



ICONS, MYTHS AND LEGENDS AN INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCE

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Icons, Myths and Legends

“You alarm me! Said the King, ‘I feel faint - give me a ham sandwich!’

On which the messenger, to Alice’s great amusement, opened a bag that hung around his neck.

‘Another sandwich!’ said the King.

‘There’s nothing but hay left now’ the Messenger said, peeping into his bag.

‘Hay then’ the King murmured in a faint whisper.

Alice was glad to see that it revived him a good deal. ‘There’s nothing like eating hay when you’re faint,’ he remarked to her, as he munched away.

‘I should think throwing cold water over you would be better,’ Alice suggested, ‘or some sal-volatile.’

‘I didn’t say there was nothing **BETTER**,’ the King replied. ‘I said there was nothing **LIKE** it.’

Which Alice did not venture to deny.

-Alice through the Looking Glass

In 1973 as an art student at the Santa Barbara Art Institute, two experiences stood out. First was an art history class and the second was a visit to a monk who restored Russian Icons.

The art history course was from the Medieval to the Renaissance period. Nothing special, but instead of the standard textbook and taking notes routine and remembering who was who and what they did, we experienced it through a unique way.

Backlit screens and stereo speakers surrounded us. Projected images of cathedral interiors and paintings were shown. And in the background Baroque and Gregorian chants were playing. You actually felt you were back in the time of Renaissance. The experience of that class left a lasting impression on me and I always thought if the opportunity provided itself to me I would somehow like to reproduce that same environment - only this time with the artwork I was doing.

The Second Seed...

The second experience was a visit to a monk at a monastery just outside of Los Angeles. The monastery was in the foothills, large trees abounded, and as we entered you could just feel it was a sacred place.

We toured the grounds and then entered the main building. The floors were wooden and the walls stone. There were big old chairs of leather, brass and oak and a large 20-foot table where the Monks met for their meals. We continued on to the chapel where the monks prayed, guarded by large wooden statues painted properly in gold's, reds and royal blues. This was God's house and his presence was there.

The Monk that we met showed us the Icons he was working on. He explained their history and beginnings. What their effect was on the peoples who owned them. Why they were so important at that time and why it was important for him, as a restorer, and how it affected his life. He said he was paid very handsomely for his talents and said that if he was on the outside he would be well off - money wise. But the moneys he made all went to the support of the monastery and he felt that since this was a God-given talent it was his way of repaying and honoring his blessing. He felt he was a far richer man in this setting than anything else could provide.

So Now the Seeds Were Planted...

The first seed said that if you were to create something surround it with music and an environment fitting for it. The second seed was to create an image that would be iconographic in "Spirit".

The first artists were the Shamans of the cave dwellers. There they captured the "spirits" of the animals that were important to their well-being, believing that the image would help and protect them. And in that process art was associated with magic and mythology. This led to the way religious Icons were also made. The artists, mostly Monks in a religious order, were blessed, as well as their materials, and thus the spirit was there for infused in the making of the Icon.

After 40+ years of being a photographer, graphic designer and artist all that I done had left me unfulfilled. Then one day, while making cast paper figures of Goddesses, the thought of paintings and music came back to my mind...and I started to envision what I call my Icons, Myths and Legends.

While in San Antonio, Texas I was spending time as an artist-in-residence at Stone Metal Press. I was assisting people with making prints and working in the gallery. But I was also experimenting with making recycled paper. Which were lanterns, spirit books and cast paper figures. I called the work "Notes from the Earth" because I included elements of nature such as branches, grass, nuts and natural pigments.

I thought of the figures as being Icons and I wrote using runes as the alphabet giving them a mysterious look and language. They developed a life of their own and I thought of shrines or altars to be displayed. The altars having a paper lantern, a bowl for offerings and a book opened to a passage telling a story, moral or description of the deity.

They just needed a setting and atmosphere that would be fitting.

While developing these images I stumbled upon a story told by Joseph Campbell. He and his wife were at a retreat of some sort and the night before they were to experience some ritual they were given seven stones. They were asked to "name one thing that they could not live life without" and associate it with each stone. The next evening they went to an opening of a cave and a masked individual requested one of the stones before they were allowed to enter. At each turn of the cave they were greeted by another person and ordered to give up another stone until all seven were given up. He said that it was a revelatory experience. One understood their values in life.

The second is the famous story of the Holy Grail - *Percival* - by Wolfram von Achenbach. Specifically, the reference to the Phoenix, the legendary bird that - "by the power of the stone the Phoenix burns to ashes, but the ashes give him life again. Thus does the Phoenix molt and change its plumage, which afterward is bright and shining and as lovely as before. There never was a human so ill but that, if he one day sees that stone, he cannot die within the week that follows. And in looks he will not fade. His appearance will stay the same, be it maid or man, as on the day he saw the stone, the same as when the best years of his life began, and though he should see the stone for two hundred years, it will never change, save that his hair might perhaps turn gray. Such power does the stone give a man that flesh and bones are at once made young again. The stone called the Grail."

