

# From Siberia to Moscow and Beyond

*The Artistic Quest of Eduard Gorokhovskiy*  
(1929–2004)

## Biographical Note

Eduard Gorokhovskiy was born in 1929 in the city of Vinnytsia in southwestern Ukraine. In 1954 he graduated with distinction from the Odessa Institute of Civil Engineering (now Odessa State Academy of Civil Engineering and Architecture), majoring in architecture and studying under A. Postel, T. Frayerman, G. Gotgelf, and A. Kopylov; his postgraduate work assignment took him to Novosibirsk, where he had his first solo exhibition in 1967. Gorokhovskiy moved to Moscow in 1974, where he lived until moving to Offenbach, Germany, in 1991.

From 1974 on, Gorokhovskiy took part in numerous group exhibitions in museums, including *Ich Lebe–Ich Sehe: Künstler der Achtziger Jahre in Moskau*, Kunstmuseum Bern, Switzerland, in 1988; *Russian Art from Lenin to Gorbachev*, Botanik, Brussels, Belgium, in 1988; *Russian Jewish Artists in a Century of Change 1890–1990*, the Jewish Museum, New York, in 1995; and *Berlin–Moscow/Moscow–Berlin, Kunst 1950–2000*, the State Historical Museum, Moscow, and Martin Gropius Bau,



Berlin, in 2004. Important museum solo exhibitions include *Eduard Gorokhovskiy*, the State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, in 1999; *Eduard Gorokhovskiy: The Limits of the Rectangle: My Unlimited Space* at the State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg, in 2004; and *Eduard Gorokhovskiy* at the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, New Brunswick, New Jersey, in 2004–05. Gorokhovskiy's paintings and works on paper are in major museums around the world, including the State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow; the State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg; the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow; Moscow Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow; the Norton and Nancy Dodge Collection of Nonconformist Art from the Soviet Union in the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, New Brunswick; Kolodzei Art Foundation, New Jersey; State Museum of Arts, Dresden, Germany; Jewish Museum, Frankfurt am Main, Germany; the Ludwig Forum of International Art, Aachen, Germany; the Costakis Collection, Athens, Greece; and Albertina Museum, Vienna, Austria.

Opposite page: Eduard Gorokhovskiy, Oval Portrait No. 4, 1982. Screen-print, 24.21 x 19 in.

Right: Gorokhovskiy, *Novosibirsk*, 1967. Watercolor on paper, 16.85 x 24.3 in. All images in this essay courtesy of the Kolodzei Collection of Russian and Eastern European Art, Kolodzei Art Foundation. [www.KolodzeiArt.org](http://www.KolodzeiArt.org)

BY NATALIA KOLODZEI

**E**duard Gorokhovskiy developed his signature style in the early 1970s. He was one of the first Soviet nonconformist artists to use old photographic portraits, into which he juxtaposed and inserted a text, a silhouette, another photograph, or geometric figure, thus creating works in which serial images explore personal and cultural memory, public and private space, inspiring multiplicities of interpretation. The photographs provide a framework that keeps the artwork in balance, while the intruding objects add a certain intrigue or mystery to the whole. Many of Gorokhovskiy's works convey a sense of history or the process of change, often alluding to the disappearance of individuality in a totalitarian society; the destruction of the family unit brought about by the Bolshevik Revolution; a succession of devastating wars; and the forced relocations dictated by Stalinist collectivization.

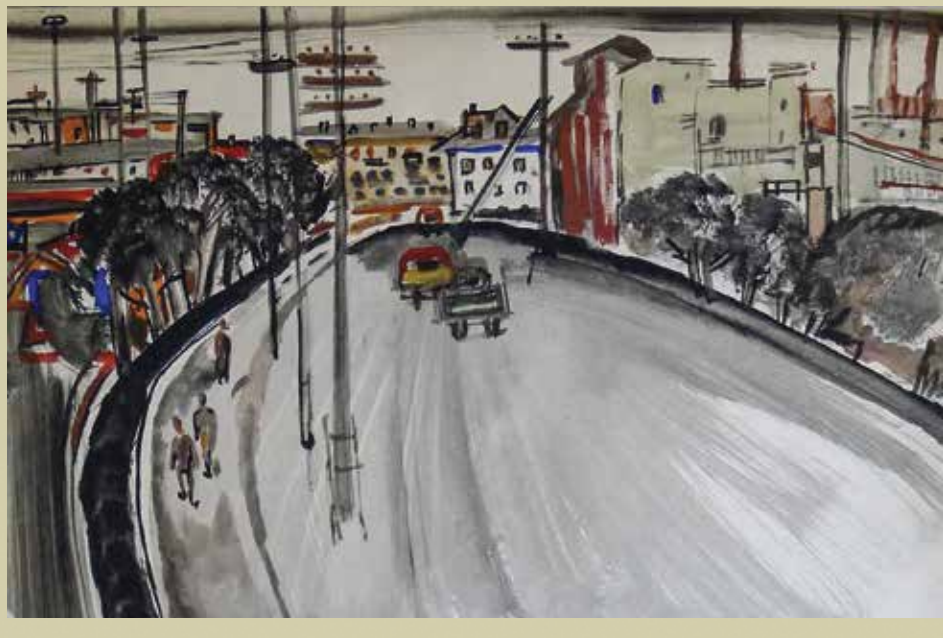
Gorokhovskiy was interested in art from an early age, attending evening classes at the Odessa Art School. His parents, however, encouraged him to pursue a career as an architect. But after completing two years of a

