IT'S LEON GOLUB'S TIME

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As I write, there is a yellowing piece of paper pinned to the bulletin board above my desk. On it is a handwritten message dated September 12, 2001. It reads: “To Whom it May Concern. Our daughter, Jo Anna Isaak, is visiting my wife, Nancy Spero, and myself this evening. We would appreciate it if she could be given access. Thank you, Leon A. Golub, 530 LaGuardia Place.”

That note was written the day after the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center. Leon had called me to say he and Nancy were fine but didn’t want to go out because there was a lot of smoke and confusion in the air, and they just wanted me to come over. On the news we were told that the police were not letting people into Lower Manhattan who did not live there. Leon was afraid I would not be allowed through the police barricade. Thinking they would let family members through, however, Leon sent the fax message—adopting me.

I have kept that fax all these years. It makes me chuckle, because Leon had never, until that moment, used his fax machine. Assistants had always run the office in their studio, including all the equipment in it. That day, several blank pages arrived before Leon figured out how to place the paper in the fax machine. But it was so like Leon to know exactly what the police would respond to in that situation, to understand the human element in the midst of chaos and tragedy.

In a very real way, Leon and Nancy had indeed adopted me. I met them in 1982, when I first arrived in New York City, and we had been friends ever since. There are many art worlds in New York City; Leon and Nancy were at the heart of what I now realize was the best one, and they simply included me. There were many late-night dinners at their loft on LaGuardia Place and gatherings of one kind or another in restaurants and galleries. Always there was a project, whether art-related or politically oriented. The people I met through Leon and Nancy became my friends, are still my friends. At those gatherings we (that is, Leon and/or Nancy and the group of people surrounding them) organized exhibitions, panels, lectures, publications, film screenings, teaching gigs, student internships, studio visits, etc.

We also took trips together. In 1987 we went to Kassel for Documenta 8, which included several of Leon’s works; in 2000 to Dublin for Leon’s retrospective at the Irish Museum of Modern Art; several times to Salzburg for the Summer Academy where Leon and Nancy taught and I lectured. In 1999 Leon and I went to Phoenix, Arizona, for a show I organized called Looking Forward Looking Back. It was about the representation of the black body, and I had included Leon’s Threnody n. The day after the opening, Leon and I rented a car and drove into the desert to see Taliesin West. At one point I was looking at the road map and said, “We need to turn west at the next crossroad.” Leon
wondered how I knew which way was west. When I told him it was by looking at the
sun, he was amazed. Laughing, I teased him about having lived too long in Manhattan.
That trip took place almost twenty years after I first met him, and by then I had the
sense I was starting to look after him.

When I first got to know Leon, he was entering the prime of his career—and
he was already sixty! He was at the center of a great deal of political and artistic
activism: a leader in the antiwar movement in the New York art community, involved
in Artists and Writers Protest Group, Art Worker's Coalition, Artist's Call Against US
Intervention in Central America, and Amnesty International. His large-scale, politically
confrontational paintings about the Vietnam War and his paintings of mercenaries and
interrogation scenes were generating a lot of controversy.

Yet for most of his life before then, Leon's art had not been politically activist.
In Chicago in the 1950s he had belonged to a group of figurative artists known as
The Monster Roster. Before that, he had been the leader of a group of art students who
protested their exclusion from the annual show at the Art Institute by organizing a
series of independent exhibitions called Exhibition Momentum, which soon eclipsed
the Art Institute's official shows. Leon was thus no stranger to protest exhibitions, but
those early protests were about art-world politics.

Biographies often present moments of arrival as critical. The decision to return to
America in 1964, after leading a quiet and somewhat isolated life in Paris for five years,
was a defining move in the careers of both Leon Golub and Nancy Spero. Not until Leon
returned to America—a nation entering into war—did real-world pressures begin
to intrude into his art space. He set to work on large-scale paintings; his first New York
paintings were the Gigantomachy series. Although sales of his work at that time were
almost nonexistent, he was undergoing important changes, including connecting with
other artists and with political activists. By 1965, as America increased its involvement
in Vietnam, Leon became more and more involved in antiwar actions in New York.
For a time, the antiwar movement took over his and Nancy's lives—meetings, rallies,
petitions, marches, dinners, phone calls, mailings, more meetings.

