

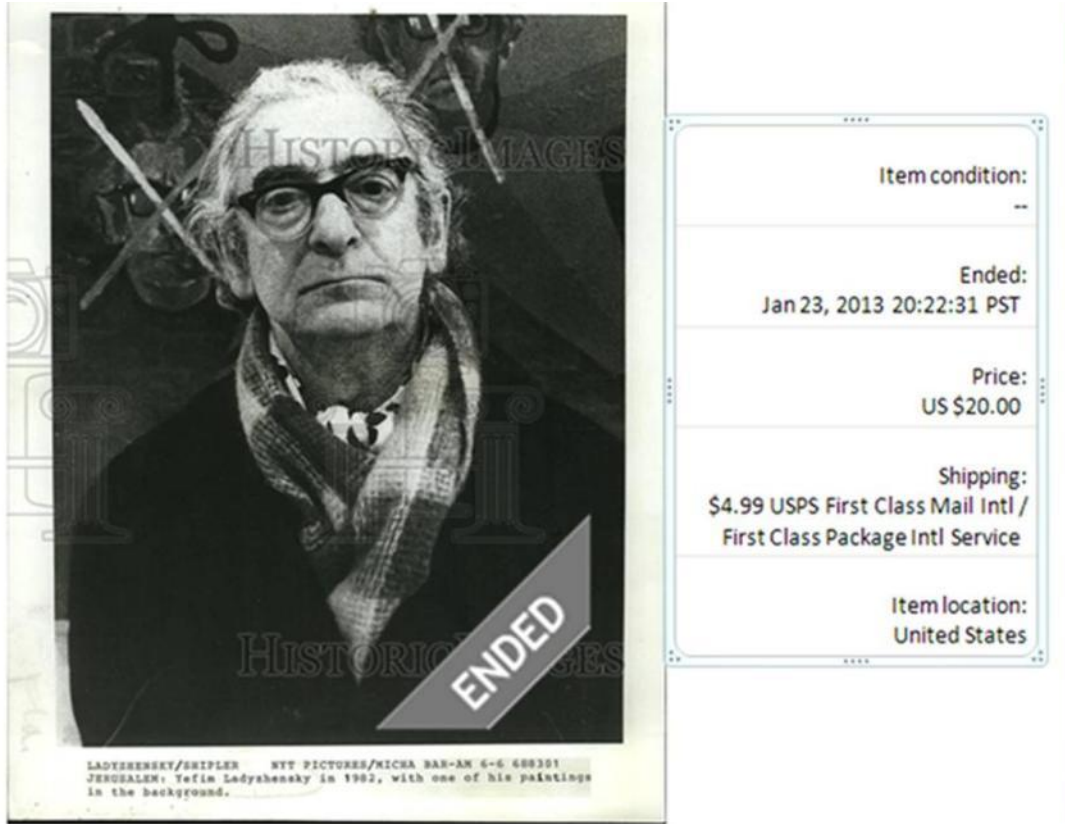
**My Father the Artist
Documentary Story**



This is a pre-war self-portrait. Having never adapted himself to the authorities, always uncompromisingly adhering to his vital principles, not once imperilling his freedom, at the age of

67 in Soviet Russia my father was afflicted by the Babelesque (I.Babel was his artistic idol) sensation of “Life is shattering, I am attending some enormous, never ending burial service”.

And here is an up-to-date confirmation of such a burial service taking place: a tragedy to be auctioned off on eBay at mere 20 dollars. This photo-portrait (by Micha Bar-Am), ordered by New-York Times correspondent David Shipler, was taken in March 1982 at the exhibition hall of the Jerusalem Artists’ House, where the last lifetime exhibition of Yefim Ladizhinsky went on display (at that time he was already barely among the living).

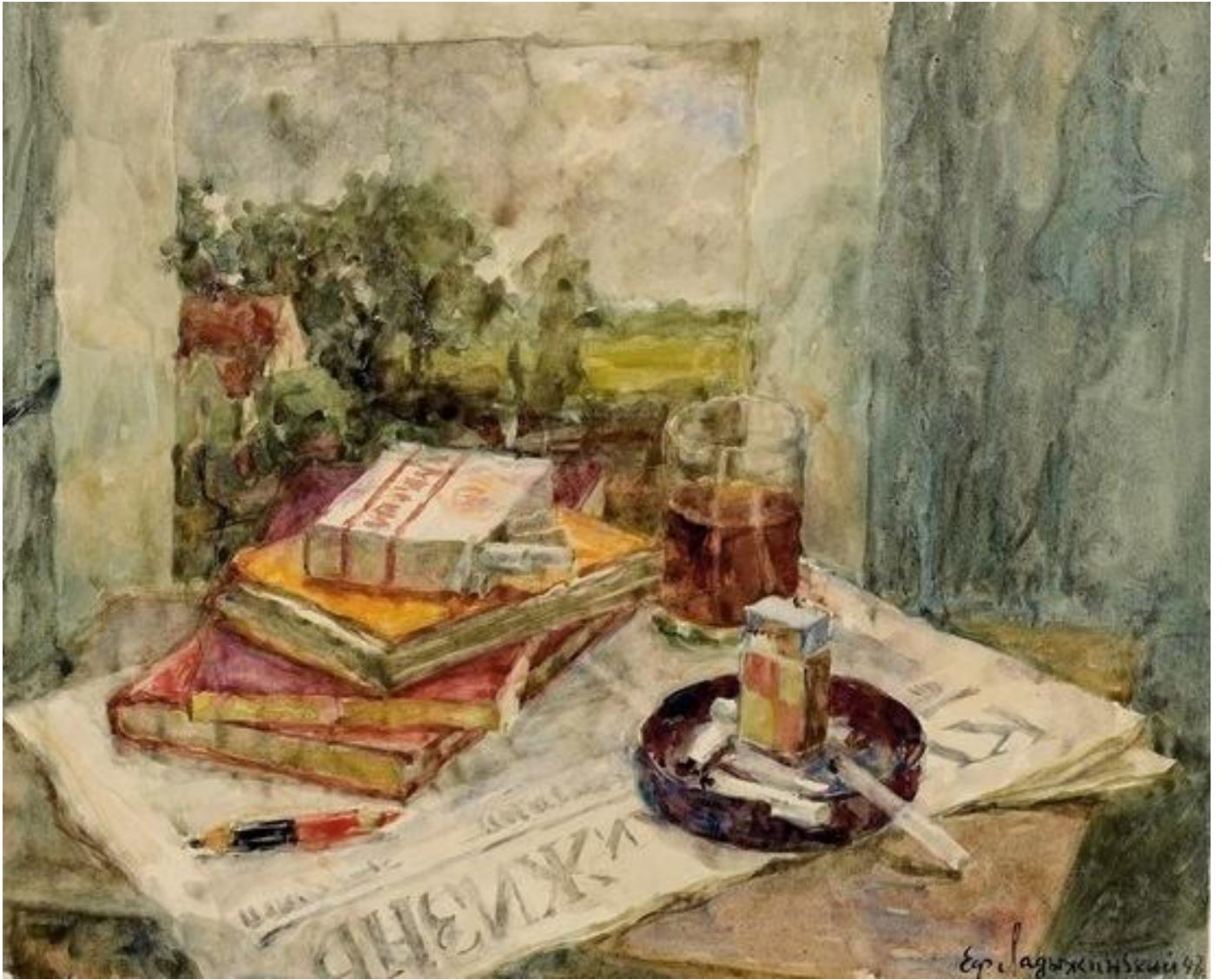


The 40-ies – 50-ies

Imparting eternity to a phenomenon by visual means, music, literature constitutes a work of art. I am an artist of natural essence. Though not in a sense of figurative. What *figurative* implies is identifiability of whatever is depicted. By “natural essence” I understand that the object depicted, described, drawn, modeled or sculptured had been seen, comprehended and realised by the artist in his life”.

