

“She Weeps Each Time You’re Born” by Quan Barry

Fiction : magical realism

Theme: I Hear You

Object list:

1: Untitled (two figures) Dinh Q. Le

2: Amida Buddha

3: Monju Bosatsu

(False door - not used this time)

4: Fugitives by Honore Daumier

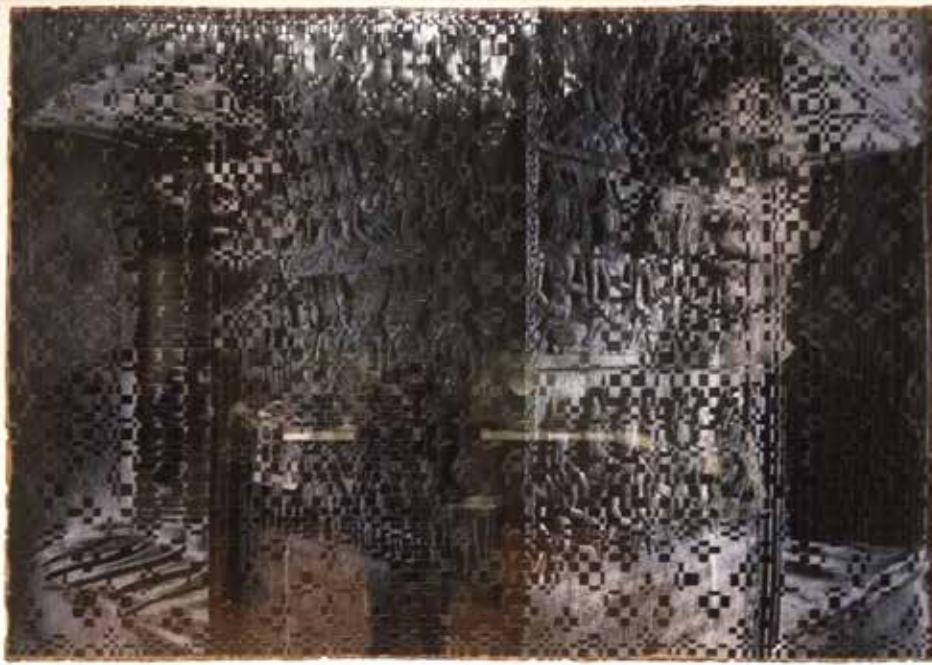
5: On the Thames, A heron James Tissot

6: Sufa, 2008, Maimouna Guerresi

7: Hmong migration, Cy Thao (let me know if you would like the synopsis of all 50 paintings in this series)

Joy Yoshikawa

joy@thedesigncompany.com



Woven in Southeast Asia

This is the first installation of contemporary Southeast Asian art at the MIA. It presents two works by two important artists, Sopheap Pich (born in Cambodia in 1971) and Dinh Q. Lê (born in Vietnam in 1968). Both artists push the potential of their mediums to achieve multi-dimensional woven surfaces, challenging conventional definitions of photography and sculpture.

Lê's *Untitled (Two Figures)* weaves together an image of the elaborately sculpted interior of a Khmer temple at Angkor with two passport-style photographs of different individuals, literally merging the modern and the historical. Pich's *Upstream 2* reflects a personal history: Made of rattan, a natural material indigenous to Cambodia, the soaring conical structure resembles the fish traps he remembers from his youth.

But these works have a darker dimension. Lê and Pich both witnessed the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge and their families fled their respective countries in 1979 to America. The ghostly portraits in Lê's work are two of the many photographs the Khmer Rouge took of their victims before execution, while Pich has often spoken of his malnourished childhood in which trapping animals was essential to survival. History aside, the works have a sophisticated beauty that attests to the vibrancy of contemporary art made in Southeast Asia.



Amida Buddha

Polychromed Japanese cypress (hinoki) with traces of gildingexpand_more

Mary Griggs Burke Collection, Gift of the Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation

Amida Nyorai, the Buddha of Limitless Light, is the salvific central figure of Pure Land Buddhist teachings. Believers who call on the name of Amida will be greeted by him and his retinue at the moment of death and transported to the Western Pure Land. In this sculpture, which reflects the influence of the eleventh-century master sculptor Jōchō, Amida is seated with legs cross in the full lotus position and joins the index fingers and thumbs of both hands in a gesture (mudra) of welcoming.