Looking back on that period, Leon often lamented the time lost in the studio,
but being at the center of all that political activity had a profound effect on him and
his work. Instead of being an expatriate artist working in isolation in his studio,
he was in his own country, speaking his own language and using his own voice to
address the wrongs he felt his country was committing. He felt implicated in this war
in a way he had not when he was an American living in Paris during the French
war with Algeria. In America he was part of a growing community who felt capable
of changing things. Leon came to feel that he, too, as an artist, could be effective in
the politics of the real world.
Leon had made paintings as protest before *Charnel House* and *Evisceration Chamber* were both done after his return from the Second World War. A response to the war and the recently released photographs of Auschwitz victims, they were his first paintings as an art student in 1946. Those paintings, he said later, were about his own sense of alienation and rage, and his identity as a Jew. But there is nothing historically specific about them; they are amorphous, monstrous revelations of deep-seated and ubiquitous social malevolence. Even the early work Leon contributed to the anti-Vietnam War protests was not historically specific. Although the silk-screen print with the words "men are not for burning" at the bottom is a clear reference to the use of napalm, the image is influenced by late classical sculpture and is a reworking of a painting he had done in Paris in the early 1960s. This image would serve him again as a commemorative symbol of the bombing of Hiroshima. Even the grand-scale *Gigantomachy* series of 1963–67 were universal images of battle taken from the friezes on the Great Altar at Pergamon, which he adapted as a template for contemporary nightmares of war. These powerful paintings could be read as protests against the Vietnam War, but they present conflict as ceaseless, with the sides undefined and the protagonists undifferentiated. The war is universal; the battle is with fate, not with some specific political power—a power that could be overthrown, in a war that could be stopped.

It was not until Leon put pants on his figures, thus making them recognizable contemporaries, that his paintings addressed power in a specific, contemporary, political sense. He had strongly resisted putting clothes on his figures, not wanting to spend time learning to paint wrinkles in fabric. But in an interview we did, entitled "Who wears the pants in the house of being?" he told me he had decided that "to put pants on is to get on with it! Who wears the pants? Who calls the shots? Wearing the pants is a very male thing." And getting on with it was exactly what he did! The pants were a key component of what would become a sharply focused agenda for the rest of his life—the connecting of painting and social meaning.

*I am bringing into your space, the art space, real-world pressure.* (Leon Golub)

Without fully realizing it, Leon Golub had been fighting on two fronts for a long time—the aesthetic and the political—and the problems he was having on those two fronts coalesced in the late 1960s and early 1970s. While his stance was always that of the angry outsider, he also wanted his paintings to connect. "Connect" was a word he used often. For him it had many forceful connotations: it meant to say something meaningful, to grab attention, to be in the game or the fight, to be in the midst of the messiness of life. "Connect," in Leon's lexicon, came with a wallop. It was closely connected with another phrase he used frequently—"up front"—, which, when Leon used it, meant "in your face." It was the opposite of the distanced, artistic solipsism that was so much a part of the required posture of the Abstract Expressionist painter. Leon

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"THE MERCENARIES OR INTERROGATORS ARE OBSERVED DIRECTLY. WE PUBLICALLY ACKNOWLEDGE AND VOYEURISTICALLY OBSERVE THEM. THEY ARE RAUNCHY, IRRITABLE, MOCKING, IMPLY RACIAL HOSTILITY AND/OR SEXUAL AMBIVALENCE. VIOLENCE AND IMPLIED VIOLENCE IS IMMEDIATE AND INSTANTANEOUS, AND MERC[ENARIE]S AND INTERROGATORS INDICATE NO COMPUNCION REGARDING THEIR ACTIONS. THEY ARE CASUALLY SELF-CONSCIOUS AND EYE US, ALERTED TO OUR OBSERVATION AND INTEREST IN THEIR ACTIONS. IRREGULAR ACTIONS OCCUR AT THE PERIPHERIES OF PUBLIC OR GOVERNMENTAL CONTROL. POWER IS CONTROL AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES OR POLITICAL GROUPS WILL USE EXTRA-LEGAL MEANS WHEN IT SUITS THEIR PURPOSES, THAT IS, WHEN THEY CAN GET AWAY WITH IT."

