

In Quest of the Face of God

A Picture Book of Paintings of Meher Baba

By Lyn Ott

An Avatar Meher Baba Trust eBook

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IN QUEST OF THE FACE OF GOD

A picture book of paintings of Meher Baba



by the painter, Lyn Ott

IN QUEST OF THE FACE OF GOD

*My silence and the breaking of
my silence at the appointed
time will make silent those who
talk of everything but God*

Meher Baba

IN QUEST OF THE
FACE OF GOD
A picture book of paintings
of
Meher Baba

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lyn Ott', with a stylized, flowing script.

by the painter, Lyn Ott

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DEDICATION

To the lovers of God everywhere, lovers whose thirst for Beauty and Truth, whose hunger for the taste of Love's real fruit, and whose longing to see the reflection of Divine Presence, have come together to make possible a book such as this.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Meher Baba, the Source of all.

To my dear sister in Baba, Mani S. Irani, Meher Baba's sister, the sister to all, who eight years ago was already encouraging me to proceed with this work and also for her permission to quote Baba's words from *Eighty- Two Family Letters to the Western Family of Lovers and Followers of Meher Baba*, (Copyright 1976, Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public Charitable Trust, Ahmednagar, India), written by Mani.

To my son, Christopher, who urged me to produce the manuscript that became the text of this book.

To Bob and Jane Brown whose unfailing friendship from the start became a firm support for the ongoing work of this book.

To my dear angels, Steve and Diane La Fleur, whose consistent and wholehearted devotion to me and to the work has become for me a genuine treasure of Meher Baba's love.

To Diane La Fleur for the hundreds of hours of intense, patient, sensitive and intelligent work which slowly shaped into a readable form the contents of this book.

To Virginia Rudd for her invaluable consultation on the text in her suggestions of necessary revisions and clarifications.

To Jim Meyer, a splendid artist, who lovingly shaped all of this material into the art book that is here.

To Dana Ferry whose smiling qualities of understanding and enthusiasm made the final editing of the text a real joy.

To Elizabeth Patterson and Kitty Davy for their help in the final revisions. To Ralph Jackson, photographer of the paintings reproduced here, whose earnest devotion to me for Baba's sake is beyond my understanding.

. To Peter Townshend for the one frame reproduced here from the film of my meeting with the Beloved.

To Mike Leever for his support from the heart.

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.

NOTE: For a blind man to produce a piece of writing, much assistance is required. The original draft is typed by myself, usually in the dark of the night with all the lights out. Later it must be read back to me, whereupon it is all changed, retyped, read back to me again and retyped and so on. This requires not just one person but a committee of editing assistants. In this case that committee consisted of three people: Diane La Fleur, Jane Brown and Dana Ferry. All three worked and argued enthusiastically both among each other and with me for the sake of that Love which we call Meher Baba.

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Meherazad
25th December
1971

Dear Lynn,

In view of the discussion we had yesterday about the possibility of a book of colour productions of your paintings, I want you to know that I have no objection to your reproducing in it any of Beloved Baba's quotes that have appeared in the Family Letters.

Looking forward to the book is a joy many will share. Your paintings of the Beloved are a hymn to His glory that echoes in hearts awakened to His Love. JAI MEHER BABA ♡

