

Ilona Sochynsky's painting career, now entering its fourth decade, presents an oeuvre of visual beauty, intelligence and complexity that is a deeply personal journey of discovery.

Her imagery, rendered with precision and clarity, is a vehicle through which she explores the nature of her art: the intersection of objective reality and abstraction; the relationship of the fragment to the whole; the significance of peripheral forms of composition; the expressive power of color. These formal concerns help articulate the themes of her work that encompass the gamut of human experience.

Sochynsky attended the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), from which she graduated in 1969 with a B.F.A. degree. She completed her studies at Yale University, from which she received her M.F.A. in 1972. After graduating from Yale, she successfully ran the Ilona Sochynsky Associates, a graphic design firm, till 1979, when the imperative to paint won out.

In her first years as a painter, Sochynsky investigated contemporary art trends: she responded to the imagery of Pop Art to which she was exposed as a student at RISD and was also influenced by Photorealism, a movement of the 1970's tangentially related to Pop Art. The imagery of vehicles and city views, rendered in a hyperrealist style, resonated with her as evidenced in works like *Cadillac* (1979).

By the early 1980's Sochynsky began to internalize her creative experience and paint images with an emotional and psychological intensity. In this effort she focused on herself and those close to her. The relatively few portraits in her oeuvre come from this period. Among the earliest is her *Self-Portrait with Hairbrush* of 1982, and *Self-Portrait with Towel*, done a year later in 1983. The artist's major protagonist in these personally meaningful works is her husband, Petro. In a number of important paintings like *Petro in Space* of 1983, he is her emissary, a traveler through space and the realms of fantasy, dreams and nightmares. These and other works of the period evidence the artist's erudition and awareness of the remarkably liberating and challenging aspect of 20th century culture. To that end, she was receptive to impulses that inform her art—the discipline of Cubism, the provocations of Marcel Duchamp that opened art's Pandora's Box, the emancipation of color, the élan of Art Deco, the fantasy of Surrealist dreams, the generous language of popular culture. These and other influences are assimilated into her personal and distinctive style in works like *Purple Glove* (1986) and *Venus* (1990).

During the 1990's and into the 21st century, Sochynsky shifted the narrative of her art toward more formal concerns. In her small paintings from the 1990's, for example, her focus was on the interaction of forms and colors that were, to a large extent, abstract. Done over a decade, these works maintain a cohesiveness of vision. These infinitely inventive works are small only in scale; for in their complexity of shapes and colors and in their execution, they are compelling, fully resolved and unique paintings. During the first decade of the 21st century, the artist explored a wide range of ideas in works done in series – these include *Fragments* (2006-2011) *Capriccios* (2006) and *Fetish* (2007-2009). The *Fragments* series consists of small, insightful and beautifully rendered vignettes that present a discourse on the nature of a fragment – here, for a rare instance, taking center stage. In the *Fetish* series Sochynsky identifies and explores the important correlation between the material and pictorial qualities of her art. In *Fetish in Black and White* of 2008 the undulating, interactive rhythms of cloth complement its lush materiality and the overlaid net establishes the painting's equilibrium.

Sochynsky's *Capriccios* series of 2006 is at once a summation of the artist's researches and a bold new direction in which she explores the possibilities of a shaped canvas. In *Capriccios*, she addresses her sustained interest in the continuum beyond the canvas by concluding peripheral forms as they determine the shape of the canvas. The artist also reiterates her strong interest in the fragment. While every work in the series presents a cohesive whole, a unique fantasy realm, each is constructed of interlocking, overlapping fragments of various shapes, sizes, colors and realities. In *Capriccios*, Sochynsky also addresses the interaction of abstract and realistic forms. For her the relationship between abstraction and realism is seamless and she moves between the two with equal respect for each. The realistic details in *Capriccios* are rare and intriguing because they carry a frame of reference different from the abstract shapes. In a number of instances, as in *Capriccio 16*, they provide a hint of the artist looking back to her early work, thereby establishing a creative continuity across decades.

The response to Sochynsky's imagery is a process of slow revelation, even puzzlement – rarely is there an “oh, I get it” moment. The works remain complex both in their formal presentation and in their content. One is often asked to engage an image that may never yield all of its secrets, but in the attempt the viewer will discover the richness of the creative process.