

Notice

MEN AS BIRTHERS, NOT DESTROYERS: A PAINTING SERIES OF MEN

by Barbara Bickel

The history of life can be understood as the creation of ever more sensitive creatures in a Universe where there is always another dimension of beauty to be felt and savoured. Think of yourself that way, as a supreme power of sensitivity surrounded by magnificence"

— from *The Universe is a Green Dragon: a cosmic creation story* by Brian Swimme.

Recently I have begun a series of figure paintings that has evolved into a project of portraying men non-traditionally as beautiful, vulnerable birthers evoking emotions, rather than as stereotypical warriors and rulers evoking respect through fear and dominance.

The beauty of the human figure has always excited and intrigued me. In my present paintings I respond to a wood grained surface that is covered with dark glazes of oil paint. The human figure is then created by removing the glaze and exposing the differentially stained wood grain patterns. This approach parallels the principle of "the way" in Taoism which is based on the original Sanskrit meaning of 'Tao' as "the grain in wood." This creates a work of art that is a response to the forces of Life and not dominating the work completely with ego will.

This painting series is a personal endeavour in accepting masculine energy, in others and myself, as an important part of the healing journey. As long as I fear and reject the masculine in myself, I will be unable to be in this world as a liberated person. My unconscious view (image) of men as aggressive hurtful beings is, and will continue to be, contradicted in this painting series. My unconscious fears are being brought to the surface to be faced

and truthed.

In bringing this project out to be seen by the public, I intend to raise the same question that is brought up in me: are we ready to accept men as nurturers, loving birthers, and creators of Life?

To fulfill this integrative healing journey, through the experience of painting, I am asking men to model in the nude and be co-creators of the way they will be portrayed, as it reflects their own journey in dealing with the male body in our society.

The process of working and responding to each other in this vulnerable endeavour is as important to share as the finished paintings. I will be documenting the experiences of myself and the men as this painting series is created. This article will be published as part of the final exhibition.

As an artist raising questions for others through visual images, I will challenge my own beliefs and those of others. Through challenging comes the opportunity for truthing our fear-based biases toward the masculine in ourselves and others. Only by overcoming these fear-based biases will we experience the deepening beauty of the reintegration of the masculine and feminine energies in both men and women.

Note: if you are a man and you are interest-

ed in modelling anonymously between Sept. '92 and Mar. '93, contact Barbara at 287-9528. Models will receive \$10/hr. This particular series is to be exhibited at the M.E.N.S. Network Annual Symposium, Apr. 30 - May 2.▲▼