much love in Him,

A He-he-ry Christmas
in 'Baba's Love' -

Mami

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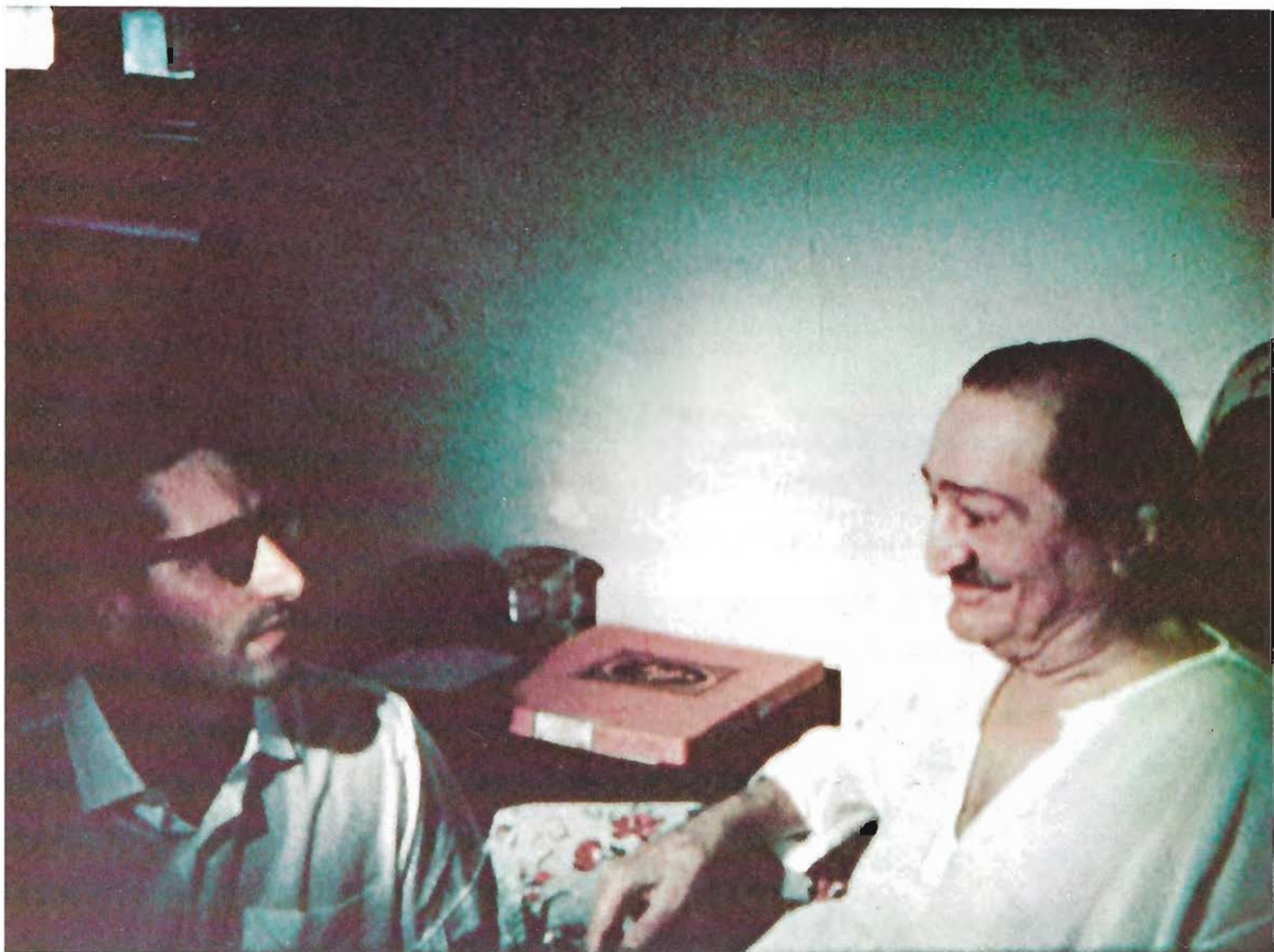
PREFACE

My experience of meeting Meher Baba cannot be separated from my experience of art. The experience of meeting Him took place in one beautiful morning, while my experience of art has lasted for more than thirty years. Even so, that meeting forms the central axis around which my life in art revolves.

I cannot really say that I know anything about Meher Baba. Even the highest reaches of the artist's imagination can barely touch the hem of the garment of a Divine personality. But I do know something about art, and I feel I can express something about Meher Baba through what I know in and about art. Art is not simply an expression; it is expression itself. Wherever expression is, there is art. Therefore, Meher Baba, being in Himself the most perfect expression, is necessarily the perfection of Art.

