

Ukraine



Leon Oks. Born in 1939.

By Tom Burgher II

The paintings of Leon Oks exhibit several styles that reflect the complexity of his experience and his creative process. In spite of a lost childhood in war-torn Eastern Europe, his paintings incredibly capture sylvan scenes and cozy Ukrainian villages; memories of the beautiful moments of his youth that flood his canvases. In his signature, expressionistic style, Leon appears fascinated by the concept of a “Mother Earth” or a “feminine” life force interwoven throughout Nature. This concept emerges in his depiction of single or multiple female figures, and re-emphasized with the fertile regenerative symbology of orchids; and people growing and blossoming as if flowers. Leon Oks, an American artist born in the Ukraine, both invites and defies comparison with modern masters. Some see the influence of Fauve and Picasso in his works while others believe he has gone well beyond the boundaries established by these great 20th Century artists. With his father lost during WWII, Leon was raised by his mother and grandparents as they moved from village to village in a war-torn Ukraine. At first, learning to draw on his own, he was later educated and mentored in the classical way of the Great Masters of the Renaissance. Many European publishers of art anthologies have included examples of his art in their compendiums of significant paintings of the past 5 centuries. But his paintings were too “free” in thought for exhibition and sale in the politically correct culture of the Soviet Union. After immigrating to the United States at age 40, he began again and quickly blossomed in style and technique. I have come to know the art and character of a great living artist: Leon Oks. I believe that what he is creating today will influence what artists and

students of the history of art will study tomorrow. I have arrived at my assessment analytically by looking at the fundamentals that make for great art and by comprehending the emotional creativity that inspires him to paint in a unique manner. Finally, others in the art community have noticed and are beginning to exclaim similar thoughts in their own way. If I were picking a living artist with the potential to assent to Picasso’s fame, then I would pick Leon Oks.

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"Old contry village" 40 x 50 cm.