FORUM GALLERY

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Robert Fishko, *Director*

RAPHAEL SOYER
(1899-1987)



Love Story (Sentimental Girl), 1933
oil on canvas
36 x 34 inches
signed lower right: "*RAPHAEL SOYER*"

Provenance

The Artist
Bella and Sol Fishko, New York
(Forum Gallery, New York)
Private Collection, Pacific Palisades, CA (since 2000)

Exhibited

Raphael Soyer: The Shape of Human Dignity, Wichita Art Museum, Wichita, KS, September 11 – October 16, 1988

Raphael Soyer: Twenty Great Paintings, Forum Gallery, New York, NY, January 19 - March 4, 1995

Literature

Goodrich, Lloyd. *Raphael Soyer*, H.N. Abrams, New York, NY, 1972, p. 63, Illustrated and p. 347, Listed as "Sentimental Girl" (Collection of Bella and Sol Fishko, New York City)

Wooden, Howard E. *Raphael Soyer: The Shape of Human Dignity*, Wichita Art Museum, Wichita, KS, 1988, no. 5, p. 10, Illustrated.

Krulik, Barbara S. *Raphael Soyer: Twenty Great Paintings*, Forum Gallery, New York, NY, 1995, p. 13, Illustrated.

ADAA member

Note

> "My art is representational by choice. In my opinion, if the art of painting is to survive, it must describe and express people, their lives and times. It must communicate…I consider myself a modern artist or rather an artist of today…because I am influenced by the thoughts, the life and the aesthetics of our time. I am also an inheritor of many great painters who proceeded me and made tradition living, on-going and ever renewable like nature itself, by finding dynamic, contemporary and personal ways to depict and interpret *their* life and *their* time."
> _Raphael Soyer

Humanity was **Raphael Soyer**'s subject, and the language by which he chose to express it was his own unique, painterly realism. From within the epicenter of the heated debates about what art is and is not, and how art should and should not look that took place in New York throughout the 20th Century, Raphael Soyer became famous for his unwavering commitment to humanist representation, leading him to be dubbed the "Dean of Realists" by John Canaday writing for *The New York Times* in 1972.

Soyer's thematic focus was the dignity and strength of character of the individual. During the 1930s Soyer painted the victims of the Great Depression as he witnessed them in New York - men existing without hope, begging, sleeping in parks and under bridges, dependent on missions for food and shelter. Simultaneously, Soyer was drawn to representing women, a subject of unwavering interest throughout his long career.

In 1946 for the introduction of a monograph about his work published by American Artists Group, Raphael Soyer highlighted an article about his work written by Carl Zigrosser, first Curator of Prints and Drawings at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, that he believed understood his objectives well. Soyer quotes Zigrosser:

> "He has caught and fixed more completely than anyone else a certain type of young womanhood peculiar to the Big City…a working girl, not a debutante, sometimes sturdy, sometimes with a wistful charm, always self-reliant…always with some spark of individuality glowing within her. There is seldom anything posed or artificial in his pictures…He portrays them in the intimacy of a homely and instinctive gesture…No need for him to travel far. He portrays what is at hand, the familiar scenes, his relatives, his friends."

Soyer's paintings of women probe and explore the depths, feelings and complexities of each subject, each genuine person. Perhaps Soyer's greatest gift was the ability to capture the emotion and personality of everyday people. Along the way, Raphael Soyer captured the spirit of a century of challenge and change through the image of its living inhabitants.

Love Story (Sentimental Girl), 1933 glows with the warm, palpable presence of the woman Soyer selected to portray in this large, figurative painting. The handsome female subject is a woman of her times and Soyer imbues her image with dignity and humanity. She sits on the edge of a bed with a copy of the periodical, *Love Story*, pinned to her lap with her folded arms.

Love Story Magazine was a wildly popular pulp fiction periodical of the Depression era, and one of the most successful pulps of the 20th Century led by author and longtime Street & Smith editor Daisy Bacon. A magazine designed by a woman for women, Street & Smith's financial muscle enabled Bacon, who took over as editor of *Love Story* in 1929, to keep the magazine going weekly during the Great Depression. *Love Story*'s circulation in the early 1930s reached 600,000 per issue! Each week's periodical featured an original illustration making the covers of *Love Story* especially attractive and collectable, a detail not missed by Soyer as he composed his painting.

Love Story Magazine became without a doubt the most valuable Street & Smith Depression-era publication. According to Quentin Reynolds, author of *The Fiction Factory* (Random House 1954), "Miss Bacon had an infallible instinct for choosing stories that would make the average woman forget either her unhappy financial state, her dreary husband or her aching heart. Daisy's own slim finger was never away from the feminine pulse of the nation; she knew just what girls of all ages wanted..."

Love Story (Sentimental Girl) is not simply the portrait of a woman Soyer came upon and got to know in the Fourteenth Street neighborhood nearby his studio, but an evocation of the times, the human impulse for escape from the harsh conditions outside to a world enriched by art discovered in the pages of books and magazines, on the stage of a theater, or on a painter's easel.



Love Story Magazine
December 17, 1932 Cover


New York City Newsstand c.1930