

6-7-2004

Messengers from God

University of Dayton. Marian Library

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

eCommons Citation

University of Dayton. Marian Library, "Messengers from God" (2004). *Marian Library Exhibit Summaries*. 77.

https://ecommons.udayton.edu/ml_exhibitsummaries/77

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 mschlange1@udayton.edu, ecommons@udayton.edu.

Messengers from God

by Aka Pereyma

Exhibit ran from June 7-August 6, 2004

From the beginning of my life I have been influenced by Ukrainian folklore and am thoroughly enchanted with it. All my creativity is steeped in this Ukrainian character, its specific individuality, and mystery."

Aka Pereyma

Aka Pereyma was born September 30, 1927, in the town of Siedice, Poland. Till 1939 she resided in the Polish village of Domanice where her parents were school teachers. Her family then moved to the towns of Cholm and Sokal, Ukraine. It wasn't until 1959 that she took up residence in Troy, Ohio. She studied at the Dayton Art Institute in Dayton, Ohio and in 1963 pursued her studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Hobart School of Welding Technology in Troy, Ohio. From 1965 to the present she exhibited yearly in solo and group shows.

Aka Pereyma works in a wide variety of media - sculpture, painting, decorative ceramics and drawings - that draw on Ukrainian folk art as a symbolic form. She expresses the essence of her work as follows: "*I enjoy and need to incorporate in my everyday life the influence of the traditions and artistic expressions of my Ukrainian heritage. This enjoyment I consciously use as a point of departure in my artwork. I develop my compositions intuitively depending on my knowledge of Ukrainian folk art, especially the patterns of Ukrainian Easter eggs.*"

No element, no motif, no artistic consideration is regarded as ordinary in the art of Aka Pereyma. Her entire being is immersed in each and every moment of daily life, and her art transforms life into rousing celebration of everyday living. The question of what it means to "be alive" is bound up with the artifacts of her native Ukrainian roots that surround her daily routines. Aka Pereyma's art is generated by the power of nature, just as the very rhythms of nature defined the visual expression of Ukraine's ancient culture found on vessels, monolithic pre-Christian sculpture, ritualistic objects, including always the simplest source of restorative symbolism -- the decorated egg (*pysanka*).

Despite the fact that her entire creative period as an artist has been spent in America, and even though she was geographically separated from the Ukraine, she preserved a powerful link with her native land. Her formal education in art began later in life than usual, but inception and completion were replete with experience, discovery, and originality. There is nothing in Pereyma's long and productive life that does not relate to her art.



In ancient Ukrainian folklore, the bird is a symbol of greatest power. It represents the highest of the three parts of the Tree of Life, a mythological image that, through the centuries, was a model of the universe. The bird was regarded as a carrier of the golden keys to open the universe, given to him by the Sun god in the spring.

The bird was considered a messenger from the world of the living, a messenger from God. For Aka Pereyma, "the other side," is the land of her ancestors (Ukraine). "According to Ukrainian legend, birds were thought to fly up to heaven and spend the winter with God. In the spring they return with eggs, new life and blessings from God." Aka traces her fascination with birds to her childhood.



Mixed Media

Cranes symbolize loneliness; the stork: family; the dove embodies love and peace, and the cuckoo foretells love and fertility.

Mixed Media

While birds as a whole are symbolic, each individual bird holds specific symbolism. Aka's favorite birds to represent are cranes, storks, doves and cuckoos.



The Ukrainian *pysanka* (from the word *pysaty*, to write) was believed to possess an enormous power not only in the egg itself, which harbored the nucleus of life, but also in the symbolic designs and colors which were drawn upon the egg in a specific manner, according to prescribed rituals. The intricately colored eggs were used for various social and religious occasions and were considered to be a talisman, a protector against evil, as well as harbingers of good. With the arrival of Christianity the symbolism evolved to include cruciform symbols and representation of Our Lady. Thus, *pysankas* are messengers of life, the life of this worlds and life eternal as we perceive it in the Incarnation and Redemption.



The large white, iconic egg with the Madonna and Child was created by Aka's granddaughter.

The most popular method of decorating *pysanky* is the use of the wax resist method or batik. A specialized instrument called the *kistka* or *ryl'tse* is used to write the design with hot wax. The dyes used in the process also had a symbolic meaning. Red symbolized the sun, life, joy; yellow stood for wealth and fertility; green was the symbol of spring and plant life. In the not-too-distant past artisans prepared their own dyes using natural products such as the bark of oak or ash trees, twigs of sour apple trees, saffron or willow tree leaves. Today, chemical dyes are used.

Says Aka, "My mother insisted that I learn how to do egg decorating. The closest thing that relates to an egg is a bird."



Summer Solstice 1 and 2 (From the Folk Stories Series)

Oil Paints

Many of the artist's inspirations for paintings come from old Ukrainian folklore. The stories told in her childhood stayed with her and manifested themselves in paintings complex in both composition and meaning.



Aka's metal sculptures are an assemblage of contours and sharp lines. They look like the skeletal remains of birds. Her talent of metal sculptures speaks volumes in the cross shown at the left. Jesus Christ hung on one of them. He is the ultimate messenger from God and the key to eternal life.

Adam and Eve
Oil Painting



Mary and Baby Jesus

Terra cotta/cloth/straw by Christina Pereyma This small sculpture shows Mary as a typical Ukrainian mother holding her child.



Religious and Christian motifs are naturally complementary in Aka's nature inspired art. No wonder then that Our Lady and the Christ child are an integral part of her artwork.

Ukrainian Madonna
Ink/watercolor



Nativity
Watercolor/colored pencil





Crown of Thorns

by Christina Pereyma
Thorns/flowerpetals/
beeswax



The Feminine Cope

by Christina Pereyma
Paper/flowerpetals/
beeswax. The first in
the "Garment Series"



Decorative Earthenware

Terracotta/glaze

Just as in her drawings and paintings, the patterns and symbols used in Aka Pereyma's ceramics derive from Ukrainian folk art. She incorporates many of the rich symbols traditionally used in *pysanky* in her earthenware designs. Making the earthen ware is a joint endeavor of husband and wife. Her husband Konstantine throws the bowls and plates and Aka glazes and fires them to get the final artistic product.