

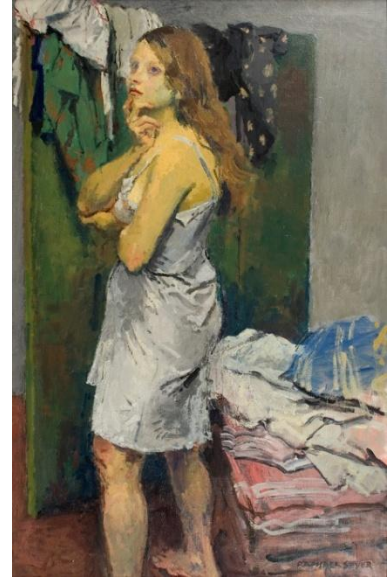


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Robert Fishko, *Director*

RAPHAEL SOYER
(1899-1987)

Young Woman, c. 1945
oil on canvas
43 x 28 inches
signed lower right "*Raphael Soyer*"



Provenance

The Artist
Dr. and Mrs. Arnold Lieber, New York, NY
(acquired directly from the Artist)
Dr. Arnold Lieber, New York, NY
Private Collection
(by descent from the above)

Exhibited

Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, PA, October 13 - December 11, 1949

Note

"I love to do portraits. I have that Russian culture in me and the Russians were interested in the psyche – in the human. I always try to penetrate people. I have to know them intimately. I never paint a portrait of a person I don't know well..."
_Raphael Soyer, 1984

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. As a central figure of the Fourteenth Street group of artists in 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.

Soyer once 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.”

Abram Lerner, Founding Director Emeritus, Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden, observed in 1985: “Raphael Soyer's studio is literally his world, inhabited by the old cot, the sink, the stacked canvases, the bare floor, and, of course, the model. It is all he requires to create a poetic moment, a mood of ineffable solitude and contemplation. His portraits are similarly endowed with intimacy and melancholy. They are rich with the sympathetic observation of a sensitive and intelligent interpreter who reveals character, and gives it substance in a painting style unmistakably his own.”