

MADELEINE AVIROV

4834 Minden Place
Los Angeles, California 90041
323.257.7858
madeleine.avirov@sbcglobal.net
www.madeleineavirov.com

Born in Cleveland, Ohio
Lives and works in Los Angeles, California

Artist's Statement

I understood early how drawing concentrates the mind, that the hand's effort—and the eye's—are not only a way through the chaos of moods and emotions, but also a doorway into the beauty of the world. Later, I fell in love first with watercolor and then with the rigor of Old-Master oil techniques. In recent years the subjects of my work in oil followed two tracks that were about to merge just as I set my brushes aside. One is darkly colored; it recedes into the past through urban terrain that Philip Roth called “a timeless Depression set in a placeless Lower East Side.” Here I work with the figure as a kind of still-life element, placing my father, for example, into settings whose objects refract his story through their own. The other track moves outward into landscape to look for what is hidden there. Things are rearranged in this half-remembered place. Local color is heightened, dimmed, or combed apart, and the surface in places remains broken and unfinished, like the broken world.

That said, I am not strictly a realist. Where traditional oil painting is mostly about exteriors, speaking to us by way of what it refers to rather than by the way in which it envisages, I have, since childhood, been driven by a faith in the mysterious forces that allow me to enter my subjects. To be present, in other words, to other modes of being. The goal is not only to show “things,” but also the soul of the thing, whatever it is in the middle ground that makes us go toward this thing and not that. Some of the works read like hallucinations—real and unreal together, some elements way out of normal scale.

I build up the surface of the canvas transparently—in dozens of layers in some places, in others abrading or letting the ground show through. By laying down patches of color to build form architecturally (a method I constructed from studying the texture of tree bark and from looking at Cézanne, the Spanish realist Antonio Lopez Garcia, and the English figurative painter Euan Uglow), I followed, until recently, a kind of geological process. But where before I only built up, now it seems to me that I am also digging down, excavating the image from the canvas, in which, like a fossil record, it is waiting to be found. This in turn has changed my thinking about the function of light. In traditional European painting, space is physical and light crosses emptiness and all things are perceived as “outside” and “over there.” When I walk in the silence of early morning, however, I seem to become the thing I behold. Light behaves the way it does in non-Western pictorial images, in which light is not something that crosses emptiness but is, rather, an emanation, or a solvent that dissolves boundaries. In the Russian icon, for example, neither space nor time exists. The icon addresses the eye, but an eye which then shuts in prayer so that the image—now in the mind's eye—is isolated, becomes sacred.

An ever-shifting mix of realism, surrealism, expressionism—my work is grounded in and is moving more and more toward abstraction, even imageless-ness. Any given work is to some degree driven by its content, but all the decisions I make about it refer to formal conventions, formal relationships. The story told, the emotion conveyed, are secondary even as they hover at the edge of these

decisions. It is an abstract, inward movement, but one that carries with it the loved things of the world. This understanding came through text, through reading—an activity as vital to me as eating. Until the summer of 2010, though I had yet to do so, I felt more and more pressed to put words on canvas, to integrate word and image. But as the fates would have it, it now looks as if the thing will be accomplished the other way round, in a book of words that includes certain of my images.

CURRICULUM VITAE

EXHIBITIONS include:

- 2010 *Memory and Transformation* (juried), Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles, CA
The Rashi Effect: Artist as Commentator (juried), Platt/Borstein Gallery, American Jewish University, Los Angeles, CA
Yosemite Renaissance XXV (national juried), Yosemite, CA, cash award
- 2009 *Like Water on Rock* (national juried traveling—3 presentations), American Jewish University, Los Angeles, CA; Finegood Gallery, West Hills, CA; and San Diego Center for Jewish Culture, La Jolla, CA
Ten Women Gallery (juried), Venice, CA
- 2005 *Invitational 2005* (three-person), Oak Park Art League, Oak Park, IL
- 2004 Faculty, Oak Park Art League, Oak Park, IL
Holiday (juried), Oak Park Art League, Oak Park, IL
- 2003 Group, Beverly Arts Center (juried), Chicago, IL
Faculty, Old Town Triangle Gallery, Chicago, IL

