

POLY-PHOBIC GARDENS

(Originally Sum of All Fears)

April 2012

Incubating an Idea

The electricity went off and the heat of the night returned with a vengeance causing my body to become encased in sweat. I kicked off the sheet and finally succumbed to the comfort of sleep, albeit fitfully. Sometime thereafter I was jolted into consciousness when I felt multiple tiny feet running up the back of my leg onto my naked rump. It felt large, very large! In Bangladesh where I lay there are two types of insects that met this criterion, cockroaches that grew to 2-3 inches or, much worse, a crab like spider that often exceeded 4 inches across and had a nasty bite. Terrorized, I grab the pillow and swung at the offending footsteps tracking across my ass and sent it flying. I quickly turn on my bed side lamp to identify and confront this mini terrorist.

Fortunately it was a big, black, ugly, revolting “cocky-roach” trying to find a hiding place. I quickly grabbed a slipper and started swatting at it. My initial whacks were way off target as it zipped, sagged, dodged, darted, and jumped like a dexterous NFL running back. Finally I herded it into a corner, and wacked it to mush. With my heart pounding wildly I warily returned to the bed afraid to fall asleep. It took an eternity to dose off. Ferocious, grotesque spiders and other insects six feet high and larger put me on a mediaeval rack and maliciously tortured me through the night. It was only the early morning cawing of the ubiquitous crows that rescued me from my torment. It was not a fun night.

During the next several weeks I thought about these horrifying images that stilled lurked in recesses of my head and wondered what life would be like if insects were as big as people. The more I dwelled on it the more I realized that all inhabitants of this globe have phobias in some form or another. Could these human fears be transformed in to images and be artistically rendered on canvas? So began more than a year of conceptualizing and planning for my opus “The Sum of All Fears”.

What is the nature of these fears (or phobias as the shrinks call them)? They are clearly psychological in nature; emotions, irrational feelings, or mental constructs that have no physical form or substance. They well up from the inside and consequently cannot be visualized by a second party on the outside unless there is a demonstrable physical reaction to observe. People fear abstract ideas or imaginary concepts such as god, the devil, uncontrollable events, or simply things. The problem presented to this artist was how to visually represent these non-physical concepts. Salvador Dali was a master at representing

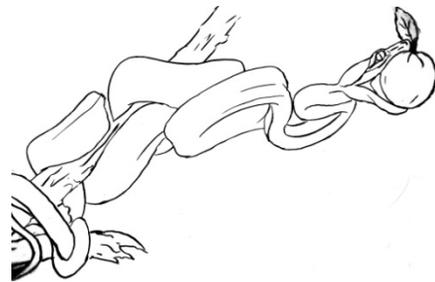
psychological paradigms through the use of symbolism or metaphors. This is the approach that I have taken in planning and implementing this painting.

This blog follows the mental and physical process in which I conceptualized and executed it on canvas. It describes both the thought process and the reasoning behind the imagery as well as the technical problems that had to be faced and overcome. The finished work incorporates elements from multiple mediums and pushes the limits of what is normally regarded as acceptable presentation format for a painting. The process is illustrated visually in the gallery *Catch as Catch Can* while some of the working drawings and completed segments are presented in the special features gallery.

Conceptualization

I wanted this painting to be different not only with regards to its subject matter and imagery but also in its form and structure. I visualize fears to be amorphous in shape with no hard boundaries. I cannot for the life of me perceive them to be rigidly geometric in nature (squares, rectangles, circles or triangles). So, I have chosen to render it in free form. They also, as I perceive my phobias, must have depth and multiple dimensions both in space and time. Unfortunately, it is difficult to represent transient time on a single canvas (unless you have the genius of a Dali and his fluid clocks.) Therefore, this painting includes some sculptural elements as well to give it depth and multiple forms of perspective.

The next issue was to define a setting that best reflected or depicted the notion of a phobia. I thought about this issue for a long time. Then it dawned on me. The Old Testament, which is for the most part accepted by Christians, Jews, and Muslims, conceives a Garden of Eden where everybody ran around stark naked and life was hunky-dory. This hunky-doryness was then compromised by the appearance of the first fears, ophidiophobia. Yikes!!!! Snaaaakes!!!! Talking ones offering apples no less!



I deduced from this tale that the habitat must have been warm to hot (Probably muggy too.) I can think of no warmer, scarier place than a tropical jungle or rainforests situated throughout the equatorial zone. Believe me I have been in many and a couple of times got the crap scared out of me. (If you have ever had a howler monkey, concealed in the foliage just a few feet above your head, suddenly let our with a ear piercing roar you know what I mean.)To make it more frightening I imagined that the humans were small enough that they could walk on the forest leaves and had to deal with insect and reptiles multiple times their size. I could even include Eve and Adam! The only glitch in this concept is that apples generally do not grow in tropical rainforest. Perhaps we can pretend that they were imported on an ark.

So the basic elements of this painting were to include:

1. A free form shape with no straight edges.
2. 3 dimensional elements including some sculptural peaces both positive and negative.
3. The human figures in the painting are to be au natural representing gymnophobia, the fear of being naked. (The only exception was the representation of zeusophobia and its practicing disciples of any denomination. I could not conceive of them being seen without their cloths on).

Creating a Free Form Canvas

How do we go about creating a free form canvas? First of all you need to make a free form stretcher designed specifically to support the anticipated sculptural elements that are to be included. This had to be cut from a .75 inch plywood. Since the largest size offered by Home Depot or Lowes was 4' X 8' I needed 2 to create a stretcher 6' high X 8' long which is the highest that I can fit in my vertically challenged studio. This size objective required me to splice a 2' wide panel to a 4' wide panel using groves, dowels, and glue with the assistance of my skinny 14 year old grandson in need of money.



That done the next step was to draw the outside shape of the canvas per preliminary designs and cut it out using a jigsaw. These edges then had to be sanded and smooth out which was a good task to assign to the “kid” since I tended to find it boring. Once cut out, this blank had to be put on 2 easels (which were eventually replaced by a built in 16 foot wide contraption that I permanently attached to the studio wall). This was an arduous

task as the “kid” had not spent too much time in the weight training room. The blank was then covered by a white paper on which we develop the preliminary composition in charcoal and ink. We did this 3 times before settling on the basic shape. (The composition as shown here was modified drastically over the course of the project).

The next step was to determine the design, type, size and location of the sculptural elements that were to be included in the composition to insure that there was wood behind them so that they had a solid base of support. Once those locations were determined the next step was to design the lattice structure for the stretcher (solid .75 inch plywood is quite heavy) and start cutting out the empty spaces. This was relatively easy along the edges but once we got towards the middle the job I had to be



turned it over to Christopher who was thin enough to fit into the cut outs closest to the center. When done we put the finished stretcher back on to the easels and recorded our progress as shown below. Amazing, I even got a smile out of Chris.

