

LEOPOLD PLOTEK

What does the song hope for?

October 14 – November 20, 2021

Opening Reception: Thursday, October 14, 5–8pm



Leopold Plotek: *Beer and Ocean*, 2021, oil on canvas; *The Picabia Collage*, 2019, oil on canvas.

Corkin Gallery is pleased to present “What does the song hope for?,” an exhibition of work by Québec painter Leopold Plotek. Anchored by large-scale works produced over the last decade, the exhibition surveys the evolution of the artist’s distinct approach to painting, which mobilizes reflection, improvisation, and, above all, hope.

The show takes its title from the first line of the W.H. Auden poem “Orpheus.” The question — “What does the song hope for?” — prompts viewers to meditate on the trajectory of artistic creation and the possibility for art to forge optimism and affirmation, especially during challenging times. Within his own practice, Plotek often finds solace in revisiting artists, poets, and philosophers of the past as he projects a new path forward with each painting.

The works in this exhibition reframe the Western canon as an object of personal experience and reflect the artist’s own engagement with architecture, artifacts, and art historical precedents. His interest in these particular subjects and sources, which range from Romanesque monuments and motifs to works by Modernist masters like Beckmann, Picabia, and Mondrian, extends beyond narrative and formal properties to encompass the conditions and spirit in which they were produced. Plotek relies on intuition and imagination to continually rework his paintings; he repeatedly scrapes the canvas to adjust colour, light, and line, all in pursuit of salvaging an irretrievable memory. By giving way to the desire to connect with an irreconcilable past and the impossibility of truly aligning experience with memory, Plotek is in fact immersing himself in the never-ending yet ever-hopeful process of translating feeling into form.

Born in 1948 in Moscow, USSR, **Leopold Plotek** emigrated to Canada from Warsaw, Poland in 1960. The artist attended McGill University and Sir George Williams University (Montreal, Québec), where he studied under Plasticien artists Yves Gaucher and Roy Kiyooka; he also studied under William Townsend at the Slade School

of Fine Art (London, United Kingdom). After spending the early years of his career grappling with his place in the “stream of Modernism,” he broke with the traditions of his esteemed mentors to evolve a method of painting inspired by “forms that offer themselves to be encountered and responded to with one’s imagination.”

The subject of almost 30 solo shows in Toronto and Montréal since 1976, Plotek has established himself as a leading Québec painter. Many prominent institutions have hosted group exhibitions featuring his work, including the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (Inaugural Exhibition, 1988), the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal (1982), and the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal (1982, 1995, 2001, 2017), and his paintings are part of institutional, corporate, and private collections across Canada and internationally.



Leopold Plotek, *The Green Theatre*, 2009, oil on canvas.

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UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS & PROGRAMMING

Art Toronto
October 28 – 31, 2021

Irving Penn
November 25, 2021 – January 22, 2022

CORKIN GALLERY

Corkin Gallery, founded in 1979, has presented hundreds of exhibitions across all media. Corkin Gallery is committed to the founding principles that moved art history forward and its mandate includes significant works of art across a spectrum of media including painting, sculpture, photography, and installation.

Corkin Gallery’s roots laid in a focus on photography: closely examining its relationship to other media as a means of enriching our understanding of the medium. Exhibitions traced the evolution of photography through the lenses of twentieth and twenty-first century masters including André Kertész, Richard Avedon, Diane Arbus, Irving Penn, Giselle Freund, Harry Callahan, Horst P. Horst, Francesco Scavullo, Sara Moon, and Nan Goldin.

True to its commitment to modernism, and exhibiting iconic works of art, Corkin Gallery features a roster of early-career through established artists from around the globe whose voices and vision are trailblazing the ideas of tomorrow.

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