

Master —Of— Drawing

RUDOLPH KHATCHATRIAN

RUDOLPH KHATCHATRIAN, a new master of an old art, is due to exhibit his drawings in Detroit and in Los Angeles. He is considered the pioneer who breathed a new life in the age-old tradition of icons. He uses the icon medium, gesso on wood panel, for monochromatic and sepia drawings with unusual effect.

Mr. Khatchatrian is already in Detroit, where the opening of his first exhibition in North America took place on Thursday, October 17, at the Arts and Recreation Center of St. John's Armenian Church in Southfield, Michigan.

Late in October the exhibition will move to the Heritage Gallery in Los Angeles.

Varteres Karagozian, the enterprising director of Editions Ereboundi, has been instrumental in bringing Rudolph Khatchatrian and his works to the United States.

Khatchatrian is an outstanding artist, well respected in Moscow and throughout the Soviet Union.

These exhibitions will give a rare opportunity to view the masterful works of one of the most respected artists of his generation.



Self portrait, Rudolph Khatchatrian.

True to Himself

WATCHING RUDOLPH KHATCHATRIAN work at one of his portraits is a memorable experience. In the middle of a clear white space, without any prior preparation, he starts drawing two eyes. Only when he has completed the eyes does he move on to another detail of the portrait and works on it with the same involvement. One wonders whether the artist will manage to make a comprehensive whole out of these different segments, and one is always surprised to find that not only is the composition complete, but that no alternatives, additions or improvements are needed. The resulting work is so pure and harmonious that it seems to have been created in one instance and with one magic stroke.

Khatchatrian's portraits do not represent frozen moments in time; that photographic quality does not interest him. He captures the whole essence of the person in eternity, or eternity in the person. To achieve that, the artist establishes a unique rapport with the model and demands from the latter the same kind of devotion to the work as he himself has. The result being that the model suddenly finds himself or herself in the midst of the unfolding miracle and, what's more, realizes that his/her participation was a vital part of the creative process.

Khatchatrian drew his first self portrait at the age of thirteen and since then the genre has assumed a singular importance for the artist: "Whenever I have exhausted my energy and the creative block imposes itself, I turn to a new self portrait. This unique process of self re-evaluation brings with it the desire to work and the urge to create..." It was during such a period that he started experimenting on a panel which was coated with gesso. The result was a self portrait, one that was excruciatingly painful for the artist because of the gradual weakening of his eyesight. The viewer, however, never feels the sweat or the pain that went into the work.

The artist's strength lies in the fact that he does not argue with nature, his teacher, does not try to change or improve it, but blends with it, penetrates into its depth and then commits his understanding on paper. And whether he uses a lead pencil, sepia, or sanguine, it is not the one color that we see but a whole range of shades.

Rudolph Khatchatrian's work brings a breath of fresh air which arouses you and reminds you of human values. He has adopted the sincerity of classical painters but has never tried to copy them, because he believes that the truth, once

created, lives its own life and cannot be recreated. Khatchatrian's work is endowed with that elusive quality which comes from a conviction where the artist has nothing to prove to anyone and has only one desire - to be true only to himself.

Henry Igitian

Genius of The Portrait Artist

RUDOLPH KHATCHATRIAN is a graphic artist par excellence. For him drawing is not just another means of artistic expression; it has its independent function and unique substance.

Viewing his portraits (his preferred genre) one is reminded of the work of the Renaissance masters. Therein one finds the same perfection of classical drawings blended, of course, with contemporary form and perception. Khatchatrian is firmly rooted in artistic tradition and even his most recent technique is borrowed from the Renaissance masters. His portraits are executed with graphite on a gesso background. The uneven surface of the gesso differs from the neutral background that paper offers; its soft and velvety surface lures the viewer to the depths of the picture.

It is Rudolph Khatchatrian's genius as a portrait artist that makes his models appear timeless. Without prior knowledge of the models we find it impossible to decide on a place or time reference. The viewer starts making associations with people of different times and different places.

There is a rich spiritual life to his faces. The superficial and the transitory have no place here. The artist goes beyond what the eye sees and brings out the beauty even in the most ordinary faces. And whether he works in sepia or sanguine, he manages to express the most subtle of emotions and essence by the use of that single color.

Khatchatrian's portraits do not have the hesitant uncertainty of sentimental romanticism. His line is pure, delicate and controlled, and the resulting portraits are complete and organic.

Besides portraits, Khatchatrian has done compositions and still lifes. He is a master of the pure line, of immaculate taste and perfection. The beauty which he creates is most arresting — again and again.

Marina Samsonian

A New Master of An Old Art

RUDOLPH KHATCHATRIAN was driven by this maturity and mastery of art to explore new media, through which he would be able to express more powerfully his complex perception of the world.

He had realized that his perception and the scope of his artistic thinking were being restricted by the limitations of pencil drawing, thereby leading him to the inevitable collapse of the traditional concept of drawing.

Khatchatrian discovered his relief in the use of *levkas* (gesso on wood panel), a medium which opened unexpected possibilities in the realm of graphic arts.

This medium was well known for many centuries to the old iconographers. But Khatchatrian did not use *levkas* for oil painting, but for drawing.

As he drew on *levkas* he developed an unprecedented mastery of drawing in this medium. This mastery helped him to move forward in attaining new artistic values.

It is hard to believe that those complex, luminous and colorful pieces are created by monochromatic sepia.

It seems as though the artist, through each pencil stroke, releases the mysterious life retained in the depths of the wood.

In more recent years, the artist has amazed the viewer by the simplicity of his classical forms and unbelievably austere lines.

In art as in life, "simple" means the most difficult, the most exceptional. Especially in art, "simple" means a new level attained by the artist in the traditional art forms, cultivated by the classical masters to the point of rendering it very ordinary, but breathed in a new life by the artist in a modern setting.

The reason this art form is considered "simple" is that it is commonly known to the art world, and the reason it is difficult is that it requires a new level of perfection over the form which was regarded as perfection by the old masters.

Khatchatrian does not destroy the old forms of drawing. He departs from the common form considered as complete by the Renaissance masters, and recreates it under new conditions and in a new quality.

Kira Mikhailovskaya

Rudolf Khachatryan (1937–2007)

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