Stretching canvas on a free form stretcher is a complex task requiring at least 2 persons. The canvas itself must be un-primed, of medium weight, and flexible enough to fit around curved edges. It needed to be cut at least 6 inches wider than the stretcher on all sides so that you had plenty of room to adjust and staple it on the back of the stretcher rather than on the side to insure a smooth edge. (There are not too many frame makers that can accommodate a free form painting, so the edge is the frame.) There were times when the canvas had to be slit down to the bottom edge of the stretcher to fit around a sharp inner curve. One has to be careful to staple across the vertex of the slit to keep the canvas from tearing into the viewable edge as illustrated to the left.

The next step in the preparation of the canvas introduce the 3D elements. There are 2 ways 3D dimensionality to a flat plane. Assuming the surface of the canvas equals zero you can both a positive or negative (+ or -) dimension positive 3D element will project out from the the canvas towards the viewer whereas the negative element projects behind the surface the entrance to a cave. For this painting I incorporated both positive and negative sculptural elements. However, before I could do that I had to develop the basic themes of the composition and a more precise layout.



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Characterization of Phobias

For the reasons indicated above, I adopted the Garden of Eden as the location for my painting. Referring to the Old Testament, this garden was a place of peace and happiness where all animal species lived in harmony with each other. Although I can conceive of humans and other herbivores subsisting on a vegetarian diet, I wonder what the lions, tigers, jaguars, cheetahs and their carnivorous brethren eat if they were good buddies with the lambs, lamas, and lumbering wildebeest. Then, as the story goes, everything was transformed when some evil, slithering snake offered up a forbidden apple, (The fruit, not the computer).

This good book also indicated that before heinous event, everybody pranced around in their birthday suites procreating as fast as they could. (Since it is claimed that they lived to be well over 800 years old I guess I can say that they became experts in the mechanism of this process and enjoyed life very much (in contrast to the dictates of the self-appointed

good people of today). Based on this tidbit of information, I must assume that this change in inter fauna relationships led to the rapid development of a scary eat each other to survive environment. In such a place fears and phobias would most likely run amuck up and down the food chain. In this new reality the naked Homo Sapiens felt most vulnerable and consequently developed phobias of every genuine or imagined threat ranging from germs to gremlins. The issue was how to represent them visually in a painting.

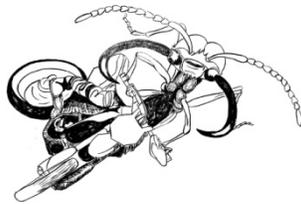
I have a good friend that lives in fear of all bugs, particularly spiders, bees, cockroaches, and just about anything with six or more legs, wings, or has vampire tendencies. Her myrmecophobia became particularly acute after having been molested by a nest of red ones in Florida whose sting burned like blue blazes. You guessed it. Ants!

It appears that these critters have a stratified society, queens, attendants, workers, and of course army guys with specialized mandibles designed to bite. They will fiercely attack insects and animals much bigger than themselves using tactics that any good general would be proud of. Think about it. These little buggers are the perfect metaphors for conquering armies pillaging and molesting subjugated populations. Therefore I have adopted army ants as an allegory for a host of phobias associated with armies including virginitiphobia, necrophobia, ballistophobia, contreltophobia, harpaxophobia, hoplophobia, and of course traumatophobia.

These phobias would be represented in the painting by a women being menaced by a squad of army ants in the military getups, fearing for her chastity or worse as do many females in war torn countries around the world. Ants can also be marauders moving in mass at high speeds through the jungle attacking any living thing in their path.



This behavior is represented by ants driving motor cycles over the tree limbs forcing people to jump into the unknown to save their lives. Picture this; giant ants riding Harleys at breakneck speeds towards you on a narrow tree limb. I assure you that you will overcome your alto and basi phobias and jump into the abyss rather than be run over by these demons. Fortunately, even army ants have their enemies and are terrified of tamanduas who find them quite tasty.



I must confess I never knew that some people have orinthophobia particularly someone as close to me as my daughter. She and the grand kids were visiting one summer. It was a relatively cool day so we left the sliding door to the deck open as we sat around the dining room table jawing. In flies this little bird no more than 4 inches long. My daughter lets out with a blood curdling scream and went absolutely berserk. "A bird!!! Get it out of here. Agggggh! She went prancing around the room like she had reds ant is her drawers trying to avoid an equally horrified bird trying desperately

to find the exit. "It's only a bird." I yelled as she flew up the stairs with the panicked fowl following in close pursuit. Clearly it was afflicted by anthropophobia and was trying to rid itself of this 2 legged blond creature. At the top of the stairs they went in different directions, my daughter into one bathroom with the door slammed loudly behind her, and the bird into the other trying to get through the invisible barrier called a window where I was able to trap it with my hands. When I released it outside, I do not recall ever seeing such a tiny bird fly so fast. It also took a lot of convincing to get that girl out of the toilet. And, by the way, she is also deathly afraid of spiders and hence the concept of her jumping into the spider web was delicious.



Can you imagine how petrified you would be if you ran into a spider with eight eyes that was taller and much wider than you. Your arachnophobia would have you shivering in your skivvies. How about vampire bats the size of elephants? Now that would constitute a very bad case of chiroptophobia. Visualize being kissed on your tender feet by a human sized frog with his long slimy tongue. I would think that your homichlophobic instincts would have you gagging at the thought of it. Believe it or not some people suffer from anthropophobia and imagine gruesome faces in the flowers that most people regard as beautiful. Throw some weirdly shaped bugs into the picture and the etomophobic personalities would be tip toeing through the tulips as swiftly as there two legs can carry them.

Most humans are Thanalophobic even if they choose martyrdom. In addition, thanks to the ever persistent ecclesiastics, the great majority of humankind is Stygiophobic and desperately will try to avoid both fates. Now, suppose human sized flying insects were summoned by the devil deity to go forth and seize the horrid insect bashing homo sapiens and cast them into the fires of hell. You certainly would be quaking in your britches trying to avoid being snatched by these sinister marauders and probably soiling your garments if you were caught.



Imagine! Imagine if the Old Testament was written by women or even more deliciously by a congregation of priestess whom history tells us held considerable sway during the times of the Pharaohs, Sumerians, Babylonians, and Assyrians. I think the tales would be significantly different. The account of Adam and Eve for, example might go like this: God (gender neutral) first created Eve to give birth to humanity. Since there was no guy around to perpetuate the species this deity created Adam from one of Eve's extra ribs. It took a while for the two to learn the ropes but in the end they were able to propagate and populate the garden. They also brought order to the multitude of inhabitants including the

vegetarian lions, tigers, and other hungry carnivores. Then that nasty serpent slither in and tapped Adam on the rump. “Hissss. Hey fella. Ya want something to turn ya on. I have this here forbidden fruit for you. It tastes really good”. At first Adam told him to get lost. But



the sly one persisted. “Hey Adam. This fruit has aphrodisiac properties. It will raise your libido.” After siring multiple hundreds of kids Adam was wearing out so he took a bite. That’s when the garden went to perdition. Now envision how the gynophobic ecclesiastics would react if this feminist view of human creation were the accepted norm. Their Hereiophobia will have steam blowing out of their ears.

