



SLOBODKINA

EARLY (1938)
AND RECENT (1988)

WORKS

WHAT SOME PEOPLE HAVE SAID:

In the Museum of Living Art, connected with the New York University, in Washington Square, a special show by Esphyr Slobodkina, has been arranged. Mrs. Slobodkina, who was born in Siberia and who studied in China, is a painter of the abstract, who has refinement, good color and a sense of picture-making among her assets. Her balanced compositions speak to the imagination even though they provide few clues to the basic themes.

N.Y. SUN Dec. 11, 1943

The Miami Herald
Sunday, Nov. 7, 1982

By HELEN L. KOHEN
Art Critic

Esphyr Slobodkina, a woman of Byzantine complexity, still paints, draws, illustrates and writes books, designing and creating at 74 from a tidy studio/house in Hallandale. It is an unlikely place for her, a world and a half away from her origins, and almost beyond reach of those who could nudge her into the fame she has earned in American art circles.

Slobodkina hides there out of choice, and though her conversation remains anything but guarded, her inclination for disguise seems in-born. She has survived on it, playing out more roles in life, and in art, than most people ever get a chance at.

A veteran of scores of exhibitions, the majority of which were held in conjunction with her fellow members of the American Abstract Artists group, Slobodkina's current show, at the Hallandale Branch Library, is an exhibition literally urged out of her. A mix of things literary, artistic and artsy, the library show is another kind of concealment, even though the dolls, the books, the illustrations, the collages and hangings and the paintings on view also reflect perfectly what she has accomplished, and how.

The "what" of Slobodkina's triumph is arriving early in her painting career at the abstract esthetic, slightly constructivist, that guides her work to this day. The "how" is several other stories.

New York Times
March 25, 1951

ABSTRACT: Recent pictures by Esphyr Slobodkina at the New School announce her as one of the more convincing and assured abstract painters of today. She sets her geometrical shapes flying all over the picture surface, conveying, in their movement and in the clean-cut impact of their interpenetrations, the dynamism that gives these designs such admirable tension. These knife-edged shapes have no body; their pure color is not altered by any transitoriness of natural light; yet, they are not flat. They advance and recede because of her ingenious play with perspective along the contours. Most pictures here have no meaning beyond the message of pure form.

Herald Tribune
Sunday, May 15, 1955

THE WONDERFUL FEAST
By Esphyr Slobodkina. 26 pp. New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Company, \$2.

A MEASURE of feed for Spotty, Farmer Jones' horse, provides a "wonderful feast" for all who happen in, the last and least being one little ant who takes the one remaining crumb with thankfulness as her "wonderful feast."

The pictures in this new book are fascinating. Esphyr Slobodkina's fine sense of design and color makes each page a delight. Soft blues jostle sharp ones, plums, browns and greens give strength, orange touches pink judiciously and there is always enough white for drama. Utterly simple are the figures too as it cut out of paper and very clear for young eyes to recognize, yet the patterns are excitingly bold and modern. Most of the pages are double spreads with the few words of text set to harmonize. The whole picture book is an aesthetic education for our youngest as well as a book they will surely love. M.S.L.



Striking a pose with *Within The Mysterious Parameters of Privileged Information*, Hallandale, 1988

Since her move to Florida in the late 1970's, Slobodkina has continued to produce works of imagination, complexity, and expressive wit. As an active exhibiting member of American Abstract Artists for more than forty years, the early reputation of the artist is confirmed by the inclusion of her works in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City; the Corcoran Gallery of Art and the Smithsonian, Washington, D.C.; and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Throughout her life Slobodkina has supported herself through various vocations - illustrator, commercial painter of trays and baskets, textile designer and printer, author, and artist. The varied objects and artifacts, the paintings, sculptures, and collages, the textile and clothing design, book illustration, jewelry, furniture and interior design - all are marked by a sense of order and rationality. Always concerned with geometric form, architecture, and design, abstraction is a natural style for Slobodkina. It expresses her love for the structural, mechanical, and mathematical visual elements which bring order and organization to our lives.