The purpose of this book is to bring more pointedly into focus the urgent necessity in our time to bring art back to God, the One Source of all art, that Source from whom art has strayed and lost its way.

-Lyn Ott



1. Meeting Meher Baba: Meherazad, October 4, 1965

MEETING MEHER BABA

In 1965, Merwan Sheriar Irani, known as Meher Baba, received me into the joy of His sweet presence when He was seventy-one years old.

Irani means one from Iran. Before the 14th century most Iranis followed Prophet Zoroaster. The Zoroastrian faith is the oldest religion still practiced in the world by those who observe the teachings of the Prophet who is said to have lived possibly nine thousand years ago. The Zoroastrian nation existed in Persia for thousands of years before it became the Islamic nation now called Iran. In the past centuries, those following the Zoroastrian faith had been severely persecuted and had gradually emigrated out of Iran in search of religious freedom. Because of the oppression in Iran, God willed that the child Merwan be born in India, where manifestations of God are awaited with great expectation and longing.

Sheriar, who was to become the father of Merwan, was a great seeker of God. Fervently in search of truth, Sheriar walked across the deserts of Iran and India. While in the desert, an angel appeared to him in a vision telling him that he would not achieve his goal within himself but that he would be the father of One who would be the personification of that which he was seeking. And so God put it into the heart of Sheriar to leave the desert and return homewards.

Sheriar's travels ended in Poona, India, where there was a large Zoroastrian community, including close relatives. Even here he continued the renunciate's life of celibacy and practiced purity of thought, word and deed, the essence of Zoroaster's message. Sheriar's sister, Piroja, pleaded with him to get married and to begin to live a householder's life, but Sheriar did not want to settle down. To put an end to the matter, Sheriar pointed to a child of five walking past the house and said to his sister, "That will be my wife; either her or no one." To his amazement his sister made him abide by his word and when the girl, Shireen, was fourteen Sheriar and Shireen were married and eventually went to live in the house where their beautiful child Merwan grew up.

Merwan was the perfect boy, admired, loved and respected by all those who knew him, both by the Spiritual Masters and the elders. Riding his bicycle to college one day through the crowded streets of Poona, he was beckoned to by a very old woman who was revered as a Perfect Master. This woman, Hazrat Babajan, had taken up her seat under a great neem tree near the busy market place. Dismounting his bicycle, Merwan came directly to her. With great purpose she bestowed a kiss upon his forehead, and in "less than a millionth of a second" his finite consciousness was transformed into consciousness of the Infinite.

The bestower of that kiss, Hazrat Babajan, by then one hundred and twenty-five years old, was one of the five Perfect Masters of the age. Over the period of the next eight years, the Perfect Masters prepared Merwan for his mission as Avatar, the One who works for the benefit of all souls in creation. These five Perfect Masters unveiled him and proclaimed him to be the Highest of the High, Saviour of humanity. So it was that Merwan became known by those close to him as Meher Baba, Compassionate Father.

I saw Meher Baba just once, and He allowed me to sit with Him for an hour and a half. That once-seeing is what is called a glimpse. That is what Baba wanted me to have. And all of the paintings that I have made of Him have come from the fire of that one glimpse.

As I sat close to Baba, He treated me with great personal affection and intimacy so that I felt His love. Instantly He was for me not the teacher or guru, but the loving father and friend. Baba touched me often with His caresses, patting my back, stroking my face.

Once more Baba gently stroked my chin and then asked me, "Did you shave today?"

It was about mid-morning and I said, "Yes, Baba. I shaved this morning."

Baba replied, "You didn't do a very good job. Feel Saba's chin."

Saba's face was very soft, and He had a splendid shave. Then I said, "While I was shaving I was thinking 'Does Saba shave?' "

Then Saba replied with surprise, "Why shouldn't I shave?"