Each of these vignettes provides metaphysical themes that can be visualized in the mind and replicated on the canvas via the creative hand. They are the initial concepts around which the composition is structured. As it began to take shape and form I introduced additional complementary themes and visual effects to add intrigue and humor to the finished product.

Method to My Madness

After taking a considerable time visualizing imagery predicated on these themes and generating more than 50 conceptual drawing, I was able to transform this nebulous set of thoughts into a much more defined thematic whole. This process was not easy. There are no mathematical models for designing an allegorical arrangement. Some artist and writers have tried to come up with some principals for organizing a painting such as the rule of thirds, the Greek concept of ideal proportions, or balance and counter balance, etc. However, I think Salvador Dali had it right in his 50 Secrets of Magic Craftsmanship. He wrote, “it’s the eye, the artist’s eye.”

In order for me, the artist, to develop a satisfying composition I needed to be able to move things around to see “what works” and what does not. It is purely an intuitive process. Consequently, I like to conceive and draw the various characters or scenes on paper, scan them, put them into the computer, and then print them out at whatever scale I need to fit the composition. It must be remembered, however, that before a painting is declared “done” it remains an out of focus concept that is subject to constant change as the artist tries to translate the vague and ever-evolving ideas in his or her brain into tangible images that can be rendered on canvas. Each new element added to a painting creates the need to reevaluate the harmony of the overall composition. Invariably the finished piece will have changed considerably from the original conceptualization.

At this point one might ask where I got the source imagery for depicting the different types of leaves, flora, rainforest imagery, insects, reptiles, humans, and other fauna. First of all

my other profession has allowed me to travel all over the tropical world and I have been fortunate to have visited rain forests in Malaysia, Uganda, Madagascar, Philippines, Panama, Guatemala, Micronesia, and Sri Lanka. Consequently, I have collected thousands of photographs of insects, animals, and other weird things from these travels as well as from the internet which I use as the models for creating my creatures. I also have even more human pose files that I have bought, shot myself, or have developed from more than 25 years of weekly life drawing practice secessions which allows me to draw human figures in motion without much handwringing. For the foreground leaves and flowers, which require far more detail, I relied almost exclusively on my photography from Longwood Gardens, in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania which is located just 20 minutes from my house. It contains and an extraordinary collection of tropical plants from around the world. By the time the painting was finished this source provided approximately 90% of the entire flora included in the painting.

Rendering the 3D Elements

There were 3 themes that I wanted to represent in three dimensions. These were Arithrophobia, Zeusophobia and its antipode Stygiophobia, and Ophidiophobia.

Arithrophobia is the fear of spiders which is very common around the world. The general modus operandi of this creature is to use a web to entrap it's pray so that he cannot escape and then inject it with paralyzing venom that keeps it alive so that the spider can sup on fresh meat whenever it was hungry. I wanted to represent someone with ornithophobia (the fear of birds) being so panicked by a hummingbird chasing her that she jumps into the web of a gigantic Black Widow spider waiting patiently for a dinner guest. The idea was to use a negative



sculpture to create a human sized web stretched between leaves in a bush at the plain of the canvas while having the spider hovering a half inch behind it to give it real depth. The jumping lady would be a positive sculpture extending out over the web.

Thanalophobia (the fear of death or dying) is frequently intertwined with Zeusophobia (the fear of god), Stygiophobia (the fear of hell), and Uranophobia (the fear of heaven). Most religions view god as omniscient (all knowing), omnipresent (everywhere) omnipotent (all powerful) and omnibenevolent (all good) among others. Perhaps I am imagining things but are not some of these “omni’s” logically antithetical concepts that essentially cancel each other out? For example, if he was all good how could he be able to conceive and create the concept of evil? Moreover, the god that is described in the Old Testament is frequently depicted as being angry, revengeful, and tyrannical, even trying to force a father to kill his own son. It is hard for me to conceive that an omnibenevolent being can display these very

negative human attributes. He even turned some couple into salt! My lord isn't that a capital crime? To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln: "Each of our armies asks the same god to give them victory in battle. How can that be?" The only way it could happen is to insure that nobody remained alive on the battlefield to be declared the winner.

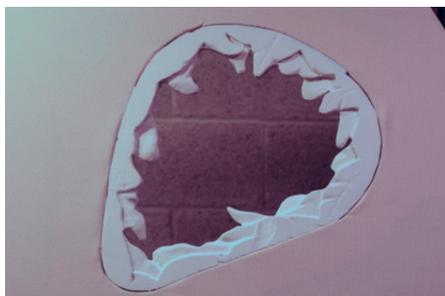


Given these contradictions, the deity in this painting will be depicted as a despotic, all powerful, anthropomorphic being whose carnivorous mouth represents both death and the entrance to the fires of hell. Most, if not all, major religious institutions employ the "you're going to burn in hell" gambit to get their disciples to follow the established dogma that will supposedly lead you in the opposite direction. The robed cleric to be included in the painting will represent the main religions entreating their congregations of "praying" mantises to abide by their doctrine or theological dictates aka. "Follow my orders." or you will suffer the eternal tortures of a fiery hell if you do not.

Finally ophidiophobias beware, this painting will include lots of snakes rendered both in 2 and 3 dimensional form. Why? Number one, they play a prominent role in the historiography and mythology of the Garden of Eden. Number two, they can be some of the most beautifully colored creatures in the jungle and three, they, particularly the venomous ones, scare the hell out of most people even including the herpetologist who handle them.

Technical Issues

The main issue was how to represent these various 3D themes in the composition and render them on the canvas. The location of the envisioned web had to be pre-planned when cutting the stretcher. The section that was cut out was then used to carve the opening in the leaves for the web. After the canvas was stretched the center of the cutout was punctured with an exacto knife and the canvas was cut back to the edges of the opening where the resulting strips were stapled to the back of the stretcher. Once this and the opening for the entrance to hell were completed the canvas was then painted with gesso. A stencil of the leaf pattern was then made to guide the carving of the web opening in the leaves.