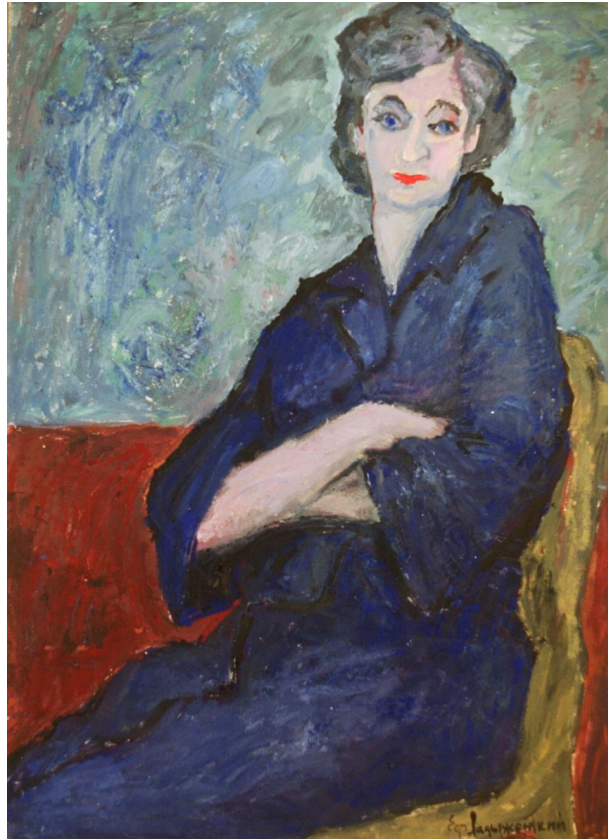
Yefim Ladizhinsky





These water-colors impart a very attractive appearance to our utterly unattractive family life. The packet of cigarettes wandering from one water-color to another is associated with the following story: during the war years my father was designing guest performances for the army in the Moscow Kaverin dramatic theatre; the entire ration received he gave to the family, while he himself was held up by tea and cigarettes, until a grave stomach ulcer stroke him; he displayed unbelievable courage, sustained a complicated operation without narcosis (the war time); was prohibited smoking, he did not throw out the last packet of cigarettes he had started, the one on his still-life canvases, thus testing his will-power never having taken up smoking again ever since.

Our family (Dad, Mom,



my elder brother Vitya,



who was ill lying in my bed, my grandma dad's mother



- the photo here is that of dad's elder brother Volodya, who had been missing since the Second World War, and myself)



“resided” in a small room, one of those 38 rooms using “one lavatory”, in a barrack labeled by somebody “The House of Engineers and Technicians”. No engineer or technician, except for my Mom, resided in this tumbled-down two-storied dwelling, propped-up with wooden supports. Our neighbours were notable for their vivid local color, just as described by Alexey Tolstoy or by Daniil Kharms. Their children, like myself and my brother, felt perfectly comfortable growing up in these conditions, which would appear barbarous today.

In the center of our living environment heavily partitioned by a curtain, where squeezed beyond it were tin basins and a bath, a table with a kerosine plate, and our pride - the bookcase and the book shelf, the parents’ sofa-recliner and my princess bed (my grandma and brother whiled away the nights on convertible camp beds), there in the center there was the hatch of the basement where food-stuffs and dad’s professional accessories were kept. Our little friends were invited to have a look at the book-case, not at its contents, but at the glass cases splashed with paints covering the glass with increasing density from one water-color to another. The contents of the case were no less interesting: naturally, the lower shelves were weighed on by heavy volumes of the Complete Soviet Encyclopedia having gone through the drama of its unstable existence. After Stalin’s death the hurry-scurry began: sheets kept on being delivered for substitution of pages demanded to be torn out of the volume and annihilated. The entries containing the current enemies of the state and their collaborators were flushed down the same hole of the close-stool. Slightly above wonderful art books were on display. One of them, however, had a misfortune of being vandalised: Velasquez’s *Infanta* and her smart clothes appeared irresistible to our young nannie Dusya, who mercilessly tore out pages with reproductions from the book, which resulted in her dismissal.



The

shelves above

were slowly filled up with all sorts of collected works brought by papa after having been engaged in projects related to contracts with theaters in Saratov, Bryansk, Vilnius, Alma-Ata and other towns. As the saying goes, extreme conditions generate incredible ideas. Here too, behind the plywood partitions of this small room, brilliant projects arose. Magnificent scale models for performances were created, models for pavilions of Central Asian republics planned for the All-Union agricultural trade show were constructed from boxes for cotton and pictures of dashing stallions.

And then one day in this murky Soviet Russia a fateful meeting of two brave artists (that of my father with the editor of “The USSR Decorative Art” Mikhail Ladur) took place: they began developing design for factory-and-works departments (the contemporaries of those times know very well the downcast premises arousing anything but the workers’ stimulation).

I also remember the meetings of activist artists concerning construction of workshops.

In the meantime our brilliant barrack gained its wreckage state, and we, the tenants, slowly ascended to the next floor of the social ladder: to “KOMMUNALKA”, the communal flat. Basins, kerosine plates, the sense of horror accompanying me, the young girl, upon a thought of another visit to the communal bath – all this was tucked away to the farthest memory fold, and our beloved book-case set out with us to the new life.

The Second Half of the 50-ies – The Early 60-ies

“Any craft bears elements bringing it within the margins of art, but art is never and nowhere begotten without craft”.

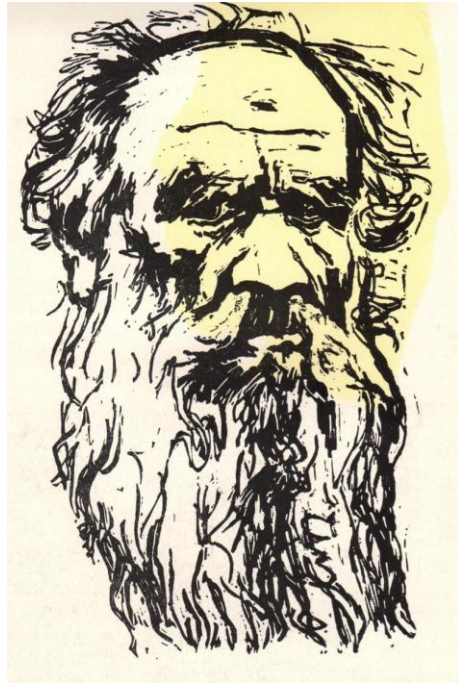
Yefim Ladizhinsky

A happy period began in my father’s creative life: an atelier was granted in the region of Izmailovo. In this tiny room, one of about hundred of various sizes (depending on the degree of recognition granted to the artist by the authorities), on the 9th floor, the last one in a “П”-shaped apartment building with multiple entrances, dad built with his own hands a loft to expand his working space. The skylight windows, the so-called “lanterns”, flooded it with light. Now my joys of visiting theatre, cinema, the museum and the library, were enriched by visiting dad’s atelier.



A narrow passage led to the ateliers of dad's friends: Illarion Golitzin (yes, yes, one of those direct offsprings of the clan of dukes); Mikhail Ivanov (I.Babel's son, stepson of V.Ivanov, and the brother of our outstanding contemporary Vyacheslav Ivanov); Kolia Andronov a sculptor and a painter (one of the first artists who dared to paint a green dog on a canvas); Vladimir Ivanovich Kostin, a wonderful person and a highly professional art critic who published his monograph about K.S. Petrov-Vodkin; Vladimir Vaisberg, a quintessential bohemian, tortured at the time and revered presently through a permanent exposition at the branch of Pushkin museum, at the museum's of private collections; Boris Volkov, the then chief artist of the Bolshoi theatre; the Dmitriyev couple engaged in the ceramic art, the kind dear twosome, residing in a studio with three well behaved cats; Valentin Ivanovich Polyakov, uncle Valya, Dad's closest friend. I visited all those ateliers, with dad and without him. I was fortunate to both watch the process of creation of those outstanding artists and view many of their works long before they were exhibited in public. I bore witness to a kind of illuminated sacrament. And all this gave me a sense of exclusiveness, which undeniably had a formative effect on my personality.

The artists worked hard and productively attentive to each other's advices. They held interesting professional as well as professionally unrelated discussions; twice-thrice a week gathered for a session of painting a nude model. Dad experimented with new to him media, including linoleum engraving, monotype and etching. Sometimes I was also permitted to smear with a spoon on a special plate paper so that all the lines of the drawing, including the thinnest ones, would be reproduced on the linoleum print. The portrait of L.N. Tolstoy carried out in this technique marking the 50th anniversary of his death, was published in the 11th edition of the "Yunost" periodical in 1960.



In 1961 dad was enlisted to a control group of the All-Union Theatrical Society. In the course of three years dramatists, actors and artists traveled all over the country visiting provincial theatres attending their performances writing critical accounts. Many of the sketches made by dad during these journeys and later on in his studio, turned into expressive water colours. And, at last, in 1962 at the All-Union Theatrical Society on Gorky street in the center of Moscow, the personal show of Yefim Ladizhinsky, a creative summary of three decades, was exhibited. Along with the sketches of scenic design prints and water-colors were on display.







1962 was a year of dramatic changes in our family. My elder brother got married, left the institute without completing his studies and was recruited to the army service. For my parents this was a true catastrophe (they still could not forget his rejection to all sorts of red-tape frameworks, his flights from pioneer camps). And indeed, my brother spent many a day and night in the guard-room for disobedience. Well, when it rains it pours, so to say: I took flippantly my entrance examinations to some institute and was not accepted. I worked a year at mom's factory and didn't regret it a single bit: made acquaintance with a girl who performed heart-breakingly all the popular songs of Bulat Okudjava. My grandma, dad's mother, his dearest person and incontestable authority, at the age of 81 finally moved to Moscow having left for ever her native Odessa.

