

## Helen P. Shipman

### Artist Statement

It is my understanding and belief that the purpose for the presence of the human race on planet earth is for us to serve as stewards of God's love and compassion for all life and to each other. How can I be a painter and writer of this truth if I don't take the time to live it? So, if my "success" is late in coming, it is because I have devoted time to living out this purpose, as well as documenting it in my art and writing. My work is created to serve as inspiration and a reminder as to what our purpose here really is. I would be nothing but a fraud and a hypocrite if I wrote and painted about it, but gave no time to living a compassionate and caring life. And so it is. I take scriptural inspiration from two beautiful Biblical quotes:

"What good will it be for a man (woman) if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?"  
(Matthew 16:26)

"If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing."  
(1 Corinthians 13:2)

My work may be a celebration, a revelation or even a complaint. In largely figurative and architectural images, I incorporate historical, mythological and archetypal symbolism to present a view of our human condition, expressing my interpretations of the range of human emotions on stage-like settings of apparently very real dream worlds.

Each painting is exhibited with its accompanying poem or prose. (In the case of The Man Who Was Most Ugly, and Virtues, Visits and Other Visions, a number of paintings and writings have been devoted to a major theme and compiled into illustrated manuscripts, for which I am currently hoping to find a publisher.) The writings are not explanations of the visual work, but are instead written twins or companions, expressing in verbal images the same concerns and subjects presented in the paintings.

My colors are selected for the psychological responses they elicit and for their emotional impact. Blues might express the cool peacefulness of serenity, or the icy coolness of rejection, but reds might reflect the warmth of provocative desire or the heat of wild-eyed anger. Purples might suggest wealth, richness and abundance, though brilliant yellows and golds often signify not only material wealth, but perhaps a wealth of wisdom, the light of knowledge and the brilliance of manifest truth and understanding.

I often abandon the traditional rectangular format and instead shape my paintings according to the spaces in which the images occur. The paintings on cut-out particle board (Masonite) panels appear to pop out in the illusion of full three-dimensional view, presenting a compelling invitation to step into the world of the dream.

My work presents a symbolism that looks inward, examining the self in all its mystical complexity. The paintings study the human relationship to self, to others, and to the divine eternal, stripped of all that is pretentious and artificial, exposed to all that is profound and vulnerable. While the paintings show the inevitable suffering, solitude and powerlessness that must be endured by the human body, they also celebrate the beauty, the dignity and the wondrous soarings of the human soul. The paintings are a careful study of human faith, healing and spirituality, the foundation of all the world's great religions.

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