ARTIST'S STATEMENT, 1982
had opposed artistic isolationism all his life. In “A Critique of Abstract Expressionism,” written in 1955, he had argued that the much-touted artistic freedom of Abstract Expressionism was a dangerous withdrawal of art from the world in which we live. For him, painting abstracted from social meaning was painting rendered inconsequential. “Abstract Expressionism was... bad for art and the artist,” he told Gerald Marzorati. “These painters were essentially turning away from the world in their work. And they were giving up on the idea that an artist might have a social role.”

When Leon returned to America in 1964, Abstract Expressionism had lost its dominance, but it was being replaced by Minimalism, which was intent on erasing everything external to the work—the content, the message, the expressive, the personal. Even the artist/author was to be eliminated. “Only matter mattered” was the adage Carl Andre coined to characterize the highly circumscribed focus of Minimalism. But Leon was not interested in maintaining a depersonalized distance from his art production or his environment; he was connecting to real political issues and discovering how to make those connections manifest in his canvases.

Begun in 1972, the Vietnam paintings were big and bold, but they didn’t come easily. Moving from the mythological and classically influenced to the representation of specific political issues in real time crossing a terrain loaded with landmines. All the small details—the clothing (specifically, US Army uniforms), the guns, the tanks, the background, the gestures, the expressions, the physiognomies of the figures—had to be worked in painstaking detail. I can still hear Leon expressing his doubts about taking this route. He was a painter, which meant he was working in an art form that had long been considered anachronistic. It was bad enough to be a painter when cool, distant Minimalism was in vogue, but now, even worse, he was moving “backward” from figuration into realism. As he said to me:

> Realism, if it is to be grounded in a social order, if it is to be an epistemology, has to address itself and examine just how it functions with respect to how a social order represents itself—in the reportage of events, in the creation of connections, intercessions, evasions, or negations through appearances. Realism can be pretty damn corny and cringing. Realistic modes can suck up to all kinds of situational expectancies, but it can also open up the whole issue of what is representable and whose interests are being represented. I have tried to get something back something of the big visual machines of the nineteenth century and bring those to the “now” politics of TV and its manipulated sense of immediacy.

And so, although Leon chose that path riddled with doubt, it led him, eventually, to become America’s foremost political painter.

When we first met in 1982, the war in Vietnam was over, but the anger, the moral revulsion at America’s foreign policy, the protests, the alienation coupled with a profound political commitment, all that was still very much part of Leon and the
work he was then producing. He had found a strong political voice—loud, articulate, combative—and it was clearly, compellingly audible in his paintings. Several of the art workers’ organizations with which he was connected had originally been anti-Vietnam War organizations. He was also teaching at Rutgers University in New Jersey, making paintings on a grand scale, and participating in numerous panel discussions. That year he had two shows of the Mercenaries and the Interrogation series at the Susan Caldwell Gallery, as well as a show at London’s Institute of Contemporary Arts. In The Village Voice Peter Schjeldahl announced unequivocally: “It’s Leon Golub’s time... Golub’s new big paintings on unstretched canvas... are right on the button of the recent issues in art and the world, including the aesthetics of the best New Figuration and the shocks of the evening news. It is as if Golub were an alarm clock set to go off in the early 80’s and wake everybody up.” And people were indeed waking up to Leon. He was getting a lot of critical recognition or, as he would say, “a lot of ink”—in commentaries, reviews, articles, and books. Joseph Dreiss was writing his doctoral thesis on Leon’s work. Two books were being written on him—one by the prominent critic Donald Kuspit, which came out in 1985, and another by Gerald Marzorati, art writer for The New York Times, which won the PEN prize when it came out in 1990. A retrospective opened at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in 1984 and traveled in the US and Canada. Several shows took place in Europe. Successful younger artists such as Eric Fischl were suggesting that Leon move to Mary Boone’s gallery—arguably the hottest gallery in New York at that moment. At dinner parties Leon was expansive; he was enjoying the limelight, and he had a right to it. “Leon Golub time” had been a long time coming. Knowing how quickly the art world could change, however, he didn’t quit his teaching job.

These large paintings were being swept into the forefront of art world attention as part of Neo-Expressionism’s triumphant return to figuration. Unexpectedly, Leon found himself placed in that group. As he told Jeanne Siegel in 1988:

Just to keep the record clear, I am an older artist who is being viewed in respect to younger artists, I don’t want to take credit for something I haven’t done. In other words, I didn’t start Neo-Expressionism or this new imagery. I didn’t have a damn thing to do with it. These artists are not my children—they never knew I existed. A few of them might have known about me one way or the other, but certainly not in any determinative way. So, I’m more grateful to them than they have cause to be grateful to me.

