

For Immediate Release: September 9, 2013

Contact: Sarah L. Stifler, Hammer Communications, 310-443-7056, [sstifler@hammer.ucla.edu](mailto:sstifler@hammer.ucla.edu)

**THE HAMMER MUSEUM IS THE ONLY WEST COAST VENUE FOR  
MAJOR SURVEY EXHIBITION *JAMES WELLING: MONOGRAPH***

September 29, 2013 – January 12, 2014



Los Angeles—Lauded by photographers, artists, and critics for his influence on the contemporary generation of art photographers, James Welling (b. 1951) has created beautiful and uncompromising photographs for over thirty-five years. Operating in the hybrid ground between painting, sculpture, and traditional photography, Welling is first and foremost a photographic practitioner enthralled with the possibilities of the medium. His wide ranging subjects and techniques are in themselves an investigation into so many different aspects of photography, from representational and abstract, black and white to color, film based, digital, and works created without a camera. *James Welling: Monograph* provides the most thorough presentation of the artist's work to date, offering an indispensable exhibition survey of this artist's remarkable, foundational practice. *James Welling: Monograph* is organized by the Cincinnati Art Museum and curated by James Crump, former Cincinnati Art Museum chief curator. The Hammer's presentation was organized by Cynthia Burlingham, Deputy Director, Curatorial Affairs.

"We are so pleased and proud to have *James Welling: Monograph* at the Hammer," says Hammer Director Annie Philbin. "Jim is a very familiar face around the Museum; not only is he UCLA faculty, but he has also served on our Artist Council and Board of Overseers. His work critically engages with the history, process, and materials of photography in a way that continually helps us understand and redefine the medium. His practice is as scholarly and investigative as it is exquisitely beautiful."

Since the mid-1970s, Welling's work has fluidly explored a mercurial set of issues and ideas: personal and cultural memory, the tenets of realism and transparency, abstraction and representation, optics and description, and the material and chemical nature of photography. To date, the artist has been the subject of numerous catalogs addressing more than twenty-five individual bodies of work—Welling's "substantive investigation of the spectrum of abstract to figurative," as one critic has described it. Yet no exhibition has been mounted with the ambition of linking these bodies of work together by examining the primary threads that run through them all. That is, until now. *James Welling: Monograph* presents nearly 200 photographs, including important early and iconic works from the 1970s to the present. In

James Welling. *0469*, 2009. Inkjet print. 33 11/16 x 50 1/2 in. (85.5 x 128.3 cm). Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Purchase.

addition, the Hammer installation includes works drawn from his personal archive, including drawings and watercolors related to his process, as well as works and material from his personal collection—such as small painting made by his great grandfather and gels and negatives—that help give insight into his process and a greater context for his practice.

“In his fifteen years at UCLA Jim has been an influential teacher for so many young artists. He is also an important part of the Hammer community and has gifted works of his own and other artists to our collections,” remarks Cynthia Burlingham. “Jim is a ‘regular’ in the Grunwald Center study room where he shows his students everything from Renaissance prints to contemporary photographs. He is part of the Hammer family.”

### **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

James Welling has exhibited extensively both nationally and internationally. In 1999 he received the DG Bank-Förder Prize in Photography from the Sprengel Museum in Hannover, Germany. Solo exhibition venues include Regen Projects, Los Angeles; David Zwirner, New York; Maureen Paley, London; Galerie Nelson-Freeman, Paris; Wako Works of Art, Tokyo; Donald Young Gallery, Chicago; and Galerie Nächst St. Stephan, Vienna. Welling is a professor in the UCLA Department of Art, where he has taught for over fifteen years, and a visiting professor at Princeton University.

### **CATALOGUE**

Aperture has published *James Welling: Monograph* to accompany the exhibition. The catalogue was edited by James Crump, and includes essays by Crump, Mark Godfrey, and Thomas Seelig. An interview by Eva Respini is also included. The catalogue was designed by Lorraine Wild and Amy Fortunato, Green Dragon Office, Los Angeles. (256 pages, 250 four-color images, published spring 2013).

### **EXHIBITION CREDIT**

*James Welling: Monograph* was organized by the Cincinnati Art Museum and curated by James Crump, former Chief Curator and Curator of Photography. The Hammer's presentation was organized by Cynthia Burlingham, Deputy Director, Curatorial Affairs.

The exhibition received generous support from George Freeman, Kristin Rey and Michael Rubel, and The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation.

