



**Margaret Neumann**  
**What Lies Between**  
**A Retrospective**

November 10, 2018 – January 6, 2019

**FRONT COVER IMAGE**

*Fräulein Among the Boys*, 2002

oil on canvas

79" x 79"

Margaret Neumann  
**What Lies Between**  
A Retrospective

November 10, 2018 – January 6, 2019



REDLINE • 2350 ARAPAHOE ST • DENVER CO 80205





*Kiki Cries*, 1984  
oil on canvas  
62" x 61.5"  
Lent by Susy and Dan Hankin



# Foreward

2018 is RedLine's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the year has been dedicated to celebrating and reflecting on the relationships that have helped us arrive at this important milestone. RedLine's connection with Margaret Neumann is one such relationship and it is honor and privilege to host her career retrospective. As one of RedLine's first Resource or mentoring artists, she had a fundamental impact on the success of RedLine and the community of incredible artists that continues to expand every year. Margaret Neumann's *What Lies Between* is a perfect culminating exhibition for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary year and provides a stunning visual space to celebrate and support one of the instrumental artists in our history and in our future. As always, we are fortunate to work with Simon Zalkind for his curatorial vision and his ongoing advocacy and support for artists in the region and beyond.

Louise Martorano  
Executive Director  
RedLine Contemporary Art Center



*Pink Swimmer*, 2007  
acrylic on canvas  
54" x 54"



# Margaret Neumann

## What Lies Between A Retrospective

Few living artists in Colorado have had the influence and impact that Margaret Neumann has had on the art-practice of multiple generations of artists – both those who have already been critically and curatorially embraced as well as a cohort of younger, aspiring artists who make work that is clearly indebted to Neumann’s enduring imprint. Neumann has achieved a near mythic stature, serving as mentor, teacher, guide and inspiration to countless artists. She also remains a vigorously evolving artist whose work continues to grow in its emotional, psychic and aesthetic range and depth. She makes paintings that are liasons to the experience of anyone who engages with them. When you look at a really good painting by Neumann be prepared to have something unleashed within you that you’ve probably locked or hidden away. I don’t think she has any intention of making “good” art in the sense of fulfilling some fussy criteria of taste or timeliness. As paradoxical as it sounds this is passionate praise. Her work makes a very good case for art that can be at different times transgressive, perplexing, melancholic, grotesque, anarchic or humorous – empathetic or mocking - but always daring.

While elements of an artist’s biography are always germane to any critical evaluation of their work, Neumann’s life story – it’s intertwining of personal and historical tragedy with the seismic cultural shifts of the last sixty years deeply infuses

her painting. So much of Neumann's work – its references and self-references - emerges from her response to the frustrations and nullities of an inherited world freighted with history, catastrophe, and anxiety.

Margaret Neumann was born in New York in 1942. Her mother, Johanna Seligman, was a German Jew who left Germany in 1936. Her father Alfred Neumann, an Austrian Jew, was a lawyer in Vienna who unlike most other Austrian Jews had the prescience to immigrate to the United States just prior to the *Anschluss* – Hitler's maniacally cheered annexation of Austria in 1938. Some of their respective families also fled just before the annihilation of Europe's Jews began but many didn't. Johanna Seligman met Alfred Neumann at Columbia University where they both earned Master's degrees in Social Work. They married in 1941. (Margaret's first language was German – she didn't begin to learn English until beginning school.) Although her parents were lucky to have escaped the infernos of the Holocaust, the Neumann home was haunted by the trauma of their dislocation and the fate of many members of their families. They moved a number of times before settling in Denver where Alfred Neumann became Director of Jewish Family Services. "For many of these reasons as well as my own social anxieties, I felt like the perpetual outsider always looking to find...well...something. I had a difficult home-life and never felt very safe anywhere. Around the time of junior high school I discovered how much I enjoyed art. I think it was like a "room of my own" per Virginia Wolfe that existed in my mind and I knew no one could ever enter or intrude unless I let them in."<sup>1</sup>