postgraduate assignment in architecture, Gorokhovskiy resolved to pursue a career as an artist and remained in Novosibirsk for 20 years, where he became friends with the artist Nikolai Gritsyuk (1922–1976). As Gorokhovskiy recalled:

Back in the 1950s I was living and working in Novosibirsk after graduation. There, in Siberia, I met people who introduced me to the sort of art that was not even mentioned in the institute, with its strict ideological control. I owe my discovery of Impressionism, Expressionism, Cubism, the Russian Avant-Garde, above all, to the remarkable artist Nikolai Gritsyuk. I consider him my first real teacher; he opened my eyes to many things in art. . . . The 20 years I lived in Siberia were good preparation for a real understanding of the essence and purpose of art.

Nikolai Gritsyuk had graduated from the Fine Art department of the Moscow Textile Institute in 1951 and returned to his native Siberia in 1953. Initially, Gritsyuk painted from nature and created a series of urban landscapes but, over time, he became more inspired by the abstract forms that became the basis for his works.

In Gorokhovskiy's *Novosibirsk* (1967), the artist was inspired by the natural, architectural, and cultural landscape changes in the vibrant young city—the hydropower plants and Akademgorodok—which was becoming one of the Soviet Union's leading scientific centers. The exhibition *Eduard Gorokhovskiy: From Siberia to Moscow, Selected Works on Paper*, presented by the Kolodzei Art Foundation at the Harriman Institute in 2018, showcased rare watercolors from the 1960s when the artist was living and working in Novosibirsk, as well as drawings and artist's prints from his Moscow period emphasizing Gorokhovskiy's







From left: Eduard Gorokhovskiy, *Meat* (The Abattoir), 1965. Watercolor on paper, 17 x 24 in.; Gorokhovskiy, *Worker*, 1968. Watercolor on paper, 20 x 14½ in.; Eduard Gorokhovskiy, *The Stone Pillars of Krasnoyarsk*, 1971. Watercolor on paper, 15¾ x 15¾ in.; Gorokhovskiy, *Athlete*, 1975. Lithograph, 15 x 14 in.

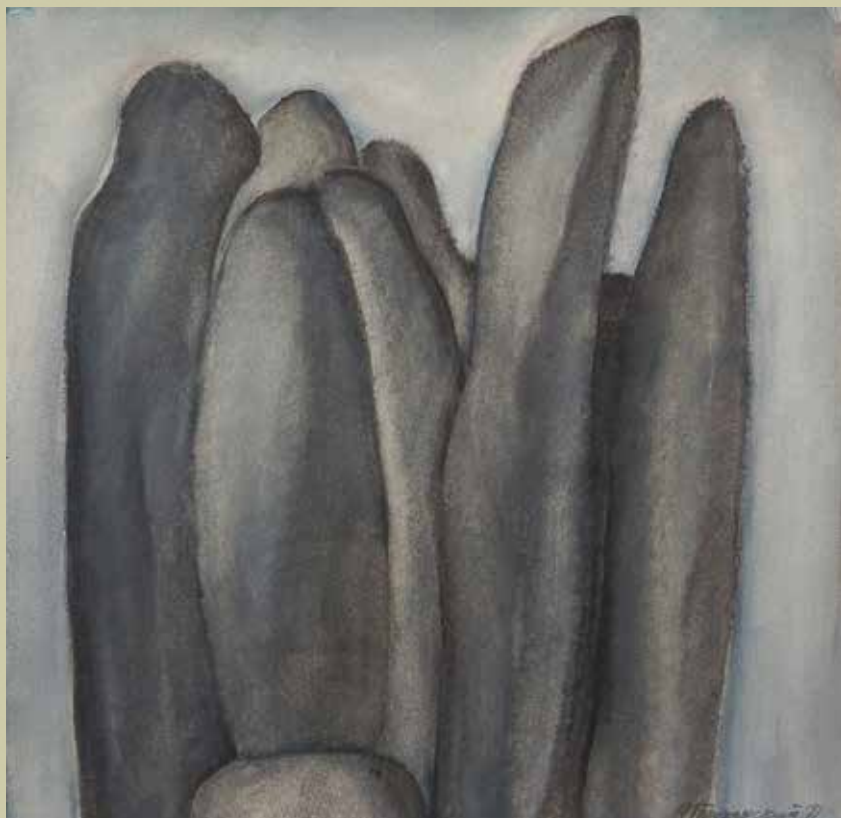
artistic and creative search, fostering the conversation on contemporary and nonconformist art from the Soviet Union and the place of printmaking and art on paper. Some of the works from the Harriman show (including *Novosibirsk*, *Meat* [1965], *The Stone Pillars of Krasnoyarsk* [1971]) were exhibited for the first time in the United States. In the *Worker* (1968), the black eye, somber colors, shades of black, blue and

