

No One Could Accuse

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No one could accuse Simon Dinnerstein of being a fashionable artist. Not at the time he began, not now, and not at any time in between. Leafing through the catalog of his mature work that now spans four decades, one is struck immediately by his total disregard for prevailing taste, his apparent disinterest in the visual arguments of advanced art circles, and conversely, by his single-minded concentration upon the development of a highly personal, creative pursuit. Well before his thirtieth birthday, the young artist was already in possession of the technical means and the spiritual motivation that allowed him, in the late sixties, to set out on a very lonely road toward assertion of his role. It was clear to him that it had to be played outside of the enchanted circle within which current art and art criticism were enclosed.

It is difficult therefore to find an appropriate stylistic designation for Dinnerstein's contribution. He is a "realist" in the sense that intense observation, particularly in his earliest work, produced meticulous accounts of things, people, and nature. He was obviously fascinated by objects strewn around the glum habitations of proletarian surroundings. As with his portraits of the same period, narrative qualities predominate, but not to the exclusion of other aspects that could be called expressionist if one wished to designate thereby a visible concern with an inner reality that so visibly protrudes onto the smooth surfaces of his walls and facades. This concern is also mirrored in the mercilessly detailed features of his models. Likewise, in the rendition of flowers, trees, and botanical elements in general, Dinnerstein's preoccupation with inwardness at times assumes an almost magic intensity that approaches the category of fantasy. And finally, the painter's surfaces are so deliberately arranged, often with obsessive symmetry, and so carefully calculated with respect to structural ratios, that the term constructivist also would come to mind were it not wholly preempted in art historical parlance by abstract imagery. It is evident, therefore, that Dinnerstein's dominant realism is significantly enriched by every principal departure in twentieth-century painting.

In Dinnerstein's monumental *Fulbright Triptych*, such qualities are carried to a rich and potent synthesis. The work's central image, featuring an interior view with land-

scape, is placed between a frontal portrait of a seated man to its right and that of a mother and child to its left. This large-scale painting, in addition to dealing with issues of process and perception, has references to visual memory and identity, the workshop of a printmaker, childhood, and ultimately, the curiosity and awe of being a young family living in a foreign land.

The Fulbright Triptych brings to their triumphant conclusion the formal and expressive qualities characterizing Dinnerstein's art.