There are a number of Neumann's paintings that obliquely – or directly – reference the Holocaust and/or the intertwining of it with her own family history. For example, the noire-ish *Puppet Master*, 1980, the pathos-ridden *Fraulein Among the Boys*, 2002, in which the ashen-gray, disembodied *Fraulein* in the painting is portrayed with features that mark her as a distinctly "semitic" type. The flocking black crows

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<sup>1</sup> All quotations in this essay are taken from transcribed conversations that I had with Margaret Neumann during July – September, 2018. – S.Z.



in Neumann's *Shrouds* is another painting that I instinctively include here. We didn't need Alfred Hitchcock to remind us that birds can be terrifying. Black crows are predatory, violent, vengeful and highly intelligent. The work's title further alludes to the lethal conclusion of this mob's rule. (There are other, more gentle images of birds among Neumann's paintings – works more likely to call to mind Emily Dickinson's "Hope is the thing with feathers..."). However, the painting that seeks most directly to attempt to inscribe a historical memory of the Jewish catastrophe is the riveting *Goya and Me*. Neumann presents a decapitated figure plunging into a blazingly red inferno. In the background, shadowy but distinct, are tumbling/floating shoes. When the Soviet Army liberated the Auschwitz/Birkenau camp complex on January 27, 1945, they found in a storage room 47,000 pairs of shoes – shoes either not yet burned, or refurbished and sent back to Germany. Those shoes remain on exhibition and have become for many visitors to the Auschwitz Museum one of the most devastating and poignant experiences of their pilgrimage to that place. Further, Neumann inserts a pointed art-historical reference here. The work's title is a direct reference to Francisco Goya's ravaging suite of etchings – *The Disasters of War*. The painting succeeds where an atrocity photograph would fail because it is an absurdly impossible image.

In 1948 Margaret's brother Frank was born. "We were both smart and overly sensitive but he was tall and handsome and became the adored light of my mother's world. While I remained overweight, awkward and a bit lost, Frank became her hope. My dad was volatile and undependable and I had little recourse to him for solace or comfort. I grew up angry, depressed and immature." Frank died in 1975. He had been working in a lumber mill outside of Vancouver when a log that had been hoisted into the air smashed into his head. He lingered in varying states of capacity for a year when he began to have the seizures that ended his life. The Neumann's already fragile family life was shattered. Frank's death remains a tragic milestone for Margaret that continues to reverberate deeply in her life and in her work. Though perhaps not directly intended by her, *Pink Swimmer*, 2007 and *Push*, 2002, cause me to think of him.

When she was seventeen Neumann attended Colorado College in Colorado Springs. "I became an English major until I realized that I didn't like to read." That summer she took an art class at the University of Colorado, Denver and loved it. "I convinced my parents to let me leave Colorado College and go to Colorado University, Boulder where I told them (with crossed fingers) that I could study art in order to become an art teacher. I am unable to teach anybody how to do anything" she laughed. 1960 wasn't quite yet the confounding whirlwind of "the 60's" but they were percolating close by. The civil-rights movement was already beginning to make ripples in American culture (The March On Washington for Jobs and Freedom, the highlight of which was Dr. Martin Luther King's wrenchingly powerful oratory – "I Have A Dream" – took place in 1963.), Bob Dylan's first album was only two years away and art-critic Lawrence Alloway had already coined the term "Pop-Art" in 1959.

Neumann's impish cajoling of her parents proved successful. She began to attend the University of Colorado in Boulder and quickly became allied with a group of other art students that were collectively known as "the Armory Group." The "armory" was a building on campus that had been converted into studio spaces for fine-art students. Although their work differed wildly from one another, the students who frequented the armory developed the kind of camaraderie that made it possible for them to critique, encourage, lambast and love each other. It was also the best place to talk about art seriously. Other notable members of that group included Clark Richert, Dale Chisman, George Woodman, John Fudge, Joe Clower and John DeAndrea. This was a time when women artists were typically marginalized or ignored and Neumann became one of the few women taken seriously as an artist. Undaunted by the "phallogentric" composition of the group or of the art-world in general, the fact that Neumann has evolved into one of Colorado's most significant contemporary artists, testifies to the ferocious tenacity of her commitment to her art practice.





