

TURNER CARROLL

Igor Melnikov

COMMENTS

Igor Melnikov is particularly sensitive to the problems of human existence. He is an artist with a strong tragic bent. His canvases are the works of a man who sees life within definite limits, but sees it all the same with surprising shrewdness and depth of insight. For him, the tragic is always coexistent with happiness, which he describes as the intensive quest for self-realization, and as a permanent emotional strain. According to the artist, the possibility of happiness necessarily presupposes one's readiness for suffering. He does not reduce happiness to pleasure, as the pleasure does not require man's courage. Therefore, the tragic is regarded as the property of the spirit and of the consciousness in which a man does not appear as a weak and pitiful creature. For Igor, every man is initially endowed with dignity, which is an important aspect of man's freedom.

The artist concentrates on the problems connected with morale (ethical) and spiritual strivings of the individual. He prefers to show children but in actuality he does not lay emphasis on any superficial images or passing feelings but tries to discover the true personality as the real object of his creative activity. His personages are actually constructed by the artist's imagination and intuitive inner visualization. It is this intuition that he tries to give the expression to; whether he strives to interpret some philosophical concepts or let his own fancy flow, he always remains personal. The basic means of expression are the result of a deliberate search for a suitable means of recording the artist's sensibility.

Igor Melnikov prefers a simple, static and compact composition. Color is being increasingly subordinated to the general idea. His palate is scanty. His colors are limpid and delicately suggestive rather than obviously apparent. He uses light in such a way that it seems to be nothing more than the symbol of light. By the most sensitive management of subtle tones he makes his studies of every day nature (a band on the throat, hay, lace, worn out dress and routine objects, victuals and household utensils, puppets, birds, insects, et cetera) to be the masterly expositions of his fantastic caprices and dreamlike experiences. The objects he introduces so carefully retain their

symbolic nature. These pure, perfectly constructed images, achieve their special role, which is that of allowing the viewer to discover, within himself, the world of fantastic adventures--mysterious and beautiful dreams and visions. Thus, though the canvases of Igor Melnikov may be taken on their surface value, the more discerning viewer may read therein the true message of the artist.

His works evoke lofty and noble sensations, elevating the viewer above the trivial and mediocre; they grasp ones attention immediately. He adds, to his persuasive power, an appeal to the imagination of the viewers of his pictures. Everyone may form his own interpretation according to his own particular tenants, providing that the viewer has an adequate interest to look into himself. Whatever the ultimate meaning of the artist's paintings may be, it provides a forceful reminder of the complexity of the human personality. His visionary experience, with its revelation of the tragic aspects of human existence and of the constant presence of suffering, in even the most enjoyable moments, may enable us to approach the meaning of being with greater concentration and awareness.