Monju Bosatsu, early 15th century
Artist: Kichizan Minchō

MONJU. In Mahayana traditions throughout Asia, Monju is the personification of the Buddha's teachings, and hence Monju symbolizes wisdom and the enlightened mind. Monju is considered the wisest of the Bodhisattva, and thus acts as the Voice (Expounder) of Buddhist Law. Monju enjoyed vast popularity in Asia for many centuries. But today in China and Japan, Monju's popularity has diminished somewhat among the common folk. Nonetheless, Monju is still counted as one of the most popular of all Mahayana divinities. In Japan, students pay homage to Monju in the hopes of passing school examinations and becoming gifted calligraphers.

Japanese sculptures of Monju often depict the deity sitting atop a roaring lion, which symbolizes the voice of Buddhist Law and the power of Buddhism to overcome all obstacles. Monju typically holds the Sutra of Wisdom in the left hand and a sharp sword in the right, which Monju uses to cut through illusion and shed light on the unenlightened mind.

Monju also serves as Zodiac Patron for People Born in the
Year of the Rabbit
1915, 1927, 1939, 1951
1963, 1975, 1987, 1999



TITLE:
False Door

DATE:
c. 2400 B.C.

MEDIUM:
Limestone

times sitting. The figure who sat opposite Iry at the table has been worn away. During this period, the missing figure customarily would have been Iry's wife or mother. Occasionally, but rarely, Iry would have been portrayed seated here. However, in this case, the hieroglyphs next to the obliterated figure form Iry's name, which would seem to indicate that he was depicted in the damaged spot. Without the figure present, it is impossible to know for sure.

FALSE DOOR

Iry was a lector-priest (one who read prayers over the deceased). Since that was a job with high status, he is shown carrying a long staff and the flat-ended baton (or wand) of authority. His costume is the typical attire for an Old Kingdom priest. He wears a short linen dress, a long wig to protect him from the sun, a short false beard, bare feet, and a collar. He is shown in the conventional Egyptian pose with profile head, legs and feet and frontal eye and torso. On the horizontal, centrally placed tablet, Iry is represented seated before a table well-stocked with loaves of bread and other provisions. The inscription tells us: "A 1000 of bread, 1000 of beer, 1000 of alabaster, 1000 of oxen, 1000 of fowl and a 1000 of clothing." The door is covered with inscriptions (see translation on pp. 8-9) which beg that the king grant an offering so that Iry will be permitted to travel the "good paths" that the revered travel and be accepted in the land of the dead.

Notice that all of the human and animal figures, whether they are hieroglyphs or depictions of Iry, tend to face towards the central niche as this is the portion of the doorway through which the ka would pass.

Iry's name is repeated countless times to ensure the survival of his spirit in the world beyond. His name is literally Akhet-n-iry (see hieroglyphic breakdown on page 11).

The order and stability of the Egyptian society is suggested by the series of vertical and horizontal rectangles of which the false door is composed. Within these rectangles, carved pictures and figures are combined in simple, ordered groups. In addition, the balanced composition, where one side almost mirrors the other exactly, is a further reflection of the order and stability of this culture.

Located inside a chapel within a tomb, a false door was the portal through which the ka, the immortal spirit of the deceased, could pass to partake of offerings left by priests. This false door comes from the cemetery area west of the great pyramid of Ghiza (near Cairo). The inscriptions commemorate Iry-en Akhet, a Lector-Priest, and list ritual prayers to the gods Osiris and Anubis to facilitate his voyage to the afterlife. Iry's name is repeated countless times to ensure the survival of his ka in the world beyond. All seven figures are symbolic portraits of the deceased. He stands in the conventional Egyptian pose, with his head, legs and feet seen in profile, while his eye and torso are frontal. As was most Egyptian sculpture, this panel was once painted in brilliant colors.

The inscriptions are carved in hieroglyphs, a system of writing consisting of pictures representing words, syllables and sounds. Scribes developed these characters from images of men, animals and other common objects in Egyptian life. Some passages are read from top to bottom, others from left to right or right to left.