These artists broke down what Leon considered the procrustean notions of Minimalism, with all its ideas of pure art, and allowed him to explore what he termed “everyday nastiness”:

By the late 1960s and seventies, the art world had closed down to an artist doing the kind of work I was doing. I’m grateful to those guys for opening things up, just making a space for the kind of work I was doing... These younger artists, in their voyeuristic figuration, were


poking around in a kind of intimacy, irritability, nastiness, and everyday life that had been verboten to the art world. Well, I am poking around in a certain kind of nastiness, not the same kind of nastiness, but I don’t think they are totally divorced from each other. Macho roles played out in militaristic terms are not that different from those played out in sexual terms.

So I do not deny the paradoxical adventurousness of artists like Salle and Fischl and others. In time, Leon’s misplacement with the Neo-Expressionist figurative work of the 1980s sorted itself out, for reasons that were clear if one simply looked at the canvases. Leon was a great storyteller, and one of his stories was about showing a large early drawing of skulls to a group of people. Everyone was quite polite while looking at the skulls and speaking about the line, and black-white relationships, etc., until Leon, wanting them to actually look at the work, finally exploded: “Goddamn it! They’re fucking skulls!” One, who would later become an art critic, said coolly, “It doesn’t matter,” and Leon shouted back, “It does matter!” His point was always just that: It does matter. The voyeuristic nastiness that Salle and Fischl were exploring was a long way from what Leon was presenting to the viewer, and that difference did matter. He was revealing not the private underbelly of the hedonistic, privileged, dysfunctional, affluent American, but an image of America that Americans didn’t, and still don’t, want to acknowledge. Much Neo-Expressionist painting used voyeurism and sexuality as a veneer for what was really rotten about American society; often sexuality has been used as a gloss that makes it possible to evade confronting what endows power with its power.

In a manner very like the work of Manet, Leon’s paintings began to reveal the true significance beneath the veneer—and the fate of both men’s paintings shows just how disturbing the removal of gloss can be. As Emile Zola said of Manet’s all too revealing and revealed Olympia, “When other artists correct nature by painting Venus they lie. Manet asked himself why he should lie. Why not tell the truth?” In Manet’s case, the revelation of the false decorum surrounding the convention of the nude in painting led him onward, soon to reveal the truth about the repressive, autocratic government of France in his day and its ill-fated colonial venture in Mexico. His paintings of the execution of Maximilian stand as permanent indictments to the cynical regime of Napoleon III, which had installed and then betrayed a puppet government in Mexico. Those paintings were censored in France throughout Manet’s lifetime. In Leon’s case, painting the truth began with the epically large-scale paintings of America’s equally ill-fated venture in Vietnam, but the exposure continued, soon manifesting itself in an explicit articulation of what was dominated, displaced, or repressed in the story America told about itself, a story established and institutionalized at great expense and in some cases with the support of art institutions. The censorship of Leon’s painting took place in more subtle ways than Manet’s, as curators discovered when they attempted to place his work in major American museums. The acquisition of overtly
“I WAS WORKING ON THE GIGANTOMACHIES WHILE THE VIETNAM WAR WAS IN PROGRESS AND I WANTED TO MAKE THEM MORE IMMEDIATE. I’D ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT THEY DEALT WITH THE HUMAN SITUATION BUT THEY WERE GENERALIZED AND ABSTRACTED, DESPITE MY INTENTIONS TO REPRESENT SOMETHING DYNAMICALLY CONNECTED TO OUR LIVES. AND I COULDN’T FIGURE A WAY OUT BECAUSE I WASN’T READY TO DEAL WITH THE SPECIFICS OF MILITARY UNIFORMS OR SPECIFIC BATTLE SCENES, SO I MADE THE FIRST NAPALM PAINTING. THEY WERE VIOLENT—I WANTED TO BREAK THE RELATIVE STABILITY OF THE CONVENTIONALIZED SCREEN BY ADDING BLOODY PATCHES. USING SCRAPED OFF SLUDGE FROM THE PAINTING AND MIXING IT WITH MORE COLOR IT GAVE A PHYSICAL TACTILITY TO THE SURFACE, AND THAT CHANGED THE BEAT OF THE PAINT, IT CHANGED THE TEMPO. THEN, FINALLY, I ACQUIRED PHOTOGRAPHS OF SOLDIERS AND ARMAMENTS AND THAT STARTED MY COLLECTION OF VISUAL INFORMATION DOCUMENTING THE WAR.”

