

M I C H A E L H A F F T K A  
A RETROSPECTIVE: LARGE OILS 1985 - 2003

# M i c h a e l     H a f f t k a

A Retrospective: Large Oils 1985 - 2003

Introduction by Robbin Zella

Essays by Michael Brodsky, Sam Hunter

October 21 through January 14, 2005



Housatonic Museum of Art

Bridgeport, CT

# FLY

George Franklin  
*For Michael Haffka*

Studio. Recognition scene.  
Instant knowledge: this is the one  
That I shall live with year after year  
Until my work is done.

Black background. Upthrust primal red.  
Two figures, soaring, fall.  
“This painting’s about trust,” I said,  
Then hung it on my wall.

Time stilled as space? A dead cliché.  
The moving eye moves what it sees-  
Long outstretched arms, a candid face  
Almost transfixing me

And that small, rapt figure just below,  
Receptive, formed like an earthen bowl;  
Each needs, creates the other,  
Separate, equal, whole.

Child and parent, parent and child,  
Lover, beloved, friend and friend,  
Sponsor within the heart’s vast space  
The bonds that free and mend.



Years have past since I first set  
Your vortex on my still standing wall;  
Far greater walls have fallen.  
Time cannot recall

The sundering moment through which fell  
Grave figures unequipped to fly  
And tempts me to see differently  
Your shapes that greet my eye.

But no. What act can uncreate  
Your vivid trust vouchsafed to me  
Now that I need it all the more  
And can more deeply see?

Black background. Upthrust primal red  
Still lights the heart’s interior sky  
Against which, scorning gravity,  
Two figures fall yet fly.

*November 2001*

# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Donald S. Dworken for coming to my studio over 25 years ago and giving me support, living with my work and setting this show in motion by your generous donation of my paintings to the Housatonic Museum of Art. I want to thank the Director of the Housatonic Museum of Art, Robbin Zella, whose enthusiasm conceived of this show. I am immensely grateful for your kindness, patience and dedication. Burt Chernow's vision of a museum environment in which works of art are on display throughout the college is a profound one and I am grateful to be able to participate.

I am indebted to Michael Brodsky who has written about me in such ways as to help me understand myself. My deep respect for your writing is combined with tremendous camaraderie with your vision. I am also thankful to George Franklin whose beautiful poem "Fly" is one of many poems of his that I have enjoyed and admired for 30 years. Your poetry has lived in my mind as vividly as any of the images I have myself made. Both of you are artists that are signposts of integrity and steadfastness of vision.

I am profoundly grateful to Professor Sam Hunter for giving my paintings a chance 20 years ago and for revisiting them now. I have always admired your writing and erudition, and I am thankful that you saw in my work enough merit to help introduce it to the world. My conversations and correspondence with you have been a great pleasure. I continue to cherish your generosity.

My family also has given me tremendous support and love and I feel blessed and fortunate, thank you.

Michael Hafftka 2004

All paintings © Michael Hafftka 2004

Catalogue © Housatonic Museum of Art 2004

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any manner in any media, or transmitted by any means whatsoever, electronic or mechanical (including photocopy, film or video recording, Internet posting, or any other information storage and retrieval system) without the prior written permission of the publisher.

ISBN: 0-9760665-0-5

# Introduction

*And he dreamed, and behold a  
Ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven;  
And behold the angels of God ascending and descending upon it.*

*Genesis 28: 10-22*

*Now that my ladder's gone,  
I must lie down where all the  
Ladders start,  
In the foul rag-and-bone shop  
Of the heart.*

*W.B. Yeats*

**C**arl G. Jung observed that “One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious.” Michael Hafftka’s fantastic imagery appeared to him in nightly visions induced by the unrelenting heat he experienced while living on a kibbutz in Israel in 1973. His figures are frightening looking creatures, pre-human or animal-like in nature: copulating, defecating, jumping and flying. Inconsolable “shadows,” each moment measured by the need to survive and reproduce, eat and void; in the words of Pascal, doomed to endure “the natural misfortune of our mortal and feeble condition.” His figures are presented to us as if characters on a stage – a static Theater of the Absurd – attenuated, misshapen forms seemingly filled with dread and awe, living and dying under the unblinking gaze of an indifferent universe. Even as they jump or soar through the air these joyless creatures are doomed, falling to earth despite the momentum behind each leap.

In his painting *Forty Years* Hafftka's figures are flayed to reveal the skeletal armature beneath the flesh, floating on a flat background within a vast Nothingness. We see these figures marking the "calendar of their lives" in this case with a birthday celebration. Each milestone is noted in Hafftka's works: marriages, children, and finally, death. There is a somberness that permeates his art; perhaps it is the realization that we live in a time where, as Samuel Beckett noted, "Nothing is more real than nothing." *Last Wish* and *Ninety Degrees* luridly convey this anxiety that continues to define our era — Jacob's ladder no longer ascends to heaven, rather, we climb rung by rung into the encompassing darkness of the Void.

Hafftka's canvases are populated by hapless men and women who labor against their own inadequacy, powerlessness and emptiness. And as Joyce Carol Oates points out in her essay *Reflections On The Grotesque*, "...the grotesque image [is] historical commentary." Capturing the existential angst of an age that includes two bloody World Wars, atomic bombings, the Korean conflict, the Viet Nam War, Desert Storm and now the war in Iraq, Hafftka's paintings are both historical and prescient. Indeed, Hafftka witnessed the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on New York from his home in Red Hook, an event that delivered a well-placed psychological blow to the American people — successfully shifting attention away from the clouded results of a contentious election by effectively fanning the public's fear. Hafftka adroitly portrays the human condition in our contemporary society: alienated from Nature, God and ourselves. Grotesque figures, with limbs akimbo and twisted, are the visual equivalent of souls tortured daily by the constant reminder of the absurdity of existence.

For the existentialist philosophers Nietzsche and Sartre evil exists as a will to power or simply as the dark side of human nature. Hafftka's *Total Submission* demonstrates the horrors that we human beings are capable of — a head floats in the center of a white cross, gray light is slowly enveloped by the ensuing blackness as another human-like shape at the foot of the cross turns away from the spectacle. We are reminded of the ancient Christian symbol of Christ on the cross, dying for our sins to give us eternal life in heaven. Yet within this painting, Hafftka also describes the death of God and the loss of the immortal soul and we are given the foreboding sense that the light, a universal symbol of redemption, is being extinguished by the "darkness of depravity."

This Nothingness, according to author William Barrett, so frightening to the rational Western mind, is to be embraced for it allows "a universal compassion for all creatures caught in the toils of an existence that is ultimately groundless." Michael Hafftka, the ever attentive observer of both human existence and human essence, being in the here and now, has embraced this darkness, a consciousness that knows death, understanding, like Yeats, that so many of us are but broken men and women, we must be satisfied with our hearts.

*Robbin Zella*

*Director, Housatonic Museum of Art*

# Toward the Plane of the Sacred: Hafftka's Great Chain of Being

*Michael Brodsky*

One of the many wonders of Michael Hafftkä's incomparable art is how powerfully it connects performance with the quest for salvation. To perform is to seek redemptive communion with the sacred. And to attain the plane of the sacred one must be willing to take risks—willed risks of self-distortion, contortion, unhingement, isolation. These marks confirm the high seriousness—the irrevocability—of the enterprise. Take, for example, the elegant headliner of “Untitled” (1983), part Nosferatu, part toreador, part virtuoso fiddler, part prestidigitator—in short, performer par excellence. And not just a performer but one who is willing—who is compelled—to make himself ridiculous, grotesque, for a shot at salvation. And not just his own salvation but the salvation of the world—your salvation and mine. Performance chez Hafftkä is a life-or-death engagement with hostile forces, most conveniently incarnated in the unseen audience waiting for the performer to fall flat on his face. The intense concentration demanded by Nosferatu's flourish has enabled him to sprout, to secrete, from somewhere in the middle of his forehead a ladder to another plane, the plane of the sacred. (Ladders abound in Hafftkä's universe: see below.) And it is all to the good pictorially that this appendage (which very well may be infinite in length since it is cut off by the frame) is not quite pinpointable—it could be a pair of antennae or an aigrette. Ambiguity invites spectator collaboration and collaboration distracts the spectator from his inherent Schadenfreude—the wish to see the performer fall on his face. In any event, the appendage as ladder is not only his way out but the serendipitous mark of his beauty, the only beauty that matters—beauty as unplanned byproduct of effort. In speaking of a way out, one is reminded of the ape in Kafka's “A Report to the Academy” who avows: “No, freedom was not what I wanted. Only a way out; right or left, or in any direction; even should the way out prove to be an illusion... Only not to stay motionless with raised arms...” “Only not to stay motionless”: the war cry in Hafftkä's universe.