gray, sharp outlines, cigarette, and cap—all contribute to the exhausted and worrisome look of the sitter in opposition to the glorifying image of the Soviet worker in socialist realist style. The *Athlete* (1976), on other hand, evokes the work of Russian avant-garde photographers El Lissitzky and Aleksandr Rodchenko. Gorokhovskiy places positive and negative images of the athlete in the minimalist interior of a black square with the outlined white door. The visual interplay between image and geometrical forms was of particular importance in Gorokhovskiy's early works, as well as in his interest in the continuity of the ideas of the Russian avant-garde.

Beginning in 1957, Gorokhovskiy earned his living as a book illustrator, which he continued after his move

to Moscow. By 1990 Gorokhovskiy had illustrated more than 120 books; many of his book illustrations received numerous accolades and awards and were showcased in national and international exhibitions. A number of Muscovite nonconformist artists—including Ilya Kabakov, Erik Bulatov, Oleg Vassiliev, and Victor Pivovarov—illustrated books, which allowed them to experiment with formal issues and work in their own art.

Gorokhovskiy joined the Union of Artists in 1968. In the early 1970s, he met Victor Pivovarov, Erik Bulatov, Oleg Vassiliev, Vladimir Yankilevsky, and Ilya Kabakov. In 1974, Gorokhovskiy moved to Moscow and later was able to acquire a cooperative apartment in the Union of Artists' building near Rechnoi Vokzal where a number of



his friends, including Ivan Chuikov, Victor Pivovarov, and Ilya Kabakov, also resided. Even though nonconformist artists did not share a single aesthetic or unifying theme, they were in constant conversation about art. This sense of the multifaceted spirit of the artistic community is also alluded to in *Group A Group B* (1982), juxtaposing the nostalgic iconography of studio photography from random family archives in Group A with Group B featuring a number of nonconformist artists in Kabakov's studio: Eduard Gorokhovskiy, Francisco Infante, Erik Bulatov, Oleg Vassiliev, Victor Pivovarov, Eduard Shteinberg, Ivan Chuikov, Boris Zhutovsky, Vladimir Yankilevsky, and Ilya Kabakov (See inside back cover). Throughout his artistic career Gorokhovskiy often

used photographs of his close friends, colleagues, and their social interactions—for example, gatherings of friends and family or birthday celebrations. For Gorokhovskiy, old archival photographs provide the opportunity to “relive” the lives of three generations of an officer's family and offer for future generations a glimpse into the life of the nonconformist art circles.

In 1974–75, during Norton Dodge's trips to Moscow, my mother, Tatiana Kolodzei, was able to introduce the famous collector of Soviet art to a number of nonconformist Muscovite artists, including Gorokhovskiy. The series of traveling exhibitions organized by Dodge in the United States,

*Some of the works from the Harriman show were exhibited for the first time in the United States.*

and the 1977 publication of *New Art from the Soviet Union: The Known and the Unknown* by Alison Hilton and Norton Dodge, inspired many of the nonconformists to continue their own search for new forms of expression. At the time there were very limited opportunities for nonconformist artists to showcase or publish their work.

Two more publications on Gorokhovskiy appeared in the magazine *A-YA* (Unofficial Russian art review [Paris, New York, Moscow]), published by Igor Shelkovskiy in Paris: one by





*Gorokhovskiy combines an excerpt from a Russian newspaper about the Reagan assassination attempt with an unrelated photograph of a woman in a frivolous pose.*

Galina Manevich in issue 2 (1980) and the other by Ilya Kabakov: “Eduard Gorokhovskiy: Reproduction of Reproduction” in issue 6 (1984). The Soviet authorities had known about the existence of nonconformist art before the publications, but they did not act. After the publications, the Soviet government immediately reacted with the only method they knew—namely, repression. Many of the nonconformist artists were members of the Union of Artists of the USSR, so the KGB repeatedly called them in for questioning and they were told to publicly renounce and condemn A-YA. As none of the artists betrayed the magazine, many of them lost their jobs as book illustrators. With the advent of perestroika, however, some of the nonconformist artists began to travel freely and exhibit internationally.

