

G U N N A R N O R R M A N

Nature and Life

Pucker Gallery, Boston

GUNNAR NORRMAN: Nature and Life

"Awe is an act of insight into a meaning greater than ourselves... The beginning of awe is wonder, and the beginning of wisdom is awe... Awe is a way of being in rapport with the mystery of all reality."

—Abraham Joshua Heschel

They are quietly serene, almost still in their tranquility. Yet, Gunnar Norrman's drawings and engravings still speak volumes about their subject matter and the crucial role it plays in both the work itself and the life of the artist.

The son-in-law of a botanist, Norrman also studied science at university before moving on to art. For most, these two fields seem almost opposite in character. Yet, when examining Norrman's work, the majority of which depicts either scenes in nature or details of subjects taken from nature, the connection that Norrman finds between the two becomes clear. One can see in his poetic works that the same love of nature which attracted Norrman's critical eye to scientific study also served as the source for his artistic endeavors. For Norrman, nature is inspiration for art and, in the same sense, is motivation for, and an affirmation of, life itself.

Norrman does not capture nature in vibrant color, but rather in the subtle grays of pencil and charcoal drawings and engravings. Because his work is based in the pureness of form found in nature, Norrman's use of black and white, and a wealth of rich tones in between, only serves to emphasize this beauty and purity. It is this absence of color which accentuates Norrman's elegant use of line to delineate such subjects as the spare and delicate trees in *Paysage Basque*, 1974, and the refined and graceful forms of the *Hanging Blossoms*, 1987.

Norrman also uses subtle gradations of tone to create the extraordinary sense of light which pervades his work. This light, almost a glow, which seems to emanate from the work itself, draws the viewer into the picture's eternal peacefulness for a moment of contemplation. It is the uncertainty of whether this light is beginning to grow with the rise of the sun or is fading within its setting which gives Norrman's works their timeless quality

and a sense of the evocation of memory. This is evident in the sense of veiled light which clings like mist to the delicately indicated hills in *I bergen*, 1985, and which gently embraces the shoreline in *Charente Maritime*, 1986.

Norrman has said that his work was in part inspired by Chinese art from the Sung Dynasty. Indeed, one can see the simple lines of the brush and ink strokes of Chinese paintings echoed in the exquisiteness of line in Norrman's drawings and engravings, as well as a shared use of simple subject matter, quietness and vaporous mists. Yet, even more significant in his art is the influence of Chinese philosophy, which Norrman says he shares, and the idea of Man's smallness in the universe.

It is this idea of Man's size and importance in relation to the vastness and grandeur of nature which has been the continuing theme of Norrman's work. His devotion without deviation to this content for decades demonstrates not only the importance of nature to his work as subject, but also to him as a form of spiritual nourishment and an assertion of life.

Norrman brings this view of nature, as both a source of life and an essential element for its sustenance, to all of his work. And while his pieces rejoice in nature, they also express a sadness created by Man's insensitivity to it. Norrman fears that urbanization is taking over and says, "... we live in a terrible world...", a world in which a blade of grass or a flower is a miracle of beauty which "most of us crush... underfoot as we walk by."

It is the awe and respect which Norrman has for nature, the awe that Heschel speaks of in the above passage, which provides him, an octogenarian, with the energy to go on creating in the face of Man's insensitivity. Norrman's works aim subtly but consistently to instill the viewer with the same sense of awe and appreciation for "the mystery of all reality" which inspires and fuels his own art and life.