About my grandma: on May 28 1941 in Odessa son Grisha was born to dad's elder brother Volodya. For several weeks grandma helped the young couple, and on June 20 left for Moscow: the childbearing of her second daughter-in-law was nearing. On June 22 1941 grandma without hesitation returned back home to Odessa. The same day dad's elder brother left to the battle-front as a field doctor. He would not manage to break out of the encirclement but he saved his wife, his child and his parents from certain death having provided them with a certificate-permit for evacuation. The fate did not destroy them by massive bombing and allowed them to get to a small Ural town. Uncle Volodya regularly wrote letters calming them down. The severe winter of 1942 brought the bitter news came: "The field doctor Ladizhinsky Vladimir Benzionovich had been declared missing in the battle of Sevastopol". My grandpa, weakened by years of serious disease, could not overcome his grief. Lifeless he spent several days on a frozen chest in the outer entrance hall while grandma would not retreat a step from him until she was taken to the hospital with frostbitten toes. After all her toes were amputated grandma relearned walking anew. In the course of the subsequent long years she was blessed with, her daily suffering had been a reminder of the two dearest men who prematurely and so tragically passed away. But she suffered silently sharing her pain with no

one.



I re-read again and again the amazing letters of uncle Volodya, which were kept in our family archive.

The main drama of that year was our ascent to a new stage of the social scale of ranks: my parents at the age of 51 and 47 received a two-room flat in the Moscow region Kuzminki near the forest-garden with Golitzin stables and the lake preserved from the former estate. For a long time we still couldn't believe that all those queuein for their turn to use the combined lavatory were only members of our family, that food cooked on the kitchen-range was only that in our own pots, that we shall never smell the nasty reek, never hear the yell of the neighbours' squabbles. Well, quite a new life.



A year later our family was saved yet another “trouble”: I entered the very best of the higher education institutions - the Moscow State University, the math department. Dad could not hide his boundless happiness of a Jewish parent whose child would receive high education, and what an education! I remember our walks in the Kuzminki forest and his moving attempts to grasp this mysterious square root concept.

The last two live performances that were stage-designed by my dad in 1964 were those of J. Priestley's play "The Scandalous Affair of Mr. Kettle and Mrs. Moon" staged by the brilliant actress Serafima Germanovna Birman in the Dramatic Theater, and of A.N. Arbuzova's play "The Lost Son" staged at the Mali Theater branch.

In that same 1964 a chance saved my father from imprisonment. In fact, imprisonment was in a way built into being a Soviet citizen, for the State day and night vigilantly kept its eye on us by means of its devoted overseers. Near dad's workshop in Izmailovo resided the superintendent's family. This is where the "kompromat" defamation complaints were routed through. The numerous denunciations were leading toward concocting a serious case against Ladizhinsky. The superintendent's wife, who was in love with my dad, informed him about this and advised to urgently move his workshop elsewhere. Just about the same time (here is where the CHANCE comes in!) the brilliant graphic artist Vladimir Ivanovich Kozlinsky retired and offered Yefim Ladizhinsky, whom he valued very much, his spacious studio on the Vavilov street. Dad accepted the offer and moved at once thus terminating "kompromat's" collection against him.

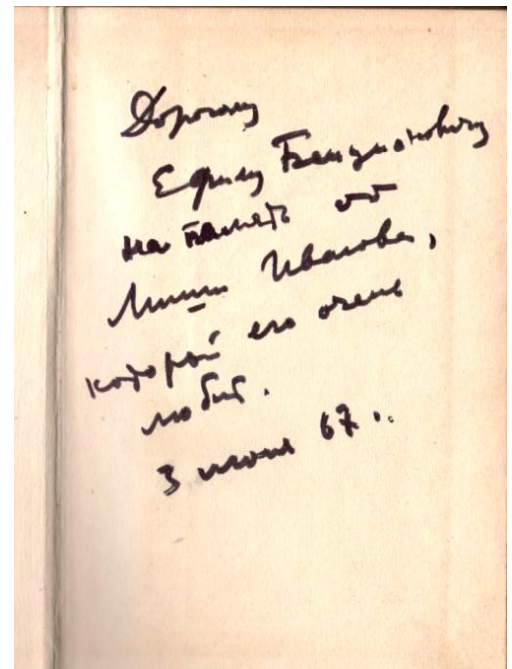
From 1964 - The 70-ies

"One must not be afraid of inventing a bicycle, an umbrella or of discovering America. When discovering America I experience the joy of discovery in my own way, and this is my own America that I discover, and the discovery is exclusively that of my own".

Yefim Ladizhinsky

Dad made sketches for stage design intended for plays that would never be staged - for "Clever Things" by S.J.Marshak, for "The Ballad about Opanas" by E.Bagritsky, for the ballet "The White Lonesome Sail" by V.Katayev, for "The Bath" by Vladimir Mayakovsky, for "Not Listed" by Boris Vasilyev and for "The Sunset" by I.Babel. These sketches are not simply sketches but serious easel-mounted paintings in tempera. They were shown at group exhibitions, enjoy extensive success, and many of them have been purchased by the Ministry of culture and the A.A.Bakhrushin Theatrical Museum.

In 1967 an important event occurred in my dad's life: Michael Ivanov, Babel's son, presented him with the book "Selected Works of I.Babel" with an inscribed dedication in it.



“I.E.Babel, the brilliant writer and my fellow-towns-man. was not immediately accessible to me. He had been beyond reach and this made me lose faith in myself. Only in 1964 when I was 53, about 20 years older than that Babel who created “The Sunset”, I painted sketches to that deeply veracious play. And later on I made my scenic interpretation of “Konarmia” (“Red Cavalry”) and stage design sketched which were shown at the All-Union exhibition of theatre and cinema artists, and at the San-Paulo Biennale. Then I began working on a series of paintings inspired by the themes of this outstanding tragic creation “Konarmia” (tempera on pasteboard). For me this was and continues to be the source of inspiration, just like myths, Biblical plots, legends were for many artist of the past.”

From the artist’s notes.



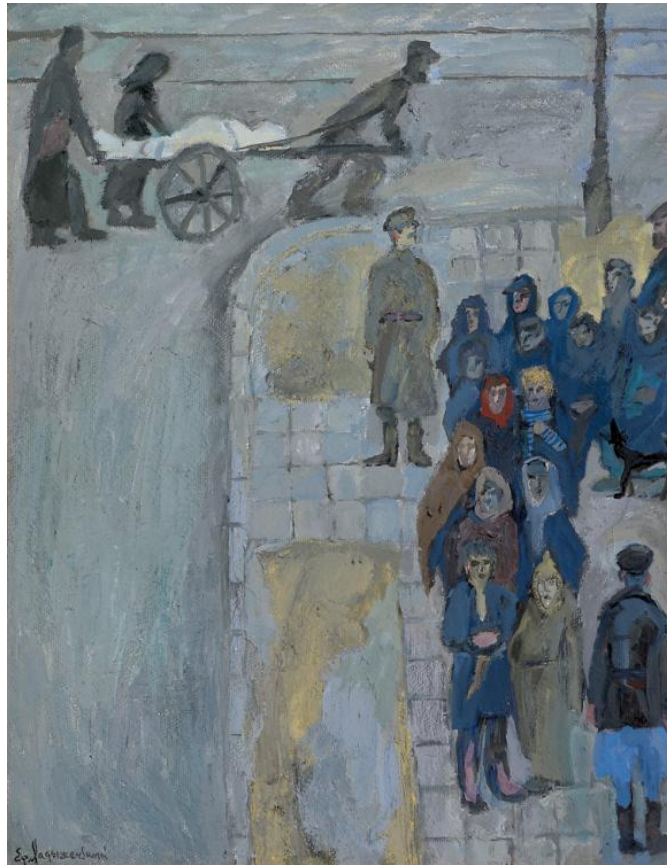
Toward mid 1968 dad completed this series of paintings. He framed the paintings with gorgeous self-made birch-bark frames, which were so much in keeping with the stories told by I.Babel and rendered by the artist Y.Ladizhinsky. Naturally the “Odessa Stories” constituted a considerable part of the “Selected Works” volume. The associations inevitably evoked as these stories were re-read, unexpectedly for Dad himself brought him to the idea of a new series (which in future would become pivotal to his creative work) “Odessa of My Youth”.

From the notes of the artist Valentin Ivanovich Polyakov:

“I asked the artist: “How do you work?” – “How? I just take a canvas and begin painting without preliminary sketches or drafts. All changes and shifts take place on the canvas. A sketch would’ve been constraining”. “After all, I am a narrator” - he added. Yes, it’s a wonderful word, “narrator”. A wonderful word and a difficult task. Ladizhinsky’s Odessa is Odessa of his own, and at the same time it is Odessa of astonishing likeness to itself (like Utrillo’s Montmartre or Cézanne’s Provence).







