





Cluffalo

CHARLES CLOUGH
THE WAY TO CLUFFALO

University at Buffalo Art Gallery
The State University of New York at Buffalo

Organized by Sandra Q. Firmin



This catalog is published on the occasion of the exhibition *Charles Clough: The Way to Cluffalo*, organized by Sandra Q. Firmin, Curator, UB Art Galleries, State University of New York at Buffalo, and shown at the UB Center for the Arts, Buffalo, New York, March 31–May 19, 2012.

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Frontispiece:

Taurus (detail), 2000

Enamel on t-shirt

27³/₄ x 17 inches

Courtesy of the artist

Title page:

Pawcatuck (aka 05102142)

Acrylic on masonite

32 x 44 inches

Courtesy of the artist

Previous page:

The Way to Cluffalo, 2011

Acrylic on canvas, 39 x 80 inches

Courtesy of the artist

Facing page:

Paint to Mask Over Board as a Vise, 1976

Enamel and silver print on board

23¹/₄ x 18¹/₄ inches

Courtesy of the artist



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Awash in Color

Sandra Q. Firmin

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My Parents' Family Before Me, 1970
Acrylic on muslin
25 x 47³/₄ inches
Collection of Dorothy Clough



Director's Foreword and Acknowledgements When thinking of my first encounter with Charlie Clough, I recall walking with him along the back wall of the large center exhibition space of the Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University and counting the tiles on the floor in hopeful anticipation that three large "Big Finger" canvases painted for the Grand Lobby of the Brooklyn Museum (*Three Paintings for One Wall*, 1985) could be installed in Niagara University's museum. Like two kids, we cheered with glee when we discovered the dimensions of the walls in the two museums were nearly identical. Referencing paintings in the Brooklyn Museum's famous collection of nineteenth century American art, the three paintings gloriously filled the Castellani's back wall and, when seen from a distance through the large glass-front windows, the colors seemed to spill outside onto the campus grounds. They inspired adults and children of all ages to participate in creating their own collaborative "Big Finger" paintings using special Clough "Big Finger" tools and buckets of paint, working just outside the front windows on the museum's sheltered porch. We are delighted that the public will be invited to participate again in a "Big Finger" extravaganza during the course of this exhibition.

Armand J. Castellani, patron of the Castellani Art Museum, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, and many art organizations in Western New York, bought all three of the *Paintings for One Wall* from Nina Freudenheim Gallery, Buffalo, New York, and donated two of them to Niagara University's collection (*Doubloon* and *Oysters*). The third was donated to the Brooklyn Museum (*The Governor*) upon the request of its then director, Robert T. Buck, former director of the Albright-Knox.

The role of collectors and patronage for the arts cannot be overstated. Networks of support nurture artists' careers, maintain the growth of public collections, and sustain a community's cultural legacy. The first Clough artwork to enter UB's collection, *The Shining Knight of Andy*, 1985, was donated in 2005 by the late Eleanor A. Castellani, Armand Castellani's widow. Dr. Ralph Obler, a University at Buffalo (UB) alumnus currently residing in Los Angeles, initiated the idea of this exhibition and, along with his wife June, donated an important group of early works. It was Dr. Obler who suggested we contact collectors Dorothy and Herbert Vogel, patrons of Clough for more than thirty years. Their generous donation to UB of almost 400 drawings and paintings from the 1970s to the 1990s made it possible to organize this comprehensive survey exhibition.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who donated Clough works to UB's collection and those lending to this exhibition, particularly the many individuals who removed paintings from their walls to share with the public. I extend my deep appreciation to the many individuals whose generous donations made this publication possible: Dean Brownrout and Jana Eisenberg, Robert and Nicole Buck, Carla Castellani, Edmund Cardoni and Cheryl Jackson, Annette Cravens, Ilene and Peter Fleischmann, Sarah Goodyear, Christopher T. and Cameron R. Greene, George and Sally Hezel, Marie and Fred Houston, Fern and Joel Levin, Robert Longo and Barbara Sukowa, John Massier, Gerald C. Mead, Jr., Richard Milazzo and Joy Glass, June and Ralph Obler, Elizabeth Schreier, Vincent Fremont Enterprises, Inc., and anonymous donors. Thanks also to Schuele Paint Company, Inc. for its support of a series of public programs enabling our community to celebrate and join native son and artist Charlie Clough as he Clufffalos back to Buffalo.

—Sandra H. Olsen, PhD
Director, UB Art Galleries



Scarface (installation detail), 1976,
Enamel and C-print
8 x 8 inches

Awash in Color In a 1975 exhibition at Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center located in Buffalo, New York, Charles Clough pasted cutout photographs of his eyes, blended in with rusty brown enamel paint, onto the brick walls of the former ice-packing warehouse.¹ An artist-run alternative art space shared with the Ashford Hollow Foundation Artist Studios, Hallwalls quickly became a social and creative hub for the local arts community to gather, exhibit work, and learn about contemporary art through a library of magazines and catalogs supplemented by a constant influx of visiting artists mostly from New York City.²

From its inception, Hallwalls took a multidisciplinary approach by staging literary readings, film and video screenings, lectures, music, performance, and art exhibitions. It was an easygoing intellectual bastion fueled by beer and coffee where artists convened for lively discussions and weekly rituals of watching *Saturday Night Live*. Clough, who cofounded Hallwalls with Robert Longo and a loose collection of friends, was particularly entranced with the theories of Freudian and cognitive psychologists, French semioticians such as Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva, and Walter Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936).³ As Conceptual art's unsuccessful bid to dematerialize the art object and counteract the commercialization of art and everyday life became increasingly apparent, these young artists did not despair. Instead, they co-opted the seductive pull of mass media to examine how images functioned in motion pictures, television, advertisements, and popular culture magazines. In a 1982 interview with art critic Carter Ratcliff, Clough remembered: "When Robert Longo and I were hanging out in Buffalo, from 1975 to '76, we would talk about 'picturism.' Sound familiar? I don't know if Robert ever talked about it with Doug Crimp. It was one of those in-the-air concepts. Anyway, figuring out how an image works seemed like something fun to do."⁴ To this end, Clough began to experiment with painting, its mechanical reproduction, and display mechanisms meant to break down the fourth wall psychologically separating artwork and viewers.

Clough's foray into installation art, with photographic eyes peering out from walls, reversed the convention of a person viewing an artwork. Taking a cue from the magical logic of cartoons, the collage animated the frozen architecture as Clough's unblinking eyes stared out day and night, bearing silent witness to the goings-on. The implied

