



## Surrealistic fables from Remedios Varo

By: **Murray Paskin** | 01/25/12 9:00 PM

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An intriguing sense of mystery pervades each of the 13 oil paintings and pencil drawings that make up this gem of a show, “Remedios Varo: Indelible Fables,” at Frey Norris Contemporary and Modern Gallery.

The title fits the exhibition perfectly. Although most of the pieces may resemble fairy tales, they also are extraordinary and unique, a product of Spanish surrealist Varo’s unusual imagination.

While a narrative sense is clear in most of the works on view, their ultimate meaning is not explicit. Yet this absence of clarity intensifies viewers’ fascination.

Text surrounding the pieces implies a deep involvement with spiritual systems, and the works — with their subdued coloring and unique juxtapositions — undoubtedly have symbolic meanings.

In the oil-on-masonite “Vegetal Cathedral,” a woman sits in a cart moving through a forest led by a large bird. The fact that we are aren’t told where the woman is going or why the leaves of the trees look like renaissance arches are among the unexplained elements intensifying our search for answers that we come to realize are beyond logic.

Varo fled her birthplace of Spain for France after the start of the Spanish civil war and the assassination of legendary Spanish poet Federico Garcia Lorca. From there, she emigrated to Mexico in 1941 to escape Nazi occupation. She died of a heart attack in 1963. By then, she had become recognized as one of the world’s outstanding surrealist painters.

Describing the mystery that surrounds her work, she once said, “Personally I do not think I am



COURTESY PHOTO

Wild: “Vegetal Cathedral” by Spanish surrealist Remedios Varo is on view at Frey Norris Gallery.

endowed with special powers but rather an ability to see the relations of cause and effect, beyond the ordinary bounds of common logic.”

**IF YOU GO**

**Remedios Varo: Indelible Fables**

**Where:** Frey Norris Gallery, 161 Jessie St., S.F.

**When:** 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays; closes Feb. 25

**Admission:** Free

**Contact:** (415) 346-7812, [www.freynorris.com](http://www.freynorris.com)

URL: <http://www.sfexaminer.com/entertainment/fine-arts/2012/01/surrealistic-fables-remedios-varo>