Brethren to Nosferatu the performer are the buskined figure in black—part cat burglar, part *danseur noble*, part ventriloquist—of “Grip;” the “Two Figures Jumping;” the bowled-over stumble-dancer; the cantors in “Grand Opening,” “Higher Octave;” and “Congregation,” flayed by the impasto of greasepaint; the naked parties to the “Dress Rehearsal;” the trapeze artist chinning/teething on the bar of hope and his two big-top comrades in “Leap of Faith;” the highwire musicians in “Jamming,” the tormented transvestite and his/her alter ego in “Marshwiggler,” the “Two Knights” (one being Quixote); the trapezists in “Fly;” and even the defecator in “Decision Making” (Hafftkä's take on Rodin's *Penseur*). All are performers because they know, or because their bodies tell them they know, that attainment of the sacred is contingent on performance—on making the effort. Performance—the dancer's willing him- or herself to become indistinguishable from the dance—is the only ladder of ascension to the plane of the sacred.

Mircea Eliade, in *Shamanism*, emphasizes the importance of the ladder as “an instrument of ontological passage from one mode of being to another—of transcendence—of attainment to the world of the gods, of power, of reality—a world saturated with being. In short, the world of the sacred.” Redemption is possible only through immersion in the warm bath of authentic being. As attested by the myths of the peoples of Africa, Oceania and North America, by Brahmanic sacrificers and by the instructions of the Egyptian Book of the Dead, “ladders facilitate the descent of the gods to earth and ensure the ascent of the dead man's soul.” Yet even if actual ladders and gangways appear frequently in Hafftkä's works, they may not be trustworthy or efficacious and, as proof of this, they seem either to be ignored or held in

reserve as a last resort—if the performative activity of self as ladder fails. The self in transformative motion—the motion craved by Kafka’s agonizedly articulate ape—is the only ladder, up or down, that counts. Even more crucial is the question whether Hafftka’s stock company are in a condition or at a stage to believe in redemption through attainment of the plane of the sacred. Do the ladders perhaps represent mere bric-a-brac, expendable artifacts of a time before Holocausts and slave trades when the myth of transcendence was still plausible.

But there are other means besides performance to self-transform in pursuit of the sacred. In “Man and Elephant,” man has taken a first step towards fusion with beast—the elephant’s exquisite pink and blue-grey trunk has become his master’s prosthetic hip and leg. His transition from man to beast might very well constitute his version of “ontological passage from one mode of being to another.” In “Fix,” the addict, too, is in transit: he constitutes the missing link (we will investigate this concept as it relates to Hafftka’s work more thoroughly below) between his pre-fix mummified and prostrate self convulsed with need and the self soon to be immersed in a warm bath of blood-red euphoria from whom he is separated by the thinnest of thin (dovegrey) lines. In “Private Affairs II,” the copulators hope, through fusion, to be each other’s ladders to another dimension; the figure at the extreme right is trying to achieve as much through prayer. The feisty streetwalking vaudevillian of “Frame of Mind,” is perhaps the most delightful—the most efficacious—of Hafftka’s transit figures: she “divides her time” between the body-bisecting canvas of which she, or her torso, is the subject, and the “real” world of spiked, viny carmine bellpulls. She knows neither domain will provide by itself a way out, much less access to the sacred—only life-or-death leaps from one domain to the other and back again can be expected to begin to do that. And to protect herself from the inevitable spikelike outrage at her traitorousness from the denizens of both domains, she wields a pipelike truncheon that is itself an embodiment of flux—pterodactyl at one end and sheet anchor at the other. Or, perhaps, having passed through her body, this creature-object has become infected with her appetite for unlocalizability. To conclude, any act that allegorizes the movement from one plane to another might very well qualify as a ladder to the domain of the sacred. Hafftka—a deeply religious artist, a mystic with both feet on the ground, so to speak, playful, and without rancor—offers his players a wide range of possible ways in and ways out.

We catch all of Hafftka’s creatures in extremis. There are significant confirmatory features of that crisis that appear in painting after painting. First, mutilation of the male body. It is specifically the males that undergo mutilation, often willingly. In the exquisite “Husband and Wife,” the husband’s right arm and lower body are amputated by the suffusing darkness, although his wife confronts the “camera” head on, all of her limbs forthrightly, almost defiantly, intact. The male feels the appropriateness, the inevitability, of partial obliteration in the presence of the monolithic female: she has body enough for two. In “Fly” and “Dress Rehearsal,” the feet of the topmost figures are amputated by the top of the canvas. The leg of one of the “Two Knights” terminates in a kind of stump and the other leg is well on its way to atrophy; the decision maker is missing his right foot. Most straightforwardly, in “Untitled” (1991), the male figure loses one leg to the lustrous dark at knee level and the other leg begins to give up the ghost somewhere below mid-calf. Moreover, the entanglement of intimacy, the indistinguishability of bodies generated by copulation, can effect a form of mutilation. In “Group,” which of the figures can lay claim to a complete set of limbs? How many postcoital figures are there in “Ninety Degrees” and which, if any, are anatomi-

cally replete? Igor in “Igor and Romulus” does, it is true, sport a powerfully virile and visibly intact physique but who’s to say how much of that intactness is ascribable to the watchful presence of the dog at his feet and/or the horizontal spear or oar or hockey stick (a bit like the bar in “Leap of Faith”) that he wields apotropaically at crotch level?

At the same time, the ambiguities connected with anatomy in so many of the paintings can be considered the fruits of a cunning formal strategy. Forced to confront a disturbing enigma centered around ablation, amputation and lack, the spectator must work to perceptually repair and rehabilitate injury and insult. He then becomes a collaborator in the production of the artwork. Hafftka’s painting becomes the recruited spectator’s very own work in progress. Among other things, he must determine at what point in the surrender to fusion with another or with an activity, individual identity, or corporeal intactness, is lost. Such work mimics under controlled conditions our toilsome daily doom of domesticating an overabundance of disorienting data, as minute by minute, year by year, we joltingly go about rectifying and redrawing our foregone conclusions before their misguidedness proves lethal. Hafftka’s uncompromising art permits us to be reconciled to that doom and even to take pleasure in it, at least within the domain of his paintings. The disorientations, the entangling enigmas patent in his work, educate us—enable us to return to the world strengthened and ennobled.

The anatomical mutilations, distortions, deformations, then, may very well indicate that intactness and completeness were never intended. For Hafftka is one of those creators for whom essence is incompatible with academic notions of health and wholeness. In his magnificent essay on Rodin—specifically on Rodin’s private mausoleum of intentionally imperfect late sculptures—sculptures to which nothing was more inimical than the “finishing touches” beloved of conventional artists—Leo Steinberg notes that inasmuch as the sculptor strove not so much to model a body in motion as clothe “a motion in body” and in no more body than the motion required to fulfill itself—inasmuch as what Rodin was after was “not really a human body, but a body’s specific gesture”—he strove to retain “just as much of the anatomical core as that gesture need[ed] to evolve.” Clothing a motion in body and retaining just so much of the body’s core as the motion needs to fulfill itself certainly constitute *one* essential task that Hafftka assigns himself in many of the paintings for an attempted Leap of Faith (this could be the title of every one of Hafftka’s paintings) into the domain of the sacred with or without ladder or chinning bar is more likely to succeed with the barest minimum of anatomical baggage.

