



Noyes
Museum of Art
STOCKTON UNIVERSITY

Education: Online Collection

Highlights from the Permanent Collection of the Noyes Museum of Art of Stockton University:

Hak Vogrin

American, 1920-2009

Predominantly self-taught, Hak Vogrin could be considered an outsider artist but his strong artistic voice adds a powerful note to mainstream 20th century art.

Born in Brooklyn in 1920 to Slovenian immigrant parents, Vogrin spent his early childhood in the countryside of Modena, New York. Fascinated by the works of talented artists such as Lyonel Feininger, Harry Hershfield and George Herriman (creator of *Krazy Kat*), this interest led to his own career as a cartoonist and comic book artist. Self-educated, he was an avid reader of works on history, science and politics and studied paintings, drawings, advertising and movie poster art. Chinese and Zen philosophy and art had strong influences on his lifestyle and work as well.

Vogrin lived and worked with his wife Jean, a potter and librarian, on the Lower East Side of New York in the early 1960s. They operated the gallery space *One Flight Up* in their studio apartment on St. Marks Place. In 1967 they moved to the Pine Barrens of New Jersey, creating a refuge from society. The couple housed draft resisters during the Vietnam War.

Vogrin was a part of the '60s and '70s underground "comix" movement. Comix appeared in the U.S. from 1968-1975 and were small press or self-published comic books with social commentary or satire containing content not permitted by the Comics Code Authority. Producing illustrations and comics, he created delicate, wistful drawings such as those featured in *A Moon Book* (1963), a counterculture book of moon imagery. He also created artwork for the acclaimed poet James Broughton in his book *High Kukus* (1968). The illustrations and comics were conversational and philosophical, a quality he retained in



Hak Vogrin (American, 1920-2009).
New World Order, oil painting, 24 x 36"
Collection of the Noyes Museum of Art
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his later political paintings. *The Captain* (1972), a comic book, hints at a more ironic, lonely tone that his future work will adopt. Contributing cartoons and drawings to publications such as *Yellow Dog*, *Liberation*, *The Realist*, and the anarchist *Good Soup*, his years as a cartoonist proved to have a lasting influence.

During the '80s, Vogrin's work featured the Great Auk, an extinct bird species. It was his symbol for an innocent, all-knowing witness to human carelessness and cruelty. Originally an abundant species living in the North Atlantic region, it was threatened after settlers learned of the birds' valuable meat and feathers. The Auk appears in many of Vogrin's paintings about American involvement in Central and South America, as an observer of the unreported atrocities committed under U.S. interventionist policies.

In the '80s and '90s, Vogrin's style ranged from expressionist and stream-of-consciousness to graphic and direct. Bold palettes and brushstrokes expressed the outrage he felt about wrongdoing in the world. Early in his career, he worked with oil and tempera paints but, as he became concerned about toxic fumes and the environmental impact of art media, he switched to water-based sign enamel. He liked the feel and intensity of sign paint for his work, which he saw as similar to the posters and billboards that demand your attention.

In his later years, the subject matter of Vogrin's work transitioned from political, feminist paintings to works of feminist eroticism. Portraying women as active subjects rebelling against their societal roles, they are often painted holding firearms and weapons, using force to demand representation and fair treatment within society. Accepting the description of iconoclast and misanthrope, he could also be described as an optimist deeply disappointed by humanity.

Vogrin identified as neither conservative nor liberal, and referred to himself as a painter, rather than as an artist. His artwork reflected his unpretentious and sharp mind, along with his will to lead by example. He was an idealist fueled by the hope that his artwork could change the world. Hak Vogrin died at the age of 88 in 2009.

We are grateful for the generous donation of many of Hak Vogrin's works by his widow, Jean Vogrin. These works now reside in the permanent collection of The Noyes Museum of Art of Stockton University.

For more information about the Noyes Museum of Art visit:

The Noyes Museum of Art of Stockton University <http://noyesmuseum.org> (609) 626-3420

The Noyes Arts Garage of Stockton University www.artsgarageac.com (609) 626-3805

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