

## INSIDE ART

# Myths and Cosmos Fascinate Leo Katz, Artist and Also Philosopher

By MEYER LEVIN

With our suddenly intensified interest in space, no artist would seem to be more timely; in his subject matter, than Leo Katz, who at the age of 70 is renewing his remarkable career.

With works in all the major galleries, with innumerable prizes, with a teaching record in the best art schools, museums and universities, Leo Katz has just moved into a cold-water loft in Atlanta, Ga., to give his time to painting again.

I came upon him accidentally. Lecturing in Atlanta, I noticed some good amateur paintings in the home of my host and found that his wife studied with a "great character," a painter named Leo Katz who had just retired after a teaching career that stretched from the Metropolitan museum in New York to Atlanta's Spelman college.

"He is not only an artist," said my host, "but a philosopher. I have him come to my plant to give a series of lectures to the executives. He's stirred them up. One of his main ideas is that the creative force is more important than the competitive force, even in our business world."

They took me to see Leo Katz in his new studio, up two flights of stairs, over a shop, the silvery-haired man was waiting, stocky, alert, warm.

"Space, space," he said, gesturing happily at his long, open loft, a floor through, with an alcove bedroom, and a row of storage racks for his accumulated works.

On the walls there hung his latest paintings, night-sky rendering of galaxies and constellations. Several had a vortex theme, and there were abstract pictures in which he had created variations on the theme of a point in space.

"Point Powder," he called such a picture, painted in 1955. Today, inevitably, it suggested an earth satellite. There was indeed something of the seer about Leo Katz. For his absorption with celestial themes is involved with a philosophy which reaches back to his early student days.

Leo Katz was born in Austria; he studied in Vienna and early became interested in the works of Freud. He tells of a

curious meeting in an art museum in the 20's, when he lingered in the almost deserted Egyptian section and got into a conversation with the only other person there — Freud. They discussed the mythological meaning of the antique sculptures.

For, like Freud, Katz is steeped in the significance of the basic legends that recur in so many cultures. The legend of man struggling with a serpent, for instance, is for analysts a picture of a subconscious struggle which goes on in every person.

●The artist, Leo Katz, has projected this inner, subconscious struggle into the skies. Like a stranger of old, he sees the mythological figures amongst the heavenly bodies. Thus, our innermost psychic patterns are related to the infinite.

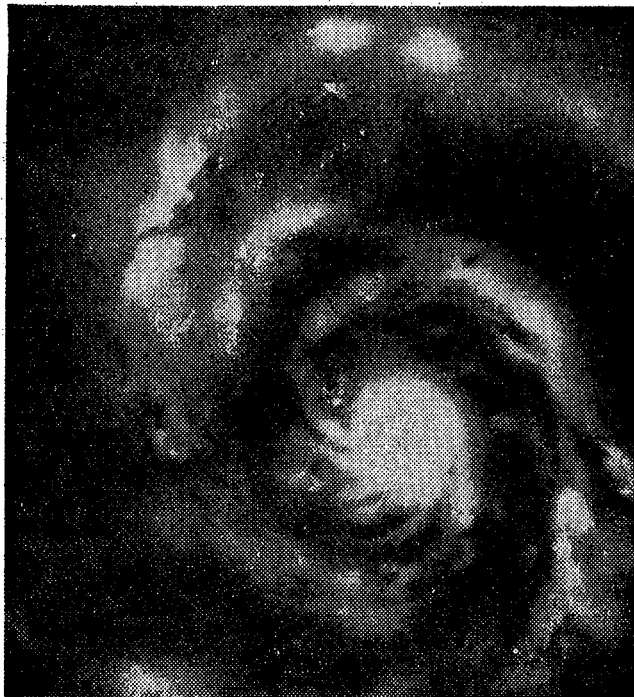
As he puts it, "The men of antiquity had poured their wis-

dom and genius into the problem of forging mental bridges between conscious knowledge and the unfathomable depths of the subconscious forces of man on the one hand, and the impenetrable mysteries of cosmic vastness on the other."

Instinctively, they felt that the whole man must be related to the universe. Drawing together these two mysteries of the subconscious soul and the vast universe remains man's greatest task. And this mystical, speculative quality pervades the work of Leo Katz.

But, though he likes to put ideas into his work, his art is of remarkable pictorial quality, forceful design, brilliant, pure color. As an etcher and engraver, Katz is a virtuoso; no collection is complete without samples of his prints.

So after a lifetime of teaching and activity, there he is in his loft in Atlanta, an artist of the infinite, with space to work in, at last.



## Abstract-Mystical

"Spiral Universe," by Leo Katz, is a night-sky painting inspired by the Milky Way. The subject is characteristic for this remarkable modernist, a teacher, philosopher and artist in many media. In his sky painting, Katz has brought together his love of the abstract and mystical, yet with a representational effect.