I could only think to say, "Well, Saba, before this morning I had never associated shaving with God."

Then He looked me in the eye quite seriously, and His response was simply this: "I am more human than you are."

It is that humanness that is the basis of this book and the major part of my life's work.

Meher Baba is the name given in this age to the Highest of the High, but-for me it is the name of the man who has become the personal Friend and Sustainer.

Although I am present everywhere in my formless Infinite state, from time to time I take form. This taking form and leaving it is termed my physical birth and death. In this sense I am born and (in this sense) I die when my universal work is finished.

- Meher Baba

2. The Light That Comes Before The Sunrise. 66" x 54". Collection of the artist.



INTRODUCTION

The Presence of the Divine Personality Being Expressed Through Painting

by Bob Brown

Lyn Ott's work has the unique ability of conveying, by way of canvas and paint, the personal sight of Meher Baba that he experiences. This communication is born of great strength because the artist creates for vision while enduring the severe limitation of having little vision himself. The dynamic tension of these opposing perspectives serves to invoke the presence of Divine reflection in the paintings to the extent that any viewer can be moved by what he sees and feels to aspire for the same state that the artist is aspiring for. The paintings of Meher Baba by Lyn Ott are of importance for they are among the few physical objects in the gross world that have the introspective power of transcending gross medium and transmuting a spiritual atmosphere. This effect can lead the individual closer to the qualities of Love, Surrender and Service to God.

The viewer of a painting by Lyn Ott is gifted with seeing that inner glimpse given to the artist from God. This projected insight manifests in the form of creative work. But, much more, it is actually an open visual flow of Love exchange between the Lover and the Beloved, in this case, the artist and the Divine Beloved. The painting that emerges out of this exchange is in fact a sacred documentary of true feeling, surcharged with a contagious and spontaneous blessing that goes on energizing all who see it. Going even further, it can be likened to seeing a page from the book of the artist's heart that is exposed only because of the inherent creative urge endowed in him by the Lord of creation Himself.

The authority and encouragement that Avatar Meher Baba gave Lyn Ott through personal meeting and correspondence comes through clearly in the paintings as complete self-confidence or, in other words, optimistic impressionism. Despite the insecurity of the artist's visual limitation, each brush stroke emerges as a flamboyant expression. Lack of realistic accuracy is no hindrance to the presence dispensed by the paintings, for in this case high energy, depth, and intuitive color selectivity allow this presence to flow.

The original paintings that have inspired this book go beyond the norm of the art world in conveying a presence that can be felt just by proximity to the painting without necessarily even seeing it. This is because Meher Baba, while in the form, focused His sight on Lyn's work and through the omniscience of His gaze caused Himself to always be present in each viewer and in each

painting seeing His own reflections.

For the individual who is moved by Lyn's work viewing it is like receiving wine after a long process of purification. This is a high privilege-to receive the fruit of a man's life-labor, especially when it is nurtured to maturity by the Master's Nazar.

This time is the time that I feel Lyn Ott is at the zenith of his career. (All of the paintings reproduced here except one were painted in the year 1976.) His helplessness and hopelessness as an artist invokes Meher Baba as the companion to uphold the sincerity and inspirational level of his work. He needs little eyesight to paint and in turn, the viewer needs little eyesight to feel the presence in the paintings. It perhaps could be the most mystical perception in the art of painting-that a man-created canvas, confined to the dimensions of time and space, can indeed house the presence of the Divine personality.

DECLARATION

True humility is the principal attribute that would enable One to stoop down from the Highest of the High to the Lowest of the Low, to come all that way purely for the sake of Love. The One is called, variously, the Christ, Rasoo, the Avatar, the Messiah, and so on. Humility means self-effacement. And when the Avatar does actually stoop down from His real position of Highest of the High, this becomes the supreme act of self-effacement. This means that He becomes veiled from the eyes of the world, so that none of us can see His face as it really is.

