

## CHAIM KOPPELMAN A Memorial Exhibition

By Marcia Rackow

**C**haim Koppelman: A Memorial Exhibition at the Terrain Gallery (May-October 2010) was a large, comprehensive show of extraordinary beauty honoring the life and work of the pioneering American artist and printmaker Chaim Koppelman (1920-2009). It surveyed the artist's extensive career from the 1940s to the 21st century and showed new, large meaning in this principle he loved, stated by Eli Siegel, founder of Aesthetic Realism, *"All beauty is a making one of opposites, and the making one of opposites is what we are going after in ourselves."* The opposites of Truth and Imagination, so rich and surprising in Chaim Koppelman's work, made this exhibition memorable.

The themes he pursued over the years—Napoleon, the Etcher, the Family, Couples—always have something fresh, unexpected, something you haven't seen before, not only in the technique—amazing relations of light and dark in etching, aquatint, embossment, ink, charcoal, pastel, oil—but also in his insightful ideas. Said Will Barnet: *"He was brilliant, both in printmaking and painting. His work has a sense of darkness and light that is unique, and of life—an observation, that is unusual and exciting, of what takes place between people. There was this profundity in him, and this sense of humanity. And it was developed through Aesthetic Realism."*

I agree! The artist's study with Eli Siegel, beginning in the 1940s, enabled him to understand the true dramas within people and deal with them imaginatively, visually, with a depth, critical kindness, and humor that is new in art.

Chaim Koppelman's work is in major museums here and abroad. An esteemed member of the National Academy, he was president of the Society of American Graphic Artists, and recipient of numerous awards, including SAGA's Lifetime Achievement Award. He taught at NYU, SUNY New Paltz, the School of Visual Arts, and the Aesthetic Realism Foundation. Selections from the exhibition can be seen at [TerrainGallery.org](http://TerrainGallery.org) and at [theoldprintshop.com](http://theoldprintshop.com).