



**'MOTHER AND CHILD'**  
Soyer's subjects are everyday people



**'CITY FACES'**  
Some of Soyer's theatre of the street characters

# Raphael Soyer visualizes paintings as barometers

By PATRICIA BEACH SMITH

One of America's foremost painters feels that technology has had a disastrous effect on art.

"For that matter," Raphael Soyer said, "technology has had a disastrous effect on everything."

"I think that now even the technologists are worried about what's going to happen to us as a result," he said at the opening of his one-man show at Garelick's Gallery, Birmingham.

A MAN with such humanist attitudes should naturally paint those subjects he best relates to—people—and that he does.

"I have never had a so-called professional model pose for any of my paintings," Soyer said.

Even though his paintings are of human forms, they still stand as barometers of contemporary society. As Soyer leafed through a book of his works he pointed out who the various subjects were for each painting.

"THIS IS Judy Collins, the singer. This is Edward Hopper, the painter. This is myself," he said coyly.

"Soyer paints himself in many of his paintings.

"This time I painted myself as a Bowery bum—no shave and an old hat," he said delightedly.

It is perhaps his lack of pretense which enables him to paint his subjects without any veneer.

WHEN ASKED why most of his subjects appear so dour, he replied, "New York is a hard city. People don't always have their happy smiling faces on. I think my people are honest, but not unhappy.

"I have always preferred the theatre of the street to that of the stage," Soyer said.

In Soyer's "Farewell to Lincoln Square" several subjects stand in the foreground while an inconspicuous man begins to tear down the building in the background.

"THIS PAINTING was done as

homage to a wonderful kind of building that was torn down. Most of the people in the painting actually lived in the building. There were many artists of all kinds there, including myself," he said.

Soyer said he is disappointed that young artists are not encouraged to draw or paint from life.

"It's a great loss not to go back to tradition for some help," he said, "but I think the young artists have realized this. There is a great movement back to realism again."

"PART OF the problem is that the photographers have taken away the function of the painter of yesterday—to record events—and again, technology made it possible for this to happen," he said.

"I think young people suffer the same frustrations as those age 80. Both want to get back to when life was simpler and not everything was done by machines," he said.

Among the contemporary realists he admires are Philip Perlstein and Lenart Anderson. But he concedes that his real "passion" is Degas.

ABOUT non-representational painters he said, "You have to talk about them all the time to rationalize their work—otherwise they fall flat on their faces. People like Rauschenburg."

Soyer does not only paint; he has written three books, the most recent of which is called "Self-Revelment."

"I'm not going to write any more though. It is too easy," he said.