When I finish a painting of the Beloved, I find that it is not really the completion of the painting but a new beginning of the possibility to express the beauty of the Beloved's face. And this feeling becomes the momentum driving me on in the fervor to start another painting. And now, at last, I as painter have finished with the impossible attempt and am content to surrender the glittering external image.

The great artist is guided by inner inspiration, which comes from his glimpse of the eternal nature in its full poignancy of being. Even the ordinary artist while not reaching the heights of inspiration is guided by his intuition, the voice of truth and beauty coming from deep within, beyond the reach of egoism.

The great painter is driven by something more than a monumental ego, for greatness is always from God, that still inner voice. (The Devil, they say, can speak to us. Not so, the Devil has no voice. He speaks to us only through the fire of terrible inner cravings and fetishes.) A great artist draws his strength from inspiration, the fountain-head of art. He is tuned to God, and his meditation is listening to Him in the act of creation. The work of the artist is really only a reincarnation, though all creations, great or small, are really from God. A great one, like Picasso, knows what God wants him to do from day to day, even though he may not find it necessary to think of Him as God; he knows how to do what he does, and he knows how to remain unaffected by what others think about what he is doing.

The great Dutch painter Jan Vermeer produced for us some of the most perfect paintings ever seen, giving to the world pictorial marvels of relative perfection. My own paintings however are filled with hundreds of imperfections. These paintings are virtually made of natural imperfections. But it really doesn't matter, all of this compound imperfection, because the One who is being portrayed here is, Himself, the actual embodiment of all perfection, Avatar, the Supremely Perfect One, perfect in His human simplicity.

There is always ego; there is ego up to the very instant of ultimate union with God. All action in the world necessitates some form of ego.

The ordinary ego says, "Kdo this, I do that." The uplifted or inspired ego says, "I do it for love." The emancipated Divine Ego says, "Kam Love." The One whose image is portrayed in this book declares in perfect humility, "Undoubtedly, I am Love."

