

Eugene Von Bruenchenhein

January 4, 2021



The dozen fiery and aqueous paintings in this gripping exhibition, at the Andrew Edlin gallery, represent just one facet of Von Bruenchenhein's vast and eclectic output. The Milwaukee artist, who died in 1983, was unrecognized during his lifetime (he worked as a baker for many years). He left behind a houseful of jaw-dropping creations for a rapt posthumous audience: enchanting foliate vessels sculpted from clay that he dug himself, erotic photographs of his

wife, intricate miniature thrones assembled from chicken bones. In the lush oil-on-Masonite pieces here, from 1957-61, Von Bruenchenhein rendered a turbulent cosmos using an innovative combination of finger painting and tools (sticks, combs, crumpled paper). His fear of war in the atomic age haunts the pictures of roiling apocalyptic skies and fantastic supernatural battles. But there are quieter images, too, including one that suggests a hybrid of octopus and bromeliad in a vaporous swamp—a brooding character in the visionary artist's otherworldly melodrama.

— [Johanna Fateman](#)