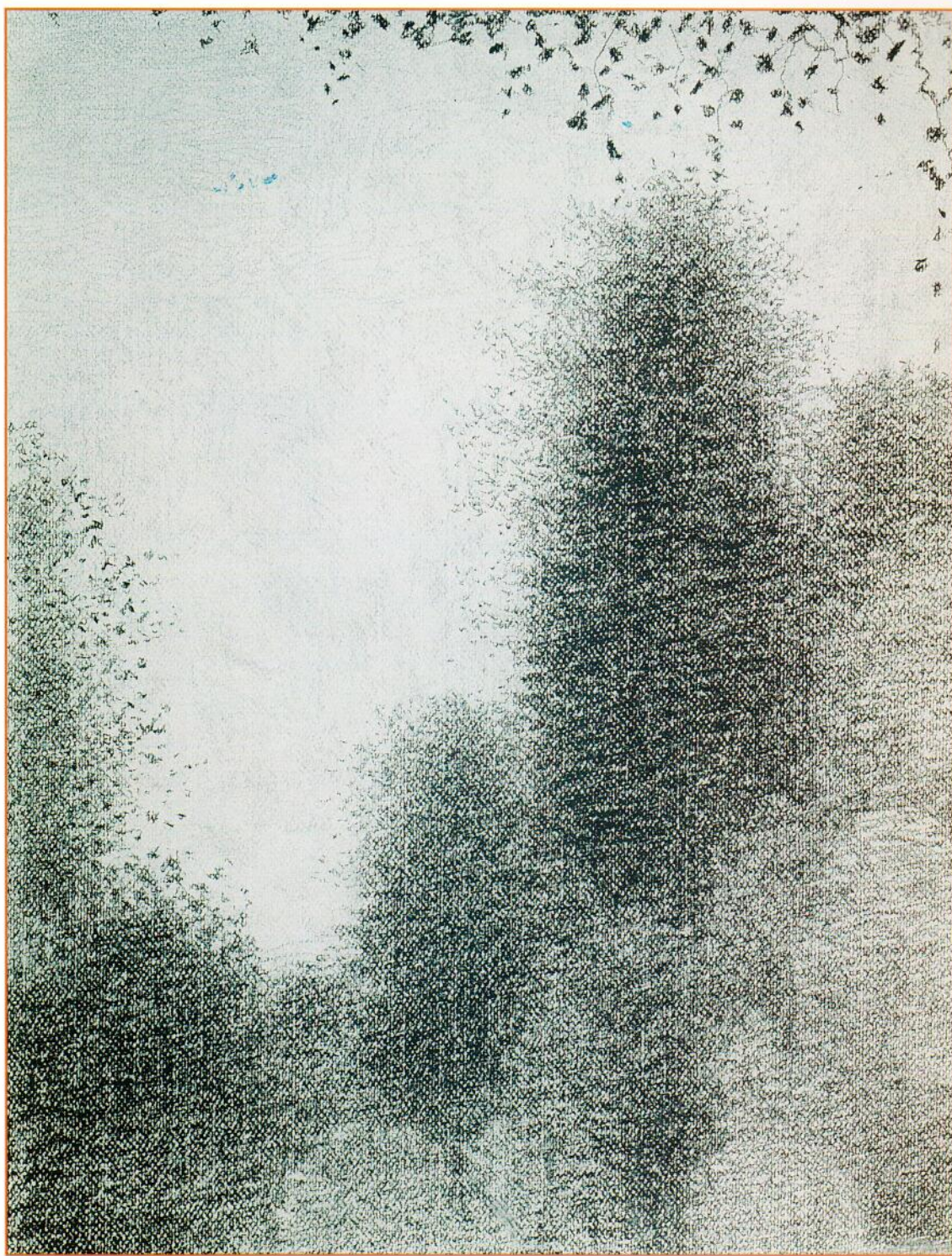
Whether he portrays nature at its purest, as in the unblemished landscape of *Mörk Strand*, 1997, or side by side with the urbanization he fears, as in *Hamnby*, 1975, Norrman captures its beauty with his remarkably refined style. His drawings delight in the most basic of pleasures – trees, sky, water, flowers – and reveal that they are more than just beauty, but rather necessity.

