

NORTON

MUSEUM OF ART

Norton Museum of Art to Present Solo Exhibitions by Mimi Plumb and Gertrude Abercrombie

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On view from October 31, 2026, the two shows explore poetic, psychologically charged visions of American life and landscape across the 20th century



L: Mimi Plumb, *Pyramid Lake*, 1985, Gelatin silver print, Framed: 23 x 27 in., Courtesy of the artist. © Mimi Plumb; R: Gertrude Abercrombie, *Letter from Karl*, 1940, Oil on canvas, 24 x 30 in., Union League Club of Chicago.

West Palm Beach, Florida (June 3, 2026) — The Norton Museum of Art will present two solo exhibitions that explore the American life and landscape of the 20th century: *Blazing Light: Photographs by Mimi Plumb* and *Gertrude Abercrombie: The Whole World Is a Mystery*.

Opening concurrently, the exhibitions create distinct visual languages — Plumb’s rooted in the powerful and evolving vision of American life and landscape, and Abercrombie’s in introspection, dreams, memory, and imagination. They will go on view on October 31, 2026, and close in March 2027.

By placing Plumb’s documentary aesthetic and poetic sensibility in dialogue with Abercrombie’s enigmatic, dreamlike paintings, visitors encounter a nuanced and multifaceted exploration of place and identity. The exhibitions underscore the Norton Museum of Art’s role as a leading platform for women artists of the 20th and 21st century whose work has been historically underrecognized.

“The exhibitions by Mimi Plumb and Gertrude Abercrombie reflect the Norton’s commitment to highlighting women artists who have challenged the way we perceive and understand ourselves and the world around us. They mark the first time these artists have been presented at such a scale in the region, offering a rare opportunity for visitors to engage deeply with their work,” said Ghislain d’Humières, the Norton’s Kenneth C. Griffin Director and CEO.

Blazing Light: Photographs by Mimi Plumb

Blazing Light: Photographs by Mimi Plumb is the first solo museum exhibition of the American artist (born 1953) in the United States, bringing together four of Plumb's major bodies of work, *The White Sky*, *Landfall*, *The Golden City*, and *The Reservoir*, that collectively contemplate the anxieties of American life in the waning years of the Cold War and its aftermath (1971–2025). The exhibition features 107 black-and-white photographs, including vintage gelatin silver prints and more recently produced pigmented inkjet prints.

Plumb began taking photos in the 1970s as a teenager in the San Francisco suburb of Walnut Creek at a time marked by rapid development coupled with global political and economic instability. Her early artistic life was defined by a burgeoning awareness of global warming, the AIDS epidemic, violent conflict in Latin America and the Middle East, and the looming threat of nuclear war. This atmosphere attuned Plumb to the evidence of such forces in the land, the built environment, and the ways people carry themselves and relate to one another — concerns that continue to resonate in her work today.

The artist's work provides a visual record of late-20th-century American life amid political unrest and a rapidly changing landscape. Her photographs focus on people, both friends and strangers, sometimes on the margins of society, capturing a pervasive sense of alienation between people and both the built and natural environments. This blend of documentary rigor and poetic sensibility expands the possibilities of photographic storytelling, positioning Plumb as a vital, if underrecognized, voice in the history of American photography.

"Since the 1970s, Mimi Plumb has been a keen observer of her surroundings, recording the subtle tensions and psychological undercurrents that shape everyday encounters with the landscape and built environment," said Lauren Richman, Ph.D., William and Sarah Ross Soter Senior Curator of Photography. "At the Norton, *Blazing Light* invites viewers into a space where reality feels at once intimate and unfamiliar, shaped as much by our inner states as by the shifting environmental and social pressures of our time."

The exhibition was organized by Gregory Harris, Keough Family Curator of Photography at the High Museum of Art. At the Norton, the exhibition is curated by Lauren Richman, Ph.D., William and Sarah Ross Soter Senior Curator of Photography. It will be complemented by an exhibition catalogue co-published by Radius Books and the High Museum, including an essay by Richman, among others from partner institutions.

Gertrude Abercrombie: The Whole World Is a Mystery

Gertrude Abercrombie: The Whole World Is a Mystery constitutes the most comprehensive museum presentation to date on the art of American artist Gertrude Abercrombie (1909–1977). With approximately 70 paintings drawn from important institutional and private collections, the exhibition will offer audiences an opportunity to discover Abercrombie's dreamlike visions and highly personal surrealist language in depth and to understand her distinct contribution to 20th-century American art, offering audiences a comprehensive look at her artistic vision.