In the mid-1980s, Gorokhovskiy began to rethink Russian history, and political subjects began to appear in some of his prints and paintings, including images of Lenin and Stalin, alongside anonymous characters. Like many artists in his circle, Gorokhovskiy felt impelled to express his relation to authority. In an untitled composi-



From top: Eduard Gorokhovskiy, *Composition*, 1973. Colored pencil on paper, 14.57 x 27.73 in.; Gorokhovskiy, *Composition*, 1984. Screenprint, 11.8 x 14.8 in.

tion from 1984, Gorokhovsky combines an excerpt from a current Soviet newspaper that features articles on “two-faced policy” and the assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan with an absolutely unrelated photograph from the archives of a woman in a frivolous pose. In many of Gorokhovsky’s works, like fragments of a puzzle, the images are not placed next to one another as equals; instead, they overlap in layers, canceling one another out. This layering of images creates for the viewer a sensation of chaos, as the angle changes and photographic images become clear, giving rise to complicated and complex associations. Gorokhovsky’s political works include *Enemies of the People* (1986–88) and *Russian Officers* (1988). Gorokhovsky dethrones Lenin by creating a portrait of Stalin from 2,488 small stamped miniatures of Lenin’s head in *2,488 Portraits of Lenin* (1988). The photograph of Tatiana Kolodzei and Eduard Gorokhovsky, taken during the installation of Gorokhovsky’s solo exhibition at the Central House of Artists in 1994, shows the pair standing in front of Gorokhovsky’s portrait of Brezhnev, constructed from miniature Stalin heads. In 2006, Gorokhovsky’s *Festive Mosaic* (1988) (Stalin and Brezhnev portraits) was sold at Sotheby’s Russian Sale in London for \$331,514—his auction record.

Gorokhovsky used a combination of media in his artistic quest. The photographic image is transformed by the artist through the prism of drawing, photo-collage, etching, lithograph, and screen-print to a combination of all of the above to

address conceptual, optical, or narrative tasks for each individual work or series. In his early works, the figures and faces are sometimes outlined; others are shaded, dotted, scribbled, crosshatched; and yet others emphasize certain details in random 19th-century family studio portraits. Gorokhovsky’s juxtapositions, intruding and clashing, transform photo images and abstract geometrical forms: square, oval, circle. In his serial images, Gorokhovsky favored screen-print media for photographic manipulations. Photo screen-printing techniques offer an artist the opportunity to repeatedly reproduce the images; most of Gorokhovsky’s prints, however, were created in very small or unique editions. In a single photograph of a lady (*Oval*, 1982) and—by optical games, intrusion, and alterations (negative, positive, fading, compression, duplication)—transform it into a pencil drawing, or a tire, or an airplane, or any other form or object. The photograph has the status of a historical document, regardless of its esthetic virtues, and relies on the thematic interpretation of its content, whereas the geometrical forms or objects are open to a pure visual game of the imagination. Gorokhovsky constructs his works on the intensity of coexistence of opposite extremes, and his work remains open to a multiplicity of interpretations. Gorokhovsky does not impose his own reading on his works; instead, he plays on the ambivalence of meaning filled with ideological and cultural layers, encouraging discussion. ■



Eduard Gorokhovsky and Tatiana Kolodzei, Moscow, 1994.

*Natalia Kolodzei is the executive director of the Kolodzei Art Foundation and an honorary member of the Russian Academy of Arts. Along with Tatiana Kolodzei, she owns the Kolodzei Collection of Russian and Eastern European Art, which contains over 7,000 pieces, including paintings, drawings, sculptures, photographs, digital art, and videos by over 300 artists from the 20th and 21st centuries. Active as a curator and art historian, Kolodzei has curated over 80 shows in the United States, Europe, and Russia at such institutions as the State Tretyakov Gallery (Moscow), State Russian Museum (St. Petersburg), and the Chelsea Art Museum (New York City). In addition, she has contributed to several books and catalogues, including works on Olga Bulgakova, Oleg Vassiliev, Alexander Sitnikov, and Russian women artists from the Kolodzei Art Foundation.*

*The Kolodzei Art Foundation, Inc., a US-based 501(c)(3) not-for-profit public foundation started in 1991, in museums and cultural centers in the United States, Russia, and other countries, often utilizing the considerable resources of the Kolodzei Collection of Russian and Eastern European Art, and publishes books on Russian art. For additional information, visit <http://www.KolodzeiArt.org>.*