*Goya and Me*, 2006

oil on canvas

48" x 72"

Lent by the Kirkland Museum of Fine and Decorative Arts

After a hiatus in New York where she eagerly feasted on the smorgasbord of prevailing art-world (Pop and Dada-inflected art was in ascendency. Minimalism and Conceptual art were right around the corner.) and counter-culture offerings, Neumann returned to CU Boulder and received her MFA in 1969. Painting however, while it was the emotional and intellectual center-pole of her life was not an especially reliable source of income or livelihood. She enrolled in and graduated from Denver University's School of Social Work (Note: This is the same academic track that her parents chose.) and has worked as a therapist from 1974 to the present. Her professional choice – involving a conceptual and experiential grounding in available psychotherapeutic modalities as well as the compassionate responsiveness and clinical skill-sets required to engage with a variety of clients suffering from profound degrees of emotional and psychic distress – has impacted her work enormously as well as it has given her the strategies and insights needed for her to “work through” her own anxieties.

The “psychotherapist Neumann” allowed the “artist Neumann” to become a storyteller. What cannot be evaded in Neumann's stories is the hole in the narrative that cannot be filled in – the wound that cannot be sutured, the breakage that cannot be healed, patched or mended. Painting does not require a seamless or unified narrative. Rather, certain images become the occasions for the expression/recollection of lived experience. The result is art that can be both rapturous and terrifying with undertows of exhilaration and humor as well as anxiety. Among many others, *Push*, 2002, the sanguineous *Kiki Cries*, 1984, *Silent Dreams*, 2004, *The Blue Room*, 1980, *She Wade in the Water*, 2014, and the arachnophobia-inducing *What Lies between*, 2016, are chock-full of submerged psychic content that Neumann has permitted to rise to the surface of her consciousness and her canvasses. Among these paintings the one that I experience most potently is *Memory*, 2017. The image of two atavistic breasts – like sightless eyes – framed by savage brushwork convulses with an abject interiority that screams of animosity and deprivation, of the infliction of a permanent scarring rather than the “natural” self-giving of maternal love and nurturance.





*Memory*, 2017  
oil on canvas  
37.5" x 37.5"

Neumann's earlier works among which I've included *Desert, Oasis, Magic*, 1968, *Barnyard*, 1968, and two Untitled works dating from the mid-1970's, display a kind of haphazard off-kilter effect, as if the referents were slightly misaligned. In her later and more recent work, Neumann has shifted her approach, creating fully integrated, atemporal worlds that can appear simultaneously archaic and contemporary, dangerous and alluring. She makes paintings that border on the heretical – paintings that implicitly reject the idealism of modernism, the certainty of its belief in the progress of art. Her work is an open question – which is nowadays more important than all the certainties in the world.

I'm grateful to Margaret Neumann for our long and fruitful conversations and for allowing me to invade her life for so long. Valerie Santerli and Rachel Beitz – directors and proprietors of Rule Gallery were near heroic in their assistance to me. Their associate, Hilary Morris should be canonized. Many thanks to all the lenders to this exhibition and to Paul Gillis for all photography. Vince Burt and Bronwen Devonshire of CDMS Corporation calmly responded to the myriad changes I kept making to this publication. Lastly – and firstly – I'm very lucky to have organized/curated this exhibition under the direction of Louise Martorano, Director of RedLine and her terrific staff. This experience has been among the most rewarding of my curatorial career.

Simon Zalkind, Curator  
September, 2018



*Puppet Master*, 1980  
acrylic on canvas  
49.5" x 55.5"





*Cherries*, 2013  
oil on canvas  
60" x 60"





*Shrouds*, 2014  
oil on canvas  
48" x 48"



*Desert Oasis Magic*, 1968  
tempera, crayon and pencil on paper  
18" x 24"  
Lent by Annie Stroklund

# Catalogue of the Exhibition

Dimensions are given in inches.