— Kirra L. Newman

Cover piece:

I bergen, 1985, 24 1/2" x 18 1/4", Charcoal

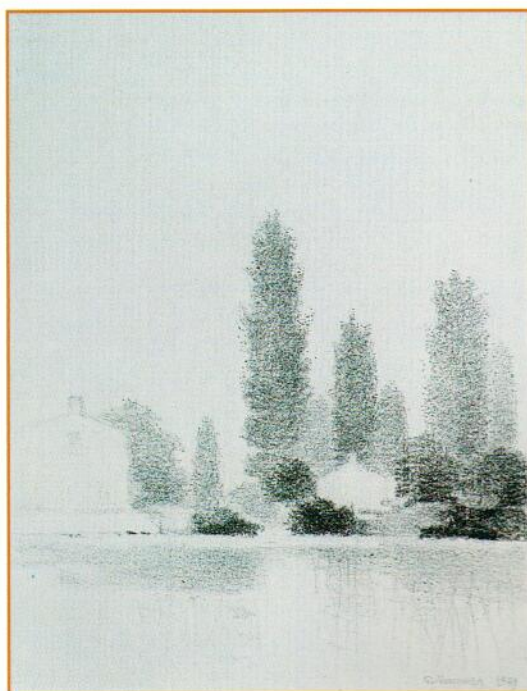
DESIGN: Jennifer Bennett EDITOR: Jeanne Gressler PHOTOGRAPHY: Andy Abrahamson, Sean Kirby and Valerie Nestor
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2. *I parken*, 1992, 18 x 14", Charcoal



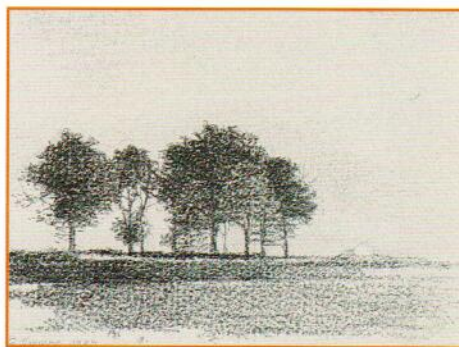
3. *Träd*, 1981, $7\frac{3}{4} \times 9\frac{2}{3}$ " , Conté crayon



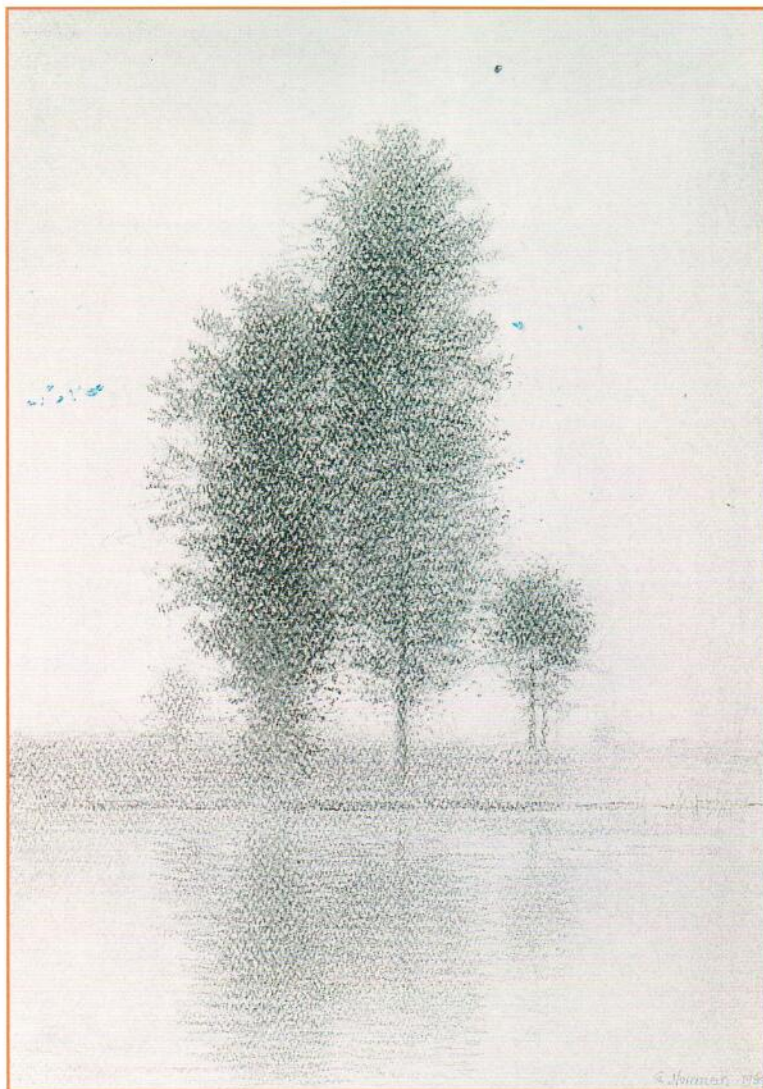
4. *Högsommar*, 1989, $9\frac{1}{16} \times 6\frac{7}{8}$ " , Conté crayon