Now... after 40 years since the first seeds were planted, the third one provided the 'magical' element that would compliment these images, and for a viewer, a way to enhance the experience.

Imagine If You Will...

You are in possession of seven stones. On a card provided you have written seven items you feel you can't live your life without...things most cherished. They are assigned to each of your stones.

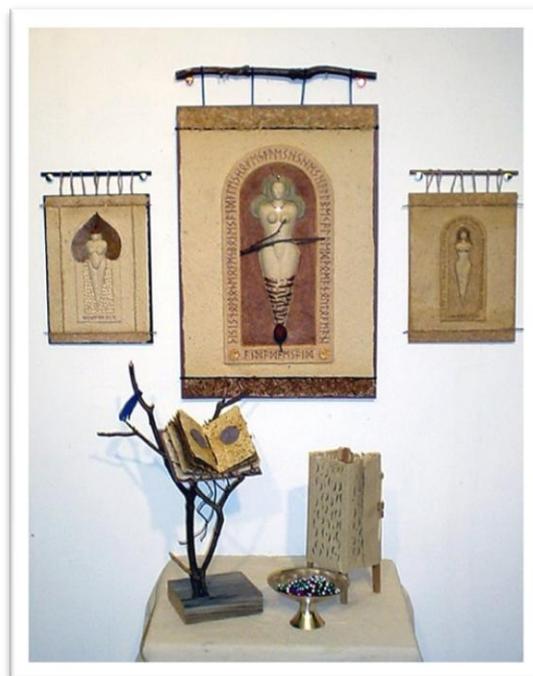
Over the entrance to the enclosed sacred space is a sign that says "Know Thyself". Music is playing - Gregorian chants and "New Age" mixture. You realize you are about to enter no ordinary art show.

A floodlight surrounds an image. A large central figure sided by two smaller images. Beneath the image is an altar of sorts, the shape and texture of rock. On the pedestal is a large vessel sitting between a luminary and sacred book. The book is opened to pages that described the myth of the Goddess, who they are and what they represented and sacrificed. And into the vessel will be the first stone you are required to give up. This offering is necessary before you move deeper into the dwelling.

As you move onto the next stage the music continues to play. The atmosphere is bathed in soft colors and then a second major image beckons for your attention and contemplation. As with the previous image, you the viewer must again part with another stone and mark it accordingly on the card as the second item of importance given up.

You continue through the cave giving up at each image/altar your precious stone and marking it on your card. But the last altar is different. Yes there's an altar with a luminary and bowl for your final stone, but the "sacred book" has blank pages and the large central image is a mirror. Your reflection holding your final offering, the **MOST** important thing you feel you cannot live without.

And with that final offering and when you exit - a sign overhead says - "Thyself you now Know"



And in closing...

The magic of the Shaman's and their cave paintings associated with nature are gone. The mysticism and illumination of Icon paintings and their place in the church are more or less regulated to museums...instead of households. And now with the digital age of game graphics, art schools now claim you don't have to be an artist anymore to go to art school.

We have lost touch with nature, with spirit, magic and even with each other. Speed dating, speed dialing; speed inter-netting has pushed aside good ole conversation, reflection and interaction. It would be interesting to see that interaction take place with the viewers and with each other after they've been through this show.

In the past a tribe supported the Shaman-Artist. The icon painter had his patronage through the church. And the Renaissance painters had the kings and queens to support them.