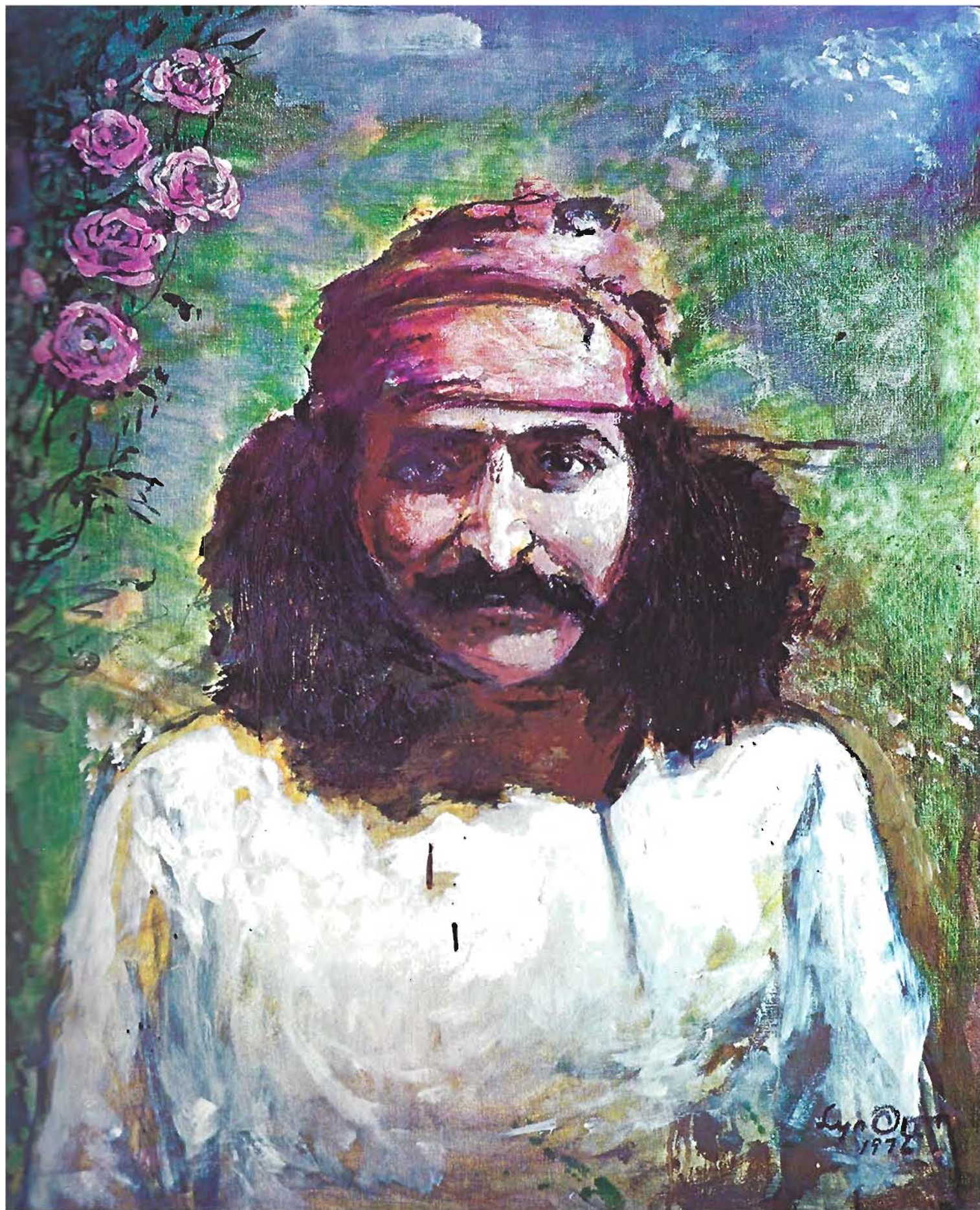
In praise of that Love, the one who produced these paintings says, "Khave been lifted up in the palm of Your hand to do what You, Beloved, have wanted me to do, as You have shown me to do, in spite of all difficulties and obstructions. In the twilight of my seeing, You had me paint these canvasses. Now, with that work done, the devotee remains here in this studio with the vision of a painter, painting these words."

Love and understanding never condemn, but seek to help and encourage. Men and women have departed from the custom and laws of Truth and goodness, but God never condemns us or turns us from His door; so we should not condemn even those who condemn us. I bless you to try to understand and love those who are trying to help you to take your place in God's Work through serving His humanity.

By serving the abandoned you are serving Jesus the Christ because He too was abandoned by all, even by His own apostles. The emblem of abandonment is the Cross. Hence, to serve the abandoned is to serve the Christ – and I am He, undoubtedly.

Meher Baba

- 3. "Undoubtedly, I Am Love." 28" x 34". Collection of Bobbi Bernstein



THE FERVOR

What is it that makes great art? In my opinion it is the fervor. And what is fervor? It seems to me that fervor is the pure expression of the heart; it stands opposite to fanaticism which is saddled, clad in armor, sword drawn, ready for challenge and conquest. Fervor is clad all in vibrant color and seeks by the sincerest of means to discover those nuances that make up the components of true love.

As I stood in Meher Baba's Tomb one day in 1977, Padri, one who had served the Master all of his life, stood next to me for a moment and gently placed a rose into my hand. That was a gesture of fervor as poignant as a brush stroke; it was so immediate and natural. I held the flower to my lips and then laid it gently upon the stone at the feet of my Master, the Highest of the High, the King of Kings. Here, quite clearly, in a pure and spontaneous moment, a gesture of real fervor was transferred from the Mandali through me to the Beloved. Imagine a conquered general offering a flower to the victorious conqueror.

*This incense is my love, these fruits my art
Which to please You I have shaped from my heart.
Accept them as You would a simple flower
That has no use beyond its shining hour.*

