



LEATHER PAINTINGS — Lyle Novinski, whose works are on view at the Art Center, cuts shapes from recycled leather for one of his sewn leather paintings. The Wisconsin born artist, who has been chairman of the University of Dallas' art department since 1960, has chosen leather as the medium for his large, abstract compositions.

## Leather Painting Exhibition On Display at Art Center

"Lyle Novinski: Leather Paintings," an exhibition of 15 sewn leather compositions, is on view at the Art Center through Sept. 26. The exhibition is the

first solo, museum showing of works by this Texas artist who has received recognition in several fields.

Novinski has been chairman of the art department at the University of Dallas since 1960. During this period he has done liturgical architectural designs for a number of churches in the Dallas area. In addition to the design work, he has crafted many objects himself, such as altars, kneelers, candlesticks, stained glass and light fixtures.

Novinski says the American artist traditionally has had to be a jack-of-all-trades whose imagination and skills are underpinned with technical expertise and manual dexterity.

Art Center director Paul Harris said, "The leather paintings currently exhibited at the Art Center give every evidence that this is an accurate description of Novinski himself. He uses what is perhaps man's oldest 'material,' leather, and an ancient stitching technique, patchwork, in a totally fresh and unexpected way. There is as well a skillful manipulation of the material that reveals expert craftsmanship."

Prior to 1970, Novinski's acrylic paintings received numerous awards in juried competitions. In 1970 a student's leather patchwork project prompted him to explore the possibilities of turning to leather as the medium for his paintings. Novinski says that although the "leathers" reflect his earlier works, they have evolved into a "more mature, complex expression."

Most of his leather comes from used garments found in resale stores. Because it offers more interesting and varied textures and softer colors, the artist usually works with the reverse side of his recycled material. Novinski says that he has no desire to embellish the leather with paint, dyes, beads, or feathers.

The subtle colors are derived from the natural variations in the leather and the commercial dyes previously used on some of the garments. As a painter, he shapes the leather and uses these shapes and stitching as drawing in the composition. The lines and curves that evolve echo those in his earlier paintings.

After backing the pieced leather compositions with canvas, Novinski stretches the material on bent wood structures. Most of the works involve three or more of these sculptural forms which are skillfully fitted together.

Novinski finds particular satisfaction in the fact that images arise from the design and placement of material. Paul Harris points to examples of these images in the pied beauty of "Eye Sky" where one may find an aerial view of a fertile landscape or the undulating sands of the desert in "Siencur."

"In the monochromatic greys and whites of 'Cloud Pillar I and II,' one discovers the muted hues of cumulous formations and, in others, mountains rising from the sea or striations unearthed in archeological digs," Harris said.