Another particularly disquieting hallmark of the Hafftkaesque crisis is the presence in several of the paintings of what one might call the missing link—an atavistic creature representing a sort of golemlike point of intersection between being and nonbeing, between man and animal, between heaven and hell—an infinitely gentle, perhaps infinitely suffering embryon that might at the same time be capable of devastating malevolence simply in order to, willy-nilly, persist in its own being. I’m thinking here of the tiny sinuously graceful entity on the extreme right in “The Selecting Hand” palpatingly traversing a trunk or bollard; the poignantly lemurlike head with quizzically haunted eyes and foreshortened arms crossed just below its neck in “History Lesson,” a kind of simian infanta; and the eye-patched, grass-skirted songstress in “Jamming,” with her floating gonadal insignia. “Gumby”—does this painting allude to the animated cartoon character created by Art Clokey (a former Episcopal seminarian! and therefore

consanguineous with Hafftkä the Kabbalist)?—seems to be “all about” such creatures. In this category one may also include the two purposefully blurred forms blessed by the Roualtlike Christ in “The Blessing” and the pathos-laden monkey cum donkey like figure in profile at the extreme right in “Dead End,” Hafftkä’s only excursion into film noir (but film noir adroitly mated with *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*). These creatures are depicted with a dispassionate tenderness and hardnosed affection reminiscent of Tod Browning’s *Freaks* and Bunuel’s *Viridiana*, *Nazarin* and *Los Olvidados* (Hafftkä’s beings, too, are forgotten ones). But more to the point is Eisenstein, specifically the Eisenstein of *Potemkin*. I’m thinking of the passage where the people of Odessa are rushing towards the harbor to welcome the incoming battleship. Struggling (yet managing) to keep up with the crowd is a legless cripple who is not singled out and is thereby matter-of-factly demonstrated to be an essential part of the pageant—what Arthur Lovejoy refers to as The Great Chain of Being (see directly below)—in fact, the most essential part—inasmuch as it is his agonized effort to keep up that makes us aware of what it means to move driven by desire and expectation—what it means, therefore, to be human. The pageant would have itself been mutilated, crippled, if it hadn’t embraced his exemplary *nisus*. In Kafka’s “Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk,” (as in Hafftkä’s paintings, this is a world of beings not quite human, not quite animal) the crucialness to any community of the ostensibly marginal missing link is stressed with exquisite succinctness: “...it turns out,” says the narrator, “that we have overlooked the art of cracking nuts because we are too skilled in it... and that this newcomer to it first shows us its real nature, even finding it useful in making his efforts *to be rather less expert in nut-cracking than most of us*” (the italics are mine). Since the legless cripple is less expert than the rest of us in racing towards the harbor, he allows us to recuperate the essence of that act and by extension all human acts.

The Great Chain of Being was, according to Lovejoy, “a conception of the plan and structure... of the universe” as “composed of an immense, or... of an infinite, number of links ranging in hierarchical order from the meagrest kind of existents, which barely escape non-existence, through ‘every possible’ grade up to the highest possible kind of creature.” Eliminating “even one link in the series... would be a general dissolution of the cosmic order.” In Lovejoy’s view, the remark of Plotinus to the effect that it is better that one animal should be eaten by another than it should never have existed at all” takes this concept to its logical (and poignantly chilling) conclusion. The concept was so compelling that from at least of the middle of the eighteenth century down to Darwin’s era, the quest for the missing links to plug the gaps in the Chain enthralled not only professional naturalists but the general public. Pandering to this insatiable curiosity, no less a mass-market psychologist than P.T. Barnum (in 1842) advertised among his Museum attractions the “preserved body of a Feejee Mermaid” as well as “the Ornithorhincus, or the connecting link between the seal and the duck...” Hafftkä has a particular affection—perhaps tender respect, perhaps lacerated awe, are better terms—for these “meagre existents,” whose very rudimentariness, whose almost coy refusal of any preassigned place on the evolutionary scale, seem to bespeak a secret knowledge of the unspeakable, a communion denied to humans with the domain of some sacred plane hospitable to the enactment of sacrificial rites. Perhaps he is so connected because he senses that beneath their attenuatedness, their shrinkage before our eyes at an ever-increasing rate (the real in Hafftkä is what is on the heady verge of disappearance), is what the sixteenth century Kabbalist Moses Cordovero referred to, in speaking of the golem, as “a special kind of naked vitality.” It is these marginals who—by virtue of their very marginality!—seem to hold the key to the mystery of Hafftkä’s art. It is they who have been elected to secrete his paintings’ untellable tale.

In fact, Hafftkka seems to have the sort of relation to all his creatures—but most potently and poignantly these meagre existents—that the medieval Kabbalist had to his golem. As Gershon Scholem notes in *The Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, golem-making is dangerous not because of the overwhelming and unstoppable powers emanating from the golem cum sorcerer's apprentice but because of "the tension which the creative process arouses in the creator himself." Through this ritual which ideally represents an act of creation purely on the plane of thought designed to culminate in mystical ecstasy, the creator challenges God as *the* creator and thereby introduces the viruses of idolatry and polytheism among his fellow men. Hafftkka alerts us to the tremendous danger involved in creating his missing links who, by lurking (without necessarily knowing they lurk) on the periphery of the spectacle, provoke a disquieting mixture of pity and fear in the spectator that calls the entire spectacle into question. He also infects us with his own temptation to worship them as conduits to and embodiments of the sacred and thereby escape from the burden of choosing one's own "motion clothed in body" as pathway to that domain.

I want to conclude with a word about the titles of Hafftkka's remarkable works. In a number of his paintings the titles are in dialectical counterpoint with the content and become thereby a part of the content. The content of a painting like "Down to Earth" indicts the figurative meaning of the title ("natural, without pretense") since the subject of the work—a fugitive from a chain gang crawling through a swamp of reeds that impale his prostrate and desperate form—is *literally* down to earth. But not only does the tension between figurative and literal meanings in relation to content enrich the work through the effort of the spectator to *see that content in the key of the literal meaning of the title*, but the very fact that the figurative meaning cannot be banished entirely—must somehow be "forgiven"—saves the work from tendentiousness: the grimmest theme is suddenly infected with a playful and absurd *blandness* which paradoxically and in the nick of time rescues the depiction of such excruciation from self-parody. The contest between figurativity and literalness thus becomes a prophylactic device. Only a truly exceptional artist could manage such a graceful reconciliation of contraries. This all-encompassing gesture is especially moving since the last thing in the world one could imagine Hafftkka and Hafftkka's work having any truck with is blandness.

Images mentioned in this essay can be viewed online at [www.hafftkka.com/brodsky](http://www.hafftkka.com/brodsky)

# Michael Hafftka: Dreamworks

*Sam Hunter*

In Michael Hafftka's vivid world unsettling figures emerge from the shadows as abruptly and mysteriously as they do in dreams, or, perhaps, during haunting nightmares and in half-remembered cultural myths. The airborne creature in his painting *Fly*, oblivious to the figure dropping into measureless depths below him, is oddly like a dark, post-millennial version of the buoyant lover delivering a tender kiss in Marc Chagall's *Birthday* painting.

Disembodied and ghostly, a face hovers to the right of two truncated figures in the equally edgy work, *The Observer and the Observed*, its presence as inexplicable and irrational as the bright-eyed lamb in Chagall's lyrical evocation of his Eastern European home, *I And The Village*. Here, with Hafftka, the drama is tinged with a modern, very personal ambiguity. In Hafftka's painting, *The Selecting Hand*, similarly insubstantial, possibly imaginary forms appear against a backdrop whose sooty blackness is relieved only by smoky suggestions of random urban artifacts: stair steps leading nowhere, crenellated walls or gap-toothed fences through which a skeletal figure peers, amid rotting pilings rising from an invisible waterway, and fragmentary figures fading in and out of view.

