

TOM BLOCK: *art & the mystical vision*

WORKS INSPIRED BY MEISTER ECKHART & THE BAAL SHEM TOV

ARTIST TOM BLOCK OF SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND INTERPRETS THE TEACHINGS OF THE GREAT SPIRITUAL MASTERS AND AGE-OLD MYSTICAL SYSTEMS IN A CONTEMPORARY VISUAL LANGUAGE THAT IS BOTH FRESH AND PERSONAL. AS HE PUTS IT,

“My art is involved with spiritual questions—not religious paintings per se, but work that explores humans’ attempt to make sense of this world and our shared struggle to develop and live by a moral code. The ultimate purpose of my work is to introduce the audience to some of the great sages and their world-views, in a manner completely outside of that to which we are accustomed. By providing a visceral, visual entree into these worlds of spirituality, I provide a palatable manner to begin learning about these seemingly antiquated visions. And by linking the actual words of the Masters to my paintings, I offer new pathways to these timeless visions.”

Here are some examples of Tom’s work based on the teachings of Meister Eckhart, the 13th-century Christian mystic, and the Baal Shem Tov, the 18th-century Jewish mystic who founded Hasidism. In essence, both conveyed a similar message, according to Tom: “the differences perceived by humans between cultures, religions, and peoples are a function of a lack of perspective.”

See www.tomblock.com for more of Tom Block’s work and thought.

Upcoming Exhibitions:

Gallery 10, Washington D.C., March 2001

ARC Gallery, Chicago, May 2001

Peace Center and Gallery, Detroit, June-July 2001

Kresge Museum, East Lansing, Mi., Nov. 2001

WILD *heart* JOURNAL



Meister Eckhart

A 14th-century Dominican monk and mystic, Meister Eckhart eschewed the necessity of organized worship, and proposed that man could bypass the church hierarchy and commune directly with the Divine. This point of view had little in common with the heavy-handed doctrine of the medieval Church, and as a result, Eckhart was posthumously declared a heretic in 1329 by Pope John XXII.

This series of paintings captures the intense and spiritual passion of Meister Eckhart’s mysticism. “Working on raw and pitted wood, I have created images that address specific aspects of the Master’s message. Echoes of Christian symbolism—the wood, the reoccurrence of trinities of corresponding images—interact with surprising and unknown forms. By using trash-wood as a support upon which to base the meditations, I have addressed Eckhart’s ultimate conundrum: How can we learn to see God in even the basest of human experience?”

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GOD ENJOYS ITSELF
“God’s own inner
enjoyment is such that
it includes God’s
enjoyment of all
creatures not as
‘creatures,’ but as God.”



THE INACTION OF BEING

“It is God’s nature to be without a nature.”



^^ DELICIOUS TEMPTATION

“The impulse to sin always brings great benefit for someone who is righteous, for the perfection of virtue is born in struggle.”

The Baal-Shem Tov

For the Baal Shem Tov, founder of Hasidism, to dance was to pray. He addressed God not through solemn incantations, but with joyful song. “There are thousands of legends and teaching stories about the Baal Shem Tov, and in this series of paintings I use the ecstasy of color and emotion to capture the Master’s joyous manner of worship, the wonder of movement through God’s world, and the spiritual mystery surrounding the Baal Shem Tov’s life and legends.”



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THE LANGUAGE OF THE BIRDS

“It seemed as if gate after gate sprang open before him, all shadows retreated, all that was murky became clear. The Baal Shem Tov slowly became aware of where he was and that the sun was rising and all kinds of birds were performing their morning song. Wonderfully enough, he soon distinguished individual words and sentences. The whole was a great conversation and everything had a gay and lovely meaning! At last!”



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“THE MASTER DANCES TOO”

One Simhat Torah evening, the Baal Shem himself danced together with his congregation. He took the scroll of the Torah in his hand and danced with it. Then he laid the scroll aside and danced without it. At that moment one of his disciples who was intimately acquainted with his gestures, said to his companions: “Now our Master has laid aside the visible, dimensional teachings and has taken the spiritual teachings unto himself.”