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Mary: A Different Look

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Mary – A Different Look

Mixed Media

Tom Dusterberg

June 1 - July 15, 2000

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

There is much variety of style and media in the art of Tom Dusterberg. He has done, for instance, a cubist rendition of the holy family. Another is closer to an impressionist landscape or a realistic street scene. Some are pure abstractions. Others are clearly influenced by Medieval illumination. "I worked as a commercial illustrator for over thirty years," he says by way of explanation. "I learned that the more techniques I have available, the more work I could get." That diversity naturally works its way into his work as a painter. "Different subjects talk to me in different techniques," he says. "Plus, I really didn't want to become a slave to any one style or medium."

Much of his work does have one thing in common, his use of religious icons. Dusterberg insists, however, that his work is not at all religious. "Spiritual" is his preferred word. A curator of an exhibit said of Dusterberg's work,

The extraordinary spiritually evolved work of Tom Dusterberg, who proposes linkages between animals, humans, and a transcendent spirit reflective of a new spiritual search in artwork, picks up where abstract expressionism left off conceptually, but works in a more modest and quiet style. Dusterberg's illustrations [often depict] humans in atmospheres and environments which are quintessentially civilized, as well as being literary narratives. They have an old-fashioned look and quality, which also represent a longing for a different kind of life.

"Religious has a lot of bells hanging all over it," he says. "I am using the icons that are prevalent in our Western culture and I want to identify for myself what it is all about." That is, his paintings attempt to redefine common religious symbols – the cross and crucifixion, the holy family, the face of Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary – in a way that is truly and uniquely Tom Dusterberg. But because they are common and familiar images, he hopes that they will resonate in the mind of the viewer in a different way.

"I want to get across the spiritual idea of 'something other' without tying myself to any specific doctrine or faith," he says. "There should be something here that anybody can relate to in a spiritual sense."

One of the biggest influences in his life and art is the poetry and personality of Thomas Merton. Dusterberg has gone to several retreats at Merton's Gethsemani monastery and several of his paintings are pastoral landscapes Dusterberg discovered there. He has, for instance, a one-seater park bench standing isolated in the middle of a field. Dusterberg explains that there was also a statue on the hill and the bench was placed there to aid meditation on the sculpture. "But the sculpture was so ordinary that I thought the bench was much more interesting," he says. "So I painted it."

That kind of off-beat humor seems to peek through the painted surfaces of much of his work even when the subject matter is deadly serious. ... By mixing the old and the new, the serious and the humorous, the traditional and the technological, the theological and the sociological, Dusterberg creates something that is layered in meaning, loaded with allusion, and simply fun to look at. The Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary, newly created for the exhibit at the Marian Library, fits this category.

This article has been adapted from an original article written by Richard O. Jones, editor of Eventure!

ARTIST STATEMENT

For centuries, Western Man has sought to make a world of brick, gears and microchips, structured to reflect his idea of himself and his potential. (A world subservient to his creative zeal; his own technical Nirvana to compensate for his feeling of powerlessness, and the constant rumor of his mortality.)

Always underlying his efforts is the silent whisper of the other: a power greater than himself, a call to his inner being. Those who hear the whisper, the contemplative, the artist, the poet, they are compelled to murmur to the world. "H is and I am." Thus, the cave painter scrawls his images, and the iconist responds to the direction of an inner voice.

Man's attempt to recreate the world is always tempered by the mystic's expression.

"Art plays an unwitting game with the ultimate things and achieves them nevertheless. In the highest zone it should assist humanity to obtain a fleeting vision of God and to rejoice in the sacred vigils when the soul sits down to dinner." Paul Klee

My art, my splattered screaming hues upon the ground tell of my moment within the light. If I have done my part, these paintings open a window in the heart to let in memories of places we have never been and stirs the small still voice of the Other.

BACKGROUND

Al Gables School of Commercial Art, Cincinnati, Ohio
Art Academy of Cincinnati, Painting, Sculpture and Photography
Twenty-five years background in advertising design and illustration
Graphics and set design WCPO Television
Dean of academics and illustration instructor ACA College of Design

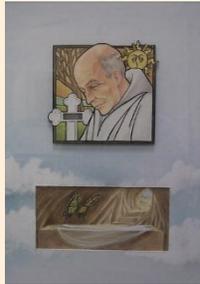
MOST RECENT EXHIBITS

Middletown Fine Arts Center (Ohio) – January 1999
"Passages" Contemporary art of the spirit – Cincinnati Art Club, October 1997
"Masterworks 53" Honorable mention award, Cincinnati, February 1995
"Exhibit 94" Art Academy of Cincinnati Alumni Association Show, Second place and Cincinnati Bell Purchase aware, September 1994

Represented by

Glendale Gallery, 27 Village Square, Cincinnati, Ohio 45246 (513) 771-1660

L.M. Brandt, 1267 Zumbrum Rd. Union City, Ohio 45390 (937) 968-5600

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A Father's Love oil on canvas	Body of Christ sculpture, painted wood	Clergy Contemplate Death watercolor	Mother and Child watercolor
			
Joyful Mystery 1 - Humility watercolor, pencil	Joyful Mystery 2 - Love of Neighbor watercolor, pencil	Joyful Mystery 3 - Spirit of Poverty watercolor, pencil	Joyful Mystery 4 - The Will of God watercolor, pencil
			
Joyful Mystery 5 - Fidelity Watercolor, pencil	Found By the Light watercolor, pencil	Merton Memorial mixed	Mindful of Him watercolor, pencil

			
Mary, Queen of Poets and Mystics acrylic	Mother Behold Your Son mixed	Spirit watercolor, gesso	Suicide colored print
		Call 937-229-4214 for further information.	
Storm of Souls oil on canvas	Virgin and Child sculpture, painted wood		

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