Dad worked at a rapid pace. His child-like phenomenal memory, keenness of observation, emotional empathy with what transpired on the streets and squares, characteristic humour of a youngster from Odessa were auspiciously instrumental in recreating images and situations one after another. Grief and happiness, work and leisure, prayer, birth and death on the master's canvases never left the beholder indifferent. The officials took a decision: a personal exhibition of the artist Yefim Ladizhinsky will be displayed in three halls of the Moscow Beregovaya street Artists' House in 1969.

Contents of the retrospective:

- Theatre, sketches of stage design to plays which were not staged
- "In Ancient Russian Cities"
- Portraits of mother
- Still-life
- I.Babel. "Konarmia"
- "Odessa of My youth".

Officials, decision, exhibition. And what does an exhibition mean for the artist? Exhibition is an incomparable emotional experience. It means anguish, agitation, dialogue, a trial. A genuine artist barely endures the ordeal of the period leading toward the exhibition. And when was the "decision" revoked? Two days before the opening! When they saw "Babel" and "Odessa" mounted on the walls they suddenly recalled the anti-Semitic line of the official policy. After the Israeli Six-day War against Arab countries the Soviet Union was seriously taken aback by the victory of the Israelis or, putting it bluntly, took it as an insult and broke off any relations with them. As to their own Jews, the hostility of the the official establishment toward them was elicited for any reason or for no reason at all. My dad was charged for excessively heroic representation of the Jews in his paintings. The conflict lasted three weeks. Of course they wouldn't provide the reason for the exclusion of the particular paintings from the exposition, but the true reasons were obvious. I was swamped by phone calls from the Arts Council members who asked me to persuade dad to compromise. I didn't even try - after all it was dad who brought me up to be true to one's principles, besides, I shared my dad's position on this issue.

The officials yielded. I shall never forget that day. After the recurrent meeting of the Council, Dad came back home. His face was red, his gait nervous: "Tomorrow we open!" – my Grandma fainted. This wasn't a mere victory: the dialogue with the public came true. The Ministry of Culture purchased many of the exhibited works. Dad laid aside the money earned not suspecting that it will be used as customs fee for his own works when leaving for Israel in 1978.

1970. Dad's mother, my Grandma, passed away. Dad's heart couldn't withstand the trial of having lost the dearest human being who loved him so much. Infarctions, one after another, irreversibly had stricken injured heart.

1971-1978

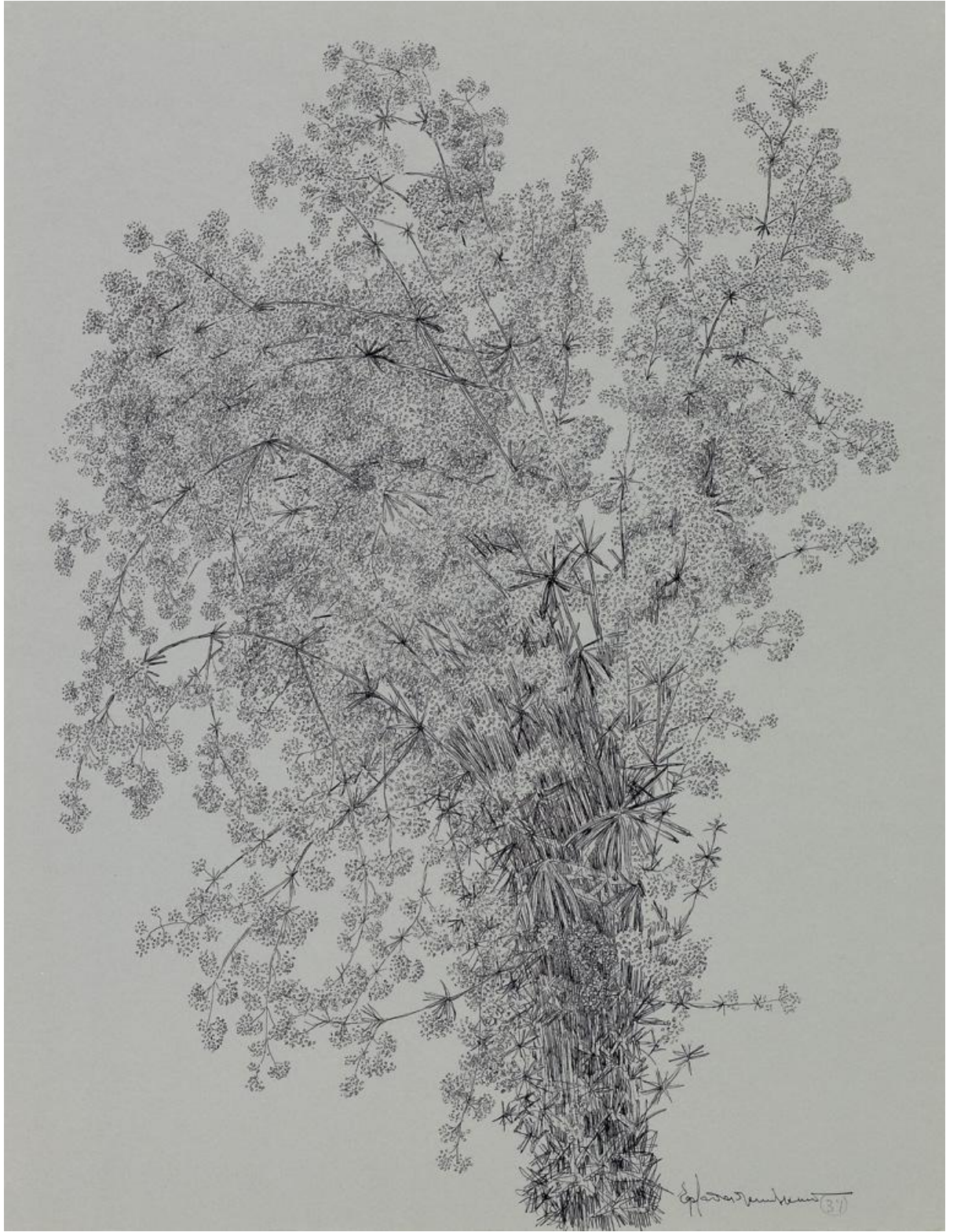
“Art is conceived only by love and compassion, grasped and absorbed by a loving and compassionate soul”.

Yefim Ladizhinsky

In 1971 dad retired and at last could devote himself totally to creative work. He began a series of drawings with pen and ink on paper. In this unique technique requiring the utmost degree of concentration and tolerating no mistakes Ladizhinsky achieved absolute virtuosity. Thus the series “Plants” came into being. The first “posing models” were the flowers notable for their might: lupines, gladioli, lilacs. Still, their “might” wouldn’t protect them from rapid fading, which stretched dad’s working day up to 11 hours. The more challenging task proved to be that of reproducing the unique grace of rudbeckia, poppy, hawthorn. Then came the prolonged period of “wilderness” lasting all the way to leaving for Israel. Dad wandered about the untended backyards adjacent to the building accommodating workshops that were overgrown with weeds left to their oblivion. The artist’s pen turned the unremakable burrs, twigs, flowerets into “still life stars”.

