

INTRODUCTION

Jurij Solovij

*"Nothing can be rushed. It must grow,
it should grow of itself. . ."*
Paul Klee "On Modern Art"

We cannot approach Jurij Solovij's work in terms of message or orthodox imagery, but rather, in terms of states of an ongoing life process, the varying conditions that maintain them. It is a language of material and color, of inherent values which are exploited and effectively juxtaposed.

Like the Abstract Expressionists, Solovij ignores formal aspects of painting and relies on his own visions and perceptions. In each work, he isolates, records, fragments of a directed creative awareness. Color is of primary importance. Solovij uses color to indicate form—painterly forms that do not yield to the static presence of more familiar still-lives and landscapes. They are active, erratic, dissoluble. To traditionalists, the result seems irrational and confusing. To others, Solovij's work is vital and imaginative.

"Thousand Heads" is a major work still in progress. These heads, executed in mixed media, disregard traditional portraiture. Instead, the individual physiognomy of each head is dependent on the expressive and dynamic harmony of color and line. To Solovij, the head is a two-fold challenge—firstly, as an object with real physical properties that are subject to change and secondly, because of the expressive nature of the face, as immediate access to inner personality and soul.

These heads are studies of the concept of repetition. While "head" reinforces a depersonalized form that is carried from piece to piece as the central compositional core, the creative interpretations of each head are highly unique and expressive. Only occasionally do actual

parts of a face appear, and they are treated as isolated, pure forms, without the context of their anatomical function. Like a word that, if repeated over and over, loses its assigned meaning and becomes experienced merely as sound, "head" becomes a basic visual cue. While this cue remains constant, the experience of viewing each individual head in succession leaves a residue of varied impressions. It is a study of transformation within a seemingly stable condition. Transformations which are interpreted and distorted through memory and the unconscious reflections of the immediate. Solovij does not balk at the multitude variations of his theme, but rather takes the time to single out each aspect in an acrobatic manner hinting at stream of consciousness.

In other works, specifically the drawings and constructions, sculptural materials such as plaster, wire mesh, and twigs are mixed with paint to create surface texture. To camouflage these materials, to make them more "presentable" or beautiful in any way, is of little importance. In these works, one senses an exploratory process through the elimination of all elements which are not essential.

Most importantly, these works come of themselves, of the artist's direct confrontation with his inspiration and those materials available to him. This confrontation becomes the syntax of Solovij's work.

Dzvinia Orlowsky

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MY CREATIVE PLATFORM

I look upon a creative seance as the radiation of energy in a dynamic fashion from the current of evolution, autonomous and without concrete references directed at this society. If one accepts this position, the only thing that one can permit oneself in art (and in life) is informing.

A work of art informs. It transmits information about the spiritual and physical world of the artist. It transmits information about the artist's interests; it transmits information about the quality of his interests; it transmits information about an artist's interest in certain components of a work of art at a given time (or moment) of the creative process; it transmits information about the physical and emotional characteristics of the components of a work of art.

In my present work one should not look for "great messages." My work would have some meaning to a viewer who is interested in the mystery of the life that surrounds us, the life beyond the social, political, and religious questions, a life on the level of the energy of the current of the evolution of life; it would have meaning to a viewer who, for example, is fascinated by things in a department store window seen through a glass pane on which things are reflected from the other side – to someone who is sensitive to the process of visual fixation.

I don't select the aspect beforehand; we automatically absorb visual qualities in our surroundings which lie encoded, waiting for the proper opportunity and moment to return to some form of reality, usually transformed by the work of art.

While I work my mind is occupied by, and I am intrigued and excited by, only pictorial occupational aspects. The identification of the automatic, encoded, unconscious episodes of the sources of the vision usually takes place after the work is finished – frequently well after a particular picture or sculpture is created.

During the work on a picture, there arises a series of thoughts, concepts, and questions which lead to the realization of the next variation in order to see and compare a concrete response to the generated thoughts, concepts, and questions. Usually this has to do with varying a certain strong pictorial component within the limits of a particular plan. This may consist of a change in the significance or proportion of a color, or in the color spectrum, or in the dimension and technique of a paint application. In the process of this work there arises a more contrasting concept which leads to the creation of a new group in a manner similar to the method of the creation of preceding groups.

The depiction of the head has meant to me both a challenge to the creative imagination and a means of representing aspects of various situations. Although all objects are directly subjected to the idea of metamorphosis – the law of changes of form and color depending on the lighting, the quality of light, depending on the topographical relationships to its surroundings – the head, in addition to being subjected to these very specific qualities, can, precisely due to the face, also reflect the mysteries of the heart and soul.

Jurij Solovij

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JURIJ SOLOVIJ

Born in Ukraine, January 6, 1921

ARTISTIC TRAINING

Academy of Fine Arts – Lviv, Ukraine 1941-44

MAJOR EXHIBITIONS

- 1979 Hunterdon Art Center, New Jersey
- 1978-9 Ukrainian Canadian Art Foundation, Toronto
- 1976 Minnesota Museum of Art
- 1976 Thompson Park Visitor Center, Lincroft, New Jersey
- 1976 Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences, New York City
- 1975 Museum of Art, University of Pennsylvania
- 1975 Philadelphia Art Alliance
- 1975 County College of Morris, New Jersey
- 1975 Little Falls Public Library, New Jersey
- 1974 Gallery North, Mt. Clemens, Michigan
- 1974 Ocean County College Art Gallery, New Jersey
- 1973 Institute "Oseredok," Winnipeg, Canada
- 1973 St. Vladimir Institute, Toronto, Canada
- 1973 New Jersey State Museum, Trenton
- 1972 Ukrainian Literary and Art Club, New York City
- 1972 New York University, New York
- 1972 St. Lawrence Art Center, Toronto, Canada
- 1972 Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art, Chicago
- 1971 Gunther Franke Gallery, Munich, Germany
- 1970 Irene Stecura Gallery, New York
- 1970 Nova Gallery, Woodstock, New York
- 1970 Ukrainian Institute of America, New York
- 1969 Unitarian Society of Rutherford, Rutherford, New Jersey
- 1969 New York Public Library (Hudson Branch), New York
- 1968 Fairleigh Dickinson University, Rutherford, New Jersey
- 1967 Fairleigh Dickinson University, Wayne, New Jersey

- 1965 Art and Literary Club, New York
- 1963 W & W Gallery, Toronto, Canada
- 1962 Adha Artzt Gallery, New York
- 1960 University of Chicago, Chicago
- 1960 Ahda Artzt Gallery, New York
- 1959 Arts Center Gallery, New York
- 1958 ART-USA, Madison Square Garden, New York
- 1951 Gunther Franke Gallery, Munich
- 1950 Museum of Nuremberg
- 1948 Ansbach Gallery, Germany
- 1947 National Gallery, Munich

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

- Gallery Gunther Franke (Germany)
- Institute "Oseredok", (Winnipeg)
- New Jersey State Museum (Trenton, N.J.)
- New York Public Library (Main Branch)
- Niagara Falls Gallery and Museum (Canada)
- Gallery Irene Stecura (New York)
- Ukrainian Museum U.V.A.N. (New York)
- Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art (Chicago)

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