INTERVIEW WITH JON BIRD, PARIS, 1984
political work was blocked, because many members of the boards of trustees of major museums were invested in or worked for companies that supported the war. Or, as Leon told it with a laugh, “Somehow they knew this guy doesn’t share our values.”

As the Vietnam War wound down, feminism emerged from the antiwar movement and generated the main political energies into the 1980s. Leon was particularly well placed to be receptive to developments in feminist art practice, because Nancy Spero was working on the other side of the same studio. In 1972 she and a group of other women had founded A.I.R., the first all-women’s art gallery in New York City. The anger of women working in the anti-Vietnam War movement was harnessed after the war and channeled into the fight for women’s rights. While feminists in the 1960s had seen clearly that “the personal is political,” it was not until the 1980s, when fundamental discoveries in linguistics and psychoanalysis were starting to have a radical effect on the understanding of the function of language and of all symbolic systems, that women artists began to realize what was at stake for them in the realm of representation. For an exhibition entitled The Revolutionary Power of Women’s Laughter that I organized in 1982, I included two of Nancy’s works: To the Revolution and Let the Priests Tremble. This exhibition was an attempt to show what was taking place in the symbolic revolution of postmodernism: the position and importance of the viewer; how meaning is constructed and can be deconstructed; how identity is constituted through language and can be reconstituted; how categories of perception and evaluation can transform our world-view. “Thus,” as Marcia Tucker noted in her discussion of the exhibition, “the debate centering on feminist issues, formerly seen as being of concern only to women, became potentially interesting to men as well and viable to an intellectual community at large.”

Leon, you might say, was all ears, and was also an avid reader. We had many, many long conversations about these issues. He was mining this terrain for new strategies for his own representational practices. While feminist theorists were exploring the idea of femininity as a construction—a self neither basic nor fixed but constituted by language and images—Leon was engaged in a similar investigation of how masculinity is constructed and represented. When a group of his portraits of powerful men are brought together as they are in the present exhibition, what the viewer senses is not so much an accumulation of power or even the outward appearance of power but rather the lack of it. Revealing the lack of the phallus was a key strategy in the feminist movement. Leon’s portraits of powerful men (Kissinger, Rockefeller, Arafat, Franco, and Nixon) are all emptied out. The artist has described these faces as “soft rubber masks you can put your hands inside and manipulate; there is no bone structure or muscle... They have all gone through the system to such a degree that they are almost anonymous, and totally representative, and totally compromised.” It is masculinity as masquerade.


It’s Leon Golub’s Time | Jo Anna Isaak
Theorizing the gaze—exploring the power relations implied in who looks at whom—was a major part of Leon's work in the 1980s. In paintings such as *Two Black Women and a White Man* (1986), an old woman is simply glancing at a white man. That is the whole subject: the glance and the disregard. It tells everything about the power relations between the two figures. Over the years, Leon became more and more interested in how his work related to the viewer and how to implicate the viewer in the work. Not long ago executions, torture, and lynching were public spectacles in America; now such activities take place somewhere else, out of sight but not, it seems, quite out of mind. Leon's *Interrogation* and *Mercenaries* series brought them back into the public eye and unfurled them like a great banner in the face of the viewer. We, the viewers, are made to be present and accountable at these events. In *Mercenaries v* (1984), the man holding a gun to the heads of three prostrate black men turns his head, smiles, and waves to the viewer, who is standing at embarrassingly close range. This painting is based on a photograph taken by Ross J. Baughman; Leon's major change to it is the direct address to the viewer. During one of our conversations in the early 1990s, he said to me:

_There is a lot going on in an exchange of looks. The glance is like an extension of the body, an antenna or signal that leaves the body, locates somewhere, may feel comfortable or uncomfortable. If it feels uncomfortable, it is going to come right home. The glance quickly withdraws, the body is alerted as to whether it should run, stay put, be welcoming. The glance is like the furthest extension of our nerve endings._

