



Vera Arutyunyan

Simone Cappa interviews a contemporary master of abstraction

Armenian-born, Los-Angeles-based artist Vera Arutyunyan combines primary colors and an aggressive brushstroke style toward a decidedly contemporary version of Abstract Expressionism. Although the masters of the 50s like Pollock and de Kooning created a similar aesthetic 40 years prior, Vera's emotionally charged paintings appear forever in the moment. The artist's vigorous and defined brushstrokes are filled to the brim with the very energy of her technique—the very motions of her wrist. In total, they are primary color-infused visions of action painting forever frozen in time. If every element of the artist's application process is clearly readable upon her finished canvas, Vera means it that way. Highly conscious of all those masters who have tried their hand at the blank canvas before her, Vera paints on, and with a vengeance that brings the viewer up-to-date. Somewhere between the mist of Turner and the drips and splashes of Rauschenberg, Vera stands tall on today's contemporary art scene for her reinvigoration and renewal not only of a painting style, but also a frame of mind.

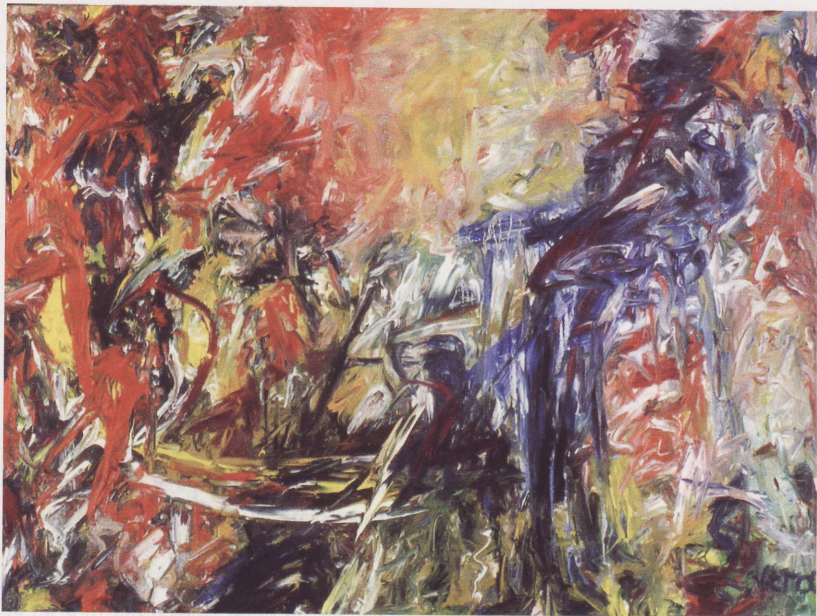
Simone Cappa: Can you name or describe some of your influences as a painter—whether they are other artists, concepts, styles, techniques, etc.?

Vera Arutyunyan: I am influenced by all that is created by God. Aren't we all? Every leaf on the tree, every cloud in the sky, every insect or animal, every footstep in the sand—aren't they an inspiration enough to make one's mind fly so high into the world outside of ours, the world where you have an answer for everything and it feels wonderful?

SC: Are your creations completely abstract or do they stem from reality in some way? In other words, how do your works relate to the visible world as we see it on a daily basis? Could these works also represent the dream world?

VA: My creations stem from comprehension of everything that I envision in my own spiritual and emotional world. My own encounters with the philosophical content of life and the emotional resonance of all that surrounds me led me to incorporate colors that emerge in words sometimes more powerful than those of spoken out loud. Is my

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VA: If anything, the predominant incorporation of the red-based palette has chosen me. I have no control over which color the eye of my mind sees. It is the same with a musician who writes a symphony and not once stops to analyze the notes with which he plays, but only hears the melody.

SC: In addition to your use of vivid colors in your works on view in New York recently, your brushstrokes are similarly strong and even aggressive in affect. Where is all this power coming from and what do you hope the viewer will see here?

VA: The trials and tribulations of everyday life have only spurred me to find strength and passion through my faith and my art. I paint to deliver myself quite spontaneously of a spiritual world, which I carry within myself. I am hoping to be understood and for my paintings to obtain identity and significance, for them to become securely existent. □

art abstract? It is as abstract as my dream world.

SC: How do you see your style of painting as having evolved during the course of your artistic career?

VA: Over the years, my form of expression, through mind and words, melded with the very brushes I used, and became one.

SC: Do you believe this evolution complete?

VA: This evolution is not just one that deals with art but has become part of myself—in essence, as grows my art so does my soul. I plunge into my subconscious world when I paint. If only I can regain the ability to draw upon super-consciousness, this would therein never cease to evolve until I cease as well.

SC: How often do you immerse yourself in the world of painting? Is it a daily process, or do you give yourself a little time in between each canvas?

VA: The world of painting is the primary plane on which I live. Though I may not be physically in front of a canvas, in my mind I am always surrounded by a play of colors.

SC: Can you briefly outline the general process and technique that you employ for each of your vibrant paintings?

VA: The technique I employ is one of blind creativity, beginning with brushes, then using my very hands as the medium. In a whirlwind of empty paint tubes, with the drumming of a familiar symphony in the background embodying the tempest of my own emotions, coming to life.

SC: How does your Armenian background figure into your unique creations?

VA: You can tell a lot about an artist by their painting. As for my own, I feel that my culture does not scream but whispers in the very palette of colors I use. The rich textures unwittingly carry through my ancient culture, with its vibrant history and strong faith. It is not a byproduct of my culture, but an instinct that brings it to life.

SC: In your paintings on display at Broadway Gallery this past spring, I discovered a primarily red-based palette. Is there something to your predominant incorporation of this strong color into your works, or was this choice of color completely arbitrary?



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