

A Sampling of Legends and Tales by Joe Nalven

What was the story in words – if the artist would speak those words to satisfy the viewer’s curiosity?

In Fall 2008, the Digital Art Guild put on an international print show titled Urban Legends and Country Tales. The art up on the walls invited the viewer into a narrative – but the narrative was visual. What was the story in words – if the artist would speak those words to satisfy the viewer’s curiosity?

These are several of the untold stories behind the legends and tales that graced the walls at the Bonita Museum.

Joe Nalven
Editor

Judy Mandolf / Burma Shave

Before freeways, country roads were sprinkled with Burma Shave signs: Mile 1 - Car in Ditch; Mile 2 - Driver in Tree; Mile 3 - Moon was Full; Mile 4 - And So Was He. Burma Shave - These icons of travel were entertaining interludes of sometimes boring travel.

Eileen Mandell / Prison Stories

In reference to any prison, one either hears stories of how prisons rehabilitate, or how they create criminals- both sides of the same coin. There are urban legends from the Birdman of Alcatraz to ConAir about the good, bad, and evil relating to prisons. And then there is always the lover’s lane tale of the escaped prisoner.

Lee Zasloff / Dia de los Muertos

During a recent visit to San Miguel de Allende in Mexico, I was fortunate to be there on the Dia de los Muertos - the Day of the Dead - October 31. Walking the town, I saw many beautifully arranged displays of marigolds, other flowers, photos of departed loved ones, groupings of objects important to that person - all to honor the dead. I was struck by the quality of the living and the dead being closely juxtaposed on that day and in that place. I enjoyed the sense of fun overlaid with the courtesy and homage being paid to the departed loved ones. This piece honors the color, the flotsam of people's lives and the sense of the living and the dying being only a breath away.

Suzi Chauvel / Magic Maze

Magic Maze is an image from a secret pleasure garden of the ancient Popes.

The legendary Garden was a 2-day ride from Rome and thus removed from the prying eyes of Roman society. The tales of debauchery by the country folk who witnessed their wild orgies are still recounted today, nearly a thousand years later.

Kristina Ellis / Isis

Oestara

eve and aphrodite

diana, rhea, isis

mary, inanna, astarte

hecate, persephone

Forever Spring

beating with knowledge bursting with Life

alive and red

then dead

repeat

Patricia Frischer / Ghosttrappers

In this work, the fantasy city was created from urban pieces collected from real cities. It houses symbols of some of the myths and legends from our society. Some are displayed prominently, others are more secret and hidden. The hand drawn elements tie this image into an entire series of paintings and drawings called Sacred and Profane which deals with how we often change over time. What was legend can still be real, while tales can grow larger and more important or disappear completely. Many of these works appeared in the exhibition Borders of Intimacy shown at Oxford University, which examined issues of private and public boundaries. By the way, this image was named Ghosttrappers after a horse that ran this year at Del Mar. I won 80 cents profit on my \$2 bet.

Andrew Mercer / Twin Towers

One of a series of digital works that originated with a small sketch of an urban sunrise. I added a clear blue sky to give some blank contrast to what was then a very busy and detailed image. I had no intention of creating a picture about the Twin Towers but as soon as I added the sky I knew where the picture was heading. This tragedy was instantly etched into the memories of millions of people around the globe. I'm sure I am not alone in remembering exactly where I was and what I was doing when the news broke.

From the tales of legendary heroism to the continuing speculation surrounding the causes of the disaster. The terrible events of that day have now become legend.

I have dedicated this work to the British victims of this disaster.

Ann Tracy / Urban Fear

It was a dark and stormy night when the young woman was leaving from her job in a department store to go to her car which was parked at the very end of the parking lot, where the light had burned out. She thought about the email she got today about how to protect yourself against male attackers, so when the woman came up to her as she was trying to get her key into the lock, she thought she was safe.

Ken Weissblum / Mystic Walk

This image is from my series called fragments of time that looks at the relationship between man and his need to be in unity with the history of civilization. Both man and civilizations have a fragile existence.

Man and civilizations are transient. Photography allows the recording of a point in time in the existence of man and of his history. Just as a moment in time for a civilization is ephemeral, so is a movement in dance. I seek to capture peak luminous moments in the dancers (who served as models) and integrate them with historical ruins.

Mankind needs to relate to his past. It has been said that he who does not remember the past is bound to repeat it. I explore this relationship through the blending of the structures and shapes of ruins and nudes. These images seek to harmonize man with his history.

Kazmier Maslanka / The Empty Paradox

Mathematics has played a major role in the development of urban technology and within this context I have created a polyaesthetic work which incorporates a mathematical poem describing the paradox I encountered when I was first exposed to the Buddhist idea of emptiness. It has been said that an infinite fusion of compassion and wisdom are acquired when one is in the state of Buddha's mind and from this we could surmise that a fusion of compassion and wisdom is proportional to Buddha's mind. Yet paradoxically I have it inversely proportional; furthermore, we also know that the limit of $1/x$ as x approaches zero is infinite. Using some terminology from cognitive science we can see that this artwork creates a metaphor using emptiness as the target domain for the metaphor presented and zero as its source domain. In English the equation states: Compassion times Wisdom is equal to the limit of one divided by x as x approaches Buddha's mind. (Chinese Calligraphy for Buddha's Mind)

Pete Axcell / Room with a View

Everyone loves an ocean view. We need our comforts of home but still desire natural beauty at the same time. Urban living often shuts out nature, but what if it was all one?

This concept began years ago when I rendered a 3d model of a lounge chair into a beach scene. It was intriguing because it was so absurd. Later, after several incarnations it grew into room without walls and has been placed in several natural environments.