Much like the memorable, searing works of Francis Bacon or, more aptly in the Brooklyn-based artist's curiously dispassionate paintings, there are also reminiscences of the works of Chaim Soutine and Francisco Goya's "black" paintings, which Hafftka admires unreservedly. In these unconscious references one encounters enigmatic emotions that drive his mysterious figures. These effects and unconscious references are broadly signaled by the artist's lush gestural brushwork. Whatever its significance, the hazy halo of white pigment that erupts from the upright book on which *The Selecting Hand's* iconic image appears, becomes in turn a virtuosic, abstract passage in the gripping pantomime, frozen as if by the crime-scene photographer's flash.

The dynamic impact appears to be *sui generis*, like nothing historically imaginable, an explosion illuminating a disparate group of grotesquely distorted bystanders, and it simply makes the enveloping darkness appear even darker and more penetrating. Contrasts are sharp, masterful and totally tactile in *The Selecting Hand*, lending a sense of somber significance to what seems to be a crucial narrative that can almost – but, provocatively, not quite be deciphered, and it remains a gripping, ultimately incomprehensible puzzle.

As a result the observer is left with a wealth of possible interpretations, all demanding urgent resolution, and, most important, we encounter a formal statement so powerful that it too demands our full attention. Like other works in the Brooklyn-based artist's thirty year artistic career, *The Selecting Hand* springs from assimilated perceptions of his own world, and it thus reflects an inner reality through his own glass: darkly, but with a sly sense of wit and irony.

His pictorial sources are rich, far-reaching and profound. They include the constantly changing urban environment Hafftka traverses constantly, between his home and nearby studio in Brooklyn, his family life, with growing children; his studies of art and artists, contemporary and past masters; impressions from a Bronx childhood; European travels and a seminal year on an Israeli kibbutz where he encountered a wealth of stories and histories, myths and legends. Those sources form the raw material for works in which reality and metaphysics blend and blur, spinning into their complex matrix modernist influences

and memories of art's great masters. And in the process, they coalesce into an emotionally charged theater of the mind, replete with forms that are both absurd and tender, cunningly abstract but still realistic.

Nowhere is that more evident than in recent works, where the spidery veils of *The Selecting Hand* and the ominously blurred imagery of *Stumble Dance* have taken on greater solidity and specificity. A broad white band outlines the reclining and upright figures in *Ninety Degrees*, setting them apart from a background where red ladders seem to stand at the ready – perhaps to lead the ravaged recumbent woman straight to heaven, or possibly merely to hang a storm window. And while the narrative implied by the title and subject remains enigmatic, the tension between the fragmentary woman and the arm extended in what might be a healing gesture or, just as likely, fresh violence, together indicate passions barely held in check, and only for the moment in which Hafftka presents his ambiguous theater.

Almost defiantly, he crams his paintings with more information than the eye can see, and more details than the mind can process. His compounded theater of action is not primarily a visual concept; his main concern is with the emotions embodied in his subjects and, simultaneously, with our reactions to those subjects – both his own response, and that of the viewer. He works intuitively, striving to express in tangible form the sort of visionary impressions that he himself began to experience 30 years ago, while he was working on the Kibbutz. Yet he considers himself essentially a realist in the sense of drawing on an inner reality and giving it distinctive, urgent form and gesture.

His pared-down, challenging figures, often stripped beyond nakedness and without the body parts unnecessary for conveying the desired emotions, might seem grotesque as they carry out what seem to be rituals from another time, and from another, alien universe. Yet the considerable power of Hafftka's paintings arises from the fact that his figures never fully cease being human, and are thus capable of either extreme cruelty or self-sacrifice – or, shockingly, of both. His recent *Upheaval* shows precisely that effect: flayed figures either tossing a bleeding person into the air or, conversely, trying to catch and cure him. Muddy reds flare in the background, as if to suggest distant fires, and crudely painted white lines over brown building blocks introduce the notion of urban structures.

The jumble of information, applied helter-skelter in the style of Chagall or perhaps a wise, inspired child, adds up to an alarming possibility: in the turbulence suggested by the title, a tragedy is taking place. What it is, exactly, remains open to question – and it is in that narrow window of disorientation, of multiple interpretations and the tangled emotions they bring into play, that Hafftka acts. His paintings, highly personal amalgams of his inner reality, reflect his willingness to work almost mediumistically and also, serendipitously.

He applies his pigments without relying on preliminary sketches, reveling in the physical process of transforming his large canvas into a surface alive with spontaneous gestures, writhing figures and visionary significance. Only later does Hafftka rework his “found” images to refine his overarching intention, which is to clarify and redefine the emerging reality. Over the past twenty years, since this author first studied Hafftka's work in New York, it has expanded dramatically from its initial gripping precepts – and, at the same time, it has taken on greater depth and heft as his experiences increased, and his vision sharpened. But rather than simply growing larger in scale and size, Hafftka's oeuvre has become deeper, more introspective and reflective.

His initial impulse dates to the early seventies, after the Yom Kippur War broke out and Hafftka decided to volunteer working on an Israeli collective farm. The child of European refugees who were Holocaust survivors, he was born in Manhattan and raised in the Bronx, where he attended public school and a Yeshiva. During his formative years, he was strongly influenced by his parents' wartime experiences, which vividly colored his view of the world. Indeed, Hafftka says, the desire for freedom that he learned from his parents contributed to his early decision to become an artist, though it would be years before he found a medium that suited his need for creative, often extreme, self-expression.

While still in his teens, Hafftka traveled to Budapest on the first of several major journeys he made to find himself, to define who he was and where he came from. His mother had died in 1971, when he was 18, and he worked in a bike shop and Army & Navy store enabling him to travel and to meet his maternal grandmother, of whose existence he had only recently become aware. One aspect of the trip made a profound impression on Hafftka: his grandmother spoke to him in the English she had learned before World War II, and her stories emerged in a stilted style that struck Hafftka as Shakespearean, and very poetic. He traveled on to Barcelona, where he lived for several months as a "hobo," as Hafftka puts it, experiencing and absorbing its culture, particularly Gaudi's sinuous Art Nouveau architecture.

He continued his self-assigned task of cultural immersion after returning to the United States, visiting New York's museums frequently and supporting himself in the bohemian style he learned in Spain before taking yet another trip to Barcelona – this time to write poetry and experience Catalonian culture surrealistically, by observing a foreign land whose language he didn't learn. The impact of dynamic, colorful Barcelona on the young artist's receptive psyche was profound, as was his method of opening himself to random events, incomprehensible situations and the compelling presence of great art – and then attempting to express them poetically. Hafftka changed his scenery again, by turning himself back into a peddler on New York's streets, before leaving for the Kibbutz.

It was there, however, that the disparate influences of his itinerant life began to come together. Working on Kibbutz Afikim in the Jordan Valley – a location he recalls choosing by sticking a pin into a map of Israel – he was thrown into a fevered state by the conditions he found there. The temperature was over 100 by day, and by night a stunned young Hafftka was unable to rest. "I didn't sleep; I dreamt," he has said. "I was delirious every night in the beginning.

"I had a continuum of dreams that went on for several years. The dreams were often connected. They were mystical and visual in such an intense and flexible form, I felt as if my soul was being informed," said Hafftka. "This has been the root of my art. I began to write down my dreams, but the writing of them was inadequate to express them. This is when I gave up poetry, writing and conceptual art (which had taken on the form of peeling tomatoes, drying the skins and collaging them to paper).

"I began to paint my dreams and soon enough the experience of painting brought on exciting and mysterious experiences, as suggestive as dreaming. I felt freer than I had ever felt before. Painting became revelatory."

