



*Sidney  
Guberman*





*Raton Pass silk screen print, nine colors, 100 cm x 100 cm, based upon the painting which was in the 1970 Exeter Show.*

Sidney Guberman graduated from Exeter in 1954. Sidney is an artist. He's also an extraordinary guy and, like most artists, he's a little crazy too. Take last March, for instance. We get a telegram asking us to meet Sidney at Logan Airport. He's flying in from Lausanne where he and his wife Jennifer, their two-year-old son Maxwell, and their faithful dog Clio have been living for the past year and a half, and where Sidney has been teaching painting at the Ecole Cantonale des Beaux Arts et d'Art Appliqué. Sidney has some business to attend to in the United States. That means he'll be in Boston for a few days to talk with Barbara Krakow of the Marcus-Krakow Gallery; in New York to see Frank Stella and play some tennis; in Philadelphia to see Marion Locks who also runs a gallery; in Washington to arrange for an exhibition of his work at the Henri Gallery; back in Philadelphia to check out the house they've rented while living in Switzerland; in Panama to visit his parents; in Florida to deliver a painting; then back to Boston to pick up the loose ends. All this in 21 days and that's not all. Behind him Sidney will leave a string of phone calls longer than your arm. For at least a week after he returns to Lausanne, phone calls will come in from Philly, Los

Angeles, San Francisco, and elsewhere wanting to know if Sidney is "still there." Sidney's motto, you see, is to "keep in constant touch." Which he does — by letters, cards, phone calls, and visits to friends scattered all over the country and the world. The word friendship probably means more to him than to any person I've ever known.

So Sidney arrives — with a couple of ample suitcases, a 3' x 3' box of prints that must weigh a hundred pounds, two Dunlop tennis racquets, a camera, one or two pieces of hand luggage, four 6' x 8' unstretched paintings, and sundry other items, including a bottle of scotch which he's brought his host all the way from London. All of which is supposed to fit into a '68 Porsche! My head is spinning with fantasies about toting this stuff all over Boston. But we somehow get it into the car, momentarily anyway, and it's not that much of a problem because Sidney has planned ahead: he's going to drop most of the stuff off at the Ritz. He always stores things there. I can hardly believe the situation, but I know one thing: it's sure great to see Sidney again.

Sidney Guberman's career as a painter has been as unpredictable as the itinerary for one of his visits — until the past few years, that is. In 1968





Installation view, Lamont Gallery show, February 1970. Paintings named after passes in Colorado, including Raton Pass, 80 in x 80 in. The other paintings shown are 4 ft x 8 ft.



Sidney Thomas Guberman, outside of his studio, Renens, August 1972

he decided to devote full time to the enterprise and that's exactly what he's been doing. Before that he struggled through an off-again-on-again flirtation with architecture that actually lasted 12 years. It began in 1956 when, as a sophomore at Princeton, he decided to enroll in the pre-architecture program, which is generally taken as preparation for graduate work in the field. The decision on architecture was mostly practical: "Architecture was somehow respectable — in somebody's mind — it led to a career, and it seemed potentially creative." What was practical, however, didn't turn out to be very meaningful: "It was extremely dreary. When I graduated I was so out of love with architecture that I simply did not wish to continue on in graduate school and had applied to *none*."