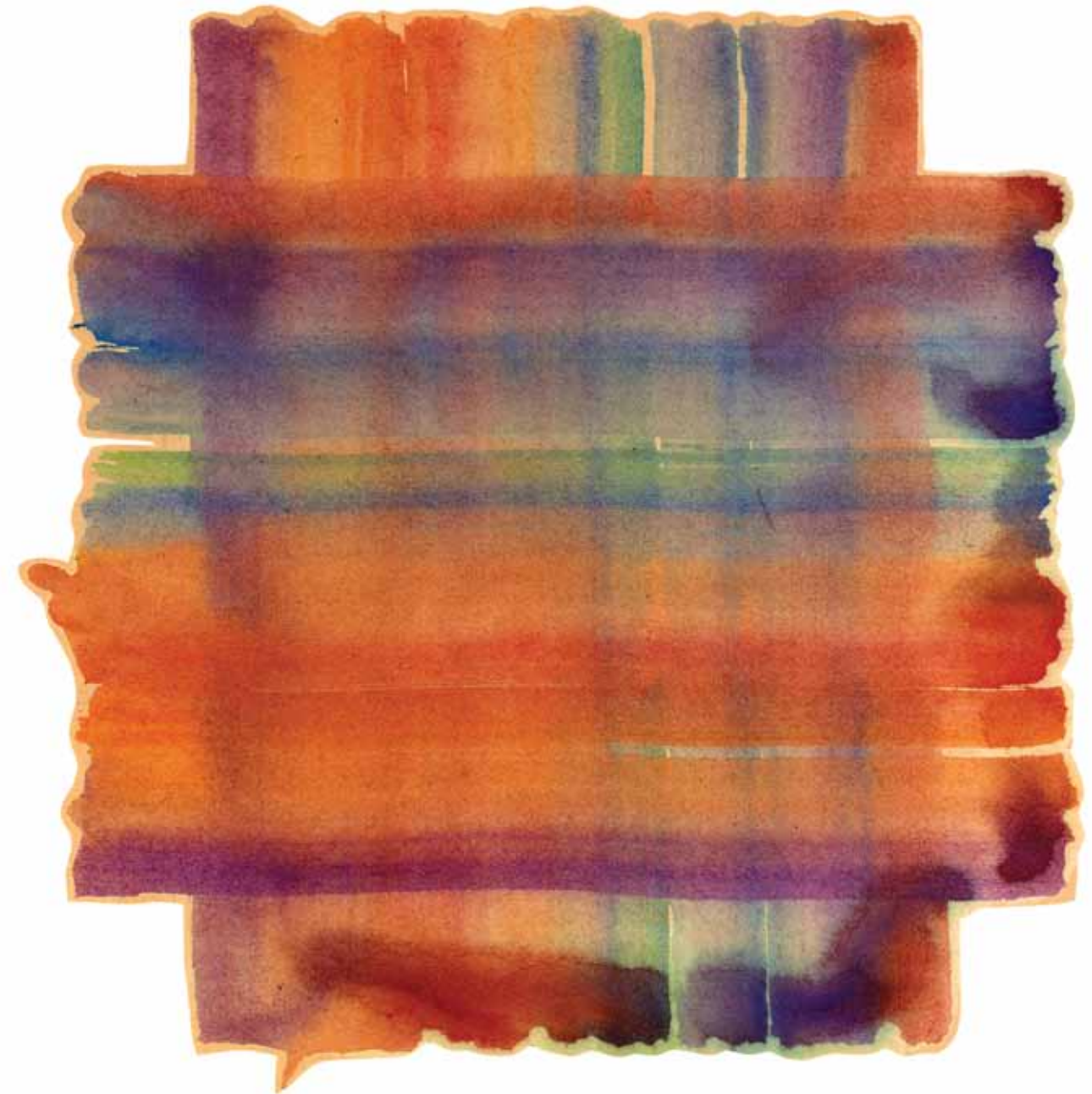
Untitled, 1971
Watercolor on paper
Approx 10 x 10 inches
University at Buffalo Art Galleries:
Gift of Herbert and Dorothy Vogel, 2010

perceptual reorientation implicit in this installation—in which unidirectional viewing is splintered into a constellation of interrelationships between the embedded artwork (functioning as a stand-in for the artist), audience, and the space they both inhabited—was an outgrowth of Allan Kaprow's "Happenings" and Michael Fried's concept of the inherent theatricality of Minimalist art.

Not for the first time, Clough left his hometown of Buffalo for New York City in 1978, which, at that time, was still the epicenter of the contemporary art world. Almost a decade earlier, he had spent a year (1969–70) at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, where he was introduced to *Artforum* and *Art in America*, whose pages were then filled with Minimalism and Conceptual art, and went with his 2-Dimensional Design class to his professor's Chinatown studio. Here, he witnessed firsthand what it meant to be a working artist. Clough's restlessness, coupled with a voracious appetite for art, drove him to gain a real-world education outside the classroom by scouring the commercial and nonprofit galleries flourishing in SoHo. He saw his first Whitney Biennial, as well as landmark exhibitions such as Henry Geldzahler's *New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940–1970* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Set against the backdrop of the Vietnam War and United States involvement in Cambodia, Clough began to question his original resolve to pursue a monetarily strategic career as an ad man, furniture maker, or other sort of craftsman. He dropped out of Pratt and returned to Buffalo briefly before following a long tradition of northern migration from the United States into Canada. Enrolling in the Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD) in Toronto—in part to avoid the Vietnam draft (unnecessarily, it turned out, given his favorable number)—the classroom once again seemed beside the point. What Clough brought back to Buffalo in 1972, however, was a resolute commitment to the fine arts and a network of mentors, including the filmmaker Michael Snow and writer John Chandler, and friendships formed at the downtown A Space Gallery. One of the first alternative art spaces in North America, A Space, along with Artist Space in New York City, became a model for Hallwalls.

Buffalo in the 1970s was exhilarating for artists like Clough, who were behind the loose affiliation of venues, organizations, and academic departments that were then fostering a staggering amount of experimentation in the visual arts, music, theater, and literature.⁵ While he continued to hone an artistic vocabulary that combined gestural painting and photography, he audited classes at the Center for Media Study at the University at Buffalo, where he was





Untitled (self portrait), 1975
Enamel and C-print on board
Approx 10 x 8 inches
University at Buffalo Art Galleries:
Gift of Herbert and Dorothy Vogel, 2010

taught by Hollis Frampton and Paul Sharits, whose chromatically-intense films pulsed with color. By inviting comparisons with abstract painting, these works resonated with Clough's interest in conflating new and traditional media.

Clough puckishly proclaims that it was during this heady time that he introduced himself to the art world with a symbolic flourish. In 1972, under cover of night and with the assistance of Joseph Panone and Linda Brooks, he seemingly embedded into an exterior wall of Buffalo's Albright-Knox Art Gallery a giant arrow that shot a glancing blow at the hallowed institution.⁶ Fashioned after small-scale maquettes he was then making (informed by a youthful interest in furniture making, Tony Smith's reductive geometry, and Pop art's love of signs), the arrow can also be interpreted as an expression of Clough's fascination with Freudian psychology. It symbolically skimmed the museum, marking his transition from a juvenile dabbler to a mature artist. This presence ultimately manifested itself as a physical reality with a solo show there in 1983.

While Clough's quasi-religious proclamation in 1976 to formally commit himself to exploring the expressive properties of paint exposes his romantic leanings, it also speaks to the doggedness of many young artists who willingly live in near-destitute conditions working an assortment of jobs—waiting tables and designing bookstore window displays, in Clough's case—in order to make their art without any guarantee on how the work will be received. For Clough, it has been a lifelong project he refers to as *Pepfog*, an acronym for the "Photographic Epic of a Painter as a Film or a Ghost," an enigmatic title that suggests an awareness that people's relationship to artworks is often established through the camera lens, and that his paintings are designed with the processes of photomechanical reproduction in mind. Moreover, *Pepfog* describes a seamless continuity of thought and action in which Clough has obstinately refused to compartmentalize his painting, sculpture, writing, photography, and video into artworks or projects that can be considered complete.

Rather, one series flows into the next with some momentary diversions—such as the airbrushed paintings from 1984 (page 21), which he quickly abandoned after a half dozen works because "they weren't any fun to make,"⁷ or *Sun Wei*, 1989, a black four-foot diameter fiberglass sphere hanging from the ceiling that one could gaze up at to see a lighted interior reminiscent of Claude Monet's panoramic paintings of water lilies at the Musée de l'Orangerie—but these endeavors are more like the mind ebbing from an idea than a dead-end pursuit. Primary, however, is his ardent experimentation with a range of additive and subtractive processes of paint handling. Although he does create discrete

*Souvenir of a Sketch for the Photographic Epic of a
Painter as a Film or a Ghost, 1976, 2012*
Inkjet print
8 x 8 inches (cut-out)



paintings that comfortably circulate autonomously in the world, Clough's procedures can be compared conceptually to that of a machine programmed to generate large volumes of work with variations in size and color. Therefore, the uniqueness of any one painting is subsumed by the mechanism of its production and the entirety of its output.