### **PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

The Hammer will also host a series of free exhibition-related public programs.

#### **Hammer Screenings**

##### **Films Selected by James Welling**

**Wednesday, October 30, 7:30pm**

***Zorns Lemma* and *July '71 in San Francisco, Living at Beach Street, Working at Canyon Cinema, Swimming in the Valley of the Moon***

Avant-garde filmmaker Hollis Frampton's *Zorns Lemma* (1970) was hailed as “a major poetic work” by 1970s structuralist filmmaker Ernie Gehr. Peter Hutton's *July '71 in San Francisco, Living at Beach Street, Working at Canyon Cinema, Swimming in the Valley of the Moon* (1971) is a diary of free-spirited communal living and moment-by-moment observations of fleeting pleasures. (Total run time: 100 min.)

## Hammer Lectures

### **Eva Respini on James Welling**

**Tuesday, November 5, 7:30PM**

**Eva Respini** is associate curator in the department of photography at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and has organized numerous exhibitions, including the recent Cindy Sherman retrospective (2012), *Boris Mikhailov: Case History* (2011), *Staging Action: Performance in Photography since 1960* (co-curated, 2010), and *Pictures by Women: A History of Modern Photography* (co-curated, 2010). Respini's interview with Welling appears in the catalogue accompanying *James Welling: Monograph*.

## Exhibition Walkthroughs\*

Artists, scholars, and colleagues lead walkthroughs of Hammer exhibitions offering unique perspectives.

### **Sunday, September 29, 2PM**

Hammer deputy director of curatorial affairs **Cynthia Burlingham**, curator and writer **James Crump**, and **James Welling**

### **Saturday, October 19, 2:30PM**

Artist **Zoe Crosher**

### **Saturday, October 26, 2:30PM**

Curator, writer, and teacher of the history of photography **Colin Westerbeck**

### **Sunday, November 3, 4PM**

Philosopher of aesthetics **Diarmuid Costello**

### **Saturday, November 16, 2:30PM**

Graphic designer, art historian, writer, and design teacher **Lorraine Wild**

### **Sunday, November 24, 2:30PM**

Art historian and critic **Michael Fried**

\*Free with Museum admission

## **ABOUT THE HAMMER MUSEUM**

The Hammer Museum—a public arts unit of the University of California, Los Angeles—is dedicated to exploring the diversity of artistic expression through the ages. Its collections, exhibitions, and programs span the classic to the cutting-edge in art, architecture, and design, recognizing that artists play a crucial role in all aspects of culture and society.

The museum houses the Armand Hammer Collection of old master, impressionist, and postimpressionist paintings and the Armand Hammer Daumier and Contemporaries Collection. The museum also houses the Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts—comprising more than 45,000 prints, drawings, photographs, and artists' books from the Renaissance to the present—and oversees the management of the Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden on the UCLA campus. The Hammer's newest collection, the Hammer Contemporary Collection, is highlighted by works by artists such as Lari Pittman, Kara Walker, Ed Ruscha, Barbara Kruger, Mark Bradford, Richard Hawkins, and Llyn Foulkes, among many others. The Hammer presents major single-artist and thematic exhibitions of historical and contemporary art. It also presents approximately ten Hammer Projects exhibitions each year, providing international and local artists with a laboratory-like environment to create new work or to present existing work in a new context.

As a cultural center, the Hammer offers a diverse array of free public programs throughout the year, including lectures, readings, symposia, film screenings, and music performances. These widely acclaimed public programs are presented in the Hammer's Billy Wilder Theater, which is also the new home of the UCLA Film & Television Archive's renowned cinemathèque.

## **HAMMER MUSEUM INFORMATION**

For current program and exhibition information, call 310-443-7000 or visit [www.hammer.ucla.edu](http://www.hammer.ucla.edu).

Hours: Tuesday–Friday 11am–8pm; Saturday & Sunday 11am–5pm; closed Mondays, July 4, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

Admission: \$10 for adults; \$5 for seniors (65+) and UCLA Alumni Association members; free for museum members, students with identification, UCLA faculty/staff, military personnel, veterans, and visitors 17 and under. The museum is free on Thursdays for all visitors. Public programs are always free.

Location/Parking: The Hammer is located at 10899 Wilshire Boulevard, at Westwood Boulevard. Parking is available under the Museum. Rate is \$3 for three hours with museum validation. Bicycles park free.