The next issue was to learn how to carve the wood to give me the opening that I needed. I had never carved wood to create both a negative and positive 3D sculpture before. I did, however, have experience sculpting in clay, which is primarily an additive process, so I simply reversed the thought process and tried to figure out what had to be removed to meet my objective. The first part, cutting the interior edge pattern was

relatively easy and was accomplished using a small round bladed jigsaw. I then purchased a wood chiseling set to cut the general shape of the leaves and layered them in a 3 D effect. Next I used a small Dremel grinder with a variety of bits to add detail and smooth everything out. The leaves were then painted in the general colors that they would be in the final painting.

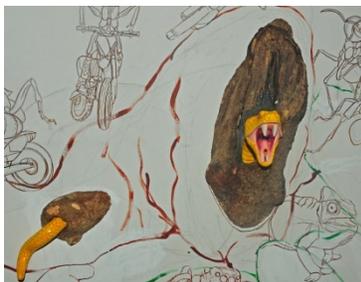
With this done, small holes directed towards the center of the opening were drilled through the edge of the insert and light fishing line was fed through and tied to a small ring of the same material to form the axis of the vertical strings of the web. Additional rings were woven through these radii to complete the web. The intersection between the vertical and lateral threads was fixed in place using superglue. Finally the image of the spider was painted on a separate heavy weight canvas and stapled to the back of the stretcher. The crack between the insert and the canvas was sealed with spackling past and sanded smooth when it was dry.

With regards to creating the 3 D imagery of the evil deity, the process involved 3 steps,

1. carving a negative animalist maw through the canvas to represent the entrance to Hades similar in technique used to make the spider web,
2. carving a projecting forehead, eyebrows, and a nose with a slimy venomous snake slithering through its nostrils from a second piece of wood and then fixed to the top lip of the mouth with 2 screws and glue to provide a solid foundation for,
3. adding leaves, twigs, snakes, insects using an acrylic modeling medium to give them 3 D characteristics.



With regards to the 3 D snakes, it turned out they were relatively easy to carve. I planned on carving a yellow eyelash viper emerging from a hole in a tree branch that comprised the third sculptural element in this composition. To accomplish this objective I needed a good hole in a tree to attach to the canvas. So, at least 6 months before starting all of this stuff I spent 4 or 5 days searching for a naturally hollowed hole in a stump of a broken tree branch in the forest behind my house. (You guessed it. I do not live in a city.) I finally found a usable one in a thicket of briars which required me to whip out my old machete and hack a path into my objective. I was able to cut off a truncated limb containing the desired hole (leaving the tree still growing) and transport it back to the house to



dry for several months. When ready it was cut back to the size I needed and voila I had a tree hole in my canvas.

Now I needed a snake's head to emerge from it. Having a mild ophidiophobia myself I did not know how the head of an eyelash viper was structured. Fortunately, the internet was full of pictures of these snakes from every angle. Using them as a guide I was able to mold a dynamic snake's head with a gaping mouth in clay and when satisfied I used it as a model to carve the final rendition in wood. Having gained experience carving the leaves and the evil deity I had a better idea of how to go about carving a fully 3 dimensional snake's head. I also carved a tail entering a knot that I also cut from the same tree. The net effect is that the snake appears to be slinking through a hollow section of a tree branch with the fearsome head immersing from its end.



When carving the orinthophobic leaping lady I wanted this characterization to be one of the three principal focuses of the painting. My objective was to show her trying to escape bird's attack by unknowingly jumping into the spiders nest. The best way to accomplish this objective was to create a female figure with her extended leg sticking out over the web. This goal meant that I would have to upgrade my wood carving skills a couple of notches. It did not help that I selected the wrong type of wood (a 2" X6" piece of grainy pine) for the job.

As with the snake, I started with a photograph of the pose that I wanted and created a half relief model in clay attached to a flat board. I then cut the basic shape of the figure out of the wood using my band saw and after 6 weeks of whittling, grinding, sanding, swearing, repairing, and painting I had a reasonable leaping lady. After painting her as realistically as possible I then temporarily attached her to the painting in the designated place using wood screws as a reference point for developing the remaining composition.



Developing the Initial Layout

This painting was conceived to be a highly complex composition with different lines of sight, a variety of perspectives and scales, more than 100 characters or creatures, and a complex jungle background. The placement of each character in a given place affected the position of every other character in the overall layout of the painting. What I wanted to minimize as much as possible was the need to white out and redo sections of the painting that did not work in terms of the whole. Therefore I established a methodology in which I placed the initial human, animal, and insect organisms in the composition before adding

any color or background. This tactic allowed me to see the interrelationships between the different characters before applying any paint thus making it easier to change as needed.

First and foremost I had to develop more than 50 line drawings in ink of the characters or set of interacting creatures that were to be inserted into the layout. These were then photographed and put into a computer file for editing and resizing to fit within the perspective of the painting at the insertion point. The drawings were then taped on to the canvas in a story book fashion and moved around to achieve the approximate composition that I was aiming at. It was clear from this initial effort that I would need to:

1. **Modify the jungle background to accommodate and emphasize the main characters and,**
2. **Add some more characters of different sizes to create more depth in the painting.**

Once I had a layout that I was happy with I was then faced with the problem of rendering the outlines of the images on the canvas. To save time and make things easier to accurately transcribe the drawings, I reprinted them at the appropriate scale and cut out a stencil by tracing the principle lines of each cartoon. These templates were then taped



onto their designated location and the lines were drawn onto the canvas using transparent brown fluid flow acrylic paint. Using these outlines as a reference, I then added the details by freehand. Once all of the characters were in place I could then re-modify the background jungle to accentuate the main characters.

I realized after reviewing this layout that the initial rendering of the evil deity did not generate the power and supremacy over the painting that I was looking for. So I re-imagined it as flamboyantly evil devil with a hideous face immersing from the underside of a crown bromeliad that was tightly encased in a tangle of leaves, vines and rotting vegetation. His open snarling maw became the metaphoric entrance to the torments of hell. It is this imagery that so many religious institutions use to scare their flocks into following accepted dogma. I also imagined that any stereotype devil worth his modus operandi must breathe at minimum smoke and fire. After all less theologically anointed dragons have that very same capability.



So I wanted to add 3 dimensional hot red and yellow flames billowing out from the center of his oral cavity. The question was how? I had 3 mediums that I could use to construct a 3 D object on a canvas, wood, modeling gel, and plastic wood. Wood would require far too much effort for what it was worth. I used modeling gel mixed with acrylic paint to render the cascading leaves in 3D but the material was too viscous to use for modeling the flames. After some experimentation the only real solution for making the fire was to use plastic wood. This material stuck firmly to the original wood that was used to carve the mouth in the first place. More importantly, it did not adhere to the aluminum plate covering the opening behind it. Just as important it was sufficiently dense that it could be molded and shaped with clay modeling tools. To make it even more terrifying I planned to place a 3X magnifying mirror behind the opening in the throat so that any observer who looked directly into the inferno will see their enlarged reflection looking back at them.