Two years after his declaration, he once again moved to New York City, where he lived and worked until relocating to Westerly, Rhode Island, in 1999. Like a lot of children growing up in a ubiquitous media culture characterized by color television sets and glossy magazines, Clough avidly embraced pluralistic forms of creativity that had not yet been assigned hierarchal valuations in his mind. Along with the daubs and drips of paint calling attention to the surfaces of the modernist masterpieces he visited regularly as a schoolboy at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, he delighted in the flat pulsating colors of Saturday morning cartoons and *Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Color*, and slick sports car illustrations by Ken Dallison and air-brush artist "Big Daddy" Ed Roth.⁸ What all these formative influences share is an untouchable vividness saturated with bright industrial colors that has become a recurring motif in Clough's paintings and his photographs of his paintings.

From 1977 to '78, Clough produced a series of irregularly shaped collages on paper composed from painted-over magazine clippings and personal photographs. He referred to the incipient formations as *Clouds*, a title inviting the eye to engage in free association by contemplating the interaction between the nebulous contours and the hyperactive surfaces set in motion by a palette of crayon-box colors gone amok, evoking the cartoon skirmishes on which he was raised. Slick images of products, faces, limbs, and sex organs emerge from and disappear into Technicolor infernos of shiny enamel paint swiftly applied with his fingertips in a suggestive act of autoeroticism for the commodities and bodies represented (which, not coincidentally, have their own layers of cosmetic color). As if endowed with an ability to subdivide and multiply, the forms quickly evolved into the *Paint Creatures, 1978–80* (pages 8,11). These resembled, at first, chromosomal Xs and Ys, and then couplings of attenuated *Male* and *Female* squiggles, each of which prominently feature a photograph of a Cyclopean eye that locks spectators into an unnerving staring contest.

The *Afters*, which he has periodically revisited since 1970, draw on various traditions of copying by testing a range of styles. These include the photo-realistic rendering of a family snapshot in *My Parents' Family Before Me, 1970* (page ix), or, later, the *Study after Titian's Deposition, 1980*, which privileges the artist's color palette over the drawn form to loosen the canonical composition and meld together shapes, figures, and landscape. "Imitation," writes the Renaissance



PAA and WDK, 1979
Enamel and collage on muslin mounted rag paper
66 x 14½ inches and 64½ x 14 inches
Burchfield Penney Art Center
Gift of Jill Sussman, 1983

scholar James S. Ackerman, "stressed community, the solidarity that the maker of the present experiences with his ancestors and teachers—ancestors whom he engages in a contest of skill and imagination."⁹ Mimesis thus gives rise to both inventiveness and "creative self-realization."¹⁰ In its quest for originality, modernism renounced imitation, but artists throughout the twentieth century faced a particular challenge to this doctrine when they encountered entire histories of art from Paleolithic times to the present day in lavishly illustrated tomes.

Clough admits that, like many of his generation, he continues to be deeply influenced by theoretical ideas: "I swallowed all the critical ideas hook, line and sinker. *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, for example. I was really taken by the essay."¹¹ In the face of mechanical reproduction, the original art object, according to Walter Benjamin's influential essay, was losing its authority, or what Benjamin considered its aura deprived of a unique existence. "And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation," Benjamin argued, "it reactivates the object produced."¹² Yet, this reactivation was not based on its uniqueness and permanence, but on its transitoriness and reproducibility.¹³ The bedrock of originality was slowly being eroded while artists found new freedom in appropriating the past as it was transmitted to them in the copy. Furthermore, confronted with 30,000-plus years of global culture, artists abandoned teleological beliefs in progress, choosing instead to think more in terms of a constellation of similarities, differences, and cyclical occurrences.

For his part, Clough was intrigued by how the unique mark of the artist had been subsumed by its mechanically reproduced counterpart in an era when viewing artworks did not require firsthand visits to museums or churches, but were reproduced for mass consumption, albeit at a reduced scale and with varying color fidelity. "I'd just as soon see my images transferred into print—into four color reproductions," Clough has remarked. "I see myself as setting up these resonances—layers, showing the touch and denying the touch. This idea of cover and recover. It ends up with the skinniness of the photograph. I like that. My things look like they are about touch, but you can't touch them."¹⁴

The *C-notes*, 1978–85 and throughout the 1990s, involved painting over his personal photographs (titled after chemicals) and art book reproductions (titled after body parts), photographing and enlarging them, and then applying another layer of paint, only to repeat the process, potentially ad infinitum. Working wet into wet, Clough engaged in a daring duel with his forbearers, as one misstep could easily turn the colors he deftly swirled together in rhythmic motions into mud. Fiery oranges and acrid yellows—blended with streaks of black—lick the surface of *Untitled*, 1979

ET, 1980
Enamel and collage on muslin mounted rag paper
38 x 30 inches
Collection of John and Shelley McKendry

(page 16), like flames, mingling with the burnt auburn-hair and olive-skin tones of the voluptuous women depicted in Lester Johnson's paintings and prints from the 1970s. Outfitted in skimpy, ornamental dresses, Johnson's women, smoldering with sexuality, are presented as monumental friezes engulfing the foreground. Clough's application of hot tones seems to externalize their internal conflagration. In these works, which pay heed to the childish transgression of willfully scribbling in books, he follows the whims of his intuition to almost obliterate the source image with over-painting to produce psychedelic morasses.

The *C-notes* resonate with the photographic techniques employed by Gerhard Richter, whose work Clough learned about in 1979 and subsequently used as a benchmark because, like Clough, "he mixed -isms: initially photo-realism with pop-like tendencies, into geometric abstraction, into gestural abstraction, kept them in rotation, also adding photography and sculpture."¹⁵ Writing about Richter's paintings, Robert Storr evocatively suggests that "losing oneself in painterly time is the sensuous and imaginative catalyst for losing oneself in painting space. . . . For Richter, where the camera intercedes, one reality is incrementally synthesized into its facsimile by traditional procedures and telescoped into an instant. The execution of the painting itself is subordinated to that mechanical abbreviation of the process of looking."¹⁶ While Storr is writing here about Richter's photorealist landscape paintings, the same process is at play in the *C-notes*, which flirt with two habitual modes of looking at paintings and photographs to generate a third perceptual orientation. The subtly raised impasto marks, which on their own would induce an optical voyage across the painterly surface, become practically indistinguishable from the flatness of the photograph, whose main function is to communicate basic information about its subject matter. This visual impact is in contrast to Richter's own over-painted photographs, which he began in 1989, where oil paint noticeably dominates the image. The *C-notes* are a conundrum—like a paradoxical Buddhist Koan—for the mind to meditate on to isolate the real from its facsimile, or perhaps to realize there is no differentiation between the two.

Clough's output is staggering. With a machine-like mania, he painted over and re-photographed thousands of personal photographs, posters, postcards, and pages irreverently torn from books and magazines, yet he could never keep up with the potentially infinite reproducibility of the image that in nightmarish science fiction scenarios threaten to overtake reality with copies.