5. *Höstkväll*, 1986, 11 1/4 x 8 1/4", Charcoal



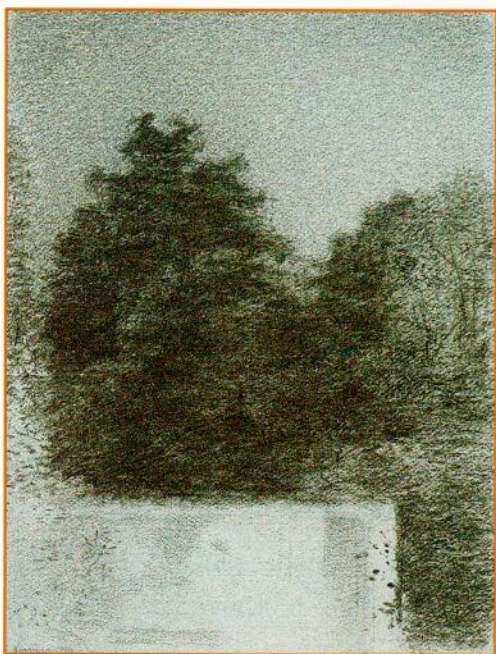
6. *Augustikväll*, 1987, 4 x 5 1/2", Conté crayon



7. Akant, 1989, 16 x 12", Charcoal



8. Skogsdamm, 1974, 7 1/2 x 10 1/4", Conté crayon



9. *Trädgårdsmur*, 1980