**HAMMER**

**JAMES WELLING MONOGRAPH**

SEPTEMBER 29, 2013 - JANUARY 12, 2014



1. JAMES WELLING. *JANUARY 7*, 1976. CHROMOGENIC PRINT FROM ORIGINAL POLAROID COLOR PRINT. 2 1/4 X 3 1/4 IN. (5.7 X 8.3 CM). COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST.



2. JAMES WELLING. *THE WATERFALL*, 1981. GELATIN SILVER PRINT. 18 X 14 IN. (45.7 X 35.6 CM). COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST.



3. JAMES WELLING. *WEST, GUILFORD, CT*, 1989. SELENIUM TONED GELATIN SILVER PRINT. 6 3/4 X 5 IN. (17.1 X 12.7 CM). COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST.



4. JAMES WELLING. *BRUSSELS*, 1996. INKJET PRINT. 17 X 22 IN. (43.2 X 55.9 CM). COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST.

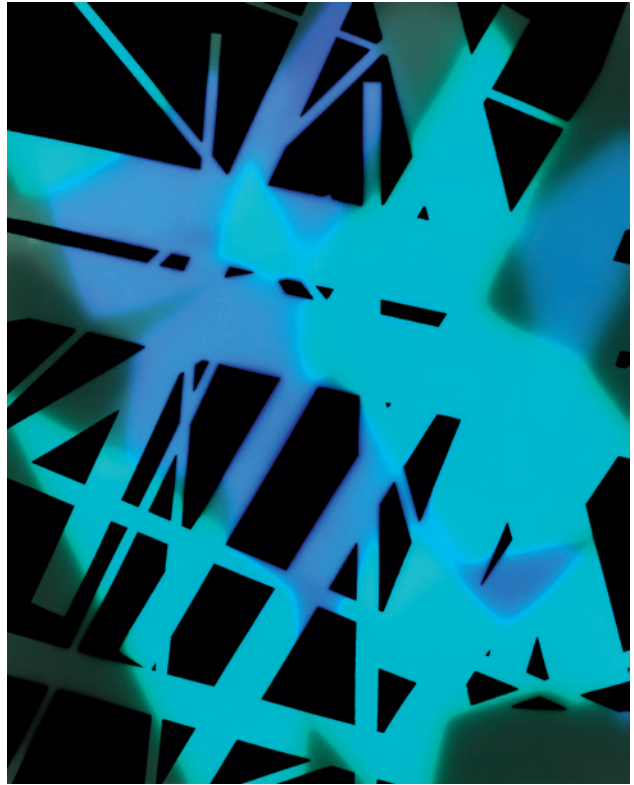
**HAMMER**

**JAMES WELLING** MONOGRAPH

SEPTEMBER 29, 2013 - JANUARY 12, 2014



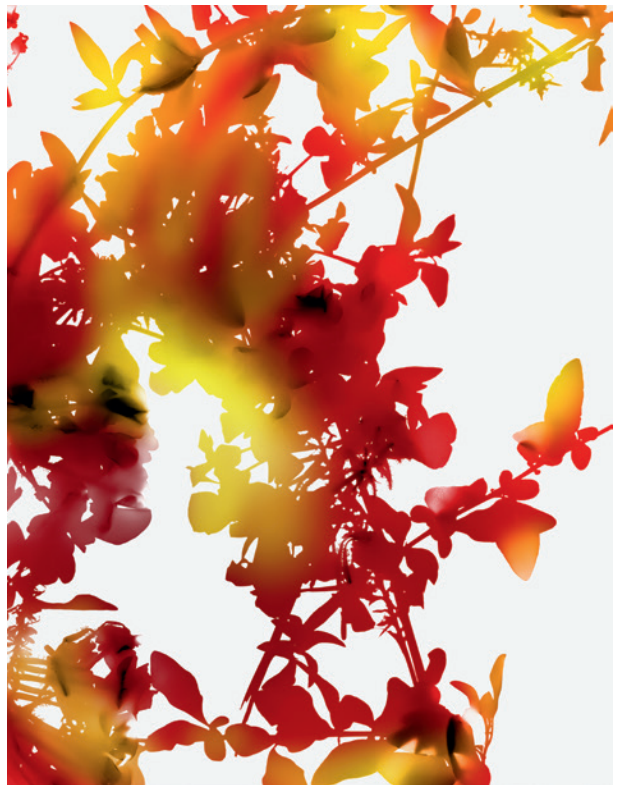
5. JAMES WELLING. *MARGUERITE MOREAU*, 2005. INKJET PRINT. 22 X 17 IN. (55.9 X 43.2 CM). COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST.