Unless otherwise noted all works are Courtesy of the Artist and Rule Gallery

1. *Barnyard*, 1968  
tempera, crayon and pencil on paper  
24.5" x 30.5"
2. *Desert Oasis Magic*, 1968  
tempera, crayon and pencil on paper  
18" x 24"  
Lent by Annie Stroklund
3. *Untitled (Gorilla)*, 1968  
tempera, crayon and pencil on paper  
37.5" x 28" (28" x 21")  
Lent by Dr. Joe and Judy Kurtz
4. *Dream Circus*, 1969  
tempera, glitter and pencil on paper  
17.75" x 21"
5. *Drady Wable*, 1974  
oil on canvas  
48" x 48"  
Lent by Michael Paglia and Robert Delaney
6. *Untitled (River)*, 1976  
acrylic on board  
23" x 29"  
Lent by Christy Sebastian



7. Untitled, 1978  
acrylic on board  
22" x 38"  
Lent by Sandra Saltrese
8. *The Blue Room*, ca. 1980  
acrylic on canvas  
49.5" x 49.5"
9. *Puppet Master*, 1980  
acrylic on canvas  
49.5" x 55.5"
10. Untitled, 1984  
acrylic on canvas  
77.5" x 53.75"  
Lent by Joshua Hassel
11. *Fan Dancer*, 1984  
acrylic on board  
25" x 38.75"  
Lent by Cora Neumann
12. *Kiki Cries*, 1884  
oil on canvas  
62" x 61.5"  
Lent by Susie and Dan Hankin
13. *Bad Boys*, 2002  
oil on canvas  
48" x 48"
14. *Fräulein Among the Boys*, 2002  
oil on canvas  
72" x 72"



15. *Push*, 2003  
oil on canvas  
72" x 72"
16. *Pink Swimmer*, 2003  
acrylic on canvas  
54" x 54"
17. *Silent Dreams*, 2004  
oil on canvas  
48" x 48"
18. *Goya and Me*, 2006  
oil on canvas  
48" x 72"  
Lent by The Kirkland Museum
19. *Voyage Long Time Ago*, 2011  
oil on canvas  
48" x 60"  
Lent by Karen Brody & Mike Hughes
20. *Ascension*, 2012  
oil on canvas  
54" x 54"  
Lent by Terry Seidel
21. *The Swan*, 2013  
oil on canvas  
54" x 54"
22. *Cherries*, 2013  
oil on canvas  
60" x 60"

23. *She Wade in the Water*, 2014

oil on canvas

54" x 54"

24. *Shrouds*, 2014

oil on canvas

48" x 48"

25. *Emerging*, 2014

oil stick on Arches paper

34.5" x 27"

Lent by Suzie Katz

26. *Blue Leaving White*, 2016

oil stick on Arches paper

22" x 30"

Lent by Nan Goodman

27. *What Lies Between*, 2016

oil on canvas

38" x 38"

Lent by Susie and Dan Hankin

28. *Memory*, 2017

oil on canvas

37.5" x 37.5"

29. *I'll Fly Away*, 2017

oil on canvas

48" x 48"

Lent by Cora Neumann

30. *To the West*, 2018

oil on canvas

48" x 72"



*What Lies Between*, 2016

oil on canvas

38" x 38"

Lent by Susie and Dan Hankin





*Push*, 2003  
oil on canvas, 72" x 72"





*Swan*, 2014  
oil on canvas, 54" x 54"



*Voyage Long Time Ago*, 2011  
oil on canvas  
48" x 60"  
Lent by Karen Brody & Mike Hughes

What Lies Between is part of RedLine's 10X - 10th Anniversary exhibition platform that celebrates 10 Years of Supporting Artists in Denver and Colorado. RedLine would like to thank the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Bonfils-Stanton Foundation, Colorado Creative Industries, the Lynda M. Goldstein Foundation, David & Laura Merage Foundation, RBC Wealth Management, RULE Gallery, Valerie Santerli, the Scientific & Cultural Facilities District, and Simon Zalkind for making this 10th anniversary exhibition and program platform possible.



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**BACK COVER IMAGE**

*Ascension*, 2012

oil on canvas

54" x 54"

Lent by Terry Seidel





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