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Crazy in the Garden

Martin Pate Katzoff
Bard College

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Crazy in the Garden

Senior Project submitted to

The Division of Arts

of Bard College

by

Martin Katzoff

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Crazy In the Garden translates from the Hebrew term Balagan, a phrase often used to chastise children who are acting wild. This work is a response to my experiences growing up in a religious Jewish community and being encouraged to study the old testament every day in school as a youth. Over the course of a decade, Judaism provided me with the initial curiosity to embrace the metaphysical although restricted that mode of practice to reciting prayer and the absolute acceptance of the preordained doctrine.

Zionism was also encouraged as a healthy pairing with contemporary Jewish identity. This notion of pledging political allegiance to Zionism in order to validate my heritage is something I reject as an adult Jew living in the diaspora. In an effort to maintain a connection with my identity as a Jew, I have turned towards research into the origins of the pre Semitic tribal mythology that is interwoven with its Mesopotamian neighbors. I was shocked by the level of connectedness that exists between these ancient worlds given that in all of my early age of bible study there had been no effort to examine the historical origins of Judaism. In contrast Babylon represented exile and archaic wickedness. The result of this research into the origins of semitic religion is seen in the narrative components of my etchings as I embrace a personal reconstruction with my definition of being culturally Jewish.

Seeking to delve beyond the constraints of this foundation of knowledge, the etchings in this show embrace other research and coursework into spiritual and religious topics spanning pre-Semitic Mesopotamian mythology to Anglo Christian cosmology, Tibetan Buddhist legends and the beliefs of various indigenous peoples. The content of this work is visually and narratively influenced by similarities in human energy and mysticism that transcend geographical and historical worlds.

The paintings in this show merge emotive abstract expression through painting with compositions that embrace the supernatural and surreal. As an abstract painter, I have discovered that integrating figurative components with abstraction constructs additional obstacles which inspire further exploration.

While it is comforting to indulge in the abundance of historical anthropological source material available for constructing a narrative. I am driven to bring my etchings to contemporary global politics and cultural transformations that characterize the twenty-first century. It is a challenging task to access and respond to the present, and I strive to make new etchings related to how a global community interacts with the environment, technology, governments, social conditions, and with each other in more intimate encounters.