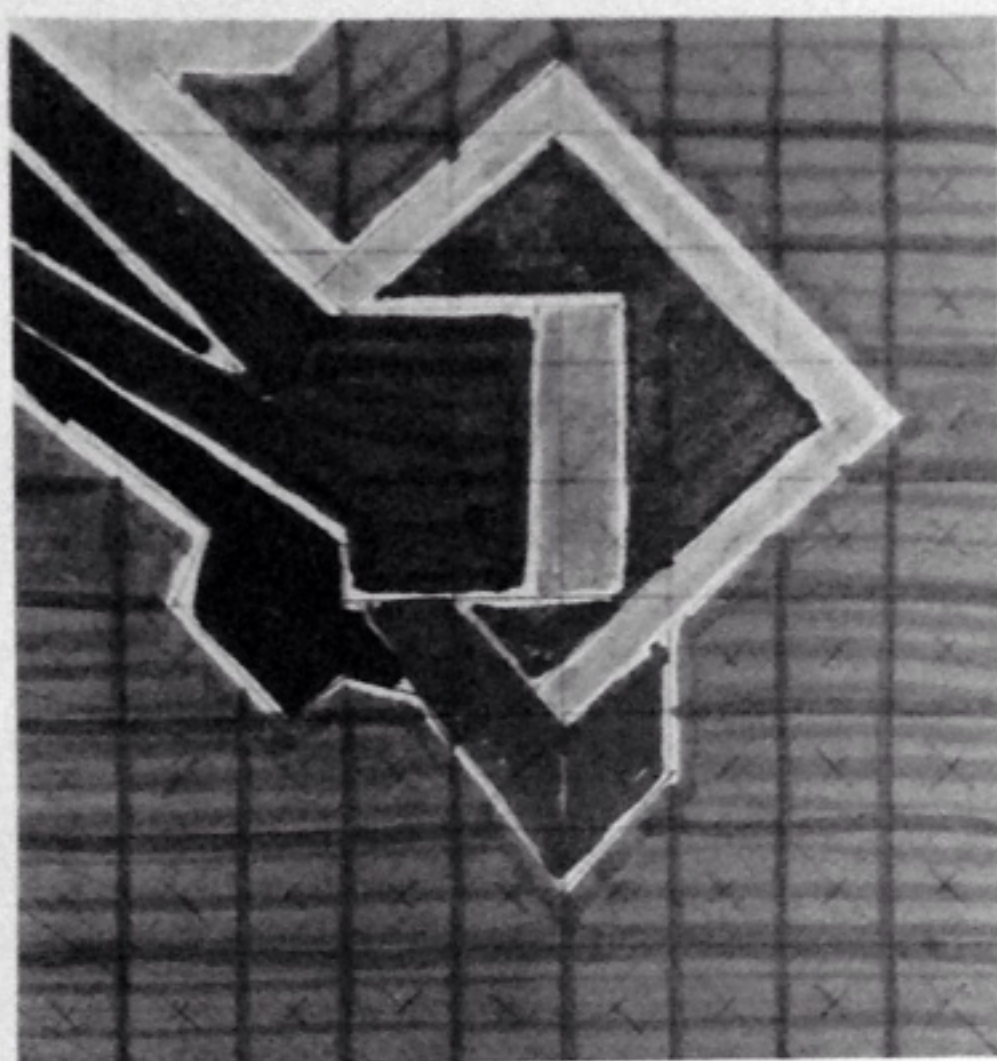
But architecture continued to be a problem. After two years away from the field — spent first in Europe and then working for his father in Colorado Springs — Guberman entered the School of Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania. He completed the first year of a three-year program, took another leave, and returned to Colorado. When his father's business was sold in 1964 he started again, this time at the University of Colorado and this time "enjoying it more . . . maybe because that's where I met Jennifer." They were married in 1965 and that's when Sidney decided to finish the program at Penn. After completing the degree, he worked for one year with the firm of V. G. Kling and Associates. "The best thing I did that year was design a window . . . we

were working on a building for Penn Center and Vincent Kling wasn't happy at what was going on. So he decided to have a little contest. He gave each of us — there were three designers on the project — a week to design a window. I won. To this day I get credit for the window, which is actually the way the wall looks, one window multiplied by a thousand." But that was it for architecture.

