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About:

Michael Morey Hensley was born on August 6, 1962, in New Orleans, Louisiana. Shortly thereafter the family relocated to Taos, NM where Michael was raised and continues to reside. His mother Carolyn B. Hensley was an educator and art director and his father Jackson M. Hensley is a highly regarded artist.

Born into an environment steeped in the arts, Michael's formal introduction into art began in his late teens. Shortly after graduating from Taos High School in Taos, New Mexico, Michael left to Woodstock, New York where he studied with Vladimir Bachinsky at the Woodstock School of Art. It was Vladimir's inspiration and enthusiasm for art that sparked a deep passion in Michael toward the great masters of the past and to the importance of draftsmanship.

Inspired by the great masters, in particular the masters of the High Renaissance, on Vladimir's recommendation, Michael at the age of eighteen left his home in Taos, NM for New York City to attend the Art Students League and the National Academy of Design. Within a month of his arrival Michael showed so much promise as a draftsman that at the request of his instructor Gustav Rehberger he was granted a full scholarship.

Passionately interested in the human figure, Michael was constantly drawing from life, when unable to draw from live models he spent all his free time studying artistic human anatomy, idealized proportion, and compositional design. These masterful drawings done in his late teens show all the struggle and determination of a young artisan learning to master his craft. The comprehensive collection of his youthful figure studies and highly detailed anatomical drawings are considered by many to be a masterpiece in their own right.

After studying for only one year, Michael was told by his instructor Gustav Rehberger that he had learned his lessons well and continuing with a formal art education would only hamper his individuality and growth as an artist and that it was time for him to follow his own path.

It was at this time that Michael returned home to help with the care of his mother who had suffered from Type 1 Diabetes for many years. Upon his return to Taos, NM, Michael's interest in philosophy and classical literature began to make its way on to the canvas.

Working on mural size canvases Michael began his pictorial Tour de Force the "Ascent" and "Descent". Using his knowledge of anatomy, Michael set out to fill these masterpieces with human figures in every conceivable position. The finished paintings were a culmination of several years work.

Michael had also begun two other large emotionally charged paintings, one a crucifixion entitled "Sangre de Cristo," which was painted as a tribute to his ailing mother and a very personal painting entitled "Prometheus Bound". Shortly after his mother's passing, Michael painted one of his most personal and moving paintings to date. The painting entitled an "Allegory of Time" was executed as a tribute to her memory.

In addition to painting and drawing Michael has also developed a large following through his instruction of artistic anatomy, fantasy art, creature design and realistic oil painting. Michael continues to reside in Taos, NM, has three children Havean, Joshua, Zoie and two grand children Yvie, and Emma.

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“Allegory of Time”, Oil on Linen by Michael Hensley

“The composition consists of a youthful figure cloaked in black, whose head aged by time is that of a skull. The timeless soul in the grasp of a Golden Eagle is being carried away to an unknown mysterious place. The Golden Eagle represents that of a higher power, it is the bearer of life, humanity, harmony, and wisdom. There are many places in humanity where it is said one may go to in the after life. The belief in where one goes is dependent on one’s own spiritual and cultural belief. More importantly though, is that one live their life for today, for in life all things must eventually come to pass. One’s allotted time can be fleeting, depending on the fullness and completeness of one’s own existence. One should always strive to be kind, considerate, and compassionate toward all. Ultimately, all that matters is how you treat others. There is beauty and relativity to all that exists in nature and it is up to each individual to recognize the importance in all that happens around you. Even within ugliness one may find beauty. Never be fooled by the exterior image of that which is before you, beauty always exists, but sometimes it lays deep within”.

Michael M. Hensley-

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“The Gathering”, Oil on Linen by Michael Hensley

Inspired by a love of ancient Greek and Christian ideals “The Gathering” is a reflection of the musings of my imagination on those themes. It was my aspiration to take a number of very complex ideas and metamorphosis them into a unique and profound composition, essentially to create a work which the only limitation was that of the viewer’s own imagination. Many of the ideas behind this work will always remain locked within. For me the beauty of art is in its mystery. I wish not to pirate the imagination of the individual viewer.

I do feel however, the following loose connotation is somewhat necessary to keep my painting from being completely inaccessible. The overall theme is that of mortality vs. immortality. More specifically I have included (with artistic license) the four horses of the apocalypse (in my interpretation the White Horse represents Hope), A Prophet, Christ (shrouded in Joseph’s coat of many colors), the Two Thieves, Prometheus and Adam and Eve.

Why butterflies? Butterflies have fascinated mankind since as far back as the ancient Greeks whom they held in particular esteem. Greek Civilization regarded butterflies as symbols of the soul’s immortality because of their transformation from the pupa to butterfly.

The Metamorphosis from the base humble larvae into the diaphanous, richly colored butterfly was an ideal that inspired their imagination. To Greek culture this symbolized the significant fulfillment of man’s destiny and the transcendence from earthly life to the afterworld. So strongly did the Greeks identify with this belief that they used a singular word to describe both the butterfly and the soul (psyche).

Centuries later, entomologist’s intent on classifying all fauna of insects revived the word and applied it to a small group of butterflies that became known as the Psychidae family. They are the only trace remaining of this unassuming insect’s fabulous importance in the metaphysics of an entire civilization.

The stark contrast of the vibrant butterflies (immortality) and the skeletal rider (mortality) is one of the more obvious interpretations, but there are many others less so. Even the particular fauna of butterfly plays a significant role in the meaning of life in this work (again there is artistic license in relation to the butterflies color).

Although obvious to some but less so to others; Christ and Prometheus were both protectors of humanity who underwent tremendous sacrifice for the sake of mankind. Therefore it is Prometheus who is the protector of Adam and Eve in this interpretation of human destiny.

It is at this point which I must conclude my ramblings before I divulge more information than is necessary, thus destroying each individual's own interpretation. It is my hope that this work sparks your imagination and inspires one to ponder mankind's fate and existence in an ever struggling society. For me the meaning of our existence is a puzzling realm. It is my belief one should always strive to be kind, considerate, and compassionate toward all. Ultimately, all that matters is how you treat others.

Michael M. Hensley-