



YURI KUPER

In a clangorous art world dominated by visual one-liners and thinky art that offers little to the eye, the paintings of Yuri Kuper are, in their quietly different way, as subversive as the paintings and objects of the Surrealists almost three quarters of a century ago. His work is steeped in time, memory, and silence. They work on the mind through the eye, and in describing them one finds oneself reaching for words little used these days, somewhat dangerous words, like beauty, poetry and craft. Kuper was born in Russia in 1940, and went through that sort of painstaking beaux arts training there that is antique history in the west.

As a young adult in Moscow, he both avoided the worst of state censorship and supported himself by working as a theater designer and, like his near contemporary and friend, Ilya Kabakov, he illustrated books. He was permitted to emigrate to Israel twenty-five years ago. He has lived in Britain, and remains a British citizen, and in France, where he has a country house. He moved to New York just three years ago. He has work in the permanent collections of the Pushkin and Tretyakov museums in Russia, the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Kuper's output in the United States has been variegated ranging from set designs for an opera produced by Robert Altman in Chicago through installations, to the paintings, objects and complex mixed media pieces in this exhibition. The plain objects with which he makes some work - a spoon, a palette, a table - are not intended to carry a charge of shock, but are used with skill and a certain reverence, like the bottles and bowls in Chardin or Morandi. Like Jasper Johns, he works through a muted rainbow: dusty autumnal colors, greys, browns and greens. Yuri Kuper's work demands long looking, and repays, amply.