6. JAMES WELLING. *04*, 2008. INKJET PRINT. 50 X 40 IN. (127 X 101.6 CM). COURTESY THE ARTIST AND REGEN PROJECTS, LOS ANGELES.



7. JAMES WELLING. *0469*, 2009. INKJET PRINT. 33 11/16 X 50 1/2 IN. (85.5 X 128.3 CM). HAMMER MUSEUM, LOS ANGELES. PURCHASE.



8. JAMES WELLING. *021R*, 2011. CHROMOGENIC PRINT. 46 X 37 IN. (116.8 X 94 CM). COURTESY THE ARTIST AND DAVID ZWIRNER, NEW YORK/LONDON.

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## THE HAMMER MUSEUM PRESENTS WORK OF VISIONARY PAINTER FORREST BESS

On view September 29, 2013 – January 5, 2014



Caption: Forrest Bess. *The Hermaphrodite*, 1957. Oil on canvas. 8 x 11 in. (20.3 x 27.9 cm). The Menil Collection, Houston, gift of John Wilcox, in memory of Frank Owen Wilson. Photo by Hickey-Robertson, Houston.

*Los Angeles*—The Hammer Museum presents *Forrest Bess: Seeing Things Invisible*, focusing on the remarkable accomplishments of this under-recognized American painter. A singular figure in American art who experienced significant recognition and painful isolation during his life—and whose fame has waxed and waned since his death—Forrest Bess (1911-1977) has recently become the subject of keen new interest. The first museum retrospective devoted to Bess in more than twenty years, *Forrest Bess: Seeing Things Invisible* presents 52 of the artist's visionary paintings, dating from 1946 to 1970. This exhibition also includes a selection of correspondence, photographs, and articles by and about Bess chosen by artist Robert Gober for the 2012 Whitney Biennial as well as additional extended labels written by Gober.

*Forrest Bess: Seeing Things Invisible* is organized by the Menil Collection, Houston, and curated by assistant curator Clare Elliott. The Hammer's presentation, on view September 29, 2013 – January 5, 2014, is organized by Cynthia Burlingham, deputy director, curatorial affairs and director, Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts. Following the presentation at the Hammer Museum, the exhibition will travel to the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase College, State University of New York.

"Forrest Bess is an artist whose work is compelling, mysterious, and largely unknown to contemporary audiences," says Hammer Director Ann Philbin. "We are so pleased to show Bess for the first time in Los Angeles and thrilled to be collaborating with the Menil and with Bob Gober. I know our visitors are going to be entranced by Bess's work and his fascinating story."

Though championed by the distinguished gallerist Betty Parsons, Bess never attained the reputation enjoyed by contemporaneous abstract painters such as Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, and Clyfford Still

all of whom she also represented during the same period. Bess's distinctive style, methods, and thinking set him apart from his peers, and subsequently the importance of his contributions have been largely overlooked. While the powerful visions Bess expressed on canvas create a sense of expansiveness in their intensity, the physical size of the paintings is diminutive when compared to the large-scale works created by abstract expressionists active during the same period. Stunning, mysterious, and alluring, as objects his paintings were also ciphers, part of a coded message he was continually attempting to reveal.

Works in the exhibition come from the Menil's own holdings, private lenders in the United States and Europe, and major institutions including the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

### **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

Self-described "visionary" artist Forrest Bess (1911-1977) is a unique figure in the history of American art. For most of his artistic career, Bess lived an isolated existence in a fishing camp outside of Bay City, Texas. He eked a meager living fishing and selling bait by day. By night and during the off-season he read, wrote, and painted prolifically, creating an extraordinary body of mostly small-scale canvases rich with enigmatic symbolism. Despite his remoteness, Bess made himself known in the 1950s in New York (then the undisputed center of the art world). The prominent artist and dealer Betty Parsons represented Bess, dedicating six solo exhibitions to his work between 1949 and 1967.

Bess taught himself to paint by copying the still-lives and landscapes of artists he admired, such as Vincent Van Gogh and Albert Pinkham Ryder. From early childhood and throughout his life, Bess experienced intense hallucinations, which both frightened and intrigued him; in 1946, he began to incorporate images from his visions into his paintings. After discovering Carl Jung's theory of the collective unconscious, Bess began to understand painting not as an end in itself, but rather as a means to an end. By meticulously recording and studying the dream-symbols captured in his artwork, Bess hoped to uncover their universal meaning.

