



*The Warrior of Light*

## SURFACE TREATMENT

What: "Max Vityk: Warriors of Light"  
Where: International Museum of Art & Science, 1900 Nolana  
When: September 5, 2020 – March 28, 2021  
Hours: 9am-1pm, 3-6pm Tuesday-Saturday  
9am-1-pm Wednesdays, sensory-friendly  
9-10am Thursday, senior hour  
Admission: Currently admission is \$1 for guests 4 and up; IMAS members and children under 4 receive free admission  
Contact: (956) 682-0123 or [ww.imasonline.org](http://ww.imasonline.org)

## **New Exhibit at IMAS**

Paintings of neo-mythical warriors fighting for good against evil in 21<sup>st</sup> century revolutions.

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

Ukrainian-American artist Max Vityk returns to IMAS with paintings even grander in scale than his previous earth-inspired abstracts. Sometimes art just needs to be big in order to contain its message. His beloved layers of earth and bedrock formations have morphed into this figurative series, "Warriors of Light". In tune with the earth's often violent history through his background in geology, the paintings react to the historical revolutionary events the artist lived through during his stay in Ukraine and Egypt

between 2011 – 2015. In “Warriors of Light”, the complexities of social change merge with the complexity of his painting technique; there is a lot going on here.

The key to Vityk’s figurative art is the pathos of naive visions. His figures embrace narrative elements from ancient rock engravings as mythological and folk symbols. These are archetypal visualizations. He wants to invoke parts of myths, traditions, and insights into becoming universal neo-mythological chimerical human images; he is creating Modernized archetypal mystical beings to convey current events. Metaphysically placed on the plane of the eternal struggle between good and evil, his paintings plead for freedom and change.

Walking into the exhibition, the gallery becomes a cave of paintings, a majestic inner earth that dwarfs us through its visual power and fills our senses with its importance. There is definitely a spiritual element at work here. In several of these works, we see archetypal shapes informing his figuration, and as the series progresses, his figures become more so. Vityk’s knowledge of the turbulence of the earth reinforces the chaos of his subject; nature and man are inseparable. Not only are geological formations referenced in these works, but his interest in the mystical power of earth and cave paintings fed into this large-scale format.

Beyond the physical plane, light/goodness fight against the darkness/evil of civil unrest in each work. His warrior figures fuse archetype, geology, metaphysics and contemporary paint style to create empathetic beings. Within this synthesis exists ancient wisdom, innocence, pain, and upheaval. He is also stitching closed the time gap between the distant past and the modern era. Can it really change? The painting, “The Warrior of Light”, with its bands of paint layering, demonstrates Vityk’s aesthetic very well. An inner light seems to emanate from the warrior whose golden shield shows growth through its concentric-tree circular pattern. The warrior’s eyes mimic this pattern, but also reflect back to ancient art. Placed against a black background the golden warrior is the symbol for change against the forces of evil.

Ornately lush textures using acrylic, foam, spray paint, and oil stick that reference Earth strata, as in “Revolutionary Soldier”, add a strongly tactile quality to this show. Here, textures ooze and flow as though to remind us that the earth has experienced the upheavals now experienced by this soldier. Although light hues randomly show hope, the darker tones are insidious. The tension between the subject and a style that could have been produced by a disturbed child is poignant. Paintings such as the grotesque “Blue Angel” become bas reliefs with bulbous textures that seem like mutating growths. This expressionistic creature suggests past and present beliefs engulfed by a magma-red background that roils with explosive intent.

As if purging his mind of remembered violence, Vityk stated, "Painting for me feels like a meditation. I often paint with my eyes closed – to let my subconscious mind be in control."

*Nancy Moyer, Professor Emerita of Art, UTRGV, is an art critic for The Monitor. She may be reached at [nmoyer@rgv.rr.com](mailto:nmoyer@rgv.rr.com)*