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NC art museum opens Kupferman exhibit

By JOHN T. PICKERING

A news media preview highlighted the opening of the first major American exhibition of the work of Moshe Kupferman, an Israeli artist who enjoys international fame, at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh.

Fifty-eight paintings, works on paper and sketchbooks comprising "Moshe Kupferman: Between Oblivion and Remembrance" will be on view at the museum from September 21 through December 1.

Critics regard Kupferman as one of the most prominent artists in Israel and he has been honored throughout Europe with numerous museum and gallery shows.

Yet he is little known in this country, according to John W. Coffey, curator of American and modern art and the exhibition's organizer. Coffey is eager to rectify this situation because he feels Kupferman's art has "both strong

affinities with American abstraction and equally strong divergences. It charts vast areas of human experience that are totally alien to most American artists."

Unlike abstract art in the U.S., Coffey believes, Kupferman's work offers "a justification of life, adds a moral dimension to artwork in which the artist and his work are inextricably combined."

This element of humanity is long overdue in American abstract art, according to Coffey, and he is obviously thrilled to introduce it to the North Carolina and the American public.

Moshe Kupferman's work is very much a product of his life experience. He was born into a traditional Jewish family in Poland in the late twenties and found his life and family ripped apart by the onslaught of World War II. Kupferman was 18 when the war ended, the only member of his family to survive Soviet work

camp. After living in postwar refugee centers, he immigrated to Israel in 1948 where he learned the construction trade. He joined a group of fellow war refugees in a kibbutz near the Lebanese border and eventually persuaded them to let him devote time to his art.

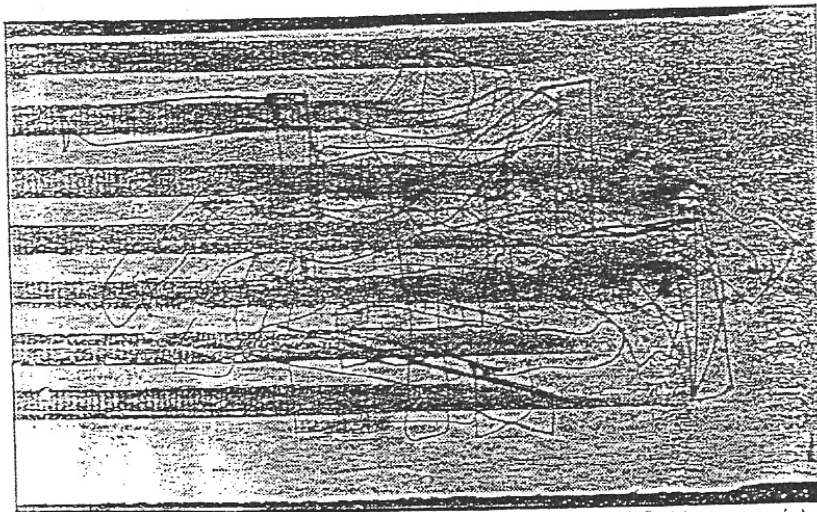
Though the collective community was struggling to make ends meet, Kupferman convinced his compatriots (thought by him to be living "between oblivion and remembrance") that a life of the mind and its expression in art was vital to restoring meaning and order in their lives.

In his case, redemption through the power of his artwork seems to have enabled him to reaffirm his being and construct an entirely new life. In post-war Munich he encountered collections by the old masters and it touched something in him. Spontaneously, he began to draw. Kupferman describes it as "a safety valve, a way of letting out what was inside me."

He is largely self-taught, which curator Coffey believes "isolated him from contemporary art so he could develop his own intense, unique and personal vision, an outward expression of inward thoughts and emotions."

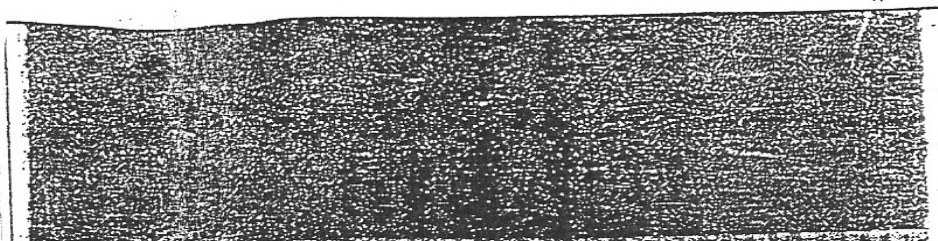
Coffey feels that this "vocabulary of emotion" and sense of "suggested form and nonlinear progress" approximates and makes visible the human thought process.

The collection is an expressive and striking journey through one man's experience and consciousness. Entering the gallery,



Courtesy N.C. Museum of Art

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