The photograph to the right shows the initial layout drawings and 3D elements that had been completed as of March 2013.

April 1-July 2013

To make this painting come alive, one needed to add color of every pigment, hue, tint, tone, or shade. I tend to paint in layers, first covering the whole canvas with the foundation colors of the principle objects in the painting and then adding a second, third, or additional layers of detail as required. However, in this particular case I planned on first finishing the background jungle and critters in detail so as to accentuate the menacing and threatening nature of the environment that spawns people's fears. This way I could better judge how to render the emotions and body language of the human figures. It also allowed me to better control the style in which the figures were rendered, the vividness and clarity of the colors that were used, and the perception of relative depth between them and the background rainforest. Consequently these human elements would be left for last.

I began by mixing a palette comprised of 16-20 variations of greens and other jungle colors ranging from nearly black to a very light yellow or blue greens. I then painted in the base colors of all the leaves that dominated the foreground or provided platforms for the character groups. By doing these elements first I was able to more accurately estimate the scale that was needed to render the background elements in a manner that would give me the sense of depth that I was looking for. Once I had the farthest elements roughed in it was relatively easy to approximate the scales of the intervening layers. This method allowed me to essentially create a 3 D effect without the need to wear specialized glasses.



Once I finished painting in these base colors I was able to identify a

number of incongruities in the composition that I could not live with. These included a way too large snake and snarling lizard that dominated thematically more important elements, the placement of some characters that simply did not fit into the backdrop, and background figures that simply were too large for the applicable perspective. Fortunately I was still at a point in the painting where it was relatively easy to modify the composition. You simply whited out the offending area and redrew the characters that you wanted. For example the offending python became a large scorpion on a leaf scaring the do-do out of an unsuspecting tree traveler.

Up to this point I had not developed the devil face beyond the initial sculptural form. It needed character, color, and expression. Also the painted 3 D elements had to blend into the pictorial representations on the surrounding flat canvas. To accomplish these objectives I first had to blend the rough edges of the hardened acrylic into the flat canvas using a grinding tool and sand paper. The next step was to apply a thick coat of heavy white acrylic to fill in the numerous voids created by the tendency of the modeling gel to stick to the pallet knife. It also allowed you to create more vivid colors. After these preparations the face was ready for the first coat of paint as shown above.

With the 3 dimensional elements roughed in or semi completed it was time to focus on painting in the details of the background rainforest. This allowed me to establish a reference point for scaling foreground elements to create visually copacetic perspective. For example, I did the details of the waterfall and stream first so that I could estimate the size of the elements in the forest canopy to create the illusion that the foreground figures were jumping in to a very deep gorge.

After these details were developed and all of the changes in the background were made, it was time to rough in the main forest creatures. By “rough in” I mean putting in the main colors and sufficient detail to give the creatures some semblance of life without getting involved with the finishing nitty-gritty. That would come once I had every inch of the canvas covered in color and could see the composition as a whole. Again there were good reasons for taking this approach. First of all most acrylic paints are transparent as they come out of the tube. By putting a foundation of paint over the whole canvas you can get a better feel of where you need to build up layers to create the pure vibrant colors that distinguish my paintings. Once you had the overall color harmony that you felt comfortable with then you can more easily paint in the distinguishing details.

For example in the image to the right I have put in the base colors of the menacing flowers with some details showing the faces and some of the more distinguishing markings on the petals. I have also put in the foundation colors for the humming bird



chasing the jumping figure. All of these colors are relatively dull or flat and in some places the foundation drawings filter through. These colors will have to be built up with thin layers of paint until they become more opaque and at the same time more translucent. The details would be rendered after I was satisfied that I had the color quality that I was looking for.

At least that was the way that I started out. I roughed out the cut worm eating away at the leaf perch of our anthophobic gal, the blue tree crab (which are really tasty when steamed), and the black/purple tarantula menacing our tree dweller. Then I came to the red ants. These were particularly intricate creatures wearing military gear and armaments. Consequently they required immediate detailing just to legibly render them on the canvas. Particularly difficult was the depiction of the AK 47s carried by a number of them which, though simple in design and construction, required the use of 0, 00, and 000 round brushes to render.

This brings me to one of my pet peeves in art. Why do most manufactures insist on making these size brushes with a short handle? Do not they understand that short handled zero or smaller brushes tend to transfer the natural shake of the hand to the tip of the brush thus making it very difficult to control when painting precise lines. When you use one with a long handle you can grip it farther back on the shaft near the brush's center of balance which allows you to create equilibrium between the two ends. The net effect is that it gives you far better control of the brush tip and accordingly allows you to paint with more elegant strokes. It also allows you to work much faster. Since my canvas is 6 X 8 feet, time is at a premium.

Fortunately, an artist friend took me to Dick Blick's art emporium in Allentown Pa. where I found long handled Escoda Mondernist rounds with 0, 00, and 000 size tips. I was in seventh heaven. With these treasures in my position I had to put them into action. The army ants were the first subjects that warranted their use. I left the ants themselves semi finished but rendered the AK47s complete. And, I was able to do it faster because I did not have to touch up raggedy lines. Cool! Maybe if I could finish off each creature in one operation I could get the painting done faster.

So, I changed my strategy. I decided to complete the bottom third of the canvas before moving on to the middle and upper sections. Why? I am a rather tall guy over 6'5" and trying to paint the bottom portion of a 6 foot high canvas was a pain in the royal back. To do it multiple times was not appealing. I was able build and adjustable easel in the section of my studio that did not have drop ceilings giving me 8 feet of wiggle room. I could raise the bottom of the canvas approximately 2 feet above the floor with the top nearly touching the ceiling. I procured a low well padded chair and went to work starting with the motorcycle ants. This was intense highly focused work requiring an average of 2-3 days to

paint each one but I was quite please with the results. In short order I was able to finish 6 more creatures within a week.

From that point I worked steadily until the beginning of July. During this period I manage to render all of the background vegetation and principal creatures along the base of the painting, rough in the jungle background and most of the foreground leaves, and isolate the main human and other critters scattered through the whole of the composition as shown below.



July 1 - October 1, 2013, Detailing

Unfortunately, or fortunately as the case may be, I was contracted to carry out a 3 month port project which generated sufficient funds for me to devote considerably more time to this painting. Just as I resumed my labors my honey one evening invited me to watch a Netflix movie so we sat down to go through the titles. To my surprise and chagrin we landed on a title called “Sum of All Fears” based on a novel by some guy name Clinsy, Clatsey, Cloney? It was hard to read so I got closer. Oh, Clancy who ever that may be. Nertz?.