Beverly Hillbillies, 1981
Enamel on paper
55½ x 104½ inches
Collection of Fern and Joel Levin

Temporarily abandoning the dialogue between painting and its mechanical reproduction, Clough developed a new mode of expression in the mid-1980s that retained the childlike spontaneity and intuition inherent in applying paint directly with the body. When Clough was invited by the Brooklyn Museum in 1985 to propose an installation for its cavernous lobby, his inspired solution for tackling the immense scale of the space was to invent the “Big Finger” tools: soft, rubber-coated pads of varying sizes that he used until the late 1990s to spread enamel onto large-scale canvases and sheets of masonite placed directly on the ground. That way he could control the paint’s viscous movement by letting it pool and pucker in places, pushing it into feathery wisps in others, and blending the colors together to produce a myriad of effects, which often conform to the shapes of the elements in the forms of effervescent smoke, rock hard geological strata, and liquid tar pits. Still, the paint’s industrial features inevitably reassert themselves, snapping the mind out of these romantic reveries. Applying paint directly from cans with his grossly enlarged body double, Clough reveled in the hard, shiny surfaces and bright, unalloyed colors made possible by modern technology. In this way, the “Big Finger” series (pages 24–49) can be seen as a continuation of the performative investigations of artists in the 1960s such as Yves Klein, Georges Mathieu, and Kazuo Shiraga, whose intensely physical acts of painting involved whole bodies or body parts to fling or move paint (and, in some instances, mud) around, drawing attention to the materiality of the paint and the temporal dimension of creation through comically exaggerated mark making.

The artist David Batchelor argues how color has been denigrated in Western Civilization. This, he says, started with Aristotle, who believed “the repository for thought in art was line,” hence, “drawing and color became ciphers for order and chaos.”¹⁷ Clough falls blissfully on the side of color and chaos with full knowledge of its liberating effects, as well as its power to overwhelm. Contemplating the “Big Finger” paintings, one is awash in color, staring into an abyss of perpetual motion and commingling fluids, of violent ruptures and soothing passages, of billowing clouds and wide arcs, of pure energy known in Chinese philosophy as *ch’i*. The paintings present an oceanic world of allusions and resemblances where meanings shift constantly and boundaries blur, especially the contours separating self and other. Carter Ratcliff brilliantly discusses these works in terms of childhood development, as they represent the excitement of a time prior to the onset of a fully formed vocabulary when life is filled with infinite, transformative possibilities.¹⁸ This is a time when kids are unconcerned with coloring inside the lines—which signify the nameable

shapes adults are so keen to impose—but paint because it is endlessly mesmerizing to have paint on their hands transferred to a surface outside of them. It is thinking through paint in which the mind and body are perfectly in sync.

The fleetingness of these undulating forms instinctually appeals to Clough, who believes that the circular shape of the "Big Finger" tool is uniquely suited to conjure "the kind of edges the ocean has on a humid windy day, of smoke and clouds, of the change in chemical states, the boundary between a solid and a liquid, a liquid and a gas."¹⁹ Vortices, stormy appearances, and cosmic energy churn throughout his paintings, channeling the sublime energy of awe-inspiring natural forces that also captivated such nineteenth century painters as Caspar David Friedrich and J. M. W. Turner. Long before it became popular to mine a museum's holdings, he used the Brooklyn Museum commission as an opportunity to transform the compositional devices employed in several nineteenth century works—ranging from Albert Bierstadt's *A Storm in the Rocky Mountains—Mt. Rosalie*, 1866, to Benjamin West's *The Women at the Sepulchre (The Angel at the Tomb of Christ)*, 1805, and several works from Childe Hassam and John Henry Twachtman—into plumes of smoke and iridescent swirls.

The past decade saw a return to Clough's interest in the aura of the painting and its reproduction to explore issues of time, authorship, authenticity, and appropriation, as well as how art accrues value and circulates in the art world. In 1999, he relocated his studio from New York City to Westerly, Rhode Island, where, due in part to space constraints, he wondered how he could make paintings that satisfied his compulsive need for abundance without taking up much physical space. He hit upon the *Pepfog* series, 2006–10 (pages 50–51), in which he reworks the same surface repeatedly through successive layers of painting, grinding down, and polishing. Now working with acrylic, Clough has softened his color palette to cooler greens, blues, yellows, and whites with an occasional trellis of brilliant red which, combined with allover scratches, convey the shimmering quality of natural light that is a hallmark of Impressionism. Although one of the end results is a unique work of art, Clough photographs his process to produce a database that he uses to construct another way of knowing his paintings by isolating and enlarging areas unclear to the naked eye and presenting the act of creation as it unfolds over time, which is more in tune with filmic representations.

O My Goodness 2, 2011 (page 52), consists of a single painting; a series of painted, photographic, inkjet print "portraits" of the painting; a book; and a movie. The core of the project is a painting on plywood that sequentially cycles through a Janson's-style history of world religions through art, starting with a scratchy, black cosmic void that morphs



Flipper, 1980
Enamel on heavy paper
67 1/2 x 80 inches
University at Buffalo Art Galleries: Gift of June and Ralph Obler, 2011



Untitled, 1981
Enamel with collage
6¹/₄ x 13¹/₂ inches
University at Buffalo Art Galleries:
Gift of June and Ralph Obler, 2011

into a cave painting. From there, Clough incrementally grinds down the image and overlays it with his characteristic expressionistic abstractions before painting another iconic image. Making use of the ease of digital photography, this process was recorded in 3,749 photographs, resulting in a flipbook-like movie that condenses the last 32,000 years of human cultural production into a short film. The final painting functions as a palimpsest and poignant meditation on the passage of time. It is also a cheeky commentary on the linearity of the art historical canon, with titles for the individual destined-to-be-erased paintings reading as a time traveler's salutation ("Hello to the Hindus" or "Hello to the Mesopotamians") to the peoples of the world.

While his multifaceted studio output comprises sculpture, photography, painting, artist books, and copious notes written on 8¹/₂ x 11 inch sheets of paper and stacked in his studio to form columns upon columns of thought, Clough experiences his art-making in relationship to others, referring to himself as an inexorable "art lover" whose pursuit of aesthetic encounters borders on the mystical: "My collection of experienced art works, exhibition viewings, studio visits, and reading provides me with a mental 'cosmos' that is my personal playground of an art world."²⁰

As with Hallwalls, Clough has repeatedly expanded his solitary studio practice outwards to orchestrate situations for social engagement and shared creativity. Although he has directly connected himself to a continuum of art history with his appropriation, or more appropriately, his absorption of art historical reproductions and expressionistic techniques into his works, his experience of the self can no longer be tied to that strain of Western romanticism that began in the early nineteenth century and extinguished itself around the mid-twentieth century when Clough was born. The romantic ideal of the artist—always gendered male, struggling to communicate by heroic means his lofty inner visions—dissolved into a contingent subject performed as an amalgamation of social constructions most often coded by gender, ethnicity, race, age, or class. The author was dead, and rising from modernism's ashes was an aesthetic paradigm that recognized the authority of the participant who actively contributes to the interpretive exchange and will join the artist, virtually or corporeally, in the inherently life-affirming and joyful act of creation. Kaprow, writing shortly after Jackson Pollock's death, articulated Pollock's impact on contemporary art as redirecting attention from the final painting to the temporal dimension of his mark making: "It may be that our need to identify with the process, the making of the whole affair, prevents a concentration on the specifics of before and behind so important in a more traditional art."²¹ Moreover, his all-over

applications of skeins of paint, Kaprow describes, "entangle and assault us" so that "the artist, the spectator, and the outer world are much too interchangeably involved here."²²

Growing up in the 1960s, when the roles of the artist and audience were undergoing radical revisions, Clough would have gained intimate knowledge of how Kaprow's ideas ruptured temporal and spatial habits of spectatorship in his encounters with modernist painting at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. The participatory and collaborative aesthetic has continued to evolve through different strategies implemented by artists, as well as rapidly changing attitudes on the part of participants, which can be attributed to the influence of technical reproduction from the printing press to photography, from cinema to the Internet.