To aid in his search for meaning Bess looked for clues in literature from a variety of fields- medical, psychological, anthropological, and philosophical. He eventually formulated a theory, which he referred to as his "thesis," that the unification of male and female within one's body could produce immortality. He so sincerely believed in his idea that he not only sent written copies of the thesis (now lost) to prominent researchers, but used his own body as a testing ground, performing several operations on his own genitals in an effort to produce a hermaphroditic state. Robert Gober's installation, *The Man That Got Away*, which brings together a selection of Bess's artwork and writings and photographs of the artist, is the first attempt to present the "thesis" and acknowledge its realization in Bess's own body.

### **CATALOGUE**

*Forrest Bess: Seeing the Invisible* is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, published by the Menil Collection, and includes an essay by Clare Elliott, assistant curator of the Menil Collection and organizer of the exhibition, and a contribution by Robert Gober. (Hardcover, 112 pages with 71 color illustrations; released June 25 2013; retails for \$60)

### **CREDIT**

*Forrest Bess: Seeing Things Invisible* is organized by the Menil Collection, Houston. This exhibition is generously supported by The John R. Eckel, Jr. Foundation, The Eleanor and Frank Freed Foundation;



Ann and Henry Hamman, Bérengère Primat; Nina and Michael Zilkha, Peter J. Fluor/K.C. Weiner, Christy and Lou Cushman, and the City of Houston.

## **PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

The Hammer will also host a series of free exhibition-related public programs.

### **Hammer Conversations**

**Robert Gober & Elisabeth Sussman**

**Thursday, October 3, 7:30PM**

Celebrated American sculptor **Robert Gober** discusses the work of Forrest Bess and curatorial practice with **Elisabeth Sussman**, curator and Sondra Gilman Curator of Photography at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Sussman's recent exhibitions include *Paul Thek: Diver, A Retrospective*; *Gordon Matta-Clark: "You Are the Measure;"* and a retrospective of the artist Eva Hesse. She also included Gober's exhibition of paintings by Bess in her presentation of the 2012 Whitney Biennial. Gober has represented the U.S. at the Venice Biennale and has had one-person exhibitions at MOCA, Los Angeles; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Serpentine Gallery, London; and the Schaulager, Basel.

### **Hammer Screenings**

***Forrest Bess: The Key to the Riddle***

**Wednesday, October 9, 7:30pm**

This film combines the beauty of Forrest Bess's art with the drama and tragedy of his personal life. Interviews with art historian Meyer Schapiro and Buddhist scholar Robert Thurman bring life to this visionary, eccentric artist. Post-screening Q&A with director **Chuck Smith**. (2000, Dirs. C, Smith, A. Marcopoulos, 48 min.)

### **Exhibition Walkthroughs**

Artists, scholars, and colleagues lead walkthroughs of Hammer exhibitions offering unique perspectives.

**Thursday, October 10, 6PM**

**Saturday, October 12, 2:30PM\***

Bess filmmaker and biographer **Chuck Smith**

**Sunday, October 13, 2PM\***

Hammer curatorial associate **Leslie Cozzi**

**Thursday, November 7, 5PM**

Professor of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Studies **Robert Thurman**

**Saturday, November 23, 2:30PM\***

Artist **Andrew Masullo**

**\*Free with Museum admission**

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Location/Parking: The Hammer is located at 10899 Wilshire Boulevard, at Westwood Boulevard. Parking is available under the Museum. Rate is \$3 for three hours with museum validation. Bicycles park free.

Hammer Museum Tours: For group tour reservations and information, call 310-443-7041.

SEPTEMBER 29, 2013 - JANUARY 5, 2014



1. FORREST BESS. *BODIES OF LITTLE DEAD CHILDREN*, 1949. OIL ON CANVAS. 6 X 7-5/8 INCHES. THE MENIL COLLECTION, HOUSTON. PHOTO: PAUL HESTER.



2. FORREST BESS. *STICKS*, CA. 1950. OIL ON CANVAS. 6-3/4 X 7-3/4 INCHES. THE MENIL COLLECTION, HOUSTON. PHOTO: PAUL HESTER.



3. FORREST BESS. *VIEW OF MAYA*, 1951. OIL ON CANVAS. 8 X 8 INCHES. THE MENIL COLLECTION, HOUSTON, BEQUEST OF JERMAYNE MACAGY. PHOTO: PAUL HESTER.



