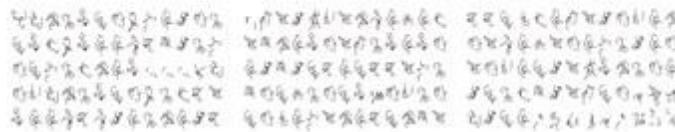


Roman Verostko exhibits at Saint Vincent Gallery

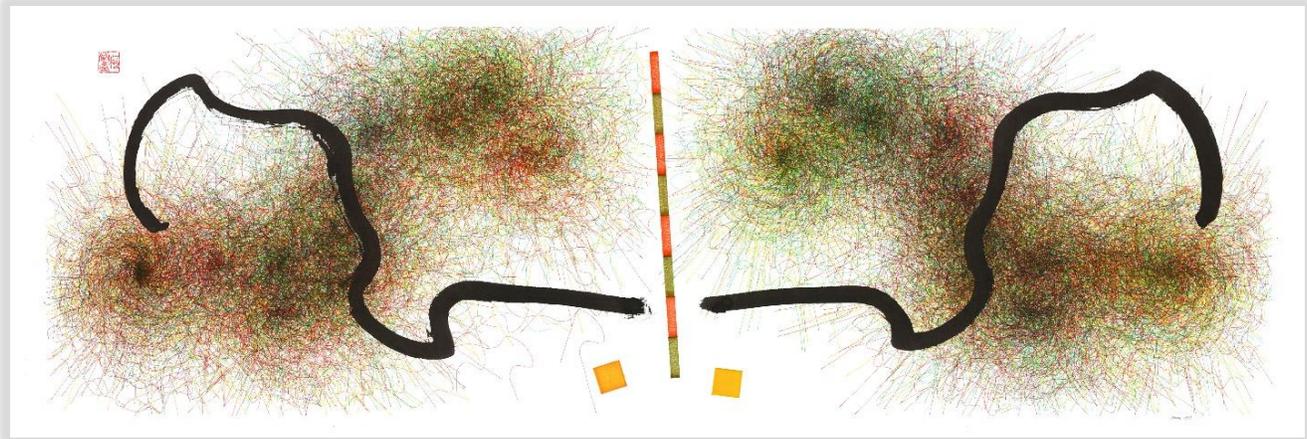
By M. Thomas



“Flowers of Learning: Madame Curie” by Roman Verostko.

It's not often that an art exhibition would be of equal interest to an artist, a philosopher, a geneticist, an art historian, a computer programmer, a theologian and a curious sixth-grader, among others. But a show at the Saint Vincent Gallery achieves that through works that seep across disciplines in a manner guided by ongoing inquisitiveness as opposed to the often forced inter-disciplinary attempts that have been popular in recent decades.

“Roman Verostko, Algorithmic Transformations: From Art by Hand to Art by Code” also manages, via carefully selected works ranging from the 1940s to the 2000s, to give insight into the artist’s long and complex visual and intellectual journey.



Lung Shan II (Dragon Mountain, 龙山二), 1989, algorithmic with pen, ink & brush, 72" by 24".