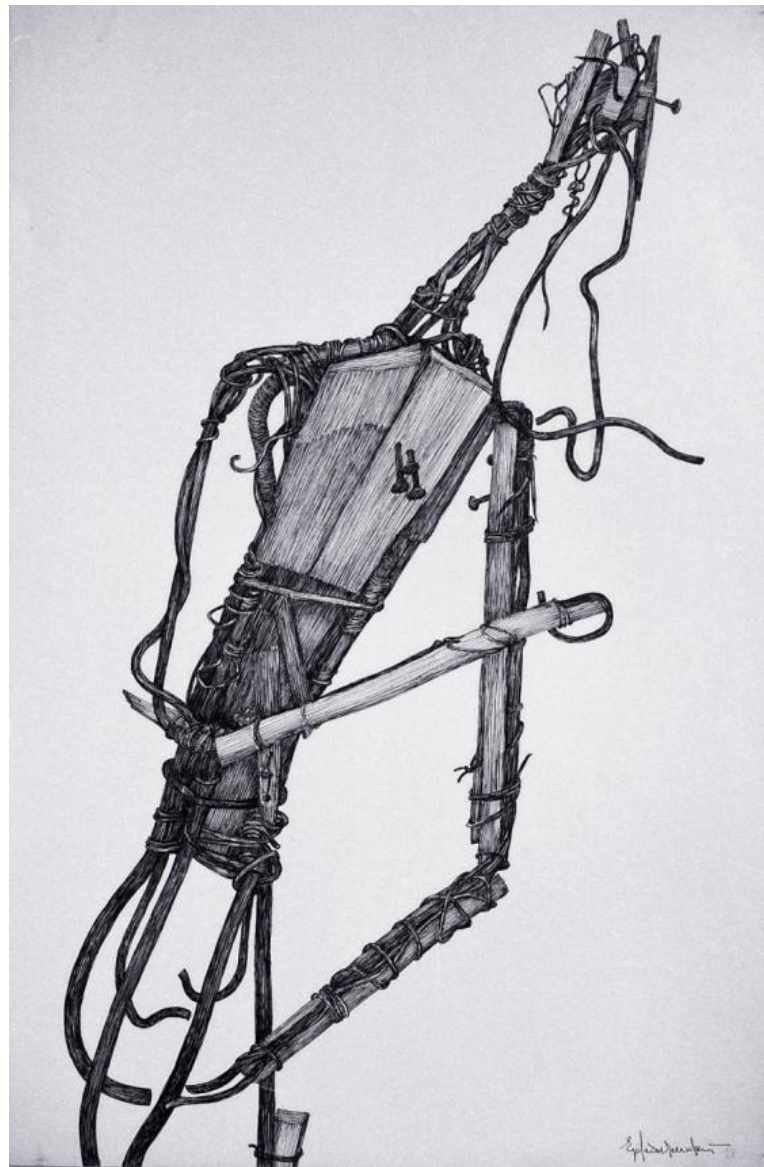


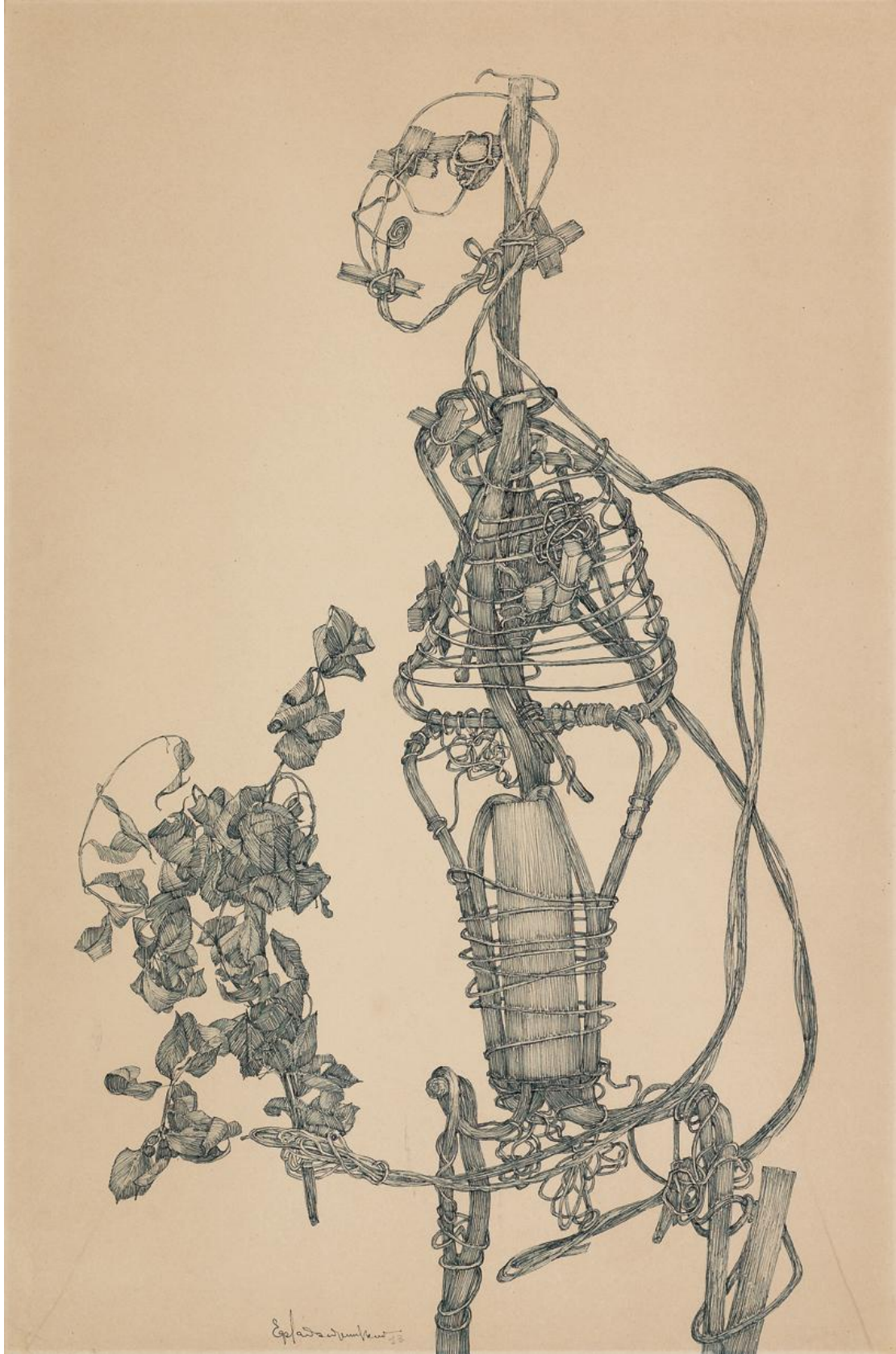


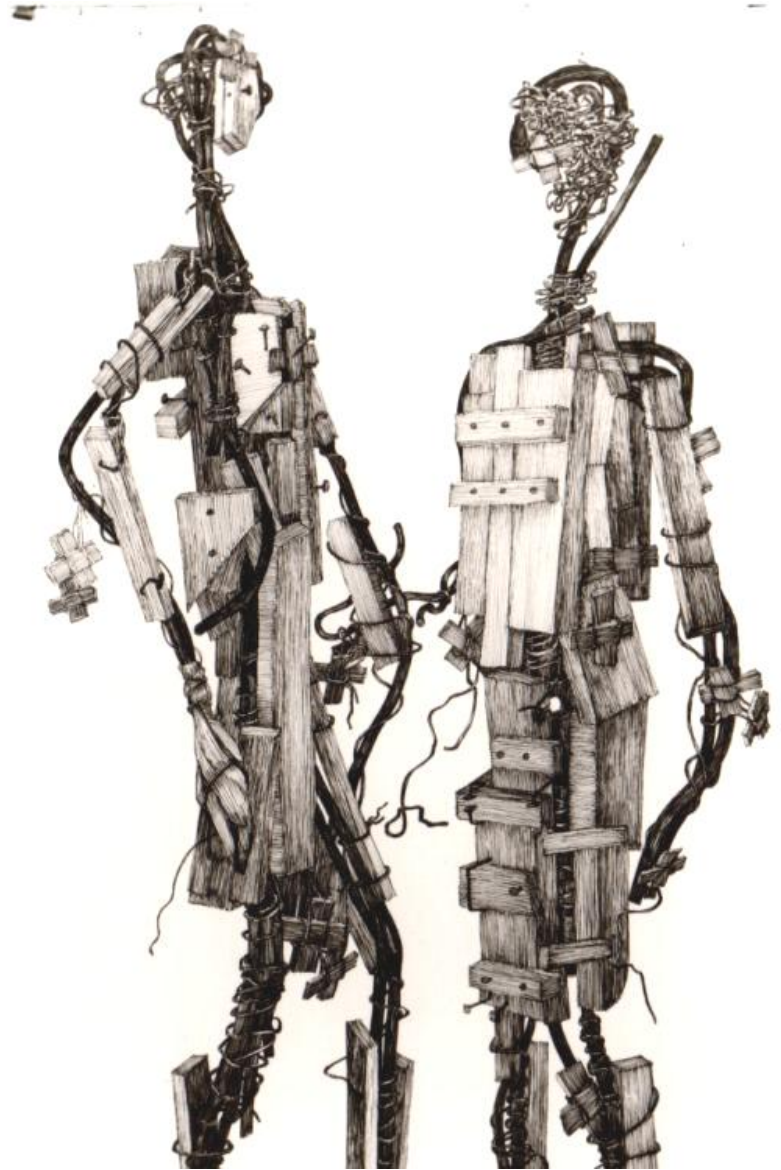
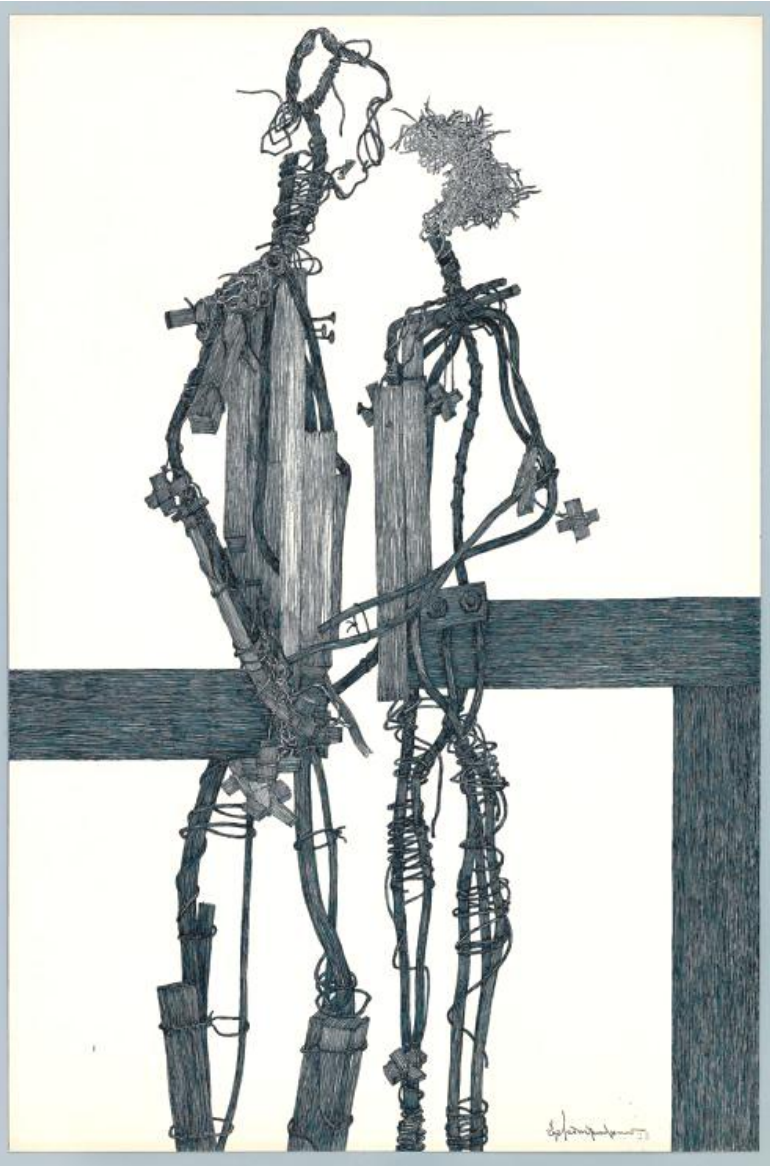