The doors of perception that opened for Hafftka during his Kibbutz year remained open, and allowed new material to enter constantly. He moved to a nearby village, living idyllically in an orchard near the Mediterranean Sea. "I would arise in the morning, pluck the fruit from a tree, swim and paint day and night," he recalled of that pivotal period.

Back in New York, a long way from orchard and ocean, Hafftka worked a variety of odd jobs and painted, showing his work for the first time in 1976 at a New York artist-owned gallery and gradually building his reputation. The pace began to pick up in the early eighties, when Hafftka's paintings were included in such group exhibitions as "Artist Protest" at Pratt Graphics Center and "The New Menace" at Gallery Schlesinger-Boisante, both in New York.

He saw his work published in 1982, in "Michael Hafftka: Selected Drawings," and in another pamphlet published that year, "Art of Experience, Experience of Art," and he saw it featured that same year in his first one-man exhibition. Other solo shows followed, as did his inclusion in group shows. Among them are "Naked/Nude," Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Brooklyn Museum's "Public and Private American Prints Today," which traveled to the Rhode Island School of Design, Carnegie Institute and the Walker Art Center, and the Jewish Museum's "Jewish Themes/Contemporary American Artists II," both opening in 1986. His work was shown internationally in 1984, in a Dutch gallery's one-man exhibition, and since then his paintings have been on view in Japanese, German and Belgian galleries, as well as in galleries throughout the United States.

Yet recognition didn't affect Hafftka's approach. "I continued to paint from my dreams and visions and to paint portraits of my friends (although there was no attempt at creating a visual resemblance)," he has said. "I was after a spiritual realism and I felt I was on the right track toward achieving my desires. All the while, painting for me was in itself a guiding light. Wherever the work led me, I would follow."

By the late eighties, as he explored "both the subject matter and the substance of paint," Hafftka had refined his vision. The works that resulted in his masterpiece of that period, *Ceremony*, focused on figures crushed by the weight of the darkness surrounding them and turning inward, as if to reflect on the existential angst they were repressing beneath banal, non-committal expressions. The scrawled figure in *Stumble Dance* bends forward, vestigial eyes closed and flayed arms resting on crouching knees. Behind him in the inky, scumbled backdrop that resembles a horror-show stage in the 1985 work are dusty-white vertical columns – wells of light, perhaps, or dramatically exaggerated bars in the central figure's personal, suffocatingly restrictive prison.

Yet more stark and more gestural, *Fix* shows two grotesque figures and the leering face of a third, emerging eerily from a luscious patch of ruddy pigment. More than merely nude, the two figures shown in some detail look like grotesquely animated corpses. One would be on the floor, lying on a side indicated by crudely painted black lines that indicate ribs, except that Hafftka shows no floor – and, indeed, no spatial parameters at all. The figures, one in a cowering position that has him gritting his lipless teeth and trying to move by using the single, slashed flipper that trails behind his truncated body and the other upright, seem to be adrift in some fathomless sea. Yet the standing man, his harshly highlit form spouting blood-red slashes, seems not so much to be rising from a murderous frenzy as recoiling at the

sight of the fallen man, pulling back to hide behind the bland smiling mask that hovers before smears and swathes of red pigment.

The figures multiply in monumental canvases of the mid-eighties, among them *The Selecting Hand*, *The Observer and The Observed* and *Deposition*, and in each the severe backdrop, lack of landmarks and grotesque figures work to create a powerful, even sublime sense of paranoia. The looming white face in *The Observer and The Observed*, with its beaklike nose and vacant eyes fixed ferociously on the work's diminutive, pathetically restrained characters, is both an awesome apparition and a creaky plot device – the Wizard's projected persona in a post-modern *Wizard of Oz*, and the very face of an omniscient being, filtered through a scrim that transforms it into a cadaverous Egon Schiele visage or a slack refugee from a societal nightmare by Otto Dix or Max Beckmann.

The artist's fascination with abstraction found full expression in works like *Bird*, a searing 1988 canvas that only tangentially deals with its titled entity. The brushstrokes – slashing, dripping, slathered and scrubbed – are the thing, culminating in a luscious, lavish interplay of blacks and whites, cut with fiery flares and, on what appears to be the distant backdrop, yellowed reflections of the foreground drama, a sacrificial dove seems to have been slaughtered, and held up in a ritual offering. Hafftka's return to a more fully developed realism can be seen in works of the early nineties, most notably the stark and classically distorted *Man Sitting*. Enveloped in dense shadows and clad in black, the man sits on a tilted wooden side chair and stares up at the viewer, arms crossed and eyebrows quizzically knitted. Beyond his expression of sullen surprise, his features betray no real, comprehensible emotion; a prisoner only of his own device, he is modern man, cast adrift from traditional roles and ancient beliefs – and he looks, quite angrily, utterly lost.

Just so does a 1993 figure, *Christ of Avignon*, appear both hopeless and resigned to his fate. Enmeshed in an agitated tangle of black and red brushstrokes laid over a more loosely worked dark-green and –blue backdrop, Hafftka's Christ – a Jewish martyr, and a real man, beyond suffering – gazes at the viewer with his simple question, "Why?" He is a dazed, footless marionette whose strings have allowed his arms to fall at his sides, and his head to topple onto his shoulder. Yet he's no more isolated than the figures in *The Old Story*, a nude man and woman seated at angles to one another and pointedly looking in different directions, or the open-mouthed figures seated on the ground in *Forty Years*, at the feet of the hooded skeleton blowing a trumpet.

Painted as intuitively as all his other works, relying not on a programmatic or pre-determined design or concept, *Forty Years* might pay tribute to the artist's age at roughly the time it was painted, 1985, as he has said in conversation with the author. Or it may be a work in which sources, influences and intentions are subordinated to Hafftka's primary working method: applying pigments intuitively, and only afterward refining his subject or general theme. And, indeed, vaguely Biblical references abound, linking the imagery to a fevered dream in which personal and archetypal angst intertwine with that of mythical or heroic figures. The Hebrews wandered in the wilderness for forty years after Moses led them out of Egypt, and King David ruled Israel for forty years, stories that are part of the cultural milieu in which Hafftka was raised, and which he adopted during his own days of wandering in search of the spiritual home art has provided.

*Too Late*, his 1996 painting of a man standing above a second figure crouched in a red-outlined box, is a lamentation, as is Hafftka's painterly tribute to his late father, the affecting *Last Wish* of 1999. When he painted *Too Late*, Hafftka was suffering a personal loss – and his emotions were transmitted to a canvas which captures both the anguish of the friend who committed suicide and the grim reality of life after the self-murder, for the people left behind. Similarly, *Last Wish* expresses the artist's sorrow as his father's health failed and he died; as literal as the work might seem, however, its emotions are universal. The elderly creature can be construed as Everyman, reaching out for the hand of Death, a Halloween figure in black hooded robes and bloody athletic shoes, while to his right the limp figure on a slab has only to step up to Jacob's Ladder to rise heavenward.

Childlike and intensely felt, both late-nineties works mark transitions in the life of the artist, as he wrestles with inner realities and manipulates their physical manifestations in oil on canvas. It's a feat Hafftka has mastered over the past thirty years, and one he is continuing to develop and push to new heights. While his immense and compelling painting of urban life, *Dead End*, made in the year 2000, overtly ruminates on scenes witnessed by Hafftka daily, as he goes from home to studio and back again, it portrays not visual but emotional reality, cast onto the world stage of the artist's imagination and projected as a fevered, fiercely expressive morality play. Props are simple: a brick wall to the left, benches and chain-link fencing to the right, a driverless sedan and rough cobbled street in dead center.

What is most compelling in the imagery, and brings the painting to nightmarish life, are actors who only seem to wear masks. Grotesques in the Grand Guignol tradition, they are the "usual suspects" sporting their horrifying true characters. Demonic and distorted, a gang gathers at the street corner, one holding a walking stick and a werewolf's head while a second figure, his lips smeared with blood, reveals his base, subhuman nature. The three figures to the right are just as terrifying creatures of the artificial night that surrounds them. One, as gaunt and pasty as any disease-ridden urban junkie, stands and stares out at the viewer; beside him are other haunted hunters. A pale woman reaches long, elastic arms out to her mark, a legless man with the face of a rodent or simian. Wherever the black hearse-like sedan may go, the end is as dead as Hafftka's denizens of an eternal, yet childlike and magically theatrical night.