This presented a problem. This title was already copywrited by some apparently well known writer. And, there was actually a movie with the same moniker. Clearly I was going to have to change my title. The question was; Too what? A number of alternatives ran through my mind. ‘Sum of all Cocky Roaches.’ Nah. ‘Summation of all Phobias.’ Nope. ‘The Garden of All Fears.’ Too harsh. ‘The Garden of Phobic Delights.’ Not Quite. I could not come up with something that had just the right connotation. So I consulted with my guru, Linda, who pondered upon it over night. Magically in the morning she emailed me a title that seemed to fit nicely. ‘Poly-phobic Gardens.’ It had a nice ring to it. The term poly means multiple or many phobias which was what it was all about while Gardens suggest the Garden of Eden especially with the temptation of Eve and Adam being the center piece of the composition. So! From now on my painting will be called ‘Poly-phobic Gardens’.

Other than name, the intended composition did not change very much during this period. I was able to paint steadily from the end of August to October and made considerable progress. Most of that involved rendering the plants and background in minute detail along the lower half of the canvas and then adding in the animal and insect personalities once it was done. The reason for completing this detailing first is that the background tends to affect the way I colored or shaded the beasts, bugs and humans. For example, many of the flying creatures have semi-transparent or translucent wings which essentially echo some of the colors and shapes in the background. The beetles also often had smooth, glossy exoskeletons that reflected their surroundings. I needed to know what the surrounding environs looked like to convincingly reflect it on a shiny surface.

This work included five clusters of creatures including the army and motorcycle ants along the main tree branch, the crocodiles, snakes, frogs, and gecko cluster in the lower right corner, the bat, spider and butterfly groups in the bottom center, the entomophobic huddle on the broad leaf in the lower left and the reptilian infested stream below. The ants, as indicated above, were a metaphor for invading armies and are depicted harassing a young maiden giving rise to all sorts of fears and phobias including, Agra, Contrelto, Virginiti, Hoplo, Ballisto, and ultimately Necrophobia. This scene alludes to a number of similar situations existing in various parts of the world today.



The motorcycle ants have a different and special meaning to this artist. The ant’s 3 motorcycles are designated X for bad, XX for badder, and XXX for baddest. They imitate the human denizens of the road on their Harleys roaring up and down our streets trying to look tough and formidable. I must admit that having experienced the lost of one cousin, another cousin-in-law maimed for life, and witnessing 2 other deadly accidents on these heinous contraptions, I have a bad case of Motorcyclephobia. Thus you find my figure on

the end of the branch where the motorcycles roam running like hell. Although I do not have Hydrophobia like those jumping into water below, my Herpetophobia becomes quite acute when I come face to face with the gaping, toothy jaws of the alligators who call the stream home. In this situation my objective was to run



where no bikers could go without risking becoming alligator poop.



With regards to the action in the lower right hand corner, I wanted to represent a common issue throughout the world. I have a friend in Bangladesh who works in a mid-level management position in the government bureaucracy

who was always complaining to me about being harassed and threatened by crocodiles, i.e. corrupt politicians on the take or political appointees who are senior to him and are looking to get kickbacks from some of the projects that he managed. This metaphor in essence applies to corruption in any government, business, or social system as well as to the intense pressure of competition in the market place. In the sense of this painting, the crocodiles leaping from a giant Raiffesia flower represent the various manifestations of these parasitic social or business practices in our society. You have to be on the ball if you want to survive.

A what? The Raiffesia flower is the largest flower in the world and is found on the islands of Borneo and Sumatra primarily in Malaysia. It can grow as large as 3 feet across and weight up to 15 pounds. You will smell it before you see it. What does it smell like? Let's say we take a very old elephant let it croak in a very wet, hot jungle environment. Wait a week or two and try to get near it without a clothespin on your nose or a gas mask to cover both your breathing apparatus. This putrefying concoction replicates its odor quite well. From an allegorical point of view it represents a rotting social core from which these retched crocodiles emanate.



The other images that were completed represent a variety of situations that tend to heighten individuals' phobias. For example, a Scopophobic lady cringes on the leaf under the stares of snakes, frogs and even a gecko. Close by a group of jungle inhabitants suffering from a combination of Arachno and Chiroptophobia hide between two leaves

devouring the herbi and omnivores in the garden giving spontaneous birth to all of our phobias. Adam apparently cannot win. Either from the feminist viewpoint or from that of the conservative male ecclesiastics of the far right, poor Adam is the fall guy. Ces't la vie.

Behind the Ophidiophobic Adam, we find a leaf housing a congregation of Hamartophobic praying mantis being sermonized by a Hereiophobic cleric trying desperately to strengthen the Theo and Hadeophobic predisposition of his flock. Prayer books in hand, the mantis attentively absorb the dogma that will keep them from the snares of the devil. Behind the man of the cloth a not so praying mantis mocks the message as she in fact in real life is a scientist steeped in logic and the scientific method. Flying around above their heads the devil's disciples are collecting and transporting miscreant humans and dropping them into the maw of the devil and eternal damnation. This malevolent entity emerges from the tangle of a crown bromeliad that I had observed high in a banyan tree in a jungle park in Uganda. It provided the perfect environment to house an ill defined ephemeral being that was created in the ingenious minds of the ancient profits.

To make things more interesting I added a reference to our overwhelming national fright, Talibanophobia. In modern times man (gender neutral) has developed new phobias that can be metaphors for age old fears that have transcended the centuries. For example the ancient fear of the Mongolian hordes charging with their swords glittering in the sun out of Central Asia can be evoked by our current dread of their Taliban brethren. Ever since the nightmares of Bush the younger became public policy, individuals in beards, turbans, and sunglasses became the most terrifying bogeymen in our national psychic.

Adopting a stratagem from our national sport (a football player falling in love with a virtual girlfriend) these devious beings hide behind their self created digital damsel "Tali-Sally", a belly dancer of the clan Mantodea who uses her six legs, tantalizing bejeweled bust, and intensely colored feathers to mesmerize and titillate her gender counterparts in the hopes of enticing female deprived soldiers in the Middle East to spill their secret military beans to gain the favors of their beloved cyber gals. Sex works even in the insect world.



My goal during this period was to finish the background jungle, the main leaves, and all of the critters inhabiting the left hand quadrant of the painting. After assessing the original composition I decided to make a number of changes to better balance the elements and to emphasize the foreground using color and scale over the background elements to achieve a perceivable sense of depth. Also there were a number of creatures that did not really fit the

theme or were too dominant in the section of the canvas where they were originally located. These include moving the bugs and lizards around, hiding some snakes within the jungle canopy, and adding a few more protagonists from the insect world.

