From Siberia to Moscow and Beyond

The Artistic Quest of Eduard Gorokhovsky
(1929–2004)

Biographical Note

Eduard Gorokhovsky 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. Gorokhovsky moved to Moscow in 1974, where he lived until moving to Offenbach, Germany, in 1991.


Gorokhovsky'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.
Eduard Gorokhovsky 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 Gorokhovsky’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.

Gorokhovsky 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, Gorokhovsky 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 Gorokhovsky 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 Gorokhovsky’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 Gorokhovsky: 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 Gorokhovsky’s
To Moscow. By 1990 Gorokhovsky 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.

Beginning in 1957, Gorokhovsky earned his living as a book illustrator, which he continued after his move to Moscow. By 1990 Gorokhovsky 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.

Gorokhovsky 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, Gorokhovsky 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 Gorokhovsky, 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 Gorokhovsky often used photographs of his close friends, colleagues, and their social interactions—for example, gatherings of friends and family or birthday celebrations. For Gorokhovsky, 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 Gorokhovsky. The series of traveling exhibitions organized by Dodge 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 Gorokhovsky appeared in the magazine *A–YA* (Unofficial Russian art review [Paris, New York, Moscow]), published by Igor Shelkovsky in Paris: one by

**Some of the works from the Harriman show were exhibited for the first time in the United States.**
Galina Manevich in issue 2 (1980) and the other by Ilya Kabakov: “Eduard Gorokhovsky: 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 told them 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, Gorokhovsky 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, Gorokhovsky felt impelled to express his relation to authority. In an untitled composi-
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Gorokhovsky,

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 series, Gorokhovsky can appropriate the elegant and nostalgic old 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.

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 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 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 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 series, Gorokhovsky can appropriate the elegant and nostalgic old 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.