Howard Ganz / Ancient City

This painting is an abstraction that suggests an ancient city. To me it seems earthy, yet sky-lit. It has vertical structures: spires and towers. It has sandy, stony grain in parts. It has a blue sky, a vibrating spire and a stream at the bottom. But art is beyond simple explanations. Feel free to find meaning beyond these words. Find the meanings that work for you.

Marie Otero / Garden of Mergers and Acquisitions

This image relates to living in New York and is a commentary on the fallen financial legends — such as Bear Stearns, who for the longest time have probably been considered urban legends in the financial world.

Vladimir J. Kone ni / Guernica at Piazza Brunelleschi, Florence

A large, torn poster of Pablo Picasso's Guernica at what is perhaps the most run-down piazza in Florence — yet one named after Filippo Brunelleschi, a 14th century native son and the genius who designed the Duomo and invented perspective for the ages.

The photograph was taken with a digital camera in Florence in 2007. It is intentionally "pure": There has been no cropping and no other digital manipulation.

Joyce Harris Mayer / In Klee's Garden

Knowing his life was coming to an end, my hero, Paul Klee created an image called "Still Life." I have appropriated the dead flowers and dying couple from Klee's image. I have changed the couple to symbolize my husband and myself, who are now battling life-threatening illness. We are both 73 years old. The legend of Klee has inspired me for all the years I have been making art. He showed me how to live, and how to create, and now he is showing me how to prepare to face my mortality. I studied with Chaim Gross, who taught me to transform pain into beauty. Klee's dead flowers are I hope "blooming" and hide the sorrow of human mortality.

Mary Ahern / Sunflowers in Makkum Pot — Homage to Van Gogh

These Van Gogh inspired sunflowers are the dominant feature in this still life of flowers sitting in a piece of Dutch Makkum pottery. My parents, who were born in Holland, raised me in America on all things Dutch. The Art, the gardens, the history of commerce and the expansion of the mercantile industries were part of my development as it was for Vincent who also did not always live in the Netherlands.

Van Gogh, a Dutch artist, struggled with system and conformity in a culture noted for tradition and discipline. His work introduced into the vernacular the element of raw passion in his imagery and brushstroke.

The use of computer technology and the inherent distance the medium places between the subject and the Artist would have been entirely antithetical to Van Gogh's visceral immersion into the locations and materials which constituted his oeuvre. He would never have accepted creating without the visceral feel of the paint and the wafting sounds and smell of his environment.

Ironically, the process of digital commercial reproduction of his original paintings is identical to the digital production of

my work. Regardless of the process used in the creation of the original work of Art, the end result is an infinitely reproducible saleable print.

Though he never made a living as an Artist, his work and the reproduction of it has supported hordes of business people who never created Art.

Michael Wright / Manu (Avatar)

The Avatar is our mask in virtual worlds, allowing us to communicate across borders, cultures, time zones, forming new relationships, alliances and social networks. The avatar is an interactive, social representation of its user. The avatar becomes a character in a real-time unfolding narrative that is both personal and social. In virtual worlds the avatar is the urban legend.

Jim Respass/ Long Black Veil

The ballad, Long Black Veil, written by Marijohn Wilkin and Danny Dill in 1959, describes the tale of a man who went to his execution rather than to disclose his love affair with his best friend's wife. The woman secretly mourns at his grave. It is the ghost of the dead lover that tells the tale.

Joan Everds / The Brotherhood

For hundreds of years, in the old capital of Guatemala, Antigua the "brotherhood" (el confradia) held processions and gatherings during Easter week. The many tales of the brotherhood that have survived over the years are still an influence over today's population.

Renata Spiazzi / Creation

When God created the Universe he started with a fractal. A few swirls of His hand and matter appeared. He said "Let there be light" and rainbows were born. He gave us blue for infinity, green for growth, yellow for warmth, orange for energy, red for love, purple for the mystery of it all. He also gave us white for purity and black for strength.

With this profusion of gifts, let us not disappoint him.

Joe Nalven / River Styx Street

Perched high in a Vancouver hotel, I looked down on the evening street, wet from a recent rain. I had lucked out. The street below was vividly lit with the night light. The lights bounced off the street. The adult video store screamed to the near vacant crossing. And there was some drama in the several souls occupying the urbanscape. One streetwalker hunched over a news machine. But the camera was ready to capture the image. I fiddled around and he was gone. But now another more ominous figure began to cross the intersection. All dressed in black. And with a black umbrella. One could only guess what he carried in his sack. I waited till he walked in front of the adult video store and snap. I was interested in that picture when I returned home with a thousand more. For the storyline, I conjured up another famous wet intersection and ominous crossing place. The River Styx. Who would willingly tread across those waters alone — and with an umbrella for safety? And what about the other side of life — what might we expect in the afterlife? An adult video store? Perhaps this is just another midnight fantasy in these neo-post-modernist times.

On the image making side, I wanted to exaggerate the path along which this person in black was walking. The lines in the street offered some strokes to force the viewer's eyes across the street and to the adult video store. Layering the same image over itself but at a different angle proved to be a tactical way of multiplying the crosswalk lines. And, yes, I did need to rename the street, changing Granville Street to River Styx Street.

Nb. The art ranged the many styles and skills in contemporary digital media — from digital photography to montage/collage to algorithmic to conceptual conceived and presented light to painting. All prints were displayed in a

uniform 17 x 17” plexi holder. The artist was allowed to use that space in any way conceivable, whether employing a faux mat or running the image to each border or to only two borders as a panoramic image and even one came as a mixed media object — as a metal print.