13³/₈ x 10⁵/₈", Charcoal



10. *Nattstämning*, 1983
6³/₄ x 4³/₄", Charcoal

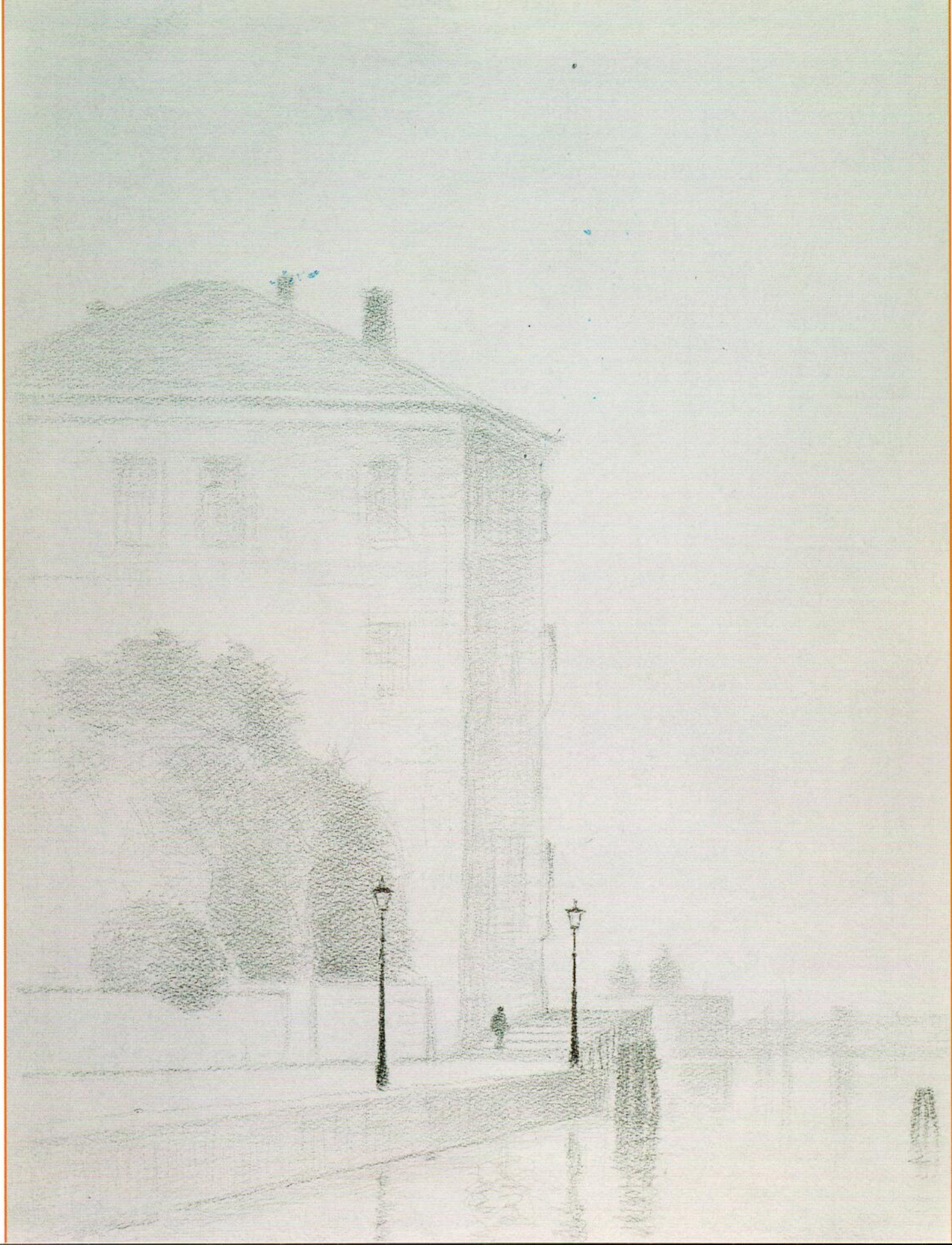


11. *Afton*, 1992, 17³/₄ x 14¹/₄", Charcoal



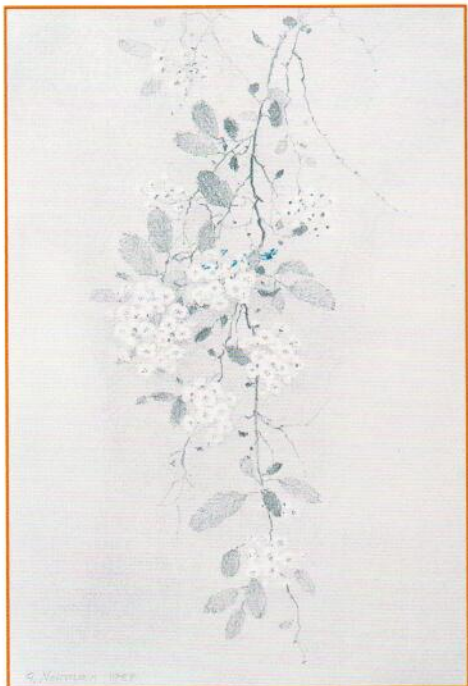
12. *Varbacke*, 1986, 18 x 18", Charcoal