I like telling the story of the origin of the “Armatures” series. I shall tell it on this occasion as well. The of sculptors’ ateliers were located on the ground floor. Dad was always attracted by the whimsical forms of the armatures serving a basis for all sculptures. On more than one occasion he took an opportunity of comparing a completed sculpture, say, a lifeless portrait of yet another leader ordered to be chiseled, with the splendid, full of mystery genuine artistic artefact - the CARCASSES. Such an image takes one’s breath away, arouses imagination.







Parallel to the “Armatures” representing the artist’s relation to the dull, stagnant reality, in which Soviet people had to dwell all those years, he created a canvas depicting the same state of despair and inconsolability, crossing into the realm of conceptualism:

“In the park ‘Kuskovo’ at night”



Fortunately, the radiant images of Odessa conjured by his memory from time to time and relayed onto canvas, brightened up his soul ever so tightly wrapped in gloom . The year of 1975 was marked by publication of the album “The town of my childhood” (“The Soviet Artist” publication) with reproductions of paintings from the “Odessa of my youth” series. This was an obvious sign of the official recognition of Yefim Ladizhinsky as a prominent artist. Such recognition guaranteed the purchase of paintings shown at group exhibition by the Ministry of culture . At the age of 64 dad could at last afford a real canvas rather than painting on the back side of a canvas marked with a title of someone’s exhibition. The thing is that Roza Yakovlevna, a devoted admirer of dad’s

talent, who was responsible for the exhibition hall situated amidst artists' ateliers, gave ("granted") Ladizhinsky that very canvas after each exhibition's closing.

Of course dad had many friends there. Although, it was not so easy to be friends with Ladizhinsky, especially after his mother's death, when his spirit would not rest. For instance, dad began his workday early in the morning, and if some friend-artist, who following a bohemian lifestyle began working around noon and would somehow dare to barge in on Yefim (as everyone called him) in his studio, a glance full of deep scorn would kick the uninvited guest out the door. Still, they went on valuing friendship with Ladizhinsky for his devotion, his extraordinary conversational abilities.

A few words about "Vavilov" friends:

Vladimir Osipovich Roskin, painter. Mayakovsky called him "Narkomproskin". "Englishman" was a nickname given by Nagibin. His close friends called him "Wolf". His name was Vladimir Roskin. He graduated from Rerberg school and Mashkov studio, was one of the founders of "ROSTA Windows", served as a chief designer of international Soviet exhibitions. Easel-painter, graphic artist Vladimir Roskin – this name is yet to be discovered by the wide audience and professionals. All this despite the fact that his works are being kept in the most prominent museums throughout the world such as the Moscow State Pushkin Art Museum, the State Tretyakov Gallery, the Moscow Museum of Literature, the British Museum in London.

(Exhibition "Windows of Growth [ROSTA] by Roskin").

Naum Tzeitlin, illustrator of children's books. The artist was especially successful with books for the little ones: Brothers Grimm's "Tales", "In Bygone Days" by B.Zhitkov, "And What About You?" by Mikhalkov and "Horse-Fire" by V.Mayakovsky.

Katya Grigoryeva (nicknamed by Ladizhinsky "Ketzele"), painter. "Katya is a proper artist. Democratic in the finest sense of the word. Intimate, lyrical. What she says and does is very close to my heart. Such integrity of a persona, and, as a consequence, such artistic freedom" (Aldashin, artist, producer).

Alexander Fedorovich Lushin. Since 1950 Chief Artist of Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Moscow Music Theater.

A friend from out of the studios, art critic and artist Gregory Anisimov spoke warmly of "sit-round gatherings with Ladizhinsky". Frequent visitors were the art critic Yuri Osmolovsky, the Chief Artist of the Mossovet theater Alexander Vasilyev, artist Vera Zaitzeva with her husband, a brilliant sculptor Lyonia Berlin, theater critic Olga Pizhova and her husband Gesha the playwright, the producers Michael and Sonia Schweitzer (dad gave them a piece from the Odessa series "In the Museum" as a gift). The Schweitzers introduced dad to Lora Yablochkina, who worked as MOSFILM editor. She enjoyed the "hangouts with Ladizhinsky" so much that once she brought

along to the studio Tonino Guerra (her future husband) and Antonioni. They could not get enough of viewing with admiration the paintings from the Odessa cycle. Antonioni drew crosses on the stretchers of several works, exclaiming: “Oh, how I’d like buy them!” Later on Tonino Guerra and Lora exported one painting to Italy, promising to try and publish a monograph about Ladizhinsky.

The “hangouts” by some circumstances brought to the studio **The New York Times** correspondent David Shipler, who later on dedicated to Ladizhinsky an article in his newspaper as well as a chapter in his book "*Russia: Broken Idols*". But the “hangouts” would not suffice for the artist, he needed a mass public for a true dialogue, and the then existing bureaucratic canons left no perspectives for a personal exhibition.

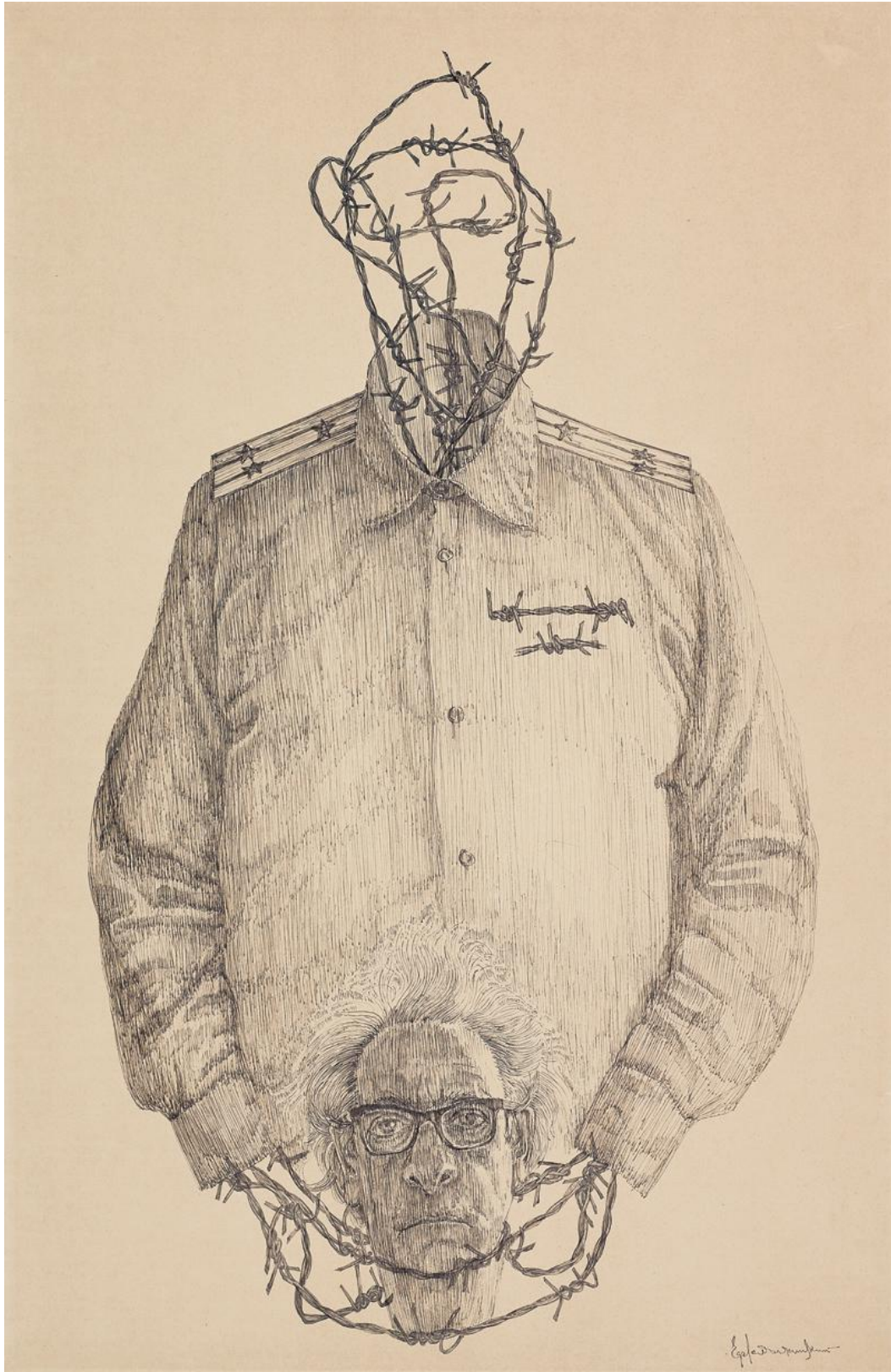
The year of 1977. January. An agonising night. I remember the anguish in my dad’s eyes. The first aid ambulance. Life support. Massive heart attack. I am bustling in the corridor with three rubels in my pocket for the nurse to provide better care. The money remained in my pocket - dad’s rearing. The condition is grave with no changes. At last, following another cardiogram, the doctor treating dad addressed him:

“I am sure I can bring you back on your feet. But I need your help: tell me, what is torturing you?”

“I can’t stop thinking. Do I have to leave for Israel so that my paintings will not be buried in the depositories of the Ministry of culture?”

In December 1977 my parents applied for emigration. The ten months ordeal began.

Not a word of information from the committee engaged in export of the artist’s creations. They demanded to vacate the studio premises. SELECTION began to do away with water-colors, paintings, tempera. 2000 of them. An act of spiritually murdering the artist. 10 months later, when the family was brought to utter despair, the authorities issued the exit visa. It took an entire day to expose a retrospective of 600 retained paintings and drawings to the dumbfounded custom officers, who were matching photographs with the originals.



The procedure ended with applause.

September 1978 - April 1982, Jerusalem

“My creations are the fruit reaped through suffering and hard work. They are needed and the time will come when they obtain their eternal audience, which I believe with all my broken and wounded heart.

Yefim Ladizhinsky

Dad immediately set out to work on the series of ink and quill drawings based on “Red Cavalry” by Babel. This was his own way of settling the score with the Soviet authorities that had seized his Babel-based painterly series and stored them in their infamous depositories. Large scale, complex compositions - exhaustion inducing work. This was his way to put his mind of his grief and ease the pain at least a bit.





December 1979 - January 1980

A one-man show “Odessa of my Youth” consisting of 35 paintings by Yefim Ladizhinsky opened at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.



That year was marked by a colossal inflow of tourists. Israel Museum was considered Israel’s main attraction. By some unwritten rules of the museum the details about the artist were not disclosed and yet the public demanded it. The person who took the responsibility of revealing this “state secret” was none other than the cloak-room attendant. In the course of one and a half months meetings between the artist and full of admiration visitors, mainly tourists, were held almost on a daily basis. Favourable reviews by the leading critics appeared in the major newspapers. An interview was taken by the news channel rewarding us with a unique memento in the form of footage showing the artist at his easel.

The exhibition of 65 paintings from the “Odessa of my Youth” cycle and 18 drawings from the graphic series “Red Cavalry” that was shown in May 1980 in Haifa, enjoyed the identical degree of success. This show was organised by the great admirer of dad’s work Professor Abraham Kampf, the founder of art history departments at the University of Haifa and Hebrew University in Jerusalem (this remarkable man, who contributed a great deal to the cultural life in Israel and its cultural ties with the US, Britain and Canada, at the age of 91 had now his own exhibition of small sculptures at the Ein Hod gallery).

Moving letters from the friends in Moscow arrived, tore our hearts.

Vladimir Osipovich Roskin:

“Dear Yefim Benzionovich! It’s been already three weeks since I received your letter. It made me very happy and at the same time sad. What made me happy and quite very much so is the opening or your exhibition and its great success. I didn’t doubt for a moment that the exhibition would take place and that it’s success was guaranteed. What saddened me is that you’re not here and I am unable to see you face to face to share with you this event. At any rate, you’re missed greatly here in our studios and I miss you all the more.”

Ghesha and Olga Pyzhov:

“Yefim Benzionovich! It’s me. [We’re] reminiscing, reminiscing, reminiscing. Part of our lives and of mine, and this is no longer called reminiscing but living in the past, or that which is bygone, that is, though nothing goes by and this is still so - came, beheld you, listened to you, looked at your painting or drawing knowing (and this, too, kept me alive) that in an atelier on Vavilov there dwells Yefim Benzionovich, and that upon genuine mental emergency one can always reach you because you’re always there in your atelier (except Sundays). Yefim will brew some tea on the electric plate, will fetch the glasses from the shelf, spoons, homemade jam, cookies, etc. and above all - we’ll talk, look at Yefim’s paintings, and this will bring the sensation of fulfilled and even meaningful life.

Your portrait was hung on the wall in an inconspicuous place by the books, and we greet you every morning. Now you are an image, you’re so severe and righteous and you demand: work!

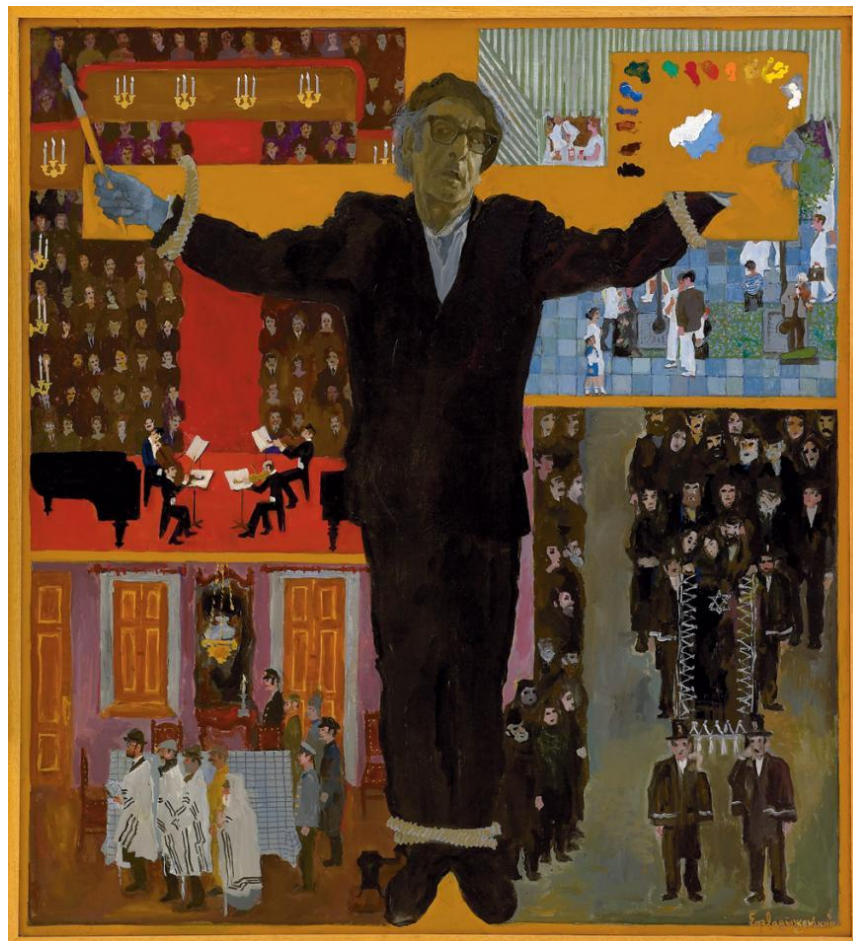
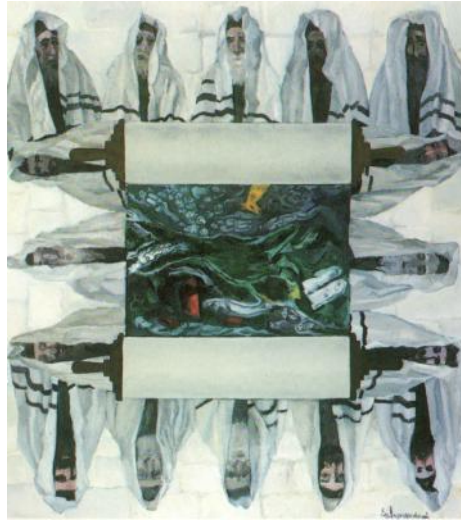
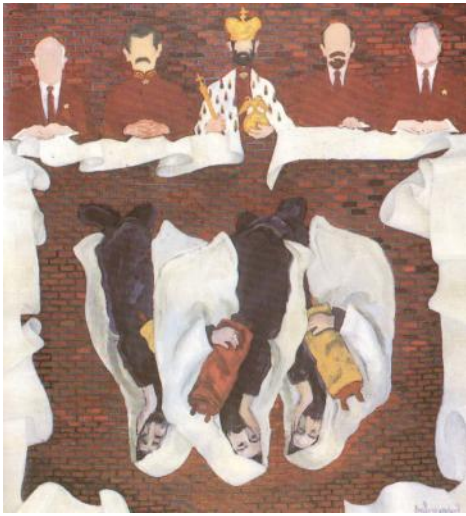
Our dear friend, the only things remaining in Cheremushki are the market and John’ik with the shashlik and icons... - you’re not there and you’re not coming back, which is sad and difficult to come to terms with. I am convinced that you’re same old you - an oddity, a hermit, hard ass and smart ass, that you didn’t let yourself to be groomed, that you won’t let anyone test your patience, that you swear and slam doors, that you remain a sceptic with the ability of loving art and people so profoundly.