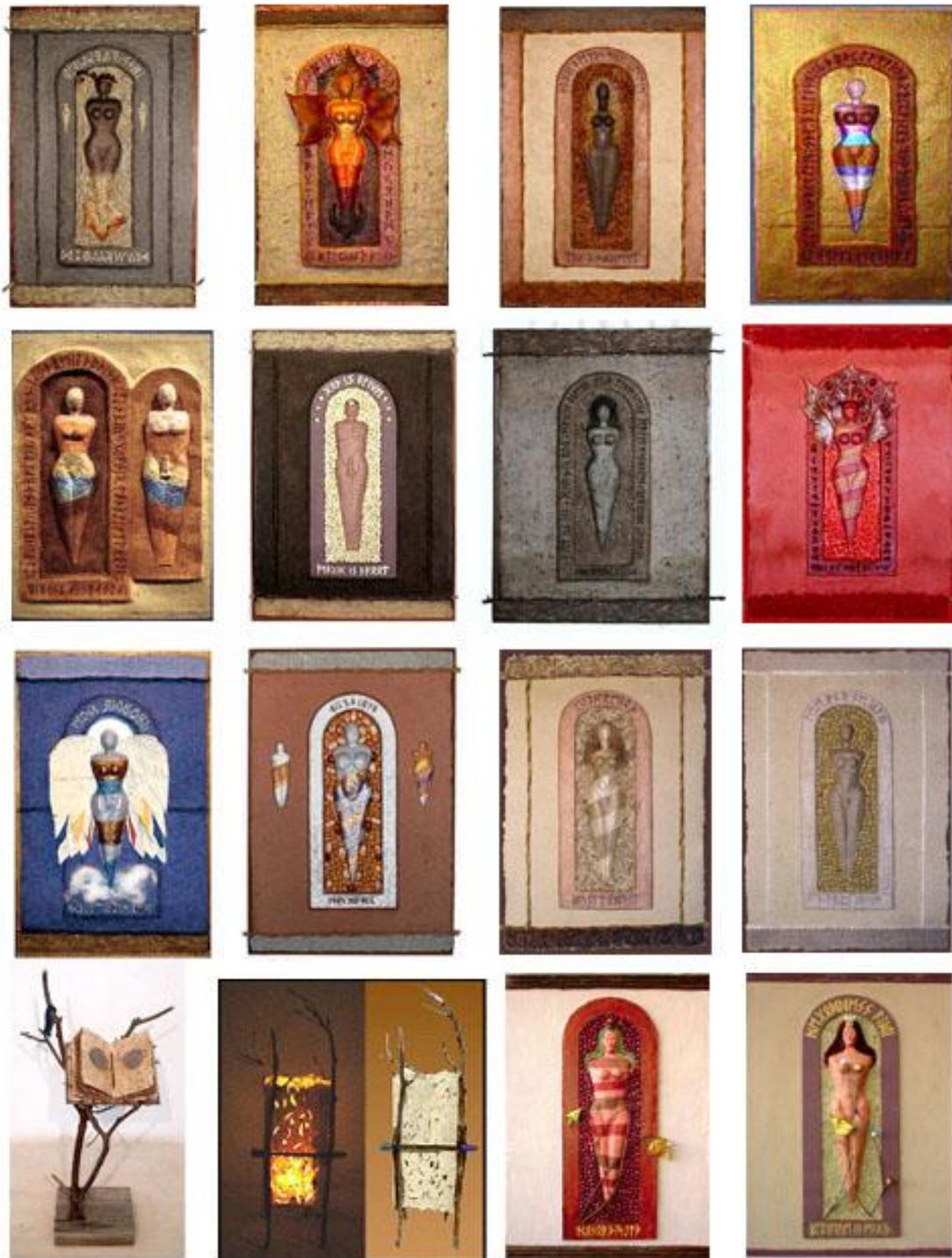
I have no tribe to turn to - but I do hear the drums and music playing. I have no church patronage - but I see illuminated images. And I have no Royal family who can provide financial support - but the viewer would be richer for it. A new en-light-en-ment is needed. We need to "Believe in Magic". Be one with nature that will serve to balance ourselves and our spirit.

If you believe, as I do, that the time is right for a show such as this - just look at the unrest and dissatisfaction people are experiencing. Then I look forward to having you travel with me on this journey. I turn to your help and to your support.

If you would like to help me in any way I would appreciate it. It could be a donation, materials, or space to produce it in. Become a member of a new tribe, follow a new path, believe in magic and if you follow your bliss – the doors will open.

You can e-mail me (ddsrtist@yahoo.com) or call/text with your encouragement at 440-222-8917

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Artwork samples of the figures, spirit book and luminary to be used.