One of the artist's strongest works is also among his most recent. Like others in New York, Hafftka was directly affected by the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 and the World Trade Center towers' collapse. The chaos of that day could already be glimpsed in his personal visions of suffering, torture, sacrifice and, paradoxically, everyday life; what is remarkable about works such as *Survivors* is that they extend the path Hafftka has been on for the past thirty years, and add new dimensions opened by new experiences. This spiritual change now appears apart from the subject itself, in this case a virtuosic depiction of an upright figure with only one leg, his head thrown back in horror and the thickened fingers of his oversized hands clasped in Adam's classic gesture of shame at his nakedness.

The Garden from which this figure is being expelled isn't in Eden, however; it's one where the graying forms of fallen figures are a tangled mass worthy of a Holocaust memorial, and where a background curtain of wavering vertical bands suggests a city of tall buildings, of lighted towers. Hafftka's palette is muted but rich, with slashing lines of putrescent yellow the only deviation from his stark red/black/white

combination. What is most remarkable is the brushwork, with its varied slashes and spatters of pure pigment forming a surface whose outrageous sensuousness only makes its colossal suffering all the stronger.

It seems that in the thirty years since he began projecting his visions onto a larger, more public screen, Hafftka was preparing for this very special moment in history, when his brush and muscular work would embody the special bestiality of our challenging post-millennial world. Yet for Hafftka the subject matter is familiar, since it also embodies his allusive, elastic vision encompassed so powerfully in *Survivors* and in his other dramatic new works. These extraordinary canvases clearly present the artist's preexisting inner reality, and yet they also reflect the frightening truths of our grim, destructive contemporary world, and they make its enormity not only credible, but also pose a heroic challenge for both artist and viewer to confront and assimilate.

1 ***Stumble Dance***, 1985, 78" x 62", Oil on canvas



2 ***Fix***, 1985, 78" x 62", Oil on canvas



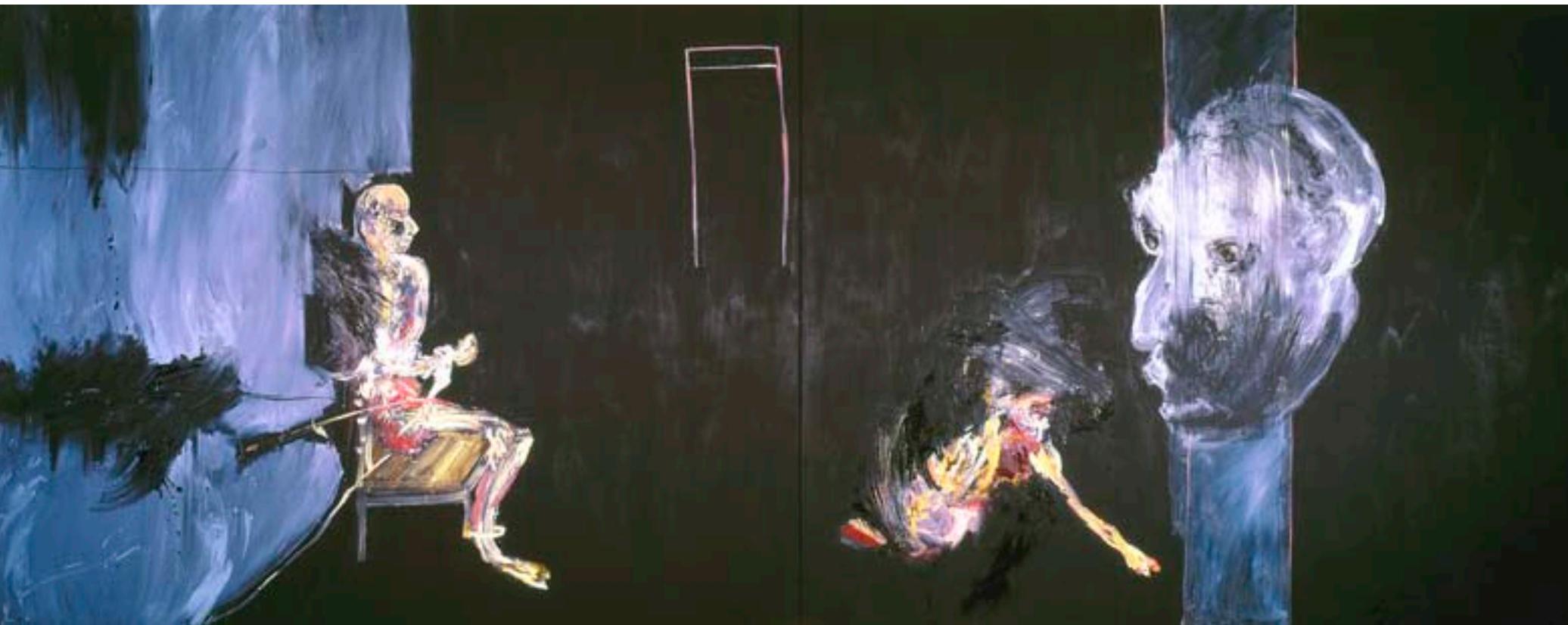
**3**    ***The Selecting Hand***, 1986, 78" x 224", Oil on canvas



