



NICHOLAS AFRICANO

Lost boy, laughing man

Paintings and Figurines from 1985 and 1986

January 12 through February 21, 1992
University Galleries at Illinois State University

*A conversation between
Nicholas Africano and Barry Blinderman*

Tuesday, January 26th at 7:00 p.m.

Reception from 8:00 to 9:00 p.m.

GALLERY HOURS:

Tuesday	9:30 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Wednesday-Friday	9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday	12:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Verso:

Actor, 1986.

Bronze, cast glass, cloth, wood, marble base, 22 inches high.

Right:

Lost boy, laughing man, 1986.

Celastick relief, oil, and wax on canvas. Detail: left panel, 90 x 82 inches.

This exhibition is funded in part by the Illinois Arts Council, a State agency.



The *Lost boy, laughing man* paintings and figurines constitute a rarely exhibited body of work created by Nicholas Africano in 1985 and 1986. The artist views this series as pivotal in his development, noting that "I was working from the full depth of myself—it was the basis for the work that was *truly mine to do*." Forgoing the allusions to literature and opera that informed the preceding *Jekyll and Hyde*, *Petrouchka*, and *Evelina* series, Africano sought a more autobiographical expression of dualism in the human condition: hope and disillusionment, good and evil, role and will, and flesh and spirit. There is an emotional immediacy, a visceral confrontation with life's transient waves of joy and suffering in the gestures of the large high-relief figures in *His tears*, *Lost boy* and other paintings. Straining from their flat yet turbulent earth-toned backgrounds, these characters are trapped between substance and ethereality, evoking the Neoplatonic concept of the body as earthly prison of the soul.

A similar struggle is evident in the bronze and cast glass figurines in *Actor*, whose development freed Africano from the fixed point of view imposed by his relief-paintings. In later work, the figures grew to life-size scale and were placed in the midst of large paintings, thus creating a physically and psychically charged three-way interaction with the viewer.

—Barry Blinderman

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