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**Creating women in full flower**

August 21, 2008

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By **MYRNA PETLICKI** Contributor

A visit to the Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe a decade ago changed the direction of Mila Ryk's art. The third generation Ukrainian artist, who lives in Morton Grove, was fascinated by the diversity and beauty of the flowers exhibited in an orchid show.

She could have painted some of the orchids, but decided that would be no better than taking a photograph. Ryk mulled her options for three years. "I couldn't start right away. I had to figure out how I wanted to do it," she explained. What has gradually evolved in the years since in Ryk's work is a blending of the nude female form with the essence of a flower. The resulting paintings are delicate, graceful and erotic.

» [Click to enlarge image](#)



Mila Ryk attended the opening reception for "Exotica Erotica" at Effe Leven Gallery in Chicago, where three of her paintings are on exhibit.

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Works by Mila Ryk such as "Peaceful Dream (Orchids)" are a blending of the nude female form with the essence of a flower.

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**MILA RYK**

Work by the artist is included in "Exotica Erotica" (through Aug. 31) at Effe Leven Gallery, 213 W. Institute Place, 4th Floor, Chicago. (312) 479-5176; [www.ffelevengallery.com](http://www.ffelevengallery.com). For information about Mila Ryk's art classes, call (224) 388-0582 or visit [www.art-beyond.com](http://www.art-beyond.com).

years later, her grandmother showed her a sculpture that Ryk had created at the age of 5. "I made a whole story out of clay," she said.

**Ukrainian immigrant**

Ryk immigrated to the United States in 1991 with her husband and daughter. She has been taking private lessons with artist Leon Oks for several years, and credits him with greatly influencing her work.

A rotating exhibit of work by Ryk has been on display at the Morton Grove Village Hall for about a year. "I have an appreciation letter from the Mayor, that he loved it," Ryk reported. Her paintings have also been displayed at the Elmhurst Artists' Guild Gallery, Morton Grove Public Library, Skokie Public Library, Skokie Heritage Museum and a gallery in Arizona, among other places.

Two examples of Ryk's "orchid" paintings grace the walls of her living room — others are in process in her upstairs studio. "I do have some landscapes and I do have some still lives," she said. But her main focus for the past several years has been the series inspired by that long-ago visit to the Chicago Botanic Garden.

"I named the series 'Orchids,' even if they don't look much like orchids," Ryk said. It's true that nude female figures, rather than flowers, seem to predominate in each work, but in paintings like "Peaceful Dream (Orchids)," in the current show, those figures look ready to blossom.

*"Imaginary Expressionism"*



*Peaceful Dream (Orchids)*  
Oil on linen, 20"x20"

**effe leven**  
GALLERY

presents

Original Art by

**Mila Ryk**

at the group exhibition

**EXOTICA EROTICA**

August 1-31, 2008  
Artists Reception  
August 23rd 6:00pm - 10:00pm

213 W. Institute Place  
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Edited by Adam P. Kennedy and Renee Kennedy



*In Full Bloom* 20 x 20, above.  
*Morning Touch* 18 x 24, opposite page.

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