Wendy Blazier
Art and Culture Center of Hollywood



Studio 1, Great Neck, 1950s-60s

The Art Digest
 fertile work in the nonobjective field is extremely well known, and the present show represents her painting with entire justice.
 By EDWARD ALDEN JEWELL

Eschyr Slobodkina

he rain forests and the
 he rare

NEW YORK TIMES
 DAY, JUNE 7, 1959.

By HOWARD DEVREE

surrealist landscape. Eschyr Slobodkina succeeds strangely in combining diverse elements reminiscent at once of mechanism, trompe l'oeil and collage. A large exhibition in... circumscribed metier should be... exciting, stimulating and varied rather than a trifle monotonous is sufficient testimony to the artist's technical skill and ability to infuse these expert commandments with communicated inventive designs, some remarkably three-dimensional air of inevitability, and colorfully shaded in tones and hues are never commonplace.—J. G.

WHAT I SOMETIMES SAY:

I have no preconceived ideas or esthetic moral principles. Whatever "looks good", "feels right" - in other words, gives esthetic satisfaction, is O.K. with me.

Unlike most of my artist friends and acquaintances, I'm only dimly aware of the "momentous" happenings and current events in the World of Arts. Still less am I influenced by current trends.

Reading learned essays on Art bores me to tears.

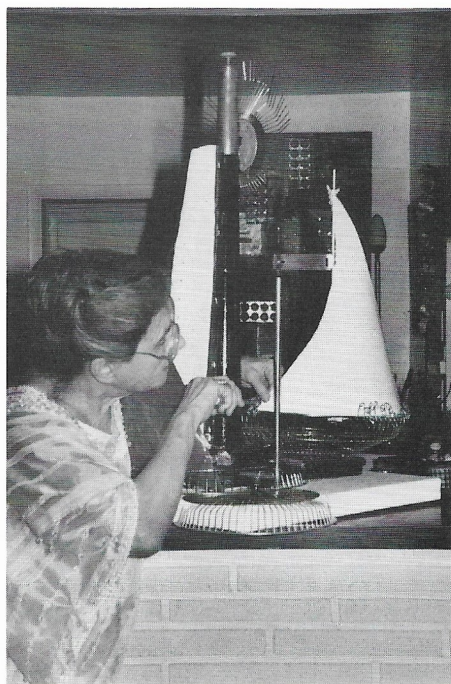
I don't have to descend into gloomy obscurantism of Zen, wrap myself up in shimmering stripes of Nirvana, or depart into empty spaces of Minimalism to get my kicks out of painting.

I don't feel a traitor to my chosen art if, in the middle of preparations for an exhibition of abstract paintings, catching sight of an exceptionally attractive bouquet of flowers, I have a strong urge to paint it. I simply go ahead, and paint it.

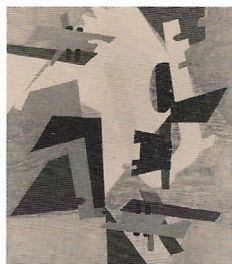
I just happen to be a very natural person, untrammelled by artificial, arbitrary rules of the games people, in my case people of "Art Circles", play.

Frankly, I never gave a damn what people thought. As a result of that I always painted, sculpted, constructed, made collages, wall hangings, "Serenipographs", "Glass Sandwiches", dolls, books, clothes, furniture, and now, G.I.O.S.O.'s!

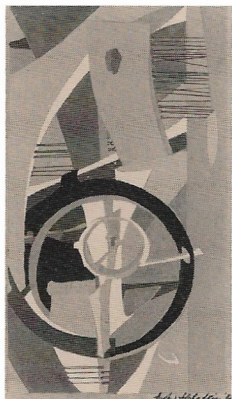
What fun it all was, and I'm glad to say, still is...



Putting finishing touches on *State of Art Quality Time*, Hallandale, 1988



Hytron Abstraction
In Green,
1945



Subzero Technology,
1982



Circuit Diagram
No. 1,
1988



1942 with wood
construction *The Derelict*
(1938)
Photo by Fritz Glarner

PAINTING —

Regardless of the school to which an artist's work belongs, there is always one essential quality which marks a successful painting, — the relation of shapes and colors must appear *inevitable* and be the *only* solution of each particular problem. The elements of a picture should not seem to be thrown together at random, but as if put there by the same forces which produced the objects in nature. One does not ask why the petals of a flower are arranged in a certain way — they just are, and the harmony of their relation to the center, stem and leaves of the flower is gratifying.