Opposite page:
13. *Venedigkaj*, 1989, 24 1/2 x 19", Charcoal

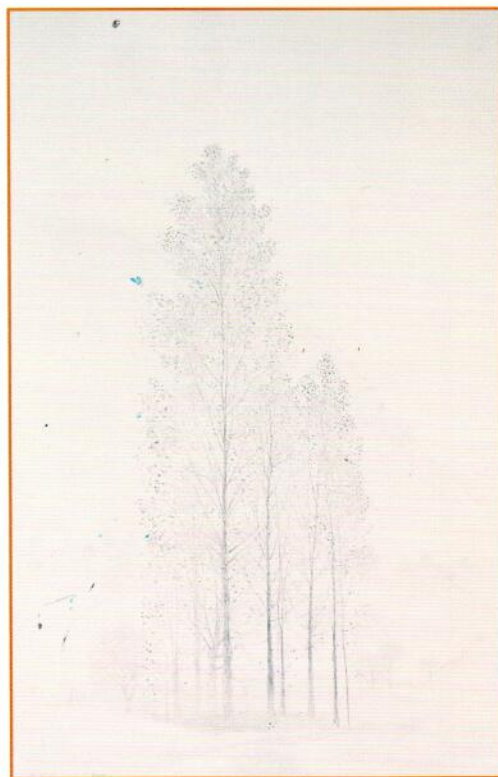




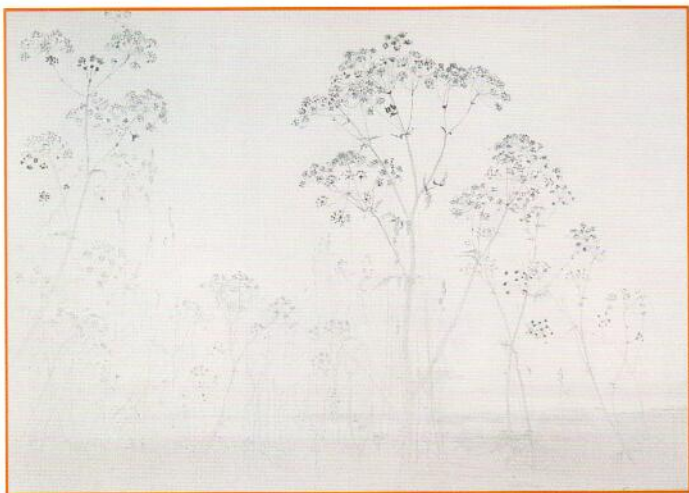
14. *Slattlandskap*, 1988, 24½ x 19", Charcoal



15. *Hanging Blossoms*, 1987
8¹/₁₆ x 5⁵/₈", Pencil



16. *Paysage Basque*, 1974
9¹/₄ x 6¹/₄", Pencil



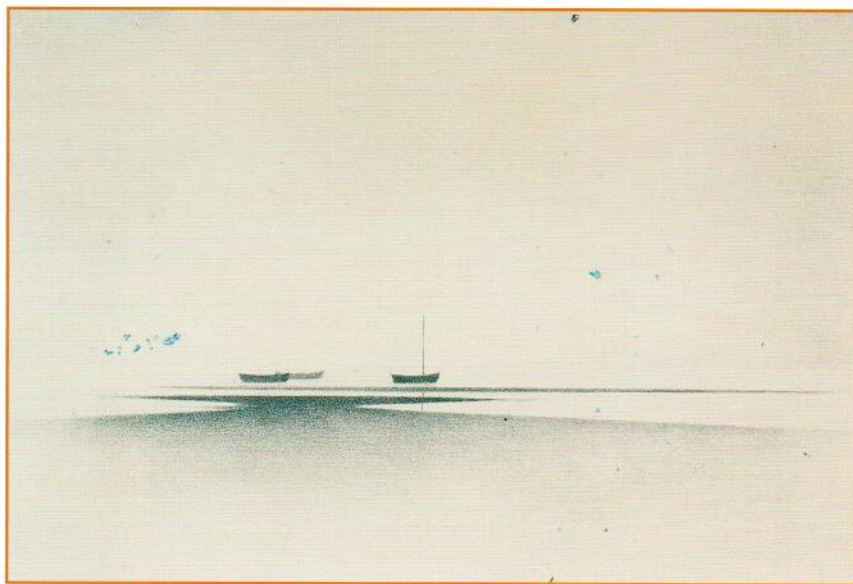
17. *Umbellater*, 1973, 6¹/₄ x 9¹/₄", Pencil



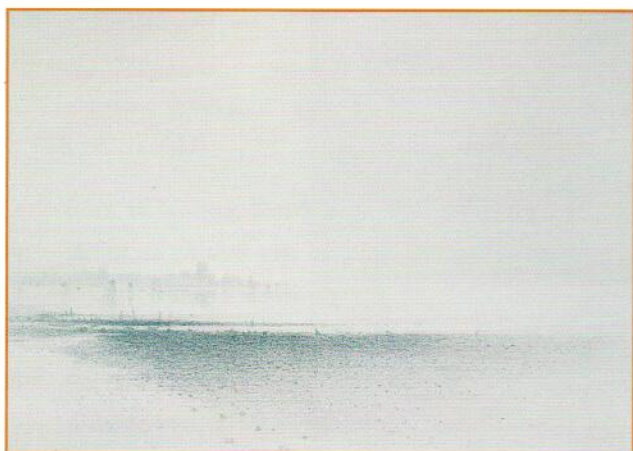
18. *Trädgårdshuset*, 1982, 5¹/₂ x 4¹/₈"
Pencil