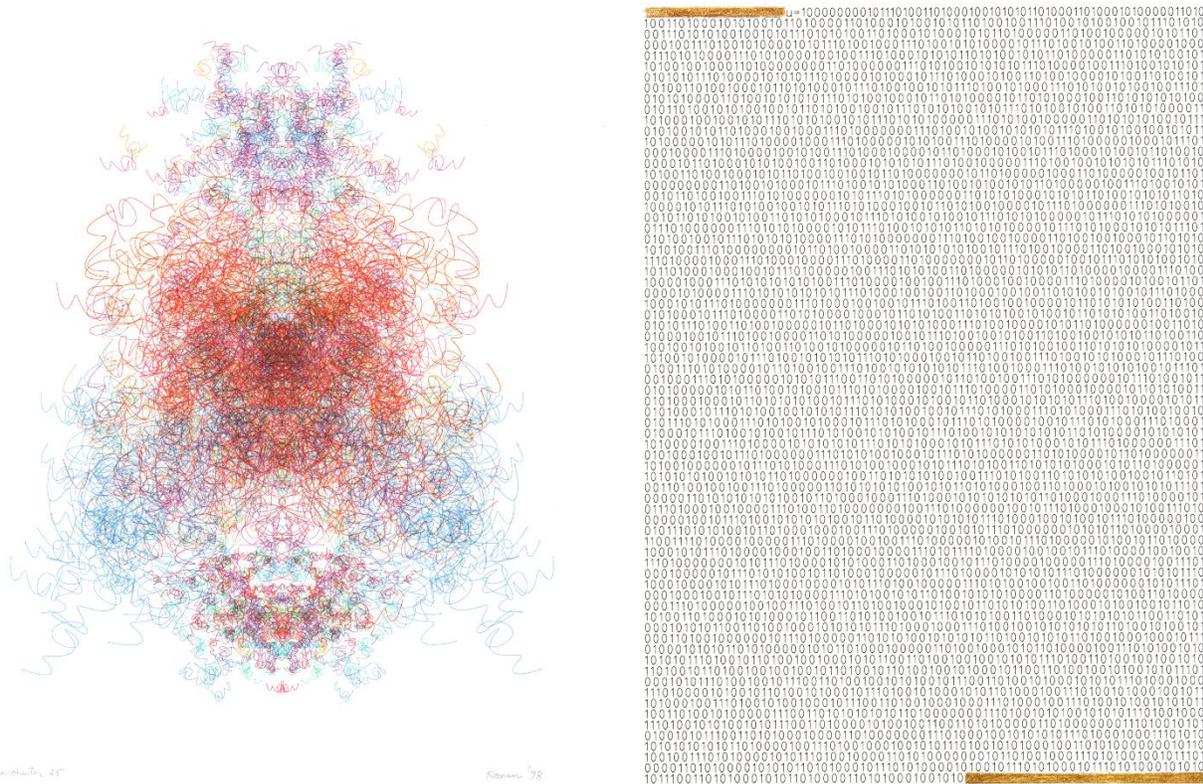
Central are works such as “Lung Shan II (Dragon Mountain),” comprising nests of thin multicolored sinewy lines fronted by a wide assertive black brush stroke reminiscent of the calligraphic flourishes of Asian ink wash paintings. (When he painted it in 1989, Mr. Verostko was a visiting professor at the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou.) It’s a visual manifestation of a computer code written by Mr. Verostko and realized by ink pens and brush mounted on the drawing arm of a pen plotter.

This and other such works represent an aha moment, a turning point when the internationally recognized and exhibited artist conceived an original realm of visual expression complementary to his expanding conceptual approach to resolving contradictions inherent in the human experience.

Born Joseph Verostko in 1929 in a coal mining patch near Tarrs, Pa., he majored in illustration at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh. After graduation, he entered Saint Vincent College, and in 1952 became a novice at Saint Vincent Archabbey, taking the monastic name Roman. In 1959 he was ordained a priest. With a foundation in philosophy and theology, he returned to art, through graduate studies in studio arts at Pratt Institute, art history at Columbia and New York universities, and an academic year at the Ecole du Louvre in Paris. He taught art history at Saint Vincent College from 1964 through 1967.

In 1968, he departed monastic life, married and joined the Minneapolis College of Art and Design humanities faculty, serving as academic dean and department chairman, and becoming professor emeritus in 1994. But he retains a presence on the Saint Vincent campus through artworks in the collection and in campus buildings, and the wonderfully fanciful biomorphic imagery of “WIM: The Upsidedown Mural” installed in the college’s Fred Rogers Center in 2008.

Early work ranges from portraiture and realism to confident mixed media abstract works on wood panel, and shows influences as varied as Picasso, Miro, Mondrian and Albers. More recent works are often monochromatic, the component parts both fuller and airy.



Manchester Illuminated Universal Turing Machine #25, 1998.

I particularly like, as future cultural artifact, “Manchester Illuminated Universal Turing Machine #25.” The 1998 work pairs an algorithmic drawing with lines of its code and pays tribute to Alan Turing, the computer genius who broke the Nazi Enigma code during World War II. I wish I could have been at the Minneapolis “White Night” in 2001 when the eight-hour drawing “Algorithmic Poetry, Green Cloud” was projected on the college’s three-story white brick wall from dusk to dawn.

But mostly I appreciate Mr. Verostko’s quest, the pathways of which most of us walk consciously or not, on simpler or more challenged levels.

A free color illustrated catalog gives more insight to Mr. Verostko’s technical and philosophical processes. The exhibition continues through Sunday in the Robert S. Carey Student Center, Saint Vincent College, Latrobe. Hours are 1-4 p.m.daily through Sunday. Admission is free. Information: <http://gallery.stvincent.edu> or 724-805-2107.

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