4 ***Total Submission***, 1986, 78" x 62", Oil on canvas



5     ***The Observer And The Observed***, 1986, 78" x 200", Oil on canvas



6     ***Deposition***, 1987, 78" x 200", Oil on canvas



7 ***Bird***, 1988, 78" x 78", Oil on canvas



8     ***Family***, 1992, 78" x 100", Oil on canvas     *detail at right*



9 ***Man Sitting***, 1992, 78" x 62", Oil on canvas



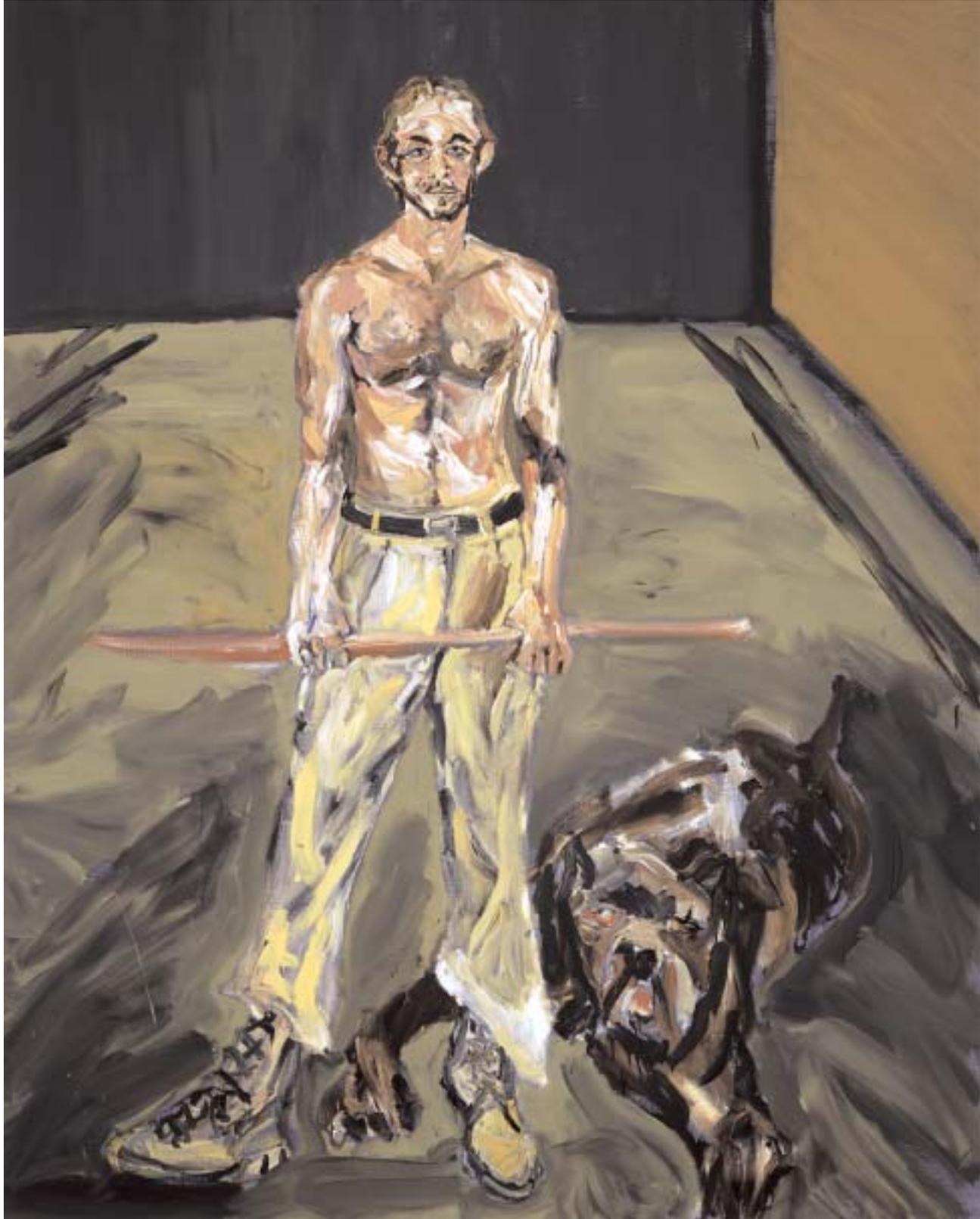
10 ***Christ of Avignon***, 1993, 78" x 62", Oil on canvas



11 ***The Old Story***, 1993, 78" x 62", Oil on canvas



12 ***Igor & Romulus***, 1994, 78" x 62", Oil on canvas



13 ***Forty Years***, 1995, 78" x 100", Oil on canvas *detail at right*



14 ***Fly***, 1995, 78" x 62", Oil on canvas



15 ***Public Affairs***, 1996, 78" x 100", Oil on canvas



16 ***Private Affairs***, 1996, 78" x 62", Oil on canvas



17 ***Too Late***, 1996, 78" x 62", Oil on canvas







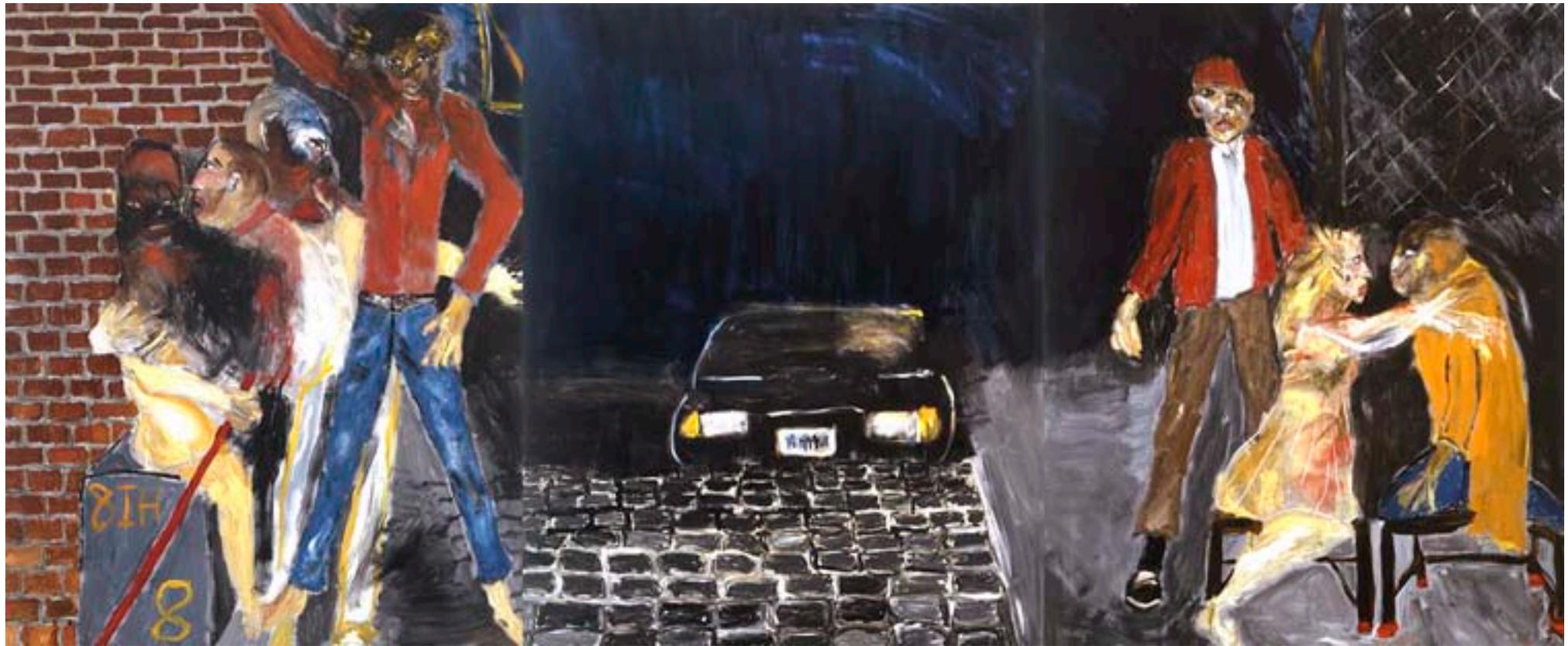
19 ***Man and Elephant***, 1997, 78" x 62", Oil on canvas



20 ***Last Wish***, 1999, 78" x 124", Oil on canvas



21 ***Dead End***, 2000, 78" x 186", Oil on canvas



22 ***Ninety Degrees***, 2001, 78" x 62", Oil on canvas



23 ***Survivors***, 2003, 78" x 62", Oil on canvas



# Selected Public Collections, Publications and Monographs

## One-Person Exhibitions

---

2004	Housatonic Museum of Art, Bridgeport, CT
2002	Cobble Hill Fine Art, Brooklyn, NY
1999	Aberbach Fine Art, New York
1998	Louis Dijkstra Kunsthandel, Antwerp, Belgium
1996	Louis Dijkstra Kunsthandel, Waalwijk, Holland
	Louis Dijkstra Kunsthandel, Antwerp, Belgium
1995	Louis Dijkstra Kunsthandel, Waalwijk, Holland
1992	Mary Ryan Gallery, New York
1991	Aberbach Fine Art, New York
	David Aberbach Fine Art, Santa Fe, New Mexico
1990	Aberbach Fine Art, Art Cologne, Germany
1988	PS Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
1987	DiLaurenti Gallery, New York
	Marc Richards Gallery, Los Angeles, California
	Mary Ryan Gallery, New York
	Janet Steinberg Gallery, San Francisco, California
1986	Louis Dijkstra Kunsthandel, Waalwijk, Holland
	Rosa Esman Gallery, New York
	Yares Gallery, Scottsdale, Arizona
1984	Rosa Esman Gallery, New York
	Louis Dijkstra Kunsthandel, Waalwijk, Holland
	Hewlett Gallery, Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA
	H.F. Manes Gallery, New York
1983	Art Galaxy, New York
1982	Gotham Book Mart Gallery, New York

