



Adia Yunkun

Seductive mauves, subtle tracings scattered over the surface, disconcerting fractions of forms, shapes half torn, calculated incompleteness are lures of Adja Yunkers. But why the cry of blue in a mauve wilderness, or the gold, darker than a cloud, in an acrylic dawn? The one dimensional process of reading the pictorial writing advocated by the blind leading the blind has to give way to the three dimensional method of recognizing images. Give yourself time to catch the clear note, the iconic flash that suddenly reveals the fusion of two opposites, one geometric the other figurative, into an indeterminate whole. The effect is lyrical for the tension between the opposites pulsates with erotic intentions.

Yunkers belongs to the lineage of artists who, like Miro, can curve the back of a woman with the trace of a gesture. Miro would brighten the sky of his oils with the song and spontaneity of the twenties. Yunkers takes full advantage of the tendency of water dissolvent colors to darken as they dry. His lyricism is thoughtful, the tearing of the collage hardly audible. Viewing together the whole series of "mauves", shifts of mood become noticeable, but the firmness of the execution is masterly. The content varies, encounters of lines suggest lovers, horizontal division of the painting offers space for reversals; the deep call, longing and masculine, may or may not reach the beloved for the distance between the two is equivocal. *Flagellants of Void* includes the portrait of a woman, a paint-

ing within a painting, formulated in a sentence including two propositions, one mauve the other brown.

Yunkers' unfulfilled patterns tend often to form diagrams but the unprejudiced viewer will certainly recognize the figures the poet is invoking. The difference between a labyrinth, a female nude or a sealed letter may seem minimal. Vast is the accumulation of images which the artist exploits with daring effects. The ultimate endeavor is to visualize that which lies beyond our immediate reality, natural or pictorial: the end beyond view cojoined to chance.

"'Less is more' hold those who reduce poetry to a mental exercise;" this is all I have murmurs the true poet, aware of the immensity of his task. Canvas and paint are the bread and wine of icons. The artist looks at the blank canvas for it must be made to speak if he is to survive. For Yunkers it is all important to bind the painting closely to his own self, something of himself must be enclosed. *Folded Canvas I*, 1970, is a key image. A canvas, painted mauve on one side, is folded to form an assymetric pattern of warm color and raw texture, the whole supported by a field of Piero della Francesca blue. Could not the folded canvas be viewed as a robe wrapping what used to be called in the days of Piero the garment of the soul?

The only secret worth concealing-and-revealing in poetic terms is love. The pressure of a male body against the flank of a woman is suggested by a luminous curve answering, as it

were, with its lyrical song the imperious thrust of the sombre ochre.

Insight is mercurial, insight unites us with what the mirror's glass holds back, it unites with what appearance envelopes. This is the primary message conveyed by the reading of the deep meaning of Adja Yunkers' paintings.

Nicolas Calas

Adja Yunkers

Born in Riga, Latvia, 1900.

Studied in Leningrad, Berlin and Paris. Stoker on Danish ship "Haderslev," 1923. Came to the United States, 1947. Taught at New School for Social Research, New York, 1947-56; Cooper Union, New York, 1956-67; Barnard College, New York, 1969-present. Also taught summer sessions at several western universities and was a visiting critic, Columbia University, New York, 1967-69. Edited and published *Creation, Ars* and *Ars-Portfolios*, Stockholm, 1942-45; *Prints In the Desert*, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1950. Major projects include production of a portfolio, *Poems for Marie-Jose* by Octavio Paz with five prints; a mural, *A Human Condition*, for Syracuse University, 1966; a tapestry for the Student Union, State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1967.

Over forty one-man exhibitions including the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., The Art Institute of Chicago, Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge. Retrospective exhibitions at The Baltimore Museum of Art, 1960, and the Utah Museum of Fine Arts, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, 1969.

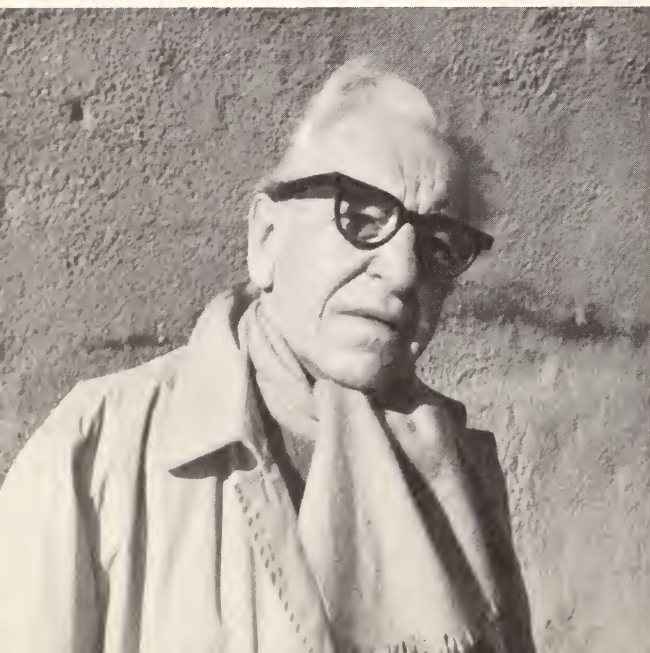
Represented in numerous group shows including *Abstract Expressionists and Imagists*, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1961; *The New American Painting and Sculpture: The First Generation*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1969; *L'Art Vivant Aux*

Etats Unis, Fondation Maeght, St. Paul de Vence, France, 1970.

Recipient of a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, 1949-50, 1954-55; Ford Foundation Grant, 1960; and numerous other awards.

Represented in over fifty institutions including The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Cleveland Museum of Art; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; National Museum, Stockholm; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Lives in New York City.



Catalogue

All paintings are acrylic and collage on canvas. All works are lent by the artist. Dimensions are in inches, height preceding width.

Paintings

1. *Composition III*. 1970. 64 x 76 $\frac{3}{4}$
2. *Composition IV*. 1970. 62 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 72 $\frac{3}{4}$
3. *Composition V*. 1970. 72 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 51
4. *Composition IX*. 1970. 62 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 72 $\frac{3}{4}$
5. *Composition X*. 1970. 62 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 72 $\frac{3}{4}$
6. *Composition XI*. 1970. 72 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 62 $\frac{1}{2}$
7. *Composition XII*. 1970. 62 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 72 $\frac{3}{4}$
8. *Composition XIII*. 1970. 72 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 62 $\frac{1}{2}$
9. *Folded Canvas III*. 1970. 62 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 72 $\frac{1}{2}$
10. *Composition XVII*. 1971. 72 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 51
11. *Composition XX*. 1971. 72 x 47 $\frac{1}{2}$
12. *The Illusionist*. 1971. 73 x 62 $\frac{1}{2}$

Collages

1. *Collage XXII*. 1970. 22 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 24 $\frac{1}{2}$
2. *Collage XXXII B*. 1971. 30 x 40
3. *Collage La Belle Epoque. Homage à Braque*. 1971. 30 x 40

February 15—March 27, 1972

Whitney Museum of American Art

945 Madison Avenue

New York, N.Y. 10021

Telephone (212) 249-4100

Cover designed by Adja Yunkers.

Photograph by Robert Doty.