

A Guide To The Murals

MEHER PILGRIM CENTRE MEHERABAD, MAHARASHTRA STATE, INDIA

Main Portal Lobby

MEHER BABA ENTERING THE WEST

45" x 42"



This portrait of Meher Baba, by Phyllis, was inspired by photos of Meher Baba during His travels to England, America, and France in the 1930's. The cubistic background is expressing the impact and change felt in western consciousness by Merwan's first meeting with Hazrat Babajan in May of 1913 and His subsequent God-realization in January of 1914, when Babajan gave Him the famous kiss in the middle of His forehead. The breaking forms of Cubism relate to Baba's 1931 statement in London: "I see the religious institutions of the West tottering. . . and shall revitalize these for individual and collective needs."

Dining Hall Interior, East Wall

PEACEABLE KINGDOM

Left - 72" x 114"



"The lion will lie down with the lamb." The lamb stands and the lion lies down before Meher Baba. Two children have come to herald the new age of peace and love.

KING OF KINGS

Middle - 96" x 48"



Meher Baba has come out of the East leading a lion, who symbolizes the power of Meher Baba's silence. The children represent the "New Humanity." Baba said that the children would be like the brothers of Ram, i.e., have loyalty for Baba even though He had departed from His physical form. (Ram's brother, Bharat, kept Ram's sandals on the throne during Ram's exile.)

REPOSE IN THE GARDEN

Right - 72" x 114"



Hafiz's Ghazal 77: At dawn, the bird of the garden spoke to the rose: "Display less disdain for in this garden (world) many a one like thee has blossomed." Mehera, the rose, the beloved of the Beloved, is seated at the feet of Meher Baba, the Adored Lord (bird of the garden, lover of the rose). The tiger (feared man-eater in India) symbolizes the mind and is separated from the Divine lovers only by the pool of the mind's narcissism. He is no danger. The small dog, named Miss Terry, is safe and happy, she was a companion to Sufi Laura De Lavigne. The dog, old and ill, expired April 28, 1980 in Myrtle Beach, coincidentally with the preview showing of these murals at The Pilgrims Centre. Lyn painted Meher Baba and the bird; Phyllis painted Mehera and Miss Terry. Christopher painted the tiger and the other animals.

Dining Hall Interior, West Wall



CHILDREN'S DARSHAN (Left - 72" x 114")

Though Meher Baba is depicted in His physical form, the theme of this mural is the wave of young lovers coming to Him since the dropping of His body, January 31, 1969. The deep feeling of the young girl with her head on Baba's feet was expressed by Lyn and Phyllis's 13 year old daughter, Betsy, as they watched children take the Beloved's darshan at the foot of His chair in Guruprasad Palace, Poona, April 1969. Mehera, while previewing this canvas, expressed her appreciation by bowing down to Baba's image in it, and placing flowers on the canvas at His feet, in April 1980. This was the last canvas lifted into its place on the walls.

MEHER BABA, THE HOST (Middle - 45" x 42")

This portrait was painted by Lyn. The title signifies that the Avatar is our host and that each morsel of food the guests (pilgrims) receive is His prasad.

EAST-WEST GATHERING, 1962 (Right - 72" x 114")

Mani, Baba's sister, peeks from behind the curtain. The East intermingles with the West. A few people gather around Meher Baba as He gestures for the music and gaiety to continue.

Dining Hall Exterior, South Verandah

Left to Right - All Canvases - 48" x 96"

THE NEW LIFE CARAVAN

Seclusion Hill is pictured with the procession marching around its base like a carousel. In the distance, the caravan, drawn by bullocks, is carrying Meher Baba and is shown approaching the mosque where He and His companions spent the last night of the New Life. The figures following the caravan, according to the list Padri recorded in his notes, are the white riderless horse, a camel with a driver, a cart with bullocks, a cow, Dr. Donkin carrying a calf, a donkey, and another donkey who had to be pulled.

The large figures of Meher Baba and Adi K. Irani are dressed in the robe and turban of the New Life. They each carry an empty pail to indicate their begging for food, a major activity in that phase of Meher Baba's Universal Work. The woman carrying steaming food represents the response of Baba's lovers to His and His companions' helplessness and hopelessness in the New Life.