In many ways, Clough's art historical borrowings and quotation of modernist tropes are out of step with much of the artwork produced by his contemporaries in the 1980s and '90s that either revived expressionistic painting as angst-ridden figuration or offered coolly detached, ideological critiques of modernism, institutions, representation, and originality. However, his work has since found companionship with a younger generation of artists such as Jim Lambie, Jonathan VanDyke, and David Batchelor who love color and embrace modernism. Speaking to this trend, cultural theorist Simon O'Sullivan remarks:

Whereas the representation of modern forms in the 1980s often operated as an ironic critique of the tenets of modernism, what we have with some of these other practices is a repetition of the modern. A *repetition* that repeats the energy, the force, of the latter. We might say then that rather than a critique of originality and authenticity these practices repeat and celebrate the modern impulse, which we might characterize generally as the desire for, and production of, the new (these practices cannot be understood as parodies or pastiches in this sense). Again, for myself, this is what is at stake in what I have been calling the aesthetic: an impulse towards the new, towards something *different* to that which is already here.²³

Clough reinforces this understanding of his work, stating, "Originality is merely theoretical; all things originate in other things."²⁴ . . . I'm interested in an art unafraid of the look of art—an extreme centrism—a protagonistic art. Although I appreciate difficult and antagonistic art and rely on it as a cultural shock absorber, I prefer that my own work be powered by desire rather than guilt."²⁵ Clough's studio notes compiled since the 1970s, consisting of to-do



Lingula 2, 1982
Enamel on C-print collage on masonite
12¹/₄ x 16 inches
Collection of Ilene and Peter Fleischmann

notes, freeform poetic musings, correspondence, and sketches, among other notations, include a collage of quotations drawn from a reservoir of books he has skimmed or read in depth. A favorite quote by Eugene Delacroix encapsulates the paradigm-shifting potential of yearning for the modern: "What moves the genius, or rather, what inspires the work is not new ideas, but their obsession with the idea that what has already been said is still not enough."²⁶

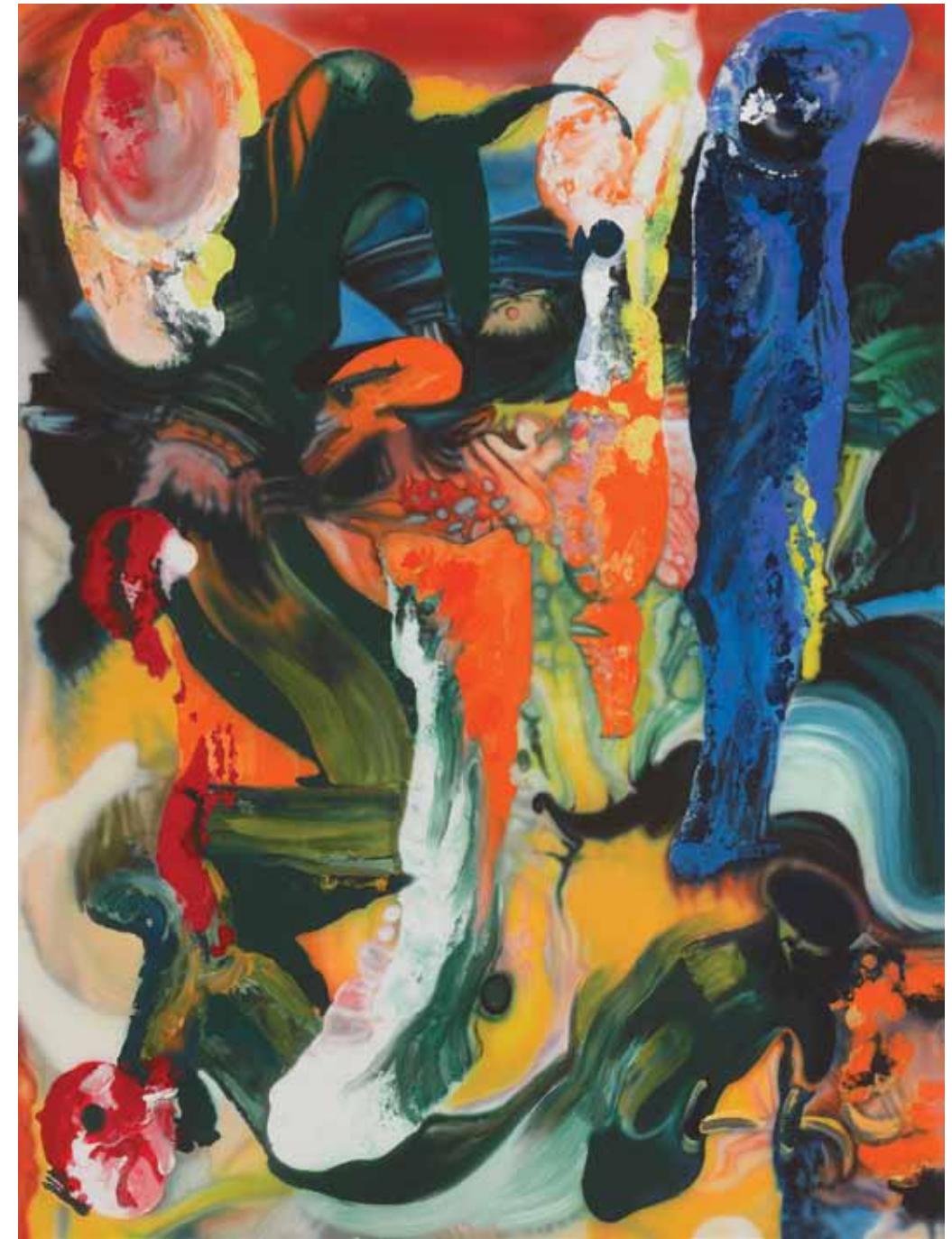
Clough taps into this open-ended and positive energy as he paints and, when, beginning in the mid-1970s at the Wilson Arts Festival in Western New York, he started to invite people of different ages and abilities to periodically join him in the process. And it motivates *The Way to Cluffalo*, a wildly diverse project that encompasses an exhibition chronicling forty-one years of Clough's multifaceted output; an immense horizontal painting (pages iv-v) whose left-to-right momentum of broad brushstrokes whipping across the canvas almost conceals a central portal (offering a ruby-red-slipper conveyance back to Buffalo?); and, lastly, a new studio in Hi-Temp Fabrication. One of this Rust Belt's city numerous warehouses, it provides spacious room for Clough to once again wield the "Big Finger" tool and, under his encouraging guidance, invite others to join in with him.

—Sandra O. Firmin



Rocky, 1996
Quartzite
Approx: 8 x 8 x 8 inches

Untitled, 1984
Oil on canvas
37 x 40 inches
Collection of Sheldon and Mary Berlow





Utopia 104, 1984
Enamel on board
36 x 44 inches
Collection of Pat and Bill Kolkmann