19. *Charente maritime*, 1986, 17 x 11³/₄", Charcoal



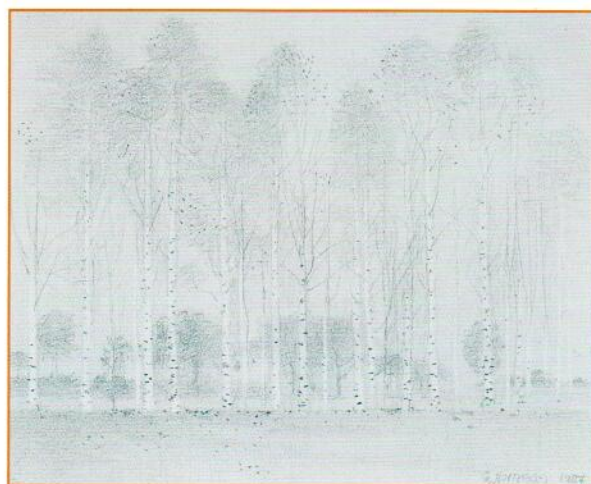
20. *Sandrevlar*, 1958, 11½ x 17⅞", Lithograph, Edition 7 of 20, #142



21. *Fran Fouras*, 1978, 6½ x 9¼", Pencil



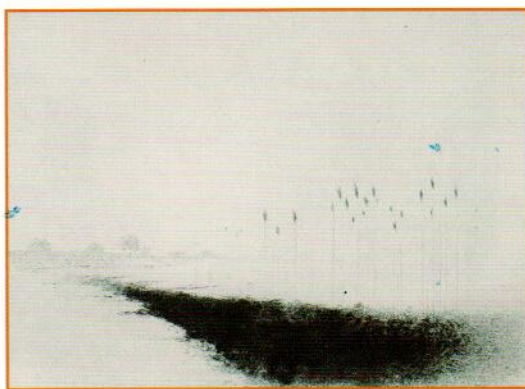
22. *Strandbrink*, 1986, 5½ x 7⅞", Conté crayon



23. *Birches*, 1987, 4 x 4⅞", Pencil



24. *Kväll i bergen*, 1997, $4\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{7}{8}$ ",
Drypoint, Edition 12 of 16, #945



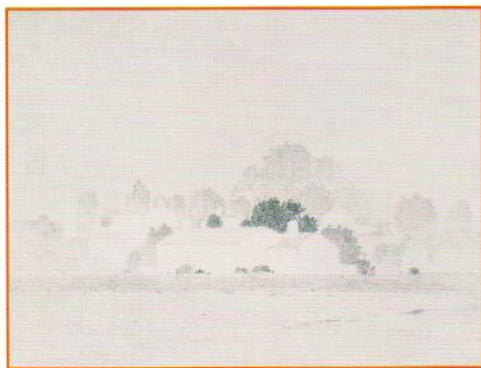
25. *Mörk strand*, 1997, $5\frac{1}{4} \times 7$ ", Drypoint,
Edition 14 of 18, #946



26. *Marskväll*, 1980, $4\frac{1}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$ ",
Drypoint, Edition 28 of 30, #538



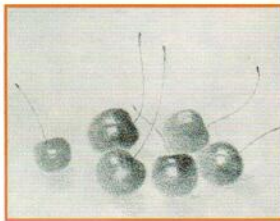
27. *Skogsbyn*, 1958, $5\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{3}{4}$ ", Lithograph, Edition 13 of 15, #139



28. *Gryning*, 1984
 $4\frac{1}{4} \times 5\frac{9}{16}$ ", Drypoint, Edition 10 of 12, #662