MEHER SPIRITUAL CENTER, MYRTLE BEACH - 1952, '56, & '58

Meher Baba's home in the West. Pictured are several people who were with Baba at the Center during His three visits there. The large figure of Baba seated at the left of the panel expresses the greeting, "Welcome to My world." Baba's figure in the center of the panel has a cane, which indicates that He has returned from the 1952 and 1956 car accidents. Eruch, who accompanied Baba in 1956, is shown behind Baba's shoulder. Elizabeth Patterson is holding the key to the Universal Center which she founded for Meher Baba. Kitty Davy stands behind Elizabeth where Baba stationed her in 1952. Jane Haynes, the beautiful lady wearing a hat, is shown on the other side of Baba; she is the same height as Elizabeth because Baba made them twin pillars of His Center. Jane's first meeting with Baba, in 1958, was at the Center. The book on the Atlantic Ocean is the prophecy that The Book, the one Baba wrote in the Jhopdi and the Table-cabin in 1925, will be found in the United States. Norina Matchabelli is on the right side, an indication that she is also placed by Baba as a major support at the Center. The little boy tugging on Baba is Charles Haynes, and the little girl hiding behind Him is Wendy Haynes.



THE ABODE OF LOVE, MEHERAZAD

Meher Baba is seated with His beloved Mehera on one side, and His sister Mani on the other side. Mehera is expressing her sweet understanding of Meher Baba's daily life. Mani is reading a book of Love to children.

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THE REALM OF THE HEART, HARMIPUR

This mural has five figures of Meher Baba, including the figure on the dais, and the turbaned dancer in the foreground. The black man leaning against Baba's knee is Pukar, a leader for Baba's work in Harmipur. Pukar died a few days after this canvas was installed.

CATHEDRAL OF THE MIND - communion with masts

The central motif is a cross-section of Ruby Falls Cave at Lookout Mountain near Chattanooga, Tennessee. Two days before the automobile accident in Prague, Oklahoma, Baba and Mehera went down into the cave together and walked around the waterfall. This waterfall is phenomenal since its source has never been located. It symbolizes the Divine power that Baba relinquished to suffer in the auto accident in America. Baba and Mehera are painted attached to each other because (as Baba wrote) on the morning of May 24, 1952 they shared equally the Universal suffering when they were thrown from the car, broken and bleeding.

On each side of the mountain, outside the cave, there is a mast being fed by Meher Baba, the Savior. One mast receives bread, symbolizing the Body of the Savior, the other mast receives wine, symbolizing the Blood of the Savior. Because masts, on the mental plane of consciousness, value and are aware of Meher Baba's sacrificing of Himself, they are depicted in this mural receiving the Sacrament of Communion. Communion is a Christian ceremony in which one receives a piece of unleavened bread and a small cup of wine or grape juice, symbolizing, respectively, the Body and Blood of Christ. This outward expression of the masts receiving communion represents Meher Baba's sacrificing of Himself, in the auto accident, for the world's unnatural sanskaras, an invisible event to the rest of the world.



Dining Hall Exterior, North Verandah

Left to Right - All Canvases - 48" x 96"



FIERY FREE LIFE

Meher Baba is gesturing that everything is all right. Two untamed and riderless white horses run freely while the horse and rider walk majestically, led by a boy. This scene is based on the painting "Saint Martin" by El Greco.

IMPARTING OF DIVINE KNOWLEDGE

As Merwan approaches the temple at Sakori, Upasni Maharaj throws a stone which catapults like a meteor towards Merwan's forehead. It will hit Him exactly on the spot that Babajan has kissed. At the instant of the stone's impact, Divine Knowledge will be imparted and Merwan will begin coming down to gross consciousness. Leslie Ott designed this mural after reading the account.



DESCENT OF THE GOD-MAN

Shireenmai, Baba's mother, is on the viewer's left; Babajan, His Divine mother, is on the right. Baba is seated above His own face, as the Creator of Himself, the final achievement of His manonash work. Merwan, as a little boy, is at Shireenmai's knee in front of Guruprasad Palace, Poona. Sheriar, Baba's father and first disciple, is shown next to Meher Baba, the Creator.

O PARVARDIGAR

The unveiling of Merwan by Sai Baba. Merwan prostrates Himself at Sai Baba's feet as the veil of His identity is lifted with the pronouncement of "O Parvardigar" by the Qutub-e-Irshad of the Age. Mehera is seen behind the veil. On the viewer's left is the East, represented by Mount Fuji and Buddha. On the right is the West, represented by the Eiffel Tower, the sky scrapers of New York, and the donors the murals, Elaine and James Cox.



"MY WORK IS DONE . . . 100% TO MY SATISFACTION."

Meher Baba's declaration on Tuesday, July 30, 1968

We, the painters, portrayed each other receiving Baba's darshan at Mandali Hall, exactly as we did on October 4, 1965. With this natural portrayal of the Divine Beloved in human form, we completed these murals. We would argue over each picture. While we were debating whether this portrait of Baba was beautiful, Leslie, our youngest daughter, came into the studio. She said, "I just now saw Baba in here and He looked so beautiful I went to kiss Him, and it was only a painting."

A b o u t t h e A r t i s t s

Lyn Ott was born in Pennsylvania, April 25, 1926, and graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design, later studying painting with Yashuo Kuniyoshi. Early on, Lyn knew that he had a degenerative eye condition known as retinitis pigmentosa which would, by degrees, take away his sight. In art school, Lyn, sensing the validity of Spengler's pessimistic view about the decline of Western Civilization, felt the futility of participating in the Western tradition of art, which, in its death throes, could only produce "noise." Despite the "helplessness and hopelessness" of his situation, Lyn knew that painting was to be his work and somehow by finding the right subject matter, he would begin to participate in a new direction in his painting. On October 4, 1965, Lyn Ott, by then an accomplished painter, was called to meet Meher Baba. Baba's invitation was accompanied by the promise: "I will show Lyn My face as it really is; this I give to very few." A battery-powered movie light was used to reveal Baba's face to the failing eyes of the young artist. This ended Lyn's search for the Perfect subject in his paintings.

Born Phyllis Silverman in Massachusetts, April 5, 1926, Phyllis Ott graduated from Harvard and later studied painting with Hans Hofmann. During Phyllis's darshan with Baba in 1965, He gestured to her, "Phyllis sees My face perfectly." Phyllis was uniquely well-suited to help carry out the commission of these murals. She had studied the Mexican muralists, and in 1961 had painted a mural, using acrylic paints, in Guanajuato, Mexico. After her return to the United States from her first meeting with Meher Baba, December 21, 1964, Phyllis, along with a partner, designed and executed a 64-foot mural for a public building in Woodstock, New York. As she states, this experience prepared her both for working in partnership and for using the method of preparing murals in the studio for a remote location.

Lyn and Phyllis found their new direction together, in art and in life, when they privately had Meher Baba's darshan in October, 1965. Their joint partnership in portraying the Beloved in these murals was assisted by their talented children, Christopher, at age 16, and Leslie, at age 14.

A b o u t t h e M u r a l s

In 1971, James Cox envisioned a building in Meherabad to house the growing number of pilgrims. The walls of the interior, he foresaw, would be adorned with Lyn Ott's lavishly colorful paintings of Meher Baba.

Construction was delayed, however, until 1974, when James Cox was able to locate a source of water for the building. Meanwhile, Lyn's vision had deteriorated to the point where he could no longer undertake the work alone. Lyn and Phyllis thus formed a partnership, which was commissioned by Mani S. Irani, chairman of the Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public Charitable Trust. This partnership had been anticipated by Baba, for, besides referring to Phyllis and Lyn as "Phylyn," Baba stated pointedly, during their meeting in 1965, "Both of you will see Me within."

Working in concert with the architect, Ted Judson, the Ott's planned for seventeen murals. The paintings were begun January 1975, in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, and completed February 25 — Baba's birthday — 1976. The canvases were kept rolled up for four and a half years awaiting completion of the building. In April 1980, the canvases were cemented to removable asbestos panels and installed on the walls of the new Pilgrims Centre.

This work was accomplished through partnership in service to the Beloved; it is a tribute to the way in which the Master works. In his book, *In Quest of the Face of God*, Lyn expressed his gratitude for this partnership in his loving acknowledgement to Phyllis, "without whose intensity of purpose, sincerity of devotion, obedience and selfless service I would not have found my way to the feet of the Highest of the High."

Thus not only do these murals depict Beloved Avatar Meher Baba's glowing form and recount this advent of the God-Man, they also remind the pilgrim that the Avatar's responsibility is to bring us all to His Feet of Love.

S t a i n e d G l a s s W i n d o w s

These circular windows were designed and executed by the artist Judy Ernst.

The East Window symbolizes the East and is soft and feminine. It shows the breaking of dawn, starting in darkness with the moon and stars. Surrounding it are moon flowers, which open only at night, and they represent the aspirant keeping his eyes fixed on the Beloved. The "dawning" outer circle of lotuses are symbols of perfection in the East and are associated with the Avatar.

The West Window symbolizes the West and is bold and masculine. Its center is a bright sun and the colors deepen through a chain of daisies, which open only with the sun. The "sunset" outer circle of red roses are Christian symbols of perfection and the Beloved.