jonathan and Barbara Silver Foundation, this exhibition presents important works from 1965-1992, the span of Silver's artistic practice. The installation comprises 20 figure drawings, 12 plaster heads, and 10 figurative bronzes. The catalog essay, titled *On the Edge of the Visible: The Drawings of Jonathan Silver*, was written by Michael Brenson.

Jonathan Silver (1937-1992) received both a BS and an MA in art history from Columbia University. While taking courses in art history as an undergraduate, he made a critical decision to study with the sculptor Peter Agostini. The life drawing classes with Agostini re-awakened the artist in Silver, who as a child had made busts of Beethoven and drawn from books on Michelangelo. He decided to become a Columbia Ph.D candidate, working under Meyer Schapiro, but even as Silver was researching a doctoral thesis on the influence of Analytic Cubism on Giacometti's paintings he was obsessed with modeling clay and making casts in plaster. Casting in plaster allowed him to preserve the first head intact while deconstructing and reconstructing additional versions. Throughout his labor-intensive and often mysterious process, he was continually reckoning with the very idea of a head. The expressive and intellectual possibilities of the plaster casts were endless and soon he worked heads by carving and adding found materials. The heads became abstract assemblages or cubist sculpture. A collection of around 45 plaster heads is on view at The Jonathan and Barbara Silver Foundation in Greenpoint, Brooklyn: jonathanandbarbarasilverfoundation.org

Silver decided not to pursue a career as an art historian and to become an artist. Until his untimely death in 1992, he continued drawing from life and created a large body of sculpture. After straddling the line between figuration and abstraction in his plaster heads, he began to construct standing figures and in the last years of his life was committed to operatic narrative installations.

Of the seven bronzes on view, the earliest is *Small Bronze Head*, a half-life size self-portrait from 1968. Perched on a long rod anchored on a stone block, the head is intensely modeled. With the mastery of light and shadow, the features become precise. The smooth life size female *Head* from 1971 has a haunted distant gaze. Two 30-inch female figures titled *Flora* and *Thief of Baghdad*, from the early 1990's, seem both to be inside and to emanate from their bodies. The tallest bronze in the show, *Small Venus*, is life size and accompanied by her mirror image in plaster, cast earlier in 1980. This rare opportunity to see the same sculpture in two different mediums allows visitors to appreciate the historical references: the plaster reminds one of Rodin's passion for that material and the bronze of Giacometti's talent to express the weight of existence in an elongated body.

In the 20 drawings on view, one sees both Silver's early exploration of Analytical Cubism and his later desire to release on paper beings that inhabited his imagination. In many of these intimate notebook drawings, one feels the thought with which he struggled to locate and animate the head on a page. With dots and lines Silver plotted each volume. In several drawings the head or body dissolves into lines and smudges, traces of his search for a grounding center, evoking intelligence and grace.

For further information and reproduction-quality images, please contact Margo Hudson
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#75, 1974, plaster, shellacked, 16 x 9 x 6"



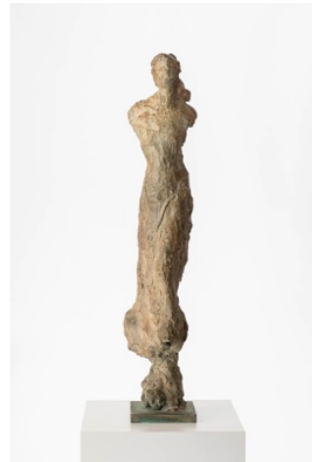
#61, c. 1971, plaster, 12 x 7 ½ x 6"



#95, c. 1978, plaster, foil, paper, metal, 18 x 9 x 7"



Head, 1971, bronze, 14 x 7 x 8"



Flora, 1990, bronze, 26 ½ x 6 x 5"



(Self-Portrait), c. 1968, bronze, 15 x 6 x 4"



JS-37, 1975, graphite on paper, 8 ½ x 5"



JS-47, 1980, graphite on paper, 7 x 4 ½"



JS-80, 1992, graphite on paper, 10 ½ x 6 ¾"