The strong vertical and horizontal emphasis in the panel, in which one side nearly mirrors the other, also communicates the Egyptian concept of space. The ancient Egyptian imagined his world as a box-like structure determined by two natural forces crossing at right angles: the south-north flow of the Nile and the east-west passage of the sun across the ceiling of the heavens.

DESCRIPTION

This false door is of the kind found on the mastaba tombs of priests and nobles who were buried in the royal necropolis of the Memphite kings during Dynasties V and VI, approximately between 2345 and 2181 B.C.

Iry is depicted seven times, four times standing and three



The Fugitives, c. 1868
Honoré Daumier

It is hard to truly know Honoré Daumier as he left few personal journals and wrote few letters. However, he was an extremely prolific artist, producing almost 4,000 prints for French journals. Although he was also a painter and sculptor, he is best known for his caricatures of the government and his fellow countrymen.

Honoré Daumier was born in 1808 in Marseille, France. His father was a glazer, part of an elite artisanal class that was slowly being made unnecessary by the mechanization of the French Industrial Revolution. In 1816, Daumier's father moved the family to Paris to try his hand at poetry. While Jean Baptiste Daumier did not achieve much economic success, he did manage to present his poetry before the king of France and have several of his works published.

Due to the family's economic circumstances, Honoré Daumier was forced to begin work at the age of 12. Even at that young age, Daumier desired to follow his artistic passions. Oddly enough, due to his father's artistic leanings, he would not allow it. Instead, Honoré Daumier began work at a bailiff's office. Although he quit the job a year later, his time there imparted with him a life-long sympathy for poor and oppressed people. In 1821, Daumier started working as an assistant for a book shop, where he produced his first drawings.

Artistic Training:

In 1822, at the age of 16, Honoré Daumier's parents finally allowed him to study drawing and art with the artist and archeologist Alexandre Lenoir, who introduced him to the paintings of Rubens and Titian, along with classical sculpture. He soon started taking formal training at the Académie Suisse and copying works from the Louvre. Daumier started working for a publisher named Belliard, who taught him lithography, the technique of drawing onto a soft stone and eventually filling the image in with ink, to create a black and white drawing. In early 19th century France, this was a popular medium that had just been created.

Honoré Daumier Middle Years

Daumier used his lithographic skills in several satirical publications of the era. During this time period, this was a powerful social platform from which to influence the masses. The first

journal that he worked at was known as *La Caricature*, launched by Charles Philippon, a lithographer and journalist. His cartoons used biting sarcasm against the pretensions of the bourgeois and railed against the corruption of the government of Louis Philippe, the king of France from 1830-1848. Originally popular for his perceived liberalism, over time his governmental policies came to be perceived as increasingly conservative and monarchical.

In 1832, Daumier published a cartoon of the King as Gargantua, in which he is depicted as an oversize monster devouring his subjects. This cartoon caused him to be imprisoned for six months at the Ste Pelagic Prison in 1832. Or rather, he received a suspended six month sentence for this action and then went and published a second cartoon just as vicious as the first. However, the sympathy generated from the public by this action also generated new followers and elevated Daumier's artistic profile.

In 1834, a law was passed which banned outright satire of the government. Honoré Daumier now turned his focus to the bourgeois. In particular, he was known for his Robert McCaire series, which mocks the actions of a greedy lawyer and shines a light on the foibles of the rest of bourgeois society as well. By that time *La Caricature* had ceased publication. Instead, Daumier published his cartoons in *Le Charivari*, another satirical publication started up by Charles Philippon.

In 1846, Daumier's son was born. He followed this up shortly afterward by marrying the mother of the child, a 24-year-old seamstress. While he never painted her picture, she was known to have black hair and be pleasant-looking. Sadly, his son died two years later.

While he mostly painted in his spare time, in 1848, the government commissioned him to paint "Madeleine en Priere." This time period is also when he began exhibiting his paintings in public.

Honoré Daumier Advanced Years

In 1867, when Daumier was firmly in old age, he started making political cartoons and speaking out again. He was a particular foe of the war between France and Prussia. Unfortunately, this is also when his eyesight began to deteriorate. During this period, Daumier also concentrated increasingly on his artworks and sculpture, which dealt with social and literary themes.