Thus the viewer is implicated in the act of looking and then made uncomfortably aware of his or her involvement. The discomfort felt by the viewer when confronted with these images has, in part, to do with the thwarted expectations of the visual pleasure usually on offer in a painting. What Leon is able to do in some of these paintings is exactly what Laura Mulvey, in her 1975 essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, urged feminist filmmakers to do: to ruin certain visual pleasures, particularly by exposing and implicating the viewer. Leon took this strategy to its logical extreme in the installation *World Wide* (1991) at the Brooklyn Museum. He blew up twelve details from his paintings, had them printed on transparent sheets of Duraclear, and hung them from the ceiling.* In order to see the work, the viewer had to walk amongst the images and, in doing so, became part of the mise-en-scène. The installation was simultaneously intimate and aggressive: "I try to rub the viewer's noses in it, to get them right up against it, to get them as close as I can to real time."

Throughout the eighties Leon was absorbed with a process he referred to as "crossing the body barrier." He described it this way:

_One of the peculiar characteristics I have developed has to do with body awareness. It started with my notions about skin, which are not so different from those about the gaze. It is the way I paint, scraping until I get down to the skin of the canvas. I've been working
with this a long time. The skin is this curious inside/outside membrane; it wraps us, it is between us and everything else out there.

Skin is usually thought of as a protective envelope. In an oil painting, exposed flesh is usually erotically charged, the viscous quality of the paint offering a pleasurable tactility suggestive of a similar sensation of the smooth, often voluptuous flesh of the nude. But in Leon's paintings the skin offers neither pleasure nor protection; it doesn't even offer a stabilizing membrane to distinguish the body from its environment. And he devised a perfect object: correlative to convey the particular psychological sense of the vulnerability of the human skin. The technique he developed—applying the paint and then scraping it off with a meat cleaver, shredding some of the surface weave of the canvas in the process—has a chilling effect. This is especially true for the exposed bodies being tortured in the Interrogation series. In Interrogation I (1981), the naked victim is hung upside down. The red, raw body of the hanging victim looks as if it has been flayed, like meat hanging in a butcher's shop—a reference to the martyrdom of St. Peter and to Titian's Flaying of Marsyas. Sometimes the body barrier is broken in order to evoke an emphatic response. Threnody II (1987) depicts a group of black women caught in a moment of lamentation, set against the indefinite background of a wall. The tragedy toward which they gesture—a slaying in the street, an accident, a riot, perhaps a repressive act on the part of the police—takes place offstage. We see only the women on the sidelines, women who sit out on the street and habitually go unnoticed by passersby. Their bodies are worn out; their desiccated skin hangs from their frames; the history of their lives is etched in their faces, in the bumps and cracks in their skin, and on their enlarged hands and feet. Leon paints them on mural-sized canvases, turning anonymous people into ennobled entrapments of spirit and flesh.

If I had to give a description of my work I would say it's a definition of how power is demonstrated through the body and in human actions, and in our time, how power and stress and political and industrial powers are shown. (Leon Golub)²

Leon brought social relevance back into painting and captured something quintessential about the America of his lifetime, and he constructed an enduring record. One day while his retrospective exhibition was up at the Brooklyn Museum, I encountered one of my students looking at the Vietnam paintings. He was stunned by them. I told him that Leon had felt "outgunned," as he put it, by the hot immediacy of television, and how difficult he had found it to compete with the ubiquitous TV images. This young man said simply, "I never saw the Vietnam War on TV; these are the first images I have seen of it."

Televisual images melt away; what remains is the powerful testimony of this artist's protest, executed on a grand scale. Leon did what he set out to do: he brought back something of the big visual machines of the nineteenth century and imposed

Kate Horsfield and Lyn Blumenthal, interview with Leon Golub, Profile 2/2, March 1982: 22.
on them the representational strategies of the contemporary world. Along the way, he showed that the role of the painter as political revolutionary is still viable. Leon named the unnameable, and he brought into open existence things that had existed only briefly, or implicitly, or in a confused or repressed state. It is the story of our time; it’s Leon Golub’s time.

*It is a good feeling to know that the work is aggressive enough to hold its own—I don’t mean with other art but with reality, bare-ass reality.* (Leon Golub)\(^{1}\)

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**II.**