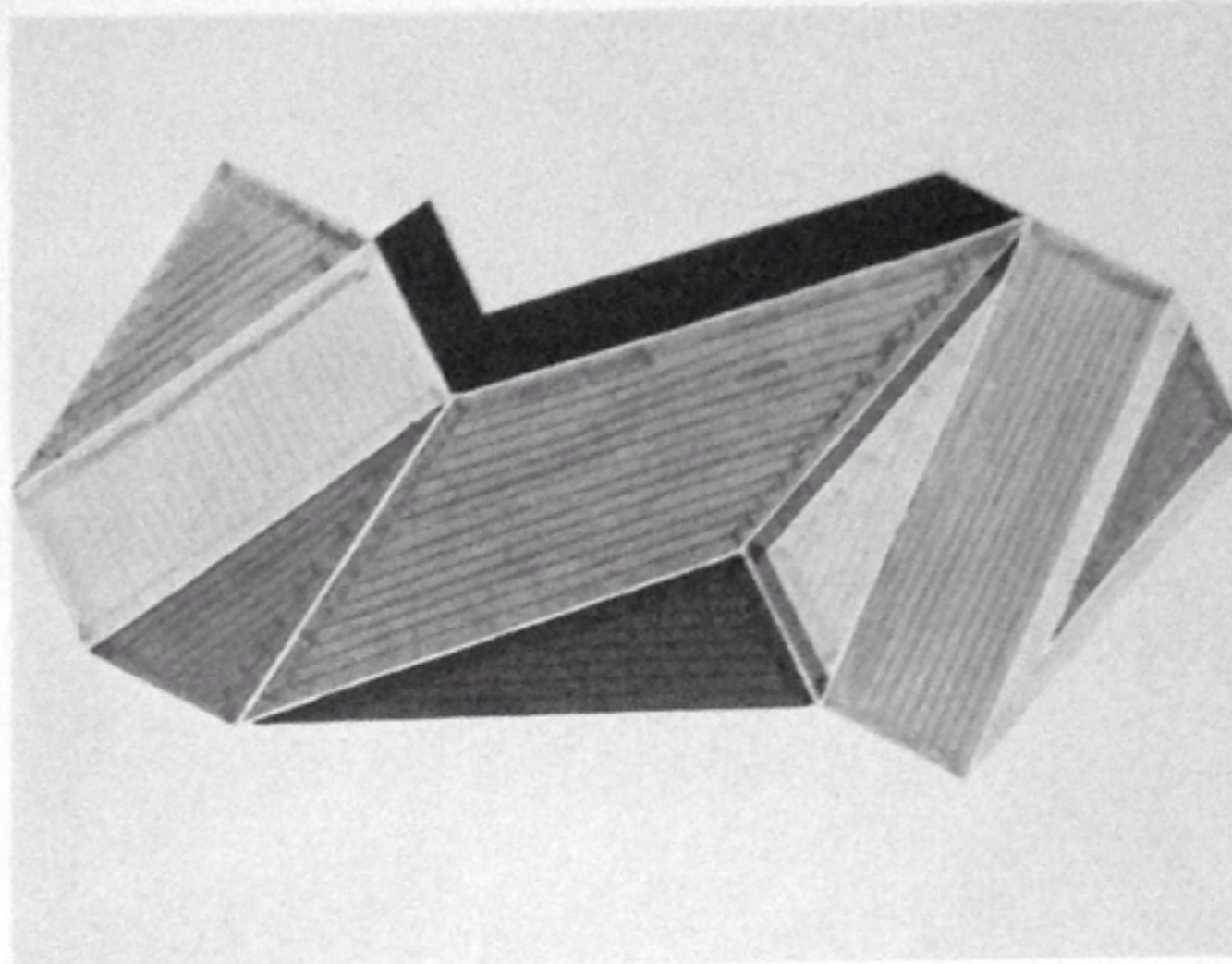
Nineteen hundred fifty-six, the year he decided to start architecture, was also an important year in terms of Guberman's painting interests. Of course they had begun earlier when Sidney was an eight-year-old in Colorado Springs and, most intensely, at Exeter, under the guidance of Glen Krause. At Princeton, however, there were no courses in painting, so he had to work on his own, doing mostly small collages and drawings. The situation changed in 1956 when Princeton initiated its artist-in-residence program. It didn't add up to anything like a major, but it meant that students with promise and commitment could work with a professional. "In 1956 I made a series of enormous drawings with India ink and brush. One afternoon when I returned from hockey practice all of the drawings were gone! It seems my friend Frank Stella had come looking for me, had seen the drawings, and had taken them to Stephen Greene. They were used as evidence that I should be let into Steve's newly-created painting course. I was let in."

Through the early sixties Guberman did "occasional pictures," though architecture was his





*Magic Marker study for large painting, 1972*



*Magic Marker study for large painting, 1972*

paramount professional concern. Painting was confined to the evenings. By 1968, however, the two fields had evolved into mutual conflict and a choice had to be made. "Leaving architecture was easy. That is, I wanted to paint all the time. What made it possible was (1) a wife, Jennifer, who was in favor of the change; (2) a wife, Jennifer, who brought in a pay check; (3) having already found a good studio; and (4) a boss, who is still a friend, who was convinced I would return to architecture after three months away. Besides, I was having a lot of problems. First of all, I was always tired because I was working every night on my painting. Second, I had this thing that I had to go running every day, so I'd go next door to the 'Y' and run three miles — which I still do, by the way. In fact, one of my proudest achievements is doing the 1970 Boston Marathon in 3 hours 19 minutes, 44.1 in a field of over a thousand. Anyway, I'd come back to work after lunch and go to sleep at my desk. I used to think, 'if I were painting now, here I am with a lot of energy, I'd be making great paintings. Instead I'm helping some guy get rich and I don't even believe in what he's doing.' So it was really easy in a way. There I was, and I already had three commissions because of architects coming to the studio to see the work and really loving it . . . right then."

As a full-time painter and occasional print-maker, Sidney Guberman has been doing well. Since the fall of 1969 he has had 7 one-man shows, including a February 1970 exhibition at Exeter's Lamont Gallery. His next show will be at

the Henri Gallery in Washington in January 1973. Equally important is the fact that the painting has gotten better and better. A particularly fascinating aspect of it, at the same time, is that it's not as far removed from architecture as one might suppose from knowing the artist's feelings about his former (pre-) occupation. For the painting has a strong architectural *feel* to it, reminding one of vast, imaginative and yet thoroughly human physical spaces — the kind one would like not merely to visit but live in. Not that they look in any way like architectural structures — they're clearly too abstract for that. Rather, it's the way their spaces unfold and generate one another. In the best pictures the scale begins intimately and gradually expands towards the range of monumentality. But even the grandest spaces and figures tend to be kept close, either through delicate color harmonies or the presence of visible markings in the application of the paint itself. A sense of architecture, then, emerges through the progression of space and scale and also through the roughly geometric nature of Guberman's drawing style. The resulting feeling of the paintings is, in human terms, both sensitive and intimate: like Sidney says, they're in constant touch.

CARL BELZ

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