Leon A. Makielski was born in Morris Run, Pennsylvania in 1885 and grew up in South Bend, Indiana. In the early 1900's he studied at the Art Institute of Chicago where by 1908 he became an instructor and was awarded the Institute's highest honor, the John Quincy Adams Traveling Scholarship.

For the next four years Makielski studied in Paris and its environs. He was enrolled in the Academie Julian and the Grand Chaumiere both in Paris. He was a pupil of Henri Martin, Richard Miller, Lucien Simon and R. Menard. He exhibited in the Paris Salons of 1910 and 1911 and spent much of his time painting the countryside around Paris, especially Giverny and Versailles. "Undins's Pool", "Luxembourg Palace" and "Wildflowers, Giverny" are wonderful examples of his work during this period.

William Gerdts cites Makielski in Monet's Giverny: "An Impressionist Colony" (Abbeville Press, 1993) as one of the most traditional of the second generation colonists who followed the lead of Theodore Robinson and other first generation Americans at Giverny.

Makielski's training might have been earlier influenced by the Hoosier Impressionists active in Chicago during his training there, but the European experience clearly brought forth a style of its own.

Makielski returned to South Bend in 1913, finally settling in Ann Arbor, Michigan where he was an instructor of fine art at The University of Michigan. During the remainder of his life he worked in Ann Arbor and Detroit where he also taught at the Meinsinger Art School. He was an active member of art groups including: the Scarab Club in Detroit and the American Federation of Artists.

His extensive exhibits beyond those at the Salons of Paris included: Detroit Institute of Art 1917, 1919, 1921, 1923, and 1925 at all of which he garnered prizes; Michigan State Fair, 1925 (prize); Scarab Club, 1929 (prize) and the Art Institute of Chicago, 1908 (prize). He is well listed including: API'97; Benezit; Davenport; Dunbier (American Impressionists. 800 Lesser Known Working Before 1940); Fielding; Mallett; and, Who's Who.

From another document:
After five years abroad, Makielski returned home to South Bend in 1913. Two years later he moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan to become a professor of fine arts at the University of Michigan. Once at UofM Makielski began a two year painting and drawing project during which he created portraits of many of the University professors and their families. One of Makielski’s most famous portrait paintings that resulted from this project is that of his dear friend and famous poet, Robert Frost; this portrait currently hangs in the Museum of Art at the University of Michigan. Approximately 50 of his other faculty portraits presently hang in other University buildings. Aside from portraits, Makielski
also worked at perfecting his landscape painting skills which he devoted time to while at his second studio, located in Detroit. For the remainder of his life, Makielski divided his time between Ann Arbor and Detroit. While in Detroit, he taught drawing and painting at the Meinsinger Art School, as well as portraiture at the Scarab Club. With regards to his Detroit portraiture, he painted many of the city’s elite business leaders, including the Kresge family and Ralph Modieski, designer of the Ambassador Bridge that links Detroit and Windsor, Ontario.