The basic methodology for making these changes was to draw the image on a white paper, scan it, print it at the scale required, and then, using an exacto knife, cut the cartoon out of the paper to create a negative stencil. The next step was to place it over the designated location for the drawing, tape it in place, and paint over the opening using a No. 7 neutral gray paint to differentiate it from any white background that it may cover. When the base color was dry I then drew in the interior guide lines using a No. 0 long haired round brush. The final step was to roughly paint in the basic colors of the background up to the edges of the cartoon. Presto! The new drawing of the protagonist was ready to be painted and detailed.

The photograph below gives you an idea of how these background and creature changes appear when fully rendered. In the very upper left corner of the canvas I have inserted a giant flying beetle jousting with a miscreant human defending himself with a large club. Behind the praying mantis group there now exists a more colorful gecko (who finds insects of any size yummy) eyeing potential dinner. To the right of the devil another massive beetle hovers like a malevolent fiend over a flinching couple from South Asia. On the leaf above, the original drawing of a family sitting on a reptile was replaced by a man being terrorized by an attacking dragon lizard. Finally, even the evil Taliban hiding behind Tali-Sally was given their own reptilian demon looking menacingly over their shoulders.

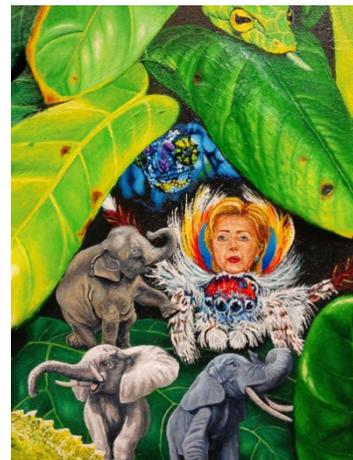


Jan - July 2014, Final Rendering of Creatures and Jungle

The first objective of this period was to make the final compositional changes that my eye thought was needed to further enliven the action. These included adding a few more threatening bugs, frogs, lizards and snakes and to rescale the overwhelmingly large Tamandau as a much smaller animal. It was then moved to a less conspicuous location behind a tree although still within striking range of his favorite delicacy, the army ants. A new sub-theme was developed in its place and the semi-final rendering of the background flora and fauna was completed leaving just the people to finish.

I sort of lost the fact that this painting was inspired by a very large “cocki-roach” scurrying up onto my rump. However, I had none on the canvas. So I inserted a large ugly one on the leaf just behind my Anthophobic lady. Behind him was a bitter enemy, a fat, grumpy, green frog who would eat anything in the insect world even something as disgusting as a roach. Hidden in the background behind the tropical leaves I also inserted a bug-eyed mosquito waiting for a chance to bite our beautiful lass. To add more intrigue I also inserted a large, toothy, green lizard waiting with mouth wide open to catch the leaping lady in case she should miss the spider’s web, Finally, I turned the sniveling wimp cringing before the blue crab into a muscle bound he-man challenging it to a mano-mano duel to the death.

In the tropical jungles of Indonesia there exist large hairy spiders that sport a fan like tail that can often function as a billboard flashing brightly colored patterns to ward off their enemies. Their flashes frequently resemble faces of homo sapiens. Imagine what would happen if a PAC supporting the donkey party paid good money to one of these out sized creatures to visit gatherings of elephants and flash the image of a certain female donkey that tends to frightens the poop out of any self respecting pachyderm. You guessed it. It’s Billy’s main squeeze, Hillary. Hillaryophobia effects all kinds of elephants regardless of gender, the red neck ones, the teapot toting yellow tinged variety, the blue more liberal albeit quite rare subspecies and off course all the white elephants that this group has been responsible for around the world. This theme was the most fun to visualize and render.



There were two technical issues that had to be addressed before this section could be finished. The snake and millipede in the upper right hand corner where actually made with modeling gel and consequently stood out about a quarter of an inch from the surface giving

them a 3D effect. This medium even mixed with a thickening pigment tends to be very viscous and hard to mold with a pallet knife. The artist needs to allow it to harden (about 2 days) and then carefully smooth it with a variety of Demerol sanding bits and plane old flexible sanding pads. This effort took 3-4 days to get it right.

The second issue was to make the painting of the spider behind the web correspond with the shape and colors in the fore ground. The background painting was painted first before anything else was done and consequently was not copasetic with the latter painted leaves in the foreground. Additionally, the leaves in the spider painting had to be reshaped to match the sculptured leaves around the border of the opening to give the feeling of continuity from foreground to background.

I also, during this period, had to finish the drawings of the individual's finalized poses as they relate or react to their tormentors so that I could render the background complete up to the edge of the figure. This process often took many layers of color to cover the changes in the under painting that were made. Finally, To insure that I did not miss anything I took a standard 11"x14" photo mat and methodically went over every square inch of the canvas and corrected any background areas that were unfinished, in correct, or intruded into a different color space. I was surprised to find several creatures that had only been roughed in and had to be reworked.

The image below shows the canvas with the background, creatures, and galloping pachyderms in their final form. I was now ready to focus on finishing the people.

August – December 2014, Bringing Life to the Species Homo-Sapiens

My objective during this period was to get all of the people at least roughed in and preferably semi finished by the end of the year. Unfortunately, due to holidays, illnesses and travel obligations I was only able to achieve the former and a little bit of the latter. At least the canvas was fully covered and I now knew what the final composition would look like with a few minor exceptions. First of all I was not happy with this particular rendition of the preacher/proselytizer and it would be changed once all of the other figures were done. Also, more work was needed on the maw of the devil. I was not happy with it. The background of the spider's web also needed to be improved.



Most of the work consisted of roughing in the details of the figures without changing the poses. There were a number of technical difficulties that had to be overcome. The first was developing a variety of palettes to best represent the skin colors of the different races or ethnic groups that were to be represented in the painting. There are a number of well illustrated books providing different recipes for mixing skin tones ranging from highlights to shadows for different categories of racial or ethnic types. The problem with all of these mixtures is that they, to some extent, add white to the mixtures which has its good and bad points.

The good point is that it allows you simulate the lighter skin tones of Caucasians, Latinos, Eurasians, and Asians reasonably well. On the other hand it lightens and flattens darker skin tones and deprives them of their natural luster. I consequently had to initially develop a basic palette of 15-20 light to dark skin tones based on a recipe book for skin colors that tended to incorporate white in some proportion in the mixture. These I used as the foundation colors of the figures as illustrated in the rendering below. When I began adding subsequent layers I tried to create a much broader range of hues by using less pure white and developing more mixtures using oranges, burnt sienna, or different transparent oxides mixed with light colors such as Naples yellow, buff titanium, yellow ochre, or lemon yellow in different proportions. For darker tones I use thin transparent glazes of maroon, light



violets, or alizarin crimson mixed with different types of blue to add a bit of transparency to the shadows. I managed to get all of the figures semi finished by the end of the year.

