

4-19-2010

Form Seeking Expression: Marian Artistic Creations

University of Dayton. Marian Library

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/ml_exhibitsummaries

eCommons Citation

University of Dayton. Marian Library, "Form Seeking Expression: Marian Artistic Creations" (2010). *Marian Library Exhibit Summaries*. 109.

https://ecommons.udayton.edu/ml_exhibitsummaries/109

This Program is brought to you for free and open access by the Marian Library Exhibits at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Marian Library Exhibit Summaries by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact mschlangen1@udayton.edu, ecommons@udayton.edu.

Christina Saj Expression—Marian Creations

April 19, 2010 - June 18, 2010

"It is not the purpose of the icon to touch its purpose to recall one or the other human experience every human sentiment as well as reason and all on to the way to illumination."

Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*



Form Seeking Artistic

contemplator. Neither is it its of natural life; it is meant to lead other qualities of human nature —Ouspensky and

Close and careful study of icons and their technique has made their reinterpretation an inevitable challenge for me. It is both part of my cultural heritage as well as a longtime, personal fascination with spiritual objects and universal symbols. Using their formal and structural elements as a departure point, I have worked to create paintings in which symbols could be recognized and reinvented so they may reflect the character of the time in which they were created.

My paintings betray a fascination with geometric abstraction, a preference for modernism and an acute awareness of historical context. There is no doubt that my family's rich cultural background has broadened my perspective. But every generation searches for its own vocabulary. I feel that one must assimilate knowledge of the past in order to elucidate the present. It is my attempt to create a synthesis of the things which I find meaningful in order to create a new ideal and a personal aesthetic representative of my own generation.

Turning to icons is just part of the story. Somewhere in my travels I discovered some x-rays and decided to try incorporation of these "bodies" in my paintings. First collaged and then painted into my images, these intricate and very evocative forms allowed me to introduce the human figure in the abstract. They provide the template for everyman.

Suddenly, the perspective had changed. The combination of using body parts in the abstract to create modern icons has afforded me a new universal symbol unavailable to previous generations of icon painters. Viewers can now interpret these paintings in relation very specifically to their own selves.

It is in this spirit of discovery of modern symbols and their meanings which a new art can be created.

Christina Saj is a painter who lives and works in NJ. She holds a BA from Sarah Lawrence and an MFA from Bard College. Early in her career, she mastered the technique of Byzantine Icon painting, having studied with Ukrainian icon master, Petro Cholodny the Younger. Her contemporary interpretations of icons have been widely exhibited including such venues as the American Bible Society, Union Theological Seminary, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, The Museum of Biblical Art in Texas, The Ukrainian Museum in New York, Museum of Cultural Heritage, Kiev Ukraine, the American Embassy in Qatar as well as at the White House. Her works reside in private and museum collections in the US and abroad. More of her work can be seen at www.christinasaj.com.

Christina Saj Artwork

Saj's paintings explore traditional iconic prototypes using modern vernacular. Her work instantly betrays a fascination with color and though not narrative in the traditional sense, it employs recognizable forms interlaced with rich surfaces of pattern and color. Her paintings attempt to dazzle and engage the viewer with their subject. For those versed in scripture, they have even more resonance. "Her style reflects both aspects of her training--a use of abstract form and color which draws on the heritage of early twentieth-century modern art, and the use of some of the forms, conventions and themes in icon painting. This combination is startling... Saj's great achievement is to create a kind of synthesis between these traditions, rather than simply borrow motifs or techniques of each."--writes Rachel Nicholls, in her recent book [Walking on Water](#) which includes analysis of Saj's work specifically in relation to scripture. [Nicholls writes] "She has creatively combined two spiritual artistic traditions and through them expressed a Christian narrative in a way in which is neither kitsch pastiche nor nostalgic reference but a 'meant' religious symbol. It is an intriguing postmodern achievement that has broken the bounds of each tradition (an abstract painting with a figure in it, an icon without a face) yet preserved and combined something of the heart of them."