## Group Exhibitions

---

2000	Baron Boisante Gallery, New York
1999	Baron Boisante Gallery, New York
1998	Museum of Modern Art, Antwerp, Belgium
1991	Scottsdale Center for the Arts, Scottsdale, Arizona
	Wooster Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts
1989	Artstart, Scottsdale, Arizona
1987	"Art for Your Collection," Marion Koogler McNay Museum, San Antonio, TX
	"The Artist and the Myth," Monterey Peninsula Museum of Art, Monterey, CA
	Marc Richards Gallery, Los Angeles, California
	Yares Gallery, Scottsdale, Arizona
1986-1988	"Jewish Themes/Contemporary American Artists II," the Jewish Museum, New York; also Spertus Museum, Chicago, IL, National Museum of American Jewish History, Philadelphia, PA

#### Group Exhibitions continued

---

- 1986-1988 "Portrait of a Collector: Stephane Janssen," Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humleback, Denmark; also University Art Museum, California State University, Palm Beach, CA, Museum of Art, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK, Art Museum at Florida International University, Miami, FL, Scottsdale Center for the Arts, Scottsdale, AZ
- 1986-1987 "Public and Private American Prints Today," The Brooklyn Museum, New York; also Flint Institute of the Arts, Michigan, Rhode Island School of Design, RI, Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis
- 1986 "Naked/Nude," Museum of Modern Art, New York
- 1985 "Surplus," Exit Art, New York
- 1984 "Invitational," Mendelson Gallery, Pittsburgh, PA
- "Selected Drawings by Eleven Artists, Willard Gallery, New York
- 1983 "Art of Found Objects," Gallery Schlesinger-Boisante, New York
- 1982 "The Crime Show," ABC No Rio, New York
- "Summer Invitational," Rosa Esman Gallery, New York
- "Artist Protest," Pratt Graphics Center, New York
- "The New Menace," Gallery Schlesinger-Boisante, New York
- "Dirty Pictures," White Columns, New York
- 1981 "Invitational," Gallery Schlesinger-Boisante, New York
- 1980 Gruenebaum Gallery, New York
- 1977 Museum of the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine, New York
- 1976 Rabinowitch and Guerra Gallery, New York

#### Bibliography

---

- 1/1991 *Status Fur Arzte*
- 2/1988 *The Miami News*, Leslie Judd Ahlander, "Florida International Showcases Janssen's COBRA Art"
- 12/1987 *Artnews*, Margaret Moonman, "Michael Hafftka at DiLaurenti Gallery"
- 12/1987 *Artnews*, John R. Sturman, "Michael Hafftka at DiLaurenti Gallery"
- 11-12/1987 *The Print Collector's Newsletter*, Vol. XVIII, No. 5
- 2/1987 *Los Angeles Times*, Suzanne Muchnic, "Janssen's COBA Collection on Exhibit in Long Beach"
- 1/1987 *The Orange County Register*, Cathy Curtis, "The COBRA Artists: Invading the Psyche with Primitivism"
- 1/1987 *Art-Talk*, Denny Medina, "Michael Hafftka Comes West"
- 12/1986 *Brabants Dagblad*, Ferd Op de Coul, "Hafftka een individualist"
- 7-8/1986 *Arts Magazine*, Joshua Teplow, "Michael Hafftka at Rosa Esman"
- 8/1986 *The New York Times*, Michael Brenson, "Bringing Fresh Approaches to Ages-Old Jewish Themes"
- 4/1986 *The New York Times*, John Russell, "Michael Hafftka at Rosa Esman Gallery"
- 12/1984 *Artnews*, Jud Tully, "Selected Drawings by Eleven Artists"
- 11/1984 *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Donald Miller, "Hafftka's Oils Pack Fascinating Power"
- 11/1984 *Kunstbeed Magazine*, Marten Beks, "Michael Hafftka of de strijd tegen de roen"
- 11/1984 *Arts Magazine*, John Robinson, "Michael Hafftka at Rosa Esman Gallery"
- 11/1984 *Art in America*, Gerrit Henry, "Michael Hafftka at Rosa Esman Gallery"
- 11/1984 *New York Magazine*, Kay Larson, "The Cooked and the Raw"
- 11/1984 *The New York Times*, John Russell, "Drawings by Eleven Artists"

## Selected Public Collections, Publications and Monographs continued

### Public Collections

---

Museum of Modern Art, New York  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York  
The Brooklyn Museum, New York  
Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA  
New York Public Library Collection, New York  
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA  
The Marion Koogler McNay Art Museum, TX  
Housatonic Museum of Art, Bridgeport, CT

### Monographs

---

1987 "Michael Hafftka, New Paintings" with text by Sam Hunter, published by DiLaurenti Gallery, New York  
1984 "Michael Hafftka" with text by Elaine King and John Caldwell, published by Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA  
1982 "Michael Hafftka, Selected Drawings 1975-81," text by Michael Brodsky, published by Guignol Books, New York  
1982 Zwart en Wit 82.3, reproduction of 12 drawings, Oosterbeek, Holland  
1981 "Art of Experience, Experience of Art," published by the artist

### Other Publications

---

1986 "Public and Private: American Prints Today," The Brooklyn Museum, New York  
1986 "Portrait of a Collector," Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebeek, Denmark  
1986 "Jewish Themes/Contemporary American Artists II," The Jewish Museum, New York  
1985 "Surplus," Exit Art, New York  
1985 "In The Penal Colony"/Franz Kafka with 4 original lithographs by Hafftka, published by Limited Editions Club

### Print Portfolios

---

1986 "The Other Half," folio of five monoprints with drypoint, published by Mark Baron, New York  
1986 "Neighbors," folio of 6 monoprints, published by Mary Ryan Gallery, New York  
1985 "Second Hand," folio of five etchings, published by Mark Baron, New York  
1985 "Undertones," "Overtones," companion suites, each with 4 monoprints with etching, published by Mark Baron, New York  
1981 "Incisions," folio of 10 etchings with etched title and colophon page, published by Mark Baron, New York

### Miscellaneous

---

1987 Inclusion in "A Calendar of Art and Antiques," Channel 13  
1982 "Pointless Gesture," a film by John Rosen depicting a street action by Hafftka, 11 min., 16 mm, color and sound

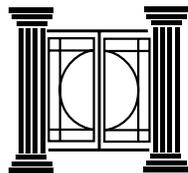
### Grants

---

1983 C.A.P.S. grant for painting

# Catalogue of Paintings

No.	Title	Year	Size In.	Medium
1	Stumble Dance	1985	78" x 62"	Oil on canvas
2	Fix	1985	78" x 62"	Oil on canvas
3	The Selecting Hand	1986	78" x 224"	Oil on canvas
4	Total Submission	1986	78" x 62"	Oil on canvas
5	The Observer And The Observed	1986	78" x 200"	Oil on canvas
6	Deposition	1987	78" x 200"	Oil on canvas
7	Bird	1988	78" x 78"	Oil on canvas
8	Family	1992	78" x 100"	Oil on canvas
9	Man Sitting	1992	78" x 62"	Oil on canvas
10	Christ of Avignon	1993	78" x 62"	Oil on canvas
11	The Old Story	1993	78" x 62"	Oil on canvas
12	Igor & Romulus	1994	78" x 62"	Oil on canvas
13	Forty Years	1995	78" x 100"	Oil on canvas
14	Fly	1995	78" x 62"	Oil on canvas
15	Public Affairs	1996	78" x 100"	Oil on canvas
16	Private Affairs	1996	78" x 62"	Oil on canvas
17	Too Late	1996	78" x 62"	Oil on canvas
18	Covenant Between The Pieces	1997	78" x 62"	Oil on canvas
19	Man and Elephant	1997	78" x 62"	Oil on canvas
20	Last Wish	1999	78" x 124"	Oil on canvas
21	Dead End	2000	78" x 186"	Oil on canvas
22	Ninety Degrees	2001	78" x 62"	Oil on canvas
23	Survivors	2003	78" x 62"	Oil on canvas



**Housatonic Museum of Art  
900 Lafayette Boulevard  
Bridgeport, CT 06604-4704**