January 1- June 2015

I took the Christmas season off and did not look at the painting for at least 3 weeks. When I came back I examined it very carefully and was not happy with my rendering of certain figures with respect to their relationship to the configuration and lighting of the background. In a dense jungle light percolates through hundreds of layers of leaves ranging from very reflective to very light absorbent. This arboreal filtering system causes the light to scatter in an infinite number of directions and wave lengths creating a kaleidoscope or colors reflecting onto and off the naked human bodies and other critters moving through the rain forests. My initial renderings did not take this variegate illumination into account. I spent the next several months reworking the more prominent figures so that they fit better into their leafy environment.

Secondly, during this period of assessment my old friend and fellow adventurer Jim Marsh passed away from cancer. He was a trucking entrepreneur and bush pilot who moved to Guatemala some 40 years ago with Pan American Airlines. When they went out of business he matriculated into a number of businesses before setting up a trucking company

transporting cargo from all over Central America to the US. I met him in 1993 when I was trying to establish a logistics' system for moving perishable cargos via refrigerated vessels directly into Philadelphia which was at the center of the largest market for these products in North America. We had many adventures flying around the region together during the 4 years it took to get the project up and running.

The memory of our first foray together will always stick in my mind. We were flying in his single engine Beachcraft from Guatemala City to a place called Zacapa in the central valley approximately 40 miles from the Port of Santo Tomas on the Western Caribbean coast. As we descended into the city Jim pointed out the runway. I scrutinized it very closely and determined that it was made of dirt and gravel. Then I noticed something else that worried me. "Hey Jim", I said, "There are a bunch of cows on the runway." "I see them. Watch." he replied. He then brought the plane down to approximately 10 feet above the runway and zoomed along its entire length before climbing out perilously close to the mountain wall. I looked down to see the cows departing in multiple directions leaving many piles of slippery poop behind them. After deftly landing and avoiding the freshly excreted piles we pulled up to the parking area.

For a moment I watched Jim fumble with a folder of papers and then glanced out the side window. I was a bit jolted by the fact that I was looking down the business end of an AK 47. I muttered "Hey Jim? There is a gun out here pointed directly at my head." "Yea, I know" he replied, "There's 2 pointed at mine." He then opened a side window and said something in Spanish and the guns came down. We had landed at a Guatemalan Army base during the middle of the country's civil war.

Nothing ever seemed to bother this little cowboy barely measuring 5'7". I wanted to honor him by incorporating his image into the painting somewhere. The question was where? I did not want to integrate him into the scene as a participant running from some giant creepy-crawly. I learned early that he was not afraid of much. Guatemala at that time was a rough and tumble, dog eat dog country at war with itself. No, I wanted him to be a

bemused outsider observing the chaotic landscape from afar.



After scrutinizing the canvas for a long while my gaze fell on the iguana nestled up against the tree limb exhaling some unfortunate's sandal encased in a bubble. Bubbles are reflective. If you look at them closely you see your reflection on the outside surface. It was the perfect way to represent Jim as an external observer looking in. Check it out.

Finally, I purposely left the Hereiophobic cleric unfinished because I frankly did not have a good idea of what he should look like with respect to facial expression, adornment, or gesture. I knew what I wanted to represent. Every major religion wants to scare their supplicants into believing that if they are good they would eventually ascend into a glorious and pleasurable afterlife. If they are bad then they will suffer the fires of Hades or its equivalent for eternity. This dichotomy of good versus evil and its consequents has pervaded human social thought since man first started drawing on cave walls. Not all people, however, believe in an afterlife. Some pretenders (properly defined as hypocrites) go through the motions while others categorically reject such an idea outright. My objective was to visually represent these conflicting attitudes, preferably in a humorous way.

For the main proselytizer I wanted a cross between a wizard, monk, and wild-eyed sorcerer who's malevolent face was partly covered by an menacing Belicheat type hoodie. An extensive search of the internet did not turn up any one photo that singularly represented the totality of this menacing being. However, I did come across a number provocative, insolent, or obscene hand gestures; angry, weird, or just plain ugly faces: agals, cassocks, cowls and other exotic head gear; and quite a few magic staffs to keep the worshippers in line. Using the bits and parts of the most interesting gestures, haberdashery, and rods I developed a variety of concept sketches and drawings before settling on my final version.



I wound up with an old fierce looking one toothed geezer dressed in an ornate 13th century cassock with the hood pulled down over his eyes so that the only thing visible was his snarling mouth cajoling his congregation to follow his dictates or descend into hell. His right hand extends out over his mesmerized followers holding the medallions of the 6 major religions that preach the good versus evil dichotomy and the shearing consequences of the latter. He grasps a stout staff topped by a grinning fearful skull reminding one that life does end and you must be prepared for the yin-yang consequences of the afterlife.



His flock of praying Mantises is shown drinking in his every word while referring to their good books to confirm his message. If you look closely, however, there is one hypocrite who is perusing a recently published “Play Bug” magazine. The cover displays the

title of the featured article within - “Sex in the Ant Hill”. It’s very erotic and titillating to the reader. Behind the preacher stands a shocking mantis mocking his message. He/she is wearing a shirt emblazoned with the equation $E=Mc^2$. Of course, he/she is the scientist mentioned above who represents the antithesis of the ecclesiastical approach to explaining life. The tension between the two viewpoints is palpable as indicated by the totally confused mantis standing off to the side who is unsure of what to believe. Such is the conundrum of life.

You would think that with the rendering of this final bit of imagery this painting would be completed. Nope. There remained one thing to be done, a coat of clear varnish. The problem was that I wanted to emphasize a sense of depth between the foreground and background as well as between different elements of the composition. This affect was partly achieved through the use of perspective and cool versus warm colors. However, I wanted to use different types of clear varnishes to enhance this effect. There are 5 different types on the market, matte, satin, semi-gloss, gloss and high gloss. Over the years I have experimented with these different options and found that matte finishes tended to recede into the background, satin and semi-gloss sort of floated in the middle, and gloss and high-gloss jumped out at you. So I set about varnishing the painting with the objective of using these qualities to create a greater sense of depth in the composition. The intended effects are hard to see in the photograph below of the finished product but when you view the original in person it becomes much more apparent. Hopefully I can find a secured facility where I can put it on public display for you all to come and see.

Postscript

Usually, when the average person goes into a museum to view a Rembrandt, Van Gogh, or a Dali, they only see the finished product without really understanding the process of how it was conceived and painted. The docent will attempt to provide some insight into the making and meaning of the composition but most of that opinion is based on secondary sources and the informed conjecture of art historians. My intent from the beginning was to keep a running account of this project from conceptualization to the final rendering so that the average Joe or Jane could read and understand the thought process, techniques, problems to be solved, and most importantly the meaning of both the different elements within and the composition as a whole. Nearly 3 years of my creative energy went into this painting and my sincere hope is that the viewer will find it interesting and provocative.

