

Galeria Corona Scores A Coup!

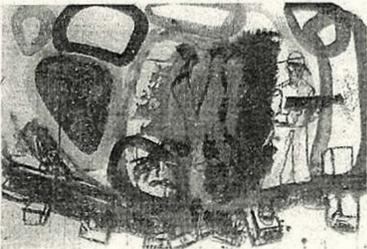
by Anna Reisman

Over the last ten years, the galleries in Puerto Vallarta have grown both in number and in the quality of the artists whose work they exhibit. We have become known as the second largest artist community in the country, outside of Mexico City.

Our town has attracted artists from all over the world, some established and some yet to be discovered. Many have fallen in love with Vallarta, deciding to spend at least part of the year here, if not all their time. Brooklyn-born Leonard Rosenfeld is one of them and Galería Coronawill have the honor of showing this renowned artist's work starting this Wednesday, March 31st. The show's inauguration will be part of this week's Art Walk.

Leonard has been coming to Mexico since 1968, and to Puerto Vallarta in particular every year for the last decade or so, until recently when he set up a studio in the Emiliano Zapata neighborhood where he now spends months at a time. That studio / apartment is where I had the pleasure to meet Leonard and his wife Janet some days ago. I had been told that the painter was a wonderful storyteller—and he has much to tell about—but I never expected so much! Leonard describes himself as a "narrative artist". "I like to tell stories. I have always told stories," he says. What a rich life this man has led, filled with unique, fascinating experiences both here and in the U.S. He should definitely consider putting his myriad stories in writing if and when he ever gets tired of painting.

Leonard was born in 1926. In the late 1940's, after his World War II army service, he attended the Art Students League of New



York. By the early 1950's he was ensconced in the Cedar Bar, engaging in heated conversations about the "New Art". "Abstract expressionism" was taking off. Willem De Kooning, Franz Klein, Mark Rothko, Clement Greenberg were regulars at the Bar, among many others. Rosenfeld associated with them, but he was just starting to paint while they were well on their way. "I tried a little abstract expressionism. I love those painters, and I love their work. But doing it wasn't for me, so I had to start from scratch with whatever influences I had," he says of

that period of his life. He experimented with many different media and his style showed the influence of Soutine, Kokoschka and other figure expressionists. From there, he went on to what he calls his "Railroad Drawings", about 300 heavy, dark drawings of the elevated railroad stations and tracks in New York City at the time.

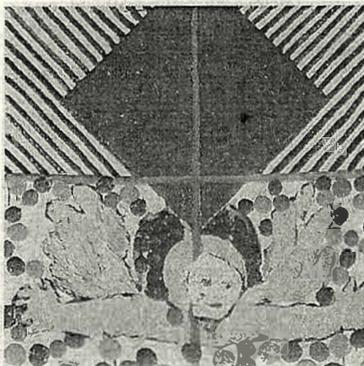
During one of his trips to Mexico in the late Sixties, in Cuernavaca to be exact,



Leonard Rosenfeld visited with the artist David Alfaro Siqueiros in Cuernavaca during the period prior to Siqueiros' death.

Rosenfeld met and spent time with David Alfaro Siqueiros, considered to be one of the 20th Century's most influential muralists. His relationship with Siqueiros ranks among Rosenfeld's most cherished memories.

In 1979, fed up, Leonard stopped painting in oils and began experimenting with wire paintings, carpet tacks and flattened spray cans, at first creating images and figures with black and white, and then later colorful electrical wires, nailed to stretcher bars.. (Even reputed mob boss John Gotti attended one of Rosenfeld's exhibits of wire paintings at a SoHo art gallery.) In 1988, he participated in "Pintores de Nueva York", a 3-man exhibit in Mexico City where he



teamed up with Scott Borofsky and Arnold Wechsler. Still using electrical wire, recycled materials, metal and wood, Leonard stated that he wanted to reflect the romantic vision he had of Mexico, its revolution and its history in general. His depiction of revolutionary hero Emiliano Zapata now hangs at the UNAM (university) in the capital.

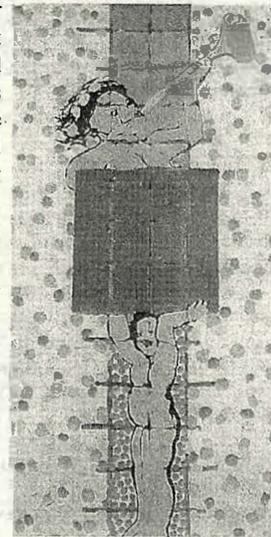
By 1992, this tireless artist had moved on to watercolors both small and large, including a series called "Nuts and Bolts". Sometimes, he would combine the watercolors with black crayon in pieces whose impact on the viewer is starkly powerful. In 1995, he was invited to participate in the Big Apple's Coalition for the Homeless ARTWALK NY. Unlike Vallarta's Art Walks, this event includes an afternoon of open studios and, in the evening, a Gala Event and an auction of art works conducted by Sotheby's, hosted by and honoring various celebrities and personalities such as Yoko Ono, Chuck Close, Matt Dillon, Charlie Rose and Peter Jennings. Rosenfeld is still participating in the annual event.

On the morning of September 11th, 2001, Janet was in Washington, D.C. and Leonard was in his studio in their apartment on Broadway, where they had been living since 1993, one block directly east of the World Trade Center. They could see the South Tower clearly from their front windows. Leonard witnessed the tragic events of that day first hand. He went out onto the street and saw people jumping to their deaths. His "Paintings from Ground Zero" exhibit was held in New York City in February 2003. Twenty-five percent of the proceeds from that show went to the New York Coalition for the Homeless. Ever since then, Rosenfeld has been painting angels.

Large dots form the background of many paintings in his "Angeles/ Angels" series.. Leonard's explanation: "When the officials and talking heads were discussing the events immediately after September 11, they kept referring to the disconnected dots. They couldn't connect the



dots, they couldn't put all the pieces together and figure it out. Those are the dots in the pictures. So I started painting those dots with the angels. To anyone looking at these paintings, those dots would appear as mere decoration. No one would know the significance of the dots unless they were told. I don't know why I started to paint angels. Someone suggested that I was thinking of the people who were killed or the people who jumped. But I don't know. Maybe I am thinking about my own mortality. I will go on painting them until... The first one is called "Angel with Dots", and one of them is called "I Love You". Maybe that is what the angels are, I do not know... three thousand people were killed in such a short amount of time, in an hour. I don't think Adolph Hitler killed that many people in one hour."



The exhibit at Galeria Corona will showcase Rosenfeld's Angels series, as well as a number of his earlier drawings and watercolors, so you too will have a chance to admire this gifted artist's evolution in time, as I did. We are privileged to have him among us. Do not miss this wonderful event. Galeria Corona is located at 164 Corona Street downtown. Free cocktails from 6 to 10. Tel.: 222-4210.