

Bob Goepfert Reviews “Electric Soup”

BY BOB GOEPFERT APRIL 24, 2015

Sometimes being a transitional figure who exists between two important art movements can be a guarantee you will be neglected by history.

That seems to have been the fate of Nicholas Krushenick whose major works during the 1960s, bridged the Abstract Impressionists and the Pop Art Movement. He labeled his work “Pop Abstraction.”

“Electric Soup,” an exhibition of Krushenick the Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery on the campus of Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs is an attempt to add to the rediscovery of his work. The hope is this exhibit will further recognize Krushenick’s importance to the world of art in the latter half of the 20th century.

At a recent group tour of the exhibit led by Dayton Director Ian Berry who organized the show, Berry said about Krushenick, “He fell through the cracks.”

Berry explained that in the early 60s Krushenick intuited that abstract Impressionism was losing its momentum Times were changing for the better and the mood of the nation and the world was more optimistic and less introspective.

Armed with this insight, Krushenick began to experiment with bolder colors painted in a flat manner with glossy acrylic paint rather than oils. Too he eliminated the psychological subtext in his work replacing it with a more graphic style using geometrical shapes rather than symbols.

As the “Electric Soup” exhibit shows, his work was a precursor of Pop Art. They are large works in which bold vivid colors dominate. They are almost playful in their seeming simple designs that are close to illustrations.

Because they were apparently lacking psychological depth his work was not welcomed by the Abstractionists and since they lacked the ironic references of pop culture they were not embraced by the Pop artists.

They were however accepted by independent art buyers, collectors and museums. Krushenick was very successful with almost every major art museum owning his work.

However, his style did not fully evolve into the Pop Art category. As that movement found public acceptance and popularity it overshadowed Krushenick’s work. Which I find rather ironic. I look at “Electric Soup,” (the signature work in the exhibit) and think if it included the word Shazam, you might wonder if it had been created by Warhol or Rauschenberg, two leaders of the Pop movement.

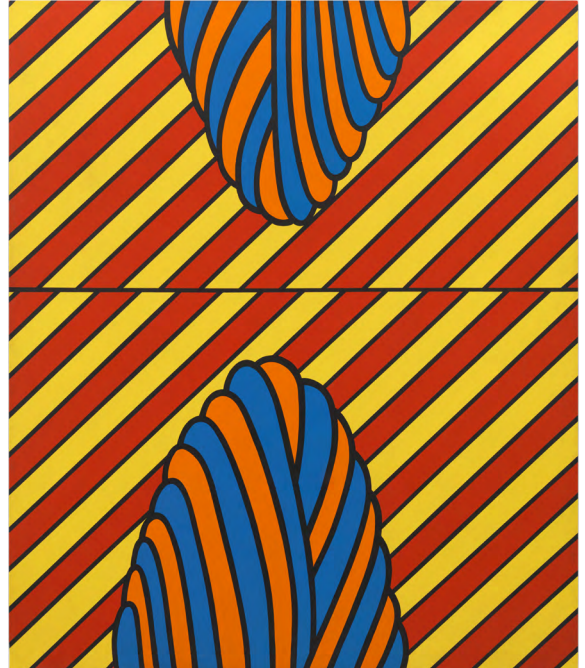
“Electric Soup” is a legitimate focal point in the exhibit in many ways. During the tour Berry pointed out that at least one early piece (Quick Red Fox”) had another painting underneath. Examine the painting carefully and you can see another painting lurking below the surface.

“Electric Soup” appears to be fractured revealing another piece beneath the surface. Ripples upon ripples, the newly revealed piece of green and orange stripes resembles other fully realized works on display.

As Berry points out, there is an impulse to see things in Krushenick’s pieces that may or not be there. The artist compounded the puzzle by giving teasing names to his pieces (“Turn Back Columbus,” “Son of King Kong,”) which begs the viewer to try to make a connection which usually doesn’t exist. That’s another thing Krushenick had in common with the Pop artists — a sense of playfulness.

Berry makes the point that though this is one of the largest exhibits of Krushenick’s work in many years, “Electric Soup,” is not an in-depth exploration of the artist’s work. It includes pieces created in the decades 1960, 70, 80 and 90. As such it represents the artist’s ever-growing maturity and slowly evolving vision.

“Electric Soup” is an important exhibit of an artist who influenced many who came after him. It is an exciting, colorful exhibit that delights the mind and teases the brain.



Son of King Kong, 1966, acrylic on canvas, 84 × 72 inches