In 1873, Daumier went completely blind and was unable to continue painting. In 1878, the year before his death, a friend collected a number of his works to be shown at the Durand-Ruel's gallery. However, these works did not receive much notice until after his death. Honoré Daumier died in debt and was buried in a pauper's grave.



On the Thames, A Heron, c. 1871-1872
James Tissot

When James Tissot fled to England in 1871 as a political refugee following the Franco-Prussian war, he discovered that English suspicion of French painting technique and a preference for sentimental narrative would require him to adapt his work for the British market. In *On the Thames, A Heron*, one of his first English works, Tissot created a

successful amalgam of these two aesthetics by serving up to British tastes his French technique wrapped in the sweet Victorian charm of beautiful young women boating on the Thames. Also presented here is the artist's full comprehension of the aesthetics of Japanese design in his use of a high vantage point and the juxtaposition of two separate pictorial elements in compressed space. Further the instantaneous realism and framing of the composition also suggests the influence of photography.

In 1870 the Franco-Prussian war broke out. Following the defeat of France, and the occupation of Paris, Tissot originally lingered in the capital. In 1871, however, Tissot fled to England where he had a considerable number of contacts. Tissot was initially the guest of the Editor of *Vanity Fair*, with whom he had become friendly, and who seems to have opened doors for him both socially and professionally. Tissot, hard working and shrewd, quickly became successful in London, where his oil paintings of social events and his conversation pieces rapidly became popular. These paintings look beautifully painted, and an interesting record of social life at the time, but were controversial. This was the time when commercially successful people were overtaking the landed aristocracy in wealth, and, as patrons of the arts. This situation was not to the liking of everybody, and in some quarters Tissot paintings were regarded as depictions of the *nouveau-riche*. Ruskin was a particularly severe critic, describing the Tissot paintings as "mere painted photographs of vulgar society." In 1873, the painter bought the house in St John's Wood where he was to live for the rest of his time in London, and he himself started to become a significant figure socially. Tissot's success in London was regarded with envy by Degas and other painters of his circle in Paris.

In the mid 1870s Tissot met Kathleen Newton (1854-1882), an Irish divorcee with a distinctly colourful past. She had formed a sexual relationship with a man on a voyage to India to be married, and borne his child. Kathleen became his model, muse, mistress, and the great love

of his life. Tissot's paintings of his lady tell any observer of sensitivity of his love for her. Many other successful men kept mistresses in St John's Wood, but they did not, like Tissot, live openly with them in adulterous relationships. This situation forced the painter to choose between his social life and Kathleen. To his credit he chose his lady. It would be wrong to think that Tissot became something of a hermit, as he and Kathleen Newton entertained their more bohemian artistic friends at home. But Tissot's days as a man-about-town were over, and he and Kathleen seem to have settled into a quiet life of domesticity. Kathleen's two children lived close by with her sister. Kathleen Newton was an extremely attractive young woman, and appeared in many of Tissot paintings at this time. In the late 1870s her health started to decline, with the onset of that great 19th century killer Tuberculosis. Tissot remained devoted to her. It is likely that the Roman Catholicism of both paintings would not allow them to contemplate marriage. In 1882, the desperately ill Kathleen cheated consumption by committing suicide, and, as a result was not able to be buried in consecrated ground. With one week Tissot left his home at St Johns Wood, and never returned to it. The house was later bought by Alma-Tadema.

Tissot was devastated by his loss, and never really recovered from it. Tissot seemed unable to accept the enormity and permanence of it. It is rumoured that he considered marriage to other women later in life, but these affairs came to nothing. Like many English people at this time Tissot became interested in Spiritualism, and on a number of occasions tried to contact the dead Kathleen. The exotic French artist and his fallen women-one of the great 19th century English love stories. Initially Tissot carried on working back in Paris, in much the same manner as in London. Tissot produced a series of paintings of attractive, beautifully dressed women in sumptuous surroundings. These paintings were, for a time, extremely fashionable. Following this Tissot experienced a profound religious experience, and became increasingly devout. Tissot embarked on a series of religious paintings, visiting the Middle East on a number of occasions, to observe and paint backgrounds for his oil paintings. These paintings were well-received at the time, but in our more secular age have little appeal. James Tissot at Buillon died on Friday 8th August 1902. (From World Classic Gallery)



Samina Ali: You are a sculptor, video artist and a photographer. I can see your various talents influencing your photographs, which look like haunting paintings. In fact, I've heard you described as the Sufi Frida Kahlo. What is the inspiration behind your work?