Notes to the Text

1. Clough and Robert Longo are generally credited for being the principal founders of Hallwalls, which was named for the hall between the studios where they first exhibited work, but other young artists, especially Diane Bertolo, Nancy Dwyer, Cindy Sherman, and Michael Zwack, along with initial seed money provided by Jack Griffis, were integral to the establishment of Hallwalls as a vanguard alternative space. On the history of Hallwalls founding see Sarah Evans, "There's No Place Like Hallwalls: Alternative-space Installations in an Artists' Community." *Oxford Art Journal* 32, no. 1 (2009): 95-119, and Ron Ehmke with Elizabeth Licata, eds., *Consider the Alternatives: 20 Years of Contemporary Art at Hallwalls* (Buffalo, New York: Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, 1996).
2. An abbreviated list of artists and art critics who presented at Hallwalls in 1975 includes: Vito Acconci, members of the Ant Farm collective, Chris Burden, Dan Graham, Nancy Holt, Lucy Lippard, Willoughby Sharp, Alan Saret, and Michael Snow. Hallwalls has compiled a near-complete online timeline of events from 1974 to the present day at <http://www.hallwalls.org/timeline.php>.
3. Amassed throughout his life, Clough's ongoing bibliography of books that have affected him is extensive, and provides a fascinating account of his philosophical and aesthetic concerns, as well as what many people of his generation were reading. One version can be found in *Pepfog Clufff*, a self-published book documenting his career from the early seventies to 2007, which anticipates the revolution in print-on-demand books. It can also be downloaded as a PDF from his website, <http://www.clufff.com>. Charles Clough, *Pepfog Clufff* (Westerly, Rhode Island: Pepfog Clufff): 89-94.
4. Carter Ratcliff, "Expressionism Today: An Artists' Symposium," *Art in America* (December 1982): 62.
5. See Heather Pesanti, *Wish You Were Here: The Buffalo Avant-Garde in the 1970s* (Buffalo, New York: Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 2012).
6. Clough, *Pepfog Clufff*, 15.
7. Alan Jones, "Charles Clough" (Galleria Peccolo, 1986; reprinted in *Ultramodernism*, New York: Charles Clough, 1997; page numbers reference reprinted essay): 32.
8. Charles Clough, email to the author, January 31, 2012.
9. James S. Ackerman, *Origins, Imitation, Conventions: Representation in the Visual Arts* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2002): 137.
10. *Ibid.*, 136.
11. Ratcliff, "Expressionism Today: An Artists' Symposium."
12. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969): 221.
13. *Ibid.*, 223.
14. Ratcliff, "Expressionism Today: An Artists' Symposium."
15. Clough, email to the author.
16. Robert Storr, *Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2002): 67.
17. David Batchelor, *Chromophobia* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), 29.
18. Carter Ratcliff, "Redemptive Play," *Charles Clough* (Potsdam: Roland Gibson Gallery, Potsdam College of the State of New York, 1991).
19. Alan Jones, "Charles Clough," *Ultramodernism*: 32.
20. Charles Clough, email to the author.
21. Allan Kaprow and Jeff Kelley, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993): 6.
22. *Ibid.*, 5.
23. Stephen Zepke and Simon O'Sullivan, eds., *Deleuze and Contemporary Art*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010): 193-94.
24. Charles Clough, "Introduction," *Ultramodernism*: 4.
25. *Ibid.*, 5.
26. Clough, "Chance and Choice," *Pepfog*: 41.



July Twenty-Sixth, 1985
Enamel on masonite, 34¹/₄ x 45¹/₈ inches
Collection of Sharon and Larry Levite



Right: *August Sixth*, 1985
Enamel on masonite, 45 x 32³/₄ inches
Collection of Gerald S. Lippes and Jody B. Ulrich



July Fourteenth, 1985
Enamel on masonite, 42 x 48 inches
Collection of Richard Milazzo and Joy Glass

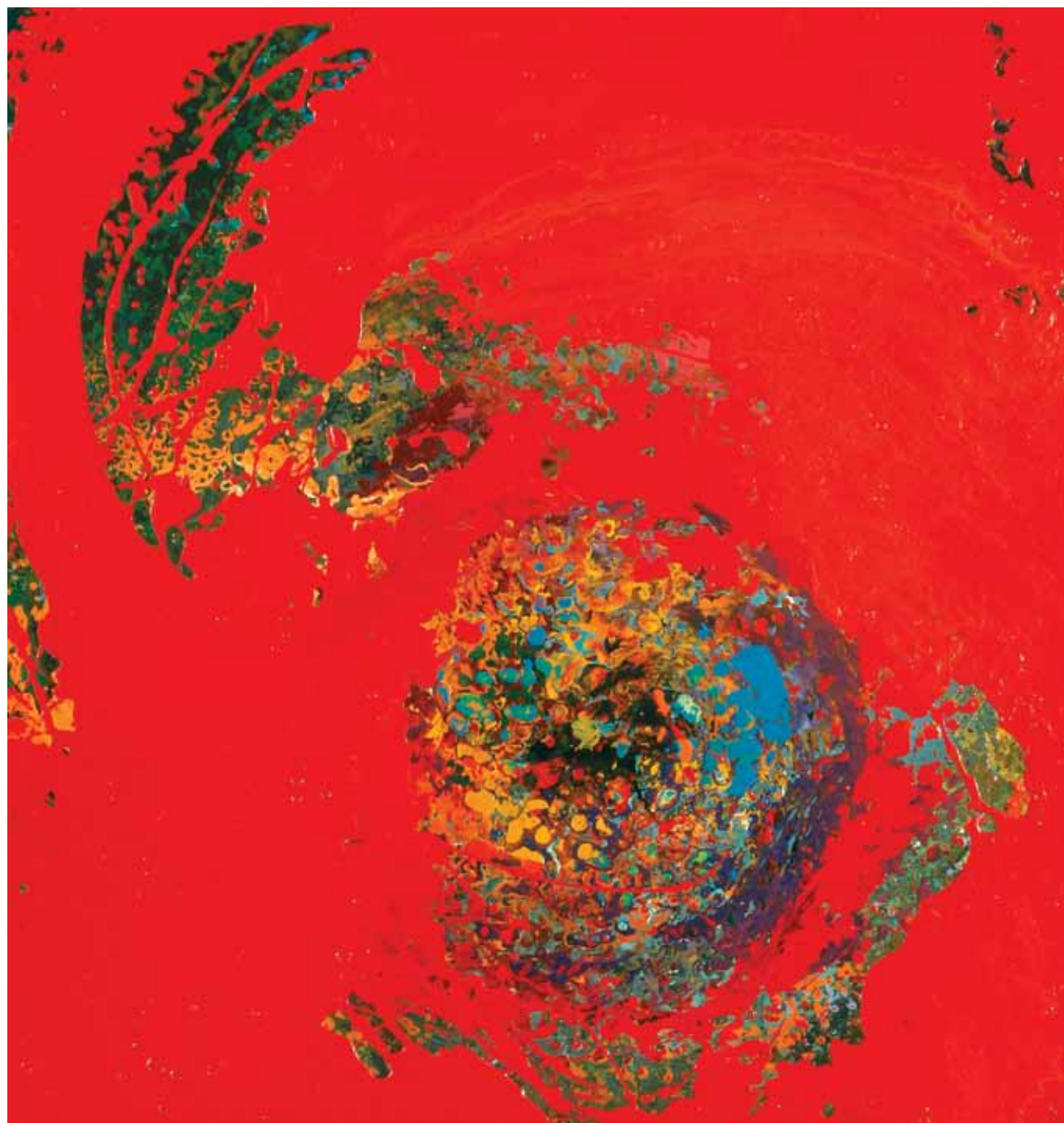
Left: *February Second, 1985*
Enamel on masonite, 16½ x 13¾ inches
Collection of Richard Shebairo



Left: *Bistro Maestro*, 1991
Enamel on masonite
27³/₄ x 20 inches
Collection of Cindy Sherman