Throughout her lifetime, Abercrombie battled feelings of isolation despite her relationships with others and seemed to be eternally searching for a sense of home, as reflected in her work. Her life was difficult, and the struggles she faced were transcribed visually in her paintings. From the 1930s until her death in 1977, she produced enigmatic paintings populated with objects and figures of personal significance. Cats, owls, snails, doors, moons, barren trees, seashells, forking paths, and masked figures all converge in her mysterious works, which suggest a life of purposeful introspection and emotional

struggle. Drawing consistently on her own dreams as source material, Abercrombie said, "The whole world is a mystery."

"Gertrude Abercrombie lived life by her own rules," said Regina Palm, Ph.D., Harold and Anne Berkley Smith Senior Curator of Modern Art. "Her very existence challenged societal norms, often leading to feelings of isolation which she processed and manifested visually in her work. Her paintings are her diary. They are revelatory as they illustrate not only the innermost thoughts and feelings of the artist but also document the happenings of her time from the jazz scene of Chicago to the civil rights movement."

The exhibition was organized by Eric Crosby, Henry J. Heinz II Director of Carnegie Museum of Art, and Sarah Humphreville, Lunder Curator of American Art at Colby College Museum of Art, with Cynthia Stucki, Curatorial Assistant at Carnegie Museum of Art. At the Norton, the exhibition is curated by Regina Palm, Ph.D., Harold and Anne Berkley Smith Senior Curator of Modern Art. It will be complemented by an exhibition catalogue co-published by Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, Maine, Delmonico Books, D.A.P., New York.

ABOUT MIMI PLUMB

Mimi Plumb (born in California, 1953) is an American photographer who has photographed the human-altered landscape of California and the western United States with an eye toward the effects of climate change, unbridled capitalism, and looming military conflict since the 1970s. She earned undergraduate and graduate degrees in photography from the San Francisco Art Institute and taught at the Art Institute of Chicago, Stanford University, and San José State University. Plumb has published six widely acclaimed monographs: *Landfall* (TBW, 2018), *The White Sky* (Stanley/Barker, 2020), *The Golden City* (Stanley/Barker, 2021), *Megalith-Still* (Stanley/Barker, 2023), *Lookout on Highway 74* (Nazraeli, 2025), and *The Reservoir* (Nazraeli, 2025).

She is a 2022 Guggenheim Fellow, a 2017 recipient of the John Gutmann Award, and a 1989/1990 California Arts Council Artist Fellow. Plumb's photographs have been exhibited at the MFA Boston, Light Work in Syracuse, the Institute of Contemporary Art San José, and Pier 24 Photography in San Francisco. Her work is held in numerous public collections including SFMOMA, LACMA, the Deutsche Borse Collection, MFA Boston, Yale University Art Gallery, High Museum of Art, and Pier 24.

ABOUT GERTRUDE ABERCROMBIE

Gertrude Abercrombie (born in Texas, 1909–1977) was an American painter associated with Chicago's Hyde Park arts scene in the mid-20th century. Known for her complex self-portraits and enigmatic paintings of stark interiors and illusory landscapes and inspired by the European movement of Surrealism, she and her fellow Midwestern Surrealists adopted the movement according to their own signature styles.

Abercrombie graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with a degree in Romance languages and studied commercial art at the American Academy of Art. In [1936](#) and [1938](#) she won prizes at the Art Institute of Chicago's *Annual Exhibition of Works by Artists of Chicago and Vicinity*. During the 1940s and 1950s, she was known for holding parties and artistic gatherings at her Hyde Park home, inviting visual artists and prominent jazz musicians such as Dizzy Gillespie. Abercrombie's work was celebrated at the end of her life by a retrospective at the Hyde Park Arts Center. Her paintings continued to influence future generations, including a group of Chicago artists known as the Hairy Who.

Biography courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.

About the Norton Museum of Art

The Norton Museum of Art, Florida's largest art museum, is home to a distinguished collection of art, with holdings in American, European, Contemporary and Asian Art and Photography.

Founded in 1941 by Ralph Hubbard Norton and his wife, Elizabeth Calhoun Norton, the Museum collects, preserves, and exhibits art, and engages visitors through exhibitions, events and live entertainment featuring local musicians and performance artists. Public programming is year-round and designed to inspire conversations and build community through the power of art. The Museum is accessible to all.

In 2013, the Norton Museum of Art worked with London-based architectural firm Foster + Partners to create a transformative Masterplan for the Museum's campus. Phase 1, completed in 2019, included a new garden space; the Heyman Plaza, a new entry featuring Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen's iconic *Typewriter Eraser, Scale X*, 1999; the welcoming Great Hall, 12,000 square feet of new gallery space; and the restoration of six Museum-owned 1920s-era historic homes that house artists-in-residence. The Museum is progressing toward Phase 2, continuing to create a welcoming environment where creativity can flourish.

Visit the Museum's website at Norton.org or connect on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

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