I'm glad to be considered a Sufi Frida Kahlo! Frida was a great woman and artist, and although life was cruel she was able to transform her suffering into art of the highest quality.

My moods are expressed in my work as faces, color, and emotions, where the body is no longer a prison of the soul, but rather like a temple to house and augment the Divine. In my work I use different techniques

from video to sculpture to photography, because I think that every artwork has its own identity and can be expressed more effectively in one technique than another.

The veiled figures that are in my work symbolize the body as a sacred building, as the "temple of the soul," according to a style reminiscent of some traditional Madonnas of classical art. The costumes are made of fabrics that I collected in my travels in Africa or Asia. Sometimes these costumes are made directly on site, as in the picture "Adji Baifall Minaret," which includes a large colored coat that I made with the help of other Sufi African women. The coat consists of 99 individual pieces of hand-sewn fabric, representing the 99 names of God.

The people who pose for me are part of my multi-ethnic family or friends, so I already have relationships with them based on empathy, collaboration, and confidence. When I photograph them they lose their individuality, becoming spiritual symbols that meld with my spirit.

I've read a New York Times interview with you where you describe your photographs as not being "about people or facts but representing infinity and cosmic space." Can you explain what you mean?

I like to think that a body may be changing fast, like in the blink of an eye. For example, the work "Cosmo" was born from this concept. I created a piece that represents a feminine image, seen from above, which spins and becomes many planets in the cosmic space.

Many may not know this, but you were raised Catholic in Italy. You converted to Islam after encountering an African Sufi community in Senegal. What specifically drew you to Islam?

I was born in a religious family, especially my mother's side, so I had an uncle who was an Africa missionary and aunt who

was a nun. At home we often had religious guests from Africa. So for me there was a certain familiarity with the African people. Then I was introduced to a Muslim Africa, thanks to my husband Sherif Assane who introduced me to the Muslim Murid community.

The Islamic faith has fascinated me, in particular for the extraordinary inner strength it teaches. It's probably something that can be said of all religions, but apparently at that time Islam was my way. It is a faith that has helped me, and still helps me, understand many questions.

When I see your work, I see so much Sufi influence. Did you work and vision change after your conversion?

After my conversion to Islam, I felt the need to create works that were closer to the vision of my new spiritual transformation. I continued to explore "the body," a theme that was already present in my previous works. In my new work I began transforming it into the mystical, metaphysical, cosmic at times almost abstract interpretations of "the body."

Islamic art and literature is full of mystical concepts, metaphors, knowledge, collected poems, verses, of miraculous and sacred value, and for me this is an endless source of inspiration.

We are seeing some visually arresting photos of mothers and daughters. What is the best lesson or advice your mother gave to you that you'd like to pass down now to the next generation of women?

To take care of themselves, to be curious and receptive, to maintain their spiritual integrity, to expand their spiritual knowledge through reading and religious practice. Women have a great task to improve society.

Perspective on the relationship between women and society, with particular reference to those countries in which the role of women is most marginalized. For over twenty years Guerresi's work has been about empowering women and bringing together individuals and cultures in an appreciation for a context of shared humanity, beyond borders – psychological, cultural, and political. She uses recurrent metaphors such as milk, light, the hijab, trees, and contrasting white on black to create awareness of the vital unifying qualities of the feminine archetype and its special healing potential. Guerresi's art is uniquely authentic. Her work is inspired by personal experience and cultural contexts that reference universal myths, the sacred realm, and the female condition, all of which are seen as vital expressions of the human form: an essentially spiritual and mystic body. Through photographs and videos of silent, austere, veiled women in domestic scenes and individual poses, her work functions as both metaphor and provocation. Guerresi's images are delicate narratives with fluid sequencing, as well as rational analyses: women dressed in white, enveloped in chadors, fixed within their own tradition and isolated from and by it in the contemporary world. Her Fatimah image suggests the woman as Mother- Earth supporting us in the original energy cycle of Space-Universe- Infinity.