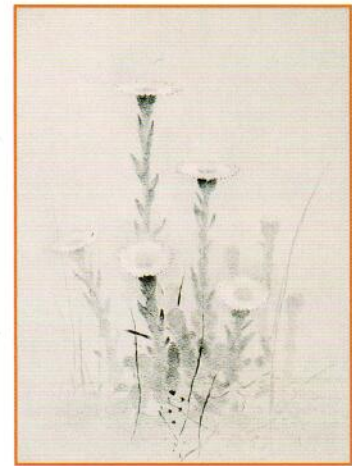
29. *Bergskam*, 1983
 $2\frac{3}{4} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$ ", Drypoint
Edition 2 of 15, #609



30. *Körsbär*, 1985
2⁵/₈ x 3¹/₈", Drypoint
Edition 30 of 30, #693



31. *Blåklockor*, 1954
7 x 4¹/₂", Lithograph
Edition 14 of 25, #107



32. *Tussilago*, 1977
5¹/₂ x 4¹/₄", Drypoint, provtryck, #452

GUNNAR NORRMAN

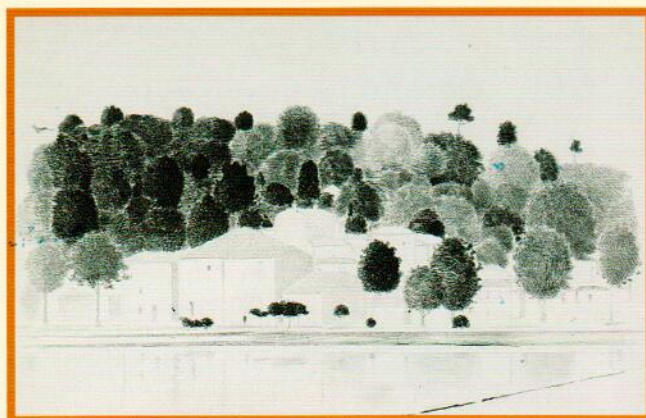
- 1912 Born in Malmö, Sweden.
- 1934 Debut as painter and graphic artist at the annual exhibition of the Scandian Art Association at Malmö, Sweden.
- 1938 Received Bachelor of Science degree
- 1942 First one man show at The Malmö Museum of Art, Malmö, Sweden.
- 1958 Received a Scholarship from the 70th Birthday Fund of King Gustaf VI Adolf (for experiments in drypoint).
- 1979 Awarded the Prince Eugen Medal.
Illustrated the anthology of poems (Nature in our Hearts).
- 1980 Works purchased during exhibition in New York by the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the New York Public Library.

Major Solo Exhibitions

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1942, 1982, 1992
Malmö Museum, Malmö, Sweden | 1986
Galerie Claude Bernard, Paris, France |
| 1973, 1982, 1986, 1992
Galerie Vömel, DüCseeldorf, West Germany | 1986, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997
Pucker Gallery, Boston, United States |
| 1976, 1978, 1981, 1983, 1985, 1986, 1988
Galerie Leger, Malmö, Sweden | 1997
Galerie Sous Le Passe-Partout, Montréal, Canada |
| 1979, 1984
Fischer Fine Art, London, United Kingdom | Galleri Lorensberg, Gotenborg, Sweden |
| 1980, 1983, 1988, 1992, 1995, 1997
Fitch-Febvrel Gallery, New York, United States | 1998
Galleri Linné, Stockholm Art Fair, Sweden |
| 1984
Galerie Brusberg, Hannover, West Germany | Galleri Linné, Upsala, Sweden |
| | 1999
Kulturmuseum, Lomma, Sweden |

Back cover:
33. *Hamnby*, 1975
5 x 7³/₄", Drypoint, Edition 1 of 6, #409

Nature and Life



4 September – 5 October

In cooperation with Fitch-Febvrel Gallery, New York City

Opening Reception: 4 September, 1999; 3 to 6 p.m.

The public is invited to attend. The artist will be present.

In conjunction with Mark Davis: Movement Within Space

GALLERY HOURS: Monday through Saturday 10:00 am to 5:30 pm; Sundays 1:00 to 5:00 pm.

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