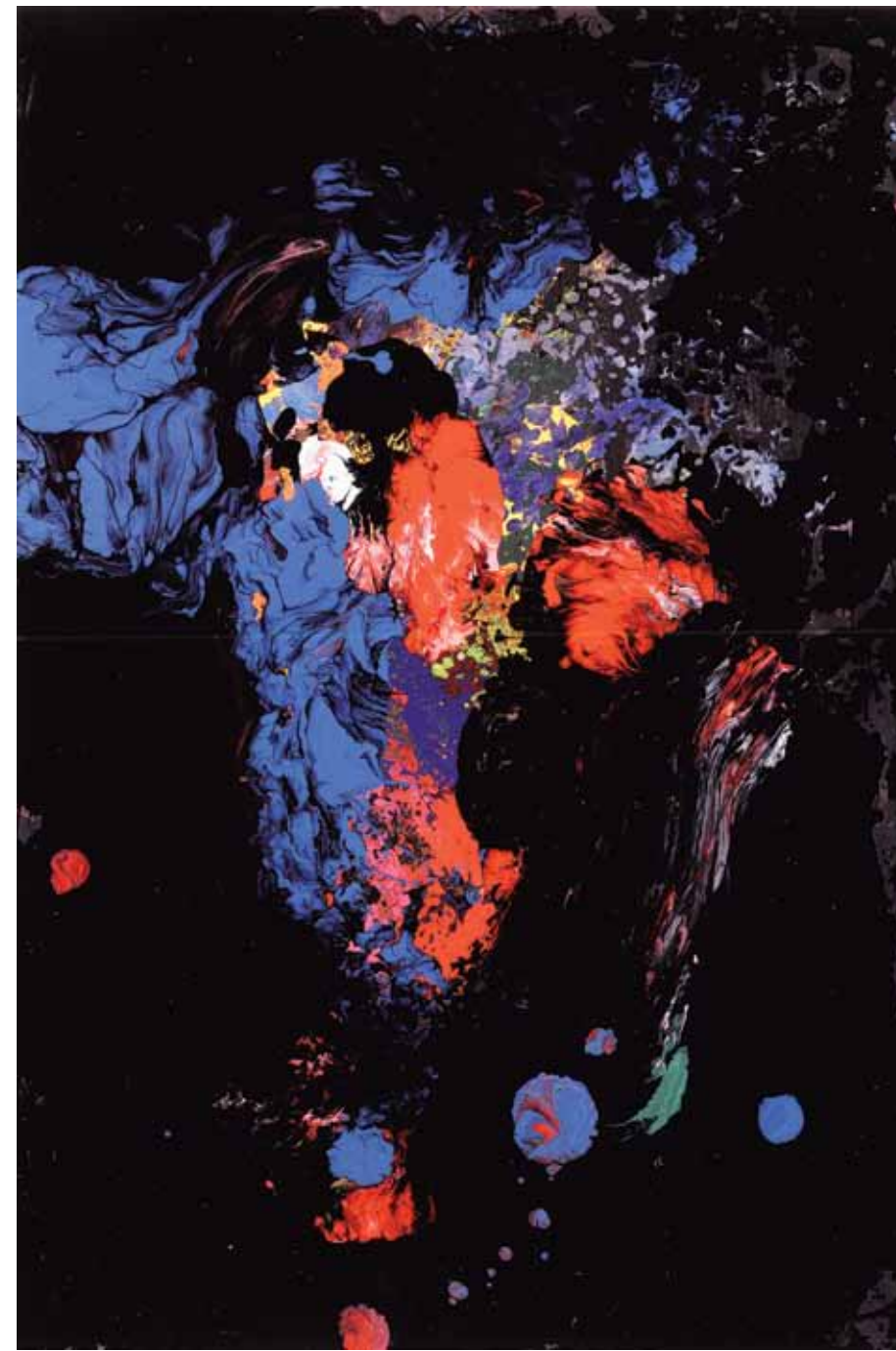
Right: *St. Andy*, 1987
Enamel on canvas, 90 x 24 inches
Collection of Shelly and Vincent Fremont





Left: *The Bunny Duck*,
(aka *December Sixteenth*), 1987–91
Enamel on masonite
19½ x 18½ inches
Collection of
George and Jenna Michaels

Right: *Ogive*, 1989–91
Enamel on board
17 x 11½ inches
Collection of Annette Cravens





Occhio, 1990
Enamel on masonite
15 x 7½ inches
Collection of Sally and Randy Marks



Uccello, 1990
Enamel on masonite
15 x 7½ inches
Collection of Sally and Randy Marks



Do, 1995
Enamel on masonite, 18½ x 22 inches
Collection of Sally and George Hezel

Left: *Keeve*, 1992
Enamel on board, 12¾ x 9¼ inches
Collection of Gerald C. Mead, Jr.



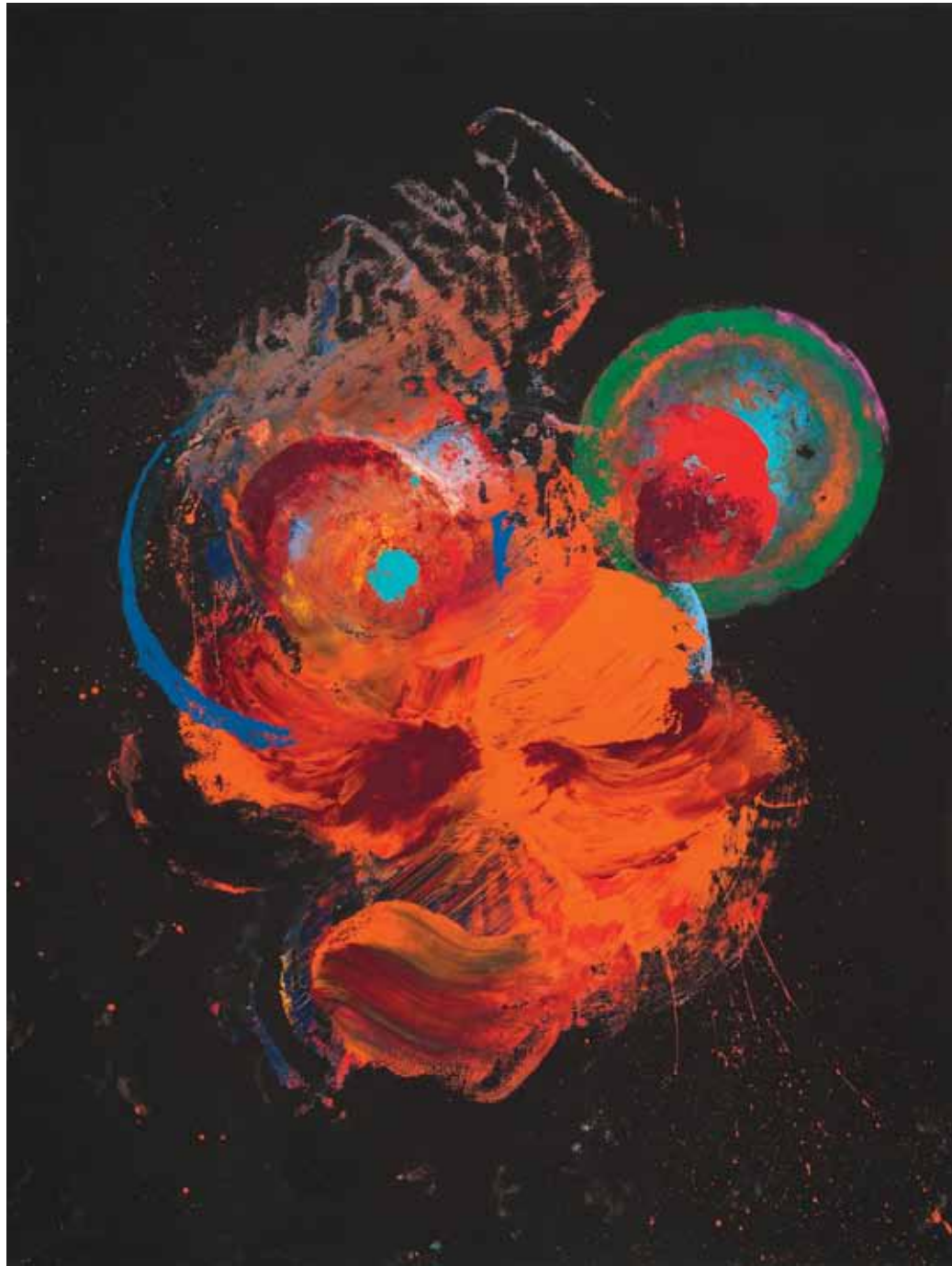
Phanatron, 1990–93
Enamel on masonite
13³/₄ x 18¹/₄ inches
Collection of Jack Edson