COMMISSIONS include:

- 2007 *Nebraska Primrose*, oil on canvas, 22 x 24 in.
- 2006 *Iris*, watercolor on paper, 22 x 30 in.
- 2005 *Early Spring*, watercolor on paper, 22 x 30 in.
- 2003 *Korean War Child*, graphite on paper, 12 x 10 in.
- 2000–2001 *Tsoutsias Family Tree*, watercolor and ink on paper, 30 x 22 in.
- 1999 *Old France, Countryside (After Atget)*, diptych, graphite on paper, 8 x 6 ½ in.; *Old France, Countryside (After Atget)*, diptych, graphite on paper, 8 x 6 ½ in.
- 1998 *East 10th Street*, graphite on paper, 11 x 8 ¼ in.; *Old Street*, graphite on paper, 8 ½ x 6 in.
- 1995 series of exhibition illustrations on birds (graphite on paper) for The Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, IL

ILLUSTRATION WORK includes:

- 2004 Weinstein, Judith, and Cahn, Susan B. “Depression Doesn’t Always Wait for Delivery,” illustration, graphite on paper, *Chicago Parent*, June; Nalbach, Sara. “Surviving the Happy Crisis,” illustration, graphite on paper, *Chicago Parent*, June, reprinted March 2005 Monroe, Kathryn. “Gang Culture,” illustrations, graphite on paper, *Chicago Parent*, January
- 2003 “Race: When Do Kids Learn?” cover illustration, watercolor on paper, *Chicago Parent*, July; Alderton, Matt. “How Not To Raise a Racist,” illustrations, graphite on paper, *Chicago Parent*, July
- 1992 Watson, Carl. “Men in Cages,” illustration, graphite on paper, *Chicago Reader*, November 6; “Birds of the Amazon,” exhibition illustrations,

- graphite on paper. Chicago: The Field Museum, Fall; Custer, Charley. "I Was a Minority White Boy," illustration, pen & ink on paper, *Chicago Reader*, June 19; Cohen, David M., and Cohen, H. Harvey. "How To Avoid Window Pains," illustration, watercolor on paper, *Safety and Health* (National Safety Council), April
- 1991 Henderson, Harold. "Reading: It Grew on the Prairie," illustration, graphite on paper, *Chicago Reader*, December 13
- 1990 Hawthorne, Ann. *Anatomy of an Eating Disorder*, book illustrations, pen & ink. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall

PUBLICATIONS (art-related writing)

"The View from Here," essay in *Poetry* magazine, January 2011.

"Immaterial Witness: An artist excavates the ground of memory and imagination," essay in Summer/Autumn 2010 issue of the *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*.

GRANTS and AWARDS

- 2010 *Yosemite Renaissance XXV*, national juried exhibition, Yosemite, CA, cash award
- 2010 Vermont Studio Center, residency, Johnson, VT
- 2008 John Anson Kittredge Fund, individual artist's grant, Cambridge, MA
Vermont Studio Center, residency, Johnson, VT
- 2007 Fisher Museum of Art, University of Southern California, purchase award, Los Angeles, CA
- 2004 Parenting Publications of America, gold medal, cover illustration for *Chicago Parent*

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Fisher Museum of Art, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA
The Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, IL

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

Various—national and international

TEACHING

- 2008–2009 Chouinard School of Art, Los Angeles, California
- 2004–2005 Oak Park Art League, Oak Park, Illinois
- 2002–2004 Old Town Art Center, Chicago, Illinois
- 1990–present private tuition with individual students

EDUCATION

- 1997–2002 School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Figure Painting workshop. Chicago, IL
- 1988–1990 Richard Halstead Studio, Portraiture workshop. Evanston, IL
- 1973–1977 Kent State University, Studio Art and Illustration. Kent, OH