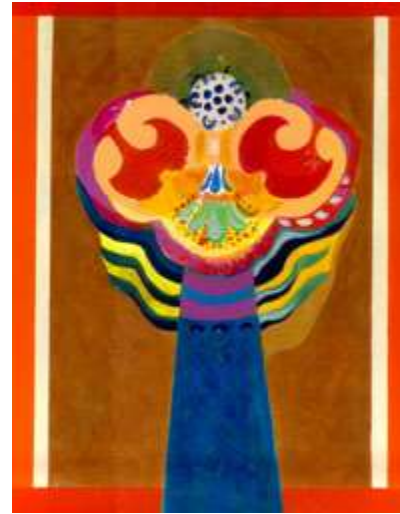
There is a rich history of depictions of the Virgin which provides ample area for exploration for iconographers, as is evidenced by the many types of Marian icons found throughout the world. It has evolved as a natural area of interest for Saj. Many of the works included in the exhibition explore these prototypes as well as narrative scenes associated with life of the Virgin and the life of Christ. Saj is especially interested in universal symbols associated with icons--allowing them to be understood by a broader audience. Much of the ancient tradition is lost and understood only by devout believers and or experts. Saj is trained in traditional aspects of icon painting and does traditional works largely on commission for ceremonial use. Doing this work, she realized that often there are aspects of these traditions lost in translation. It is her assimilation of these techniques into a contemporary context that provide the root of her artistic exploration.



Angel Watch over Me
5"h x 5"w
Mixed Media on Panel
2010



Annunciation
18"h x 36"w
Mixed Media and
Gold Leaf on Panel
2009



Archangel
14"h x 11"w
Mixed Media and
Metal Leaf on Panel
2009



Archangel Raphael
24"h x 18"w
Mixed Media and
Gold Leaf on Panel
2005



Coronation
16"h x 12"w
Mixed Media on Canvas
2007



Crown of Thorns
11"h x 14"w
Mixed Media and
Gold Leaf on Panel
2010



**Crucifixion with the
Virgin and St. John**
14"h x 11"w
Mixed Media on Panel
2010



**Crucifixion with
Virgin and St. John**
24"h x 24"w
Mixed Media on Canvas
2009



Dormition of the Virgin
14"h x 11"w
Mixed Media and
Gold Leaf on Panel
2010



Easter
30"h x 24"w
Mixed Media on Canvas
2001



Eternal Flame
10"h x 8"w
Egg Tempera and
Gold Leaf on Board
2005



Golden Angel
10"h x 8"w
Oil and Gold Leaf on Panel
2001



Golgotha
8"h x 8"w
Mixed Media on Panel
2009



Grace
10"h x 8"w
Mixed Media on Panel
2009



Guardian Angel
36"h x 24"w
Mixed Media on Canvas
2008



Hodegitria
14"h x 11"w
Mixed Media and
Metal Leaf on Panel
2009



Holy City
12"h x 12"w
Mixed Media on Panel
2008



Holy Family
24"h x 24"w
Mixed Media and
Gold Leaf on Canvas
2009



Holy, Holy, Holy
16"h x 12"w
Mixed Media on Canvas
2005



Hope
10"h x 8"w
Mixed Media and
Gold Leaf on Panel
2009



Invocation
24"h x 18"w
Mixed Media and
Gold Leaf on Panel
2001



Madonna and Child
36"h x 24"w
Oil on Wood Panel
2001



Mother and Child
7"h x 5"w
Mixed Media and
Gold Leaf on Panel
2007



Mother of the Sign
12"h x 12"w
Mixed Media on Panel
2009



Nativity
20"h x 19"w
Oil & Gold Leaf
on Aluminum
2001



Our Lady of Guadalupe
24"h x 12"w
Mixed Media and
Gold Leaf on Panel
2010



**Our Lady of the
Sacred Heart**
14"h x 11"w
Mixed Media and
Gold Leaf on Panel
2010



Protector
8"h x 8"w
Mixed Media on Panel
2009



Red Angel
10"h x 8"w
Egg Tempera and
Gold Leaf on Board
2005



Savior
10"h x 8"w
Mixed Media on Panel
2009



Seraph
24"h x 18"w
Mixed Media and
Gold Leaf on Panel
2001



Seraphim
8"h x 8"w
Mixed Media and
Gold Leaf on Panel
2009



St. John
16"h x 12"w
Oil on Panel
2000



Transfiguration
20"h x 20"w
Mixed Media and
Gold Leaf on Panel
1999



**Virgin and Child
Enthroned**
36"h x 24"w
Mixed Media on Canvas
2009