Right: *Vet Repra*, 1991
Enamel on masonite
30 x 21 inches
Collection of Elizabeth Licata and Alan Bigelow

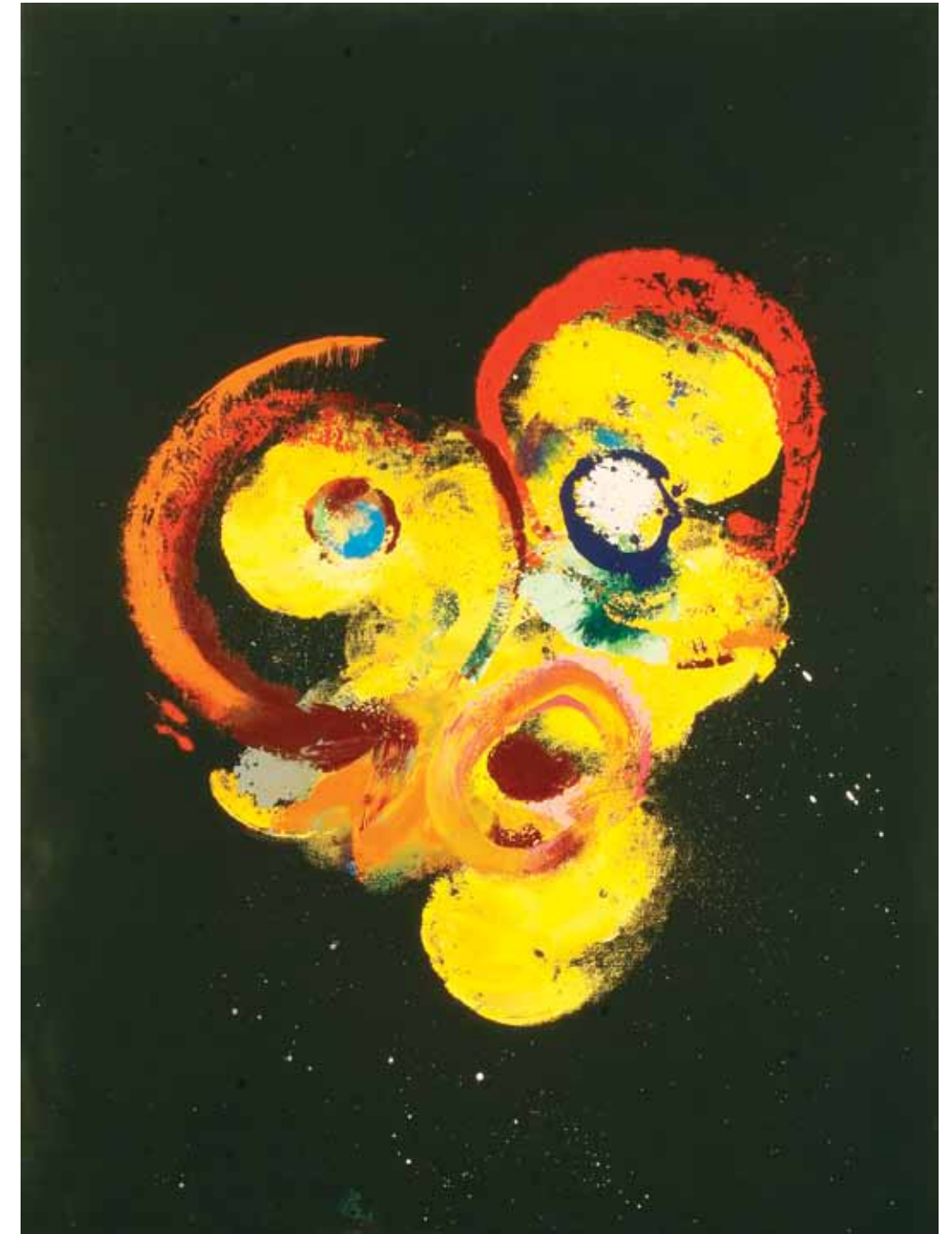




Arena, 1992
Pratt & Lambert latex on canvas
108 x 210 inches
Courtesy of the artist



Grozny, 1992
Enamel and gesso
on canvas
96 x 72 inches
Burchfield Penney
Art Center
Gift of
Loretta Liston, 2008



Job, 1990
Enamel and gesso
on canvas
96 x 72 inches
Collection of
Diane Castellani Family



Left: *Taylor is with Us*, 1992
Pratt & Lambert latex on canvas
112½ x 85 inches
Collection of Diana Kew McIntosh

Right: *Arabesque*, 1992
Enamel on linen
123 x 81 inches
Castellani Art Museum of Niagara
University Collection
Gift of Mrs. Eleanor Castellani, 2005





Akimbo, 1992
Enamel on masonite
24 x 32 inches
Collection of J. Michael Collard



Incrasate, 1994
Enamel on masonite
24 x 33 inches
Collection of John Pfahl and Bonnie Gordon



Become, 1995
Enamel on masonite
26¹/₄ x 19¹/₂ inches
Collection of Maryellen and
Ray Furse



Natural Pain, 1994
Enamel on masonite
24¹/₂ x 18³/₄ inches
Collection of Keming and
Charles A. Riley II, PhD



Metron, 1998
Enamel on masonite, 48 x 60 inches
Collection of Robert Longo and Barbara Sukowa



Delubrum, 1998
Enamel on masonite, 48 x 60 inches
Collection of Howard B. Johnson



Pepfog 8.2, 2008
Acrylic on board, 24 x 30 inches
University at Buffalo Art Galleries: Gift of Herbert and Dorothy Vogel, 2010

Left: *Pepfog 6.4*, 2007
Acrylic on plywood, 22 x 16¹/₄ inches
Collection of Britta Svoren and Aram Hezel

O My Goodness 2, 2011
Acrylic on pigmented inkjet print, 27 x 33 inches
Collection of Sally and George Hezel



List of Lenders

Sheldon and Mary Berlow

Burchfield Penney Art Center
Buffalo, New York

Eleanor A. Castellani

Castellani Art Museum
Niagara University, New York

Diane Castellani Family Collection

Dr. and Mrs. Armand J. Castellani Collection

Charles Clough and Liz Trovato

Dorothy Clough

J. Michael Collard

Annette Cravens

Jack Edson

Peter and Ilene Fleischmann

Shelly and Vincent Fremont

Maryellen and Ray Furse

Gigi Pooley Helliwell

George and Sally Hezel

Pat and Bill Kolkmann

Fern and Joel Levin

Sharon and Larry Levite

Elizabeth Licata and Alan Bigelow

Gerald S. Lippes and Jody B. Ulrich

Robert Longo and Barbara Sukowa

Howard B. Johnson

Sally and Randy Marks

John and Shelley McKendry

Diana Kew McIntosh

Gerald C. Mead, Jr.

George and Jenna Michaels

Richard Milazzo and Joy Glass

Keming and Charles A. Riley II, PhD

John Pfahl and Bonnie Gordon

Britta Svoren and Aram Hezel

Richard Shebairo

Cindy Sherman

University at Buffalo Art Galleries

The State University of New York