4. FORREST BESS. *BEFORE MAN*, 1952-53. OIL ON CANVAS. 8-3/4 X 22-3/4 INCHES. COLLECTION NEUBERGER MUSEUM OF ART, PURCHASE COLLEGE. STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, GIFT OF ROY R. NEUBERGER. PHOTO: JIM FRANK.

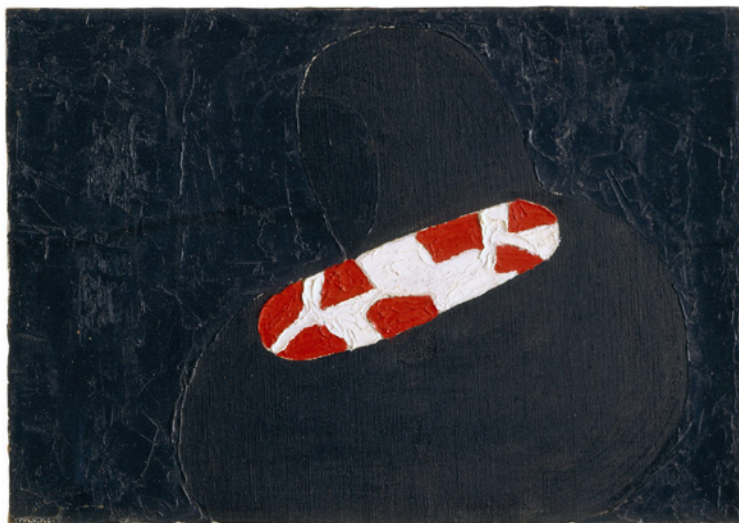
HAMMER

FORREST BESS: SEEING THINGS INVISIBLE

SEPTEMBER 29, 2013 - JANUARY 5, 2014



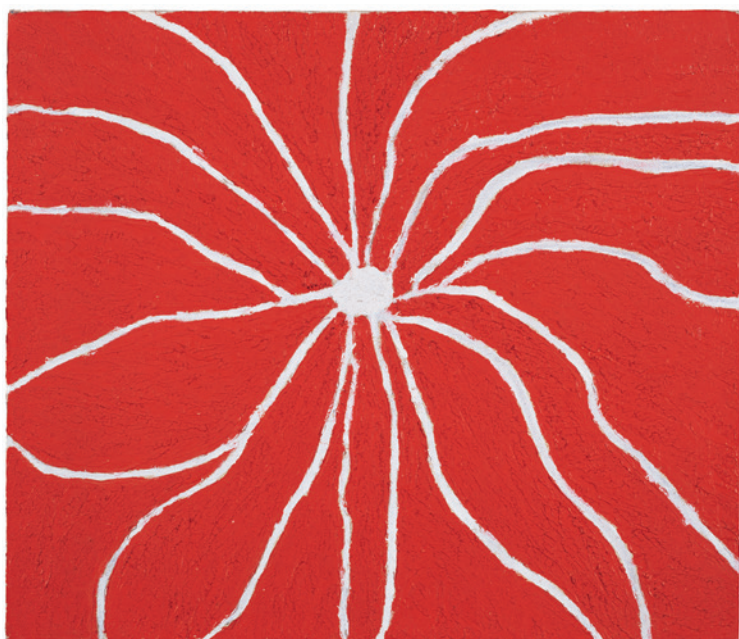
5. FORREST BESS. *UNTITLED*, 1957. OIL ON CANVAS. THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK, GIFT OF ADAM KIMMEL. DIGITAL IMAGE © THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NY/LICENSED BY SCALA/ART RESOURCE, NY.



6. FORREST BESS. *THE HERMAPHRODITE*, 1957. OIL ON CANVAS. 8 X 11-1/4 INCHES. THE MENIL COLLECTION, HOUSTON, GIFT OF JOHN WILCOX IN MEMORY OF FRANK OWEN WILSON. PHOTO: HICKEY-ROBERTSON, HOUSTON.



7. FORREST BESS. *UNTITLED (NO. 11A)*, 1958. OIL ON CANVAS. 17-3/4 X 24 INCHES. THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, GIFT OF DUKE ENERGY.



8. FORREST BESS. *UNTITLED (THE SPIDER)*, 1970. OIL ON CANVAS. 13-3/4 X 16-1/8 INCHES. COLLECTION OF CHRISTIAN ZACHARIAS.