To accomplish such harmony in painting, it is not enough to learn the rules of composition. Keen perception of beauty in nature: observation of everyday things when, suddenly, they take on a new meaning and give creative stimulus: knowledge of medium: unwavering belief in the aesthetic truth of the work about to be produced: all this must go into the making of a satisfying work of art.

Although well acquainted with the major schools of thought in Art (Realism, Impressionism, Cubism, Neo-plasticism, Surrealism, etc.), and having received a sound training in most of them, Miss Slobodkina does not choose to follow any one of these open roads. Instead, basing her work on the plastic laws of space discovered by the Cubists, and by-passing the tortured psycho-symbolism of the Surrealists, she makes a direct and powerful appeal to the uninhibited imagination of a sympathetic onlooker.

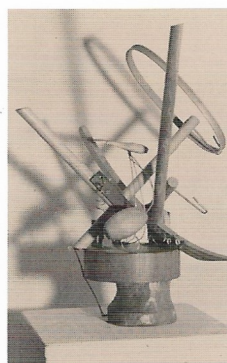
ESPHYR SLOBODKINA — Born in 1908 in Siberia. Lived in Russia Proper, its Far Eastern provinces, and in Manchuria. Became a naturalized American in 1933.

Studied art in the National Academy of Design and with private tutors.

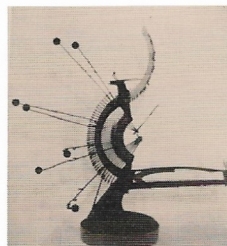
Was awarded the Yaddo Fellowship in 1933-1934, and in 1957; and the MacDowell Fellowship in 1958 and 1959.

Married Ilya Bolotowsky in 1933; divorced in 1936.

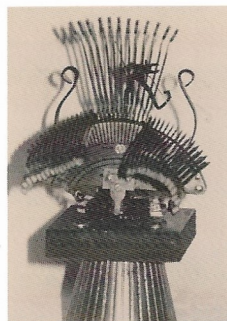
Married Wm. L. Urquhart in 1960; widowed in 1963.



Sailor's Wife,
1938



The Typewriter Bird,
1960



The Peacock of
the Walk,
1988

Charter member of the American Abstract Artists and The Federation of Modern Artists & Sculptors. Represented in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, The Smithsonian's National Museum of American Art, The Corcoran Gallery, and many other important museums and private collections.

Miss Slobodkina is also very well known as a children's book author and illustrator.

SCULPTURE —

Looking at Esphyr Slobodkina's sculpture one recognizes many a humble object of everyday life — a clothes hanger here, a darning egg there; pieces of old furniture; hinges and screws everywhere. Transformed by the plastic use to which they have been put, they achieve a new reality and lead an independent existence of their own.

Like the artists of the Renaissance, Slobodkina does not think *ANY JOB* too small or too great to interest her and to enlist her best efforts. Her works include easel paintings, murals, sculpture, textile printing, illustrations, etc.

The two latest additions to her already extensive repertoire are the 2-1/2 - dimensional constructions and the G.I.O.S.O.'s.

The 2-1/2 - Dimensional Constructions are multi-media compositions usually enclosed between two sheets of glass, this technique allowing for a particularly unorthodox choice of materials.

The G.I.O.S.O.'s, called so because they utilize small parts of typewriters, sewing and other machines. Great Ideas Of Small Origins. See?!

Irritation with the contemporary sloppiness of use of the English language, combined with the immense flexibility of this new medium, and urged on by an irrepressible sense of humor, produced works with titles such as: *The Saddy Sagging Educational Spiral*, 1986; *Our Great Big Happy Condominium In The Sky*, 1987; *The Madly Rushing Circles of Upward Mobility*, 1987; *Within The Mysterious Parameters of Privileged Information*, 1988, and others.



1988 with *Our Great Big Happy Condominium In The Sky*
Photo by Martin Newmar

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