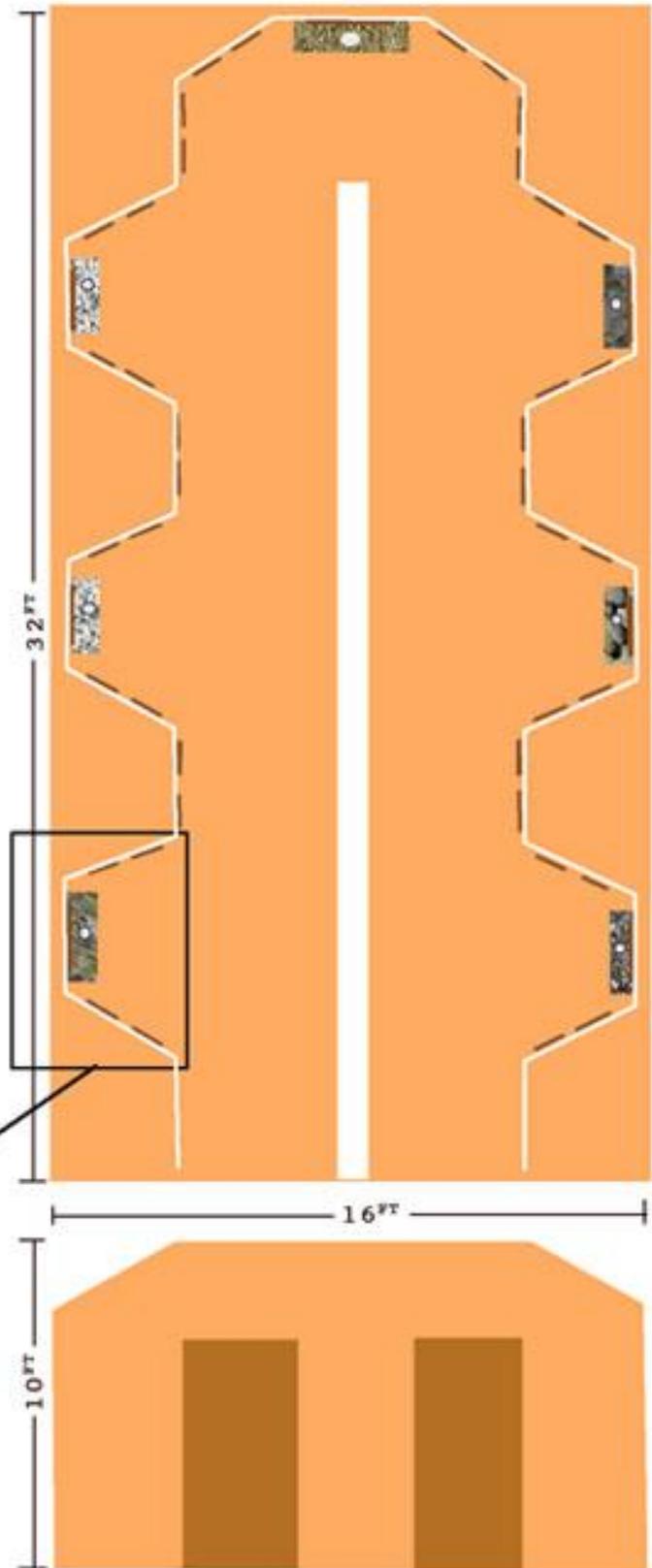
Icons, Myths and Legends Cave Layout

Elements

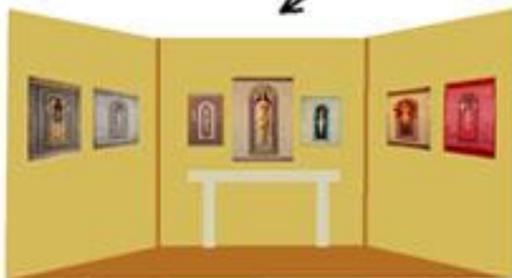
- 6 Large Figures
- 42 - 54 Small Figures
- 7 Luminaries
- 7 Spirit Books
- 7 Offering Bowls
- 7 Shrines/Altars
- 29 Foam Sheets 48" x 96"
- 1 Tarp enclosure
- Numerous stones and rocks

The inside walls will be painted and decorated in the texture of rock.

The support of the tarp will be PVC piping.



Sample Station



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EDUCATION

1970 Cleveland Institute of Art
1970-72 Brigham Young University
1972-74 Santa Barbara Art Institute (BFA)
1975-76 University of Houston

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

1975-76 University of Houston Beginning drawing and painting
1994 Lorain Community Center Drawing Instructor
1994 Lorain Community College Computer Graphic Design
2002 Ivy English Academy ESL Instructor
2003-04 Stone-Metal Press Papermaking Instructor
2007-08 Discovery Point Retirement Village Drawing/Papermaking
2008 Lorain Community College Introduction to Drawing
2009 FAVA Oberlin, OH Introduction to Drawing
2009 Lorain Community College Introduction to Drawing

SHOWS AND EXHIBITION

1976 Cleveland NOVA Invitational
1977 North Dakota Print and Drawing Competition
1978 Cleveland Museum National May Show
1979 Individual Show Lorain Civic Center (Paintings & Prints)
2004 Stone-Metal Press Notes from the Earth - Handmade Paper
2006 Fiber Art Center Amherst, Mass Small Works: Spirits and Shrines
2009 French Creek Visitors Center Portraits of the Joe Girz Project
2009 Lorain Public Library Portraits of the Joe Girz Project
2014 Lorain Community College Images of Self Worth

GALLERY REPRESENTATION

Stone-Metal Press San Antonio, TX
SOCA Gallery Scottsdale, AZ
FAVA Oberlin, Ohio
French Creek Lorain, Ohio

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Artist-In-Residence (Stone-Metal Press)
Artist-In-Residence (Center for Contemporary Art)