So much was written by immigrant artists on the subject of professional solitude! Dad worked in a small two-room apartment. One room served as an atelier, the other - as a storage space line with canvases and folders filled with drawings. In the course of three years in Israel the following series of paintings were completed:

“Lyublin Cemetery in Moscow” or, as certain literary figure defined it: “Meditations on Life and Death” (this is the cemetery where artist’s mother was put to rest);



“Eternal Jew” (eternal restlessness of Jewish folk is interwoven with personal restlessness);



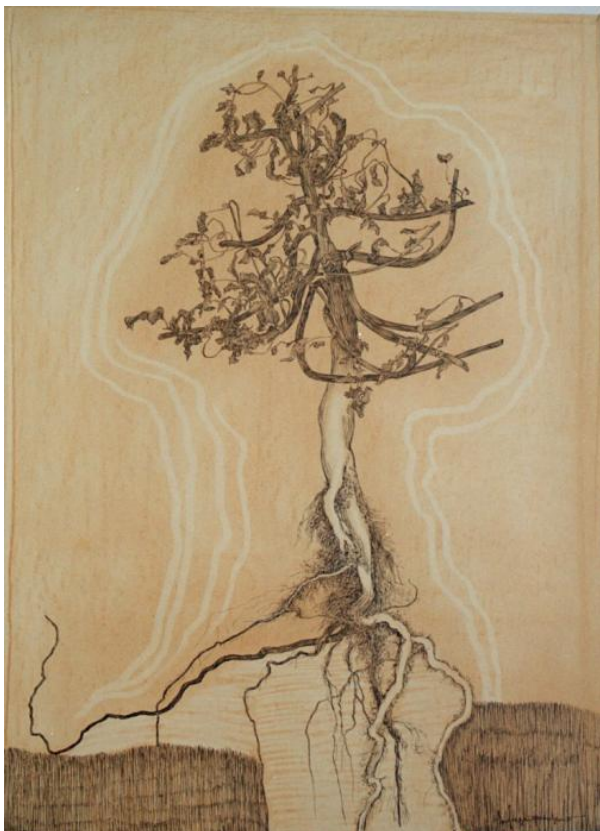
“Asen’ka paraphrased by Yefim Ladizhinsky” (based on the drawings by my daughter Asya).



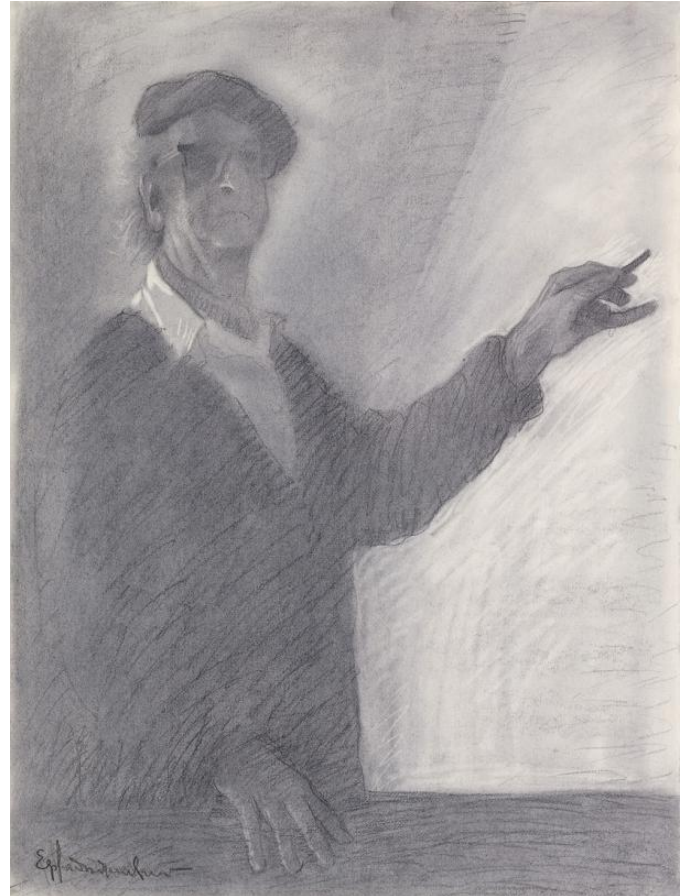
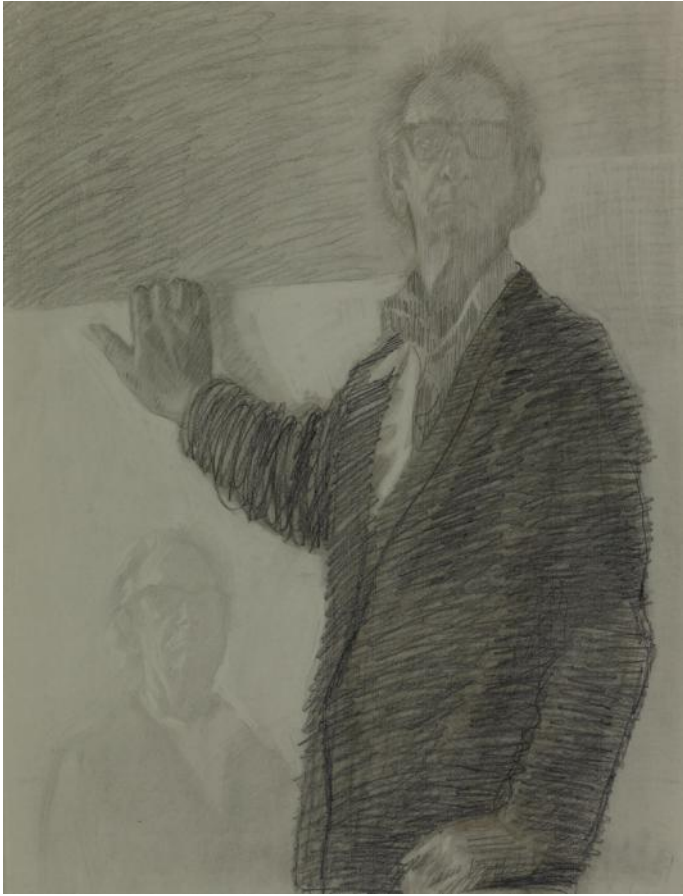
"Light and Shadow" and "Passepartout" (something other-worldly)



And graphic cycles
"Roots"



Self-portraits



The unrealisable dreams about a retrospective show and about publishing a serious monograph documenting his lifelong oeuvre literally ate his soul away.

Depression! Relatives, in utter exhaustion from their compassionate feelings toward a depression stricken kinsman, offer draw a conclusion: “depression is chemistry - suffering for no good reason”.

Yes, dad had been suffering from depression but not for no-good-reason: the unbearable yearning for his deceased mother; inexhaustible creativity propelling him toward producing ever more artwork and, at the same time, the ever increasing awe in the face of his own helplessness and the hatred toward the unsympathetic to his deep feelings milieu (it’s been a while now since he, in his own pictorial way, had been screaming the Munch’s Scream, but nobody listened) that cast onto his creations such bleakness that the horror would overwhelm even himself.

On April 3 1982 the artist Yefim Ladizhinsky tragically passed away.



Victoria Ladizhinskaya
March 2013