

# Artist's 'recycled' work both primitive, elegant

By JANET KUTNER

Art Critic of The News

WACO — Lyle Novinski recycles used garments from Goodwill stores into "leather paintings." The most recent exhibition of his work can be seen at The Art Center here through Sept. 26.

Novinski's pieces might also be regarded as "wall sculptures." There is a strong sense of architectural structure involved in their composition and they relate closely to their environmental placement.

The combination of curved and straight-edged forms result in sewn leather works that can simultaneously be termed primitive and elegant.

Titles in the Waco show, which includes examples dating 1971 to 1976, reflect many of Novinski's concerns: order and mood, organic and landscape imagery; sophisticated and primitive overtones.

**BUT LABELS** such as "Tucumcari," "Cloud Pillar" and "Eye-Sky" appear more as after thoughts than as any motivating force.

All of Novinski's work, including making the frames, is accomplished in his home studio. Indispensable tools of his trade are a band saw and a 1930 model treadle Singer sewing machine purchased at a pawn shop.

The "leather paintings" developed out of Novinski's earlier cut and fit together acrylic paintings. Novinski now uses the reverse side of used leather and suede garments found in second hand shops, cutting shapes from the old coats or jackets and using the stitching as a drawing element.

**CURVES DIVIDE** one area from another and as Waco Art Center Director Paul Harris points out, symmetrical arrangements are developed from such uniform elements as sleeves from a single coat.

A subdued tonal quality pervades all of Novinski's work and any variation in texture is a part of the materials' inherent character as a result of its aging process from wear. No paint or other embellishment is added.

"The American artist has traditionally been a 'crafty' individual," said Novinski in a lecture last spring at the University of Dallas, where he has served as chairman of the Art Department since 1960.

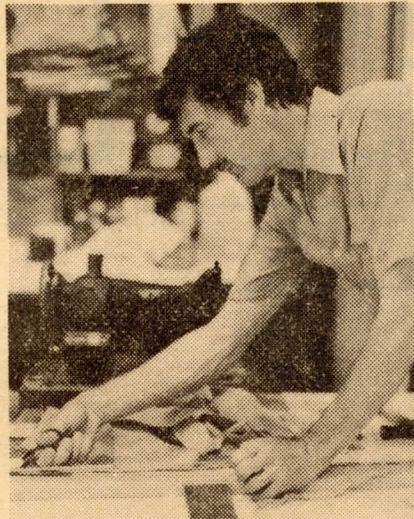
According to Novinski, the American artist has had to be a jack-of-all-trades. He, himself, comes naturally by his "pragmatic route to the aesthetic."

Close involvement with structure and craftsmanship is part of his heritage.

**THE SON OF A CARPENTER**, he recalls a grandmother who was a seamstress and reminisces that her father was a German architect who went to Chicago to help rebuild the city after the 1871 fire.

"My family has for generations been involved in the making of things," Novinski says. "I have always lived in an environment which took it for granted as a way of life and as a personal expression."

Mythical and meditative in mood, Novinski's leathers are now executed upon a standard 4½'x6' frame. The first "leather" was commissioned for the Jack Vaughn box at Texas Stadium and others hang at Southland Life and Mer-



Lyle Novinski works with on one of his "leather paintings" made of recycled garments from second-hand stores.

cantile National Bank in Dallas and at National Chemsearch Corp., Irving.

Novinski has shown at Valley House Gallery in Dallas and at Hooks-Epstein in Houston. He is currently involved in architectural design with Duane Landry of the O'Neil Ford firm in San Antonio.

**HIS ENIGMATIC** "leather paintings," with their multi-level interpretations, were as mysterious as they are low-key. They derive from biomorphic shapes, make sensuous use of their material, yet reflect what Harris calls "a spirituality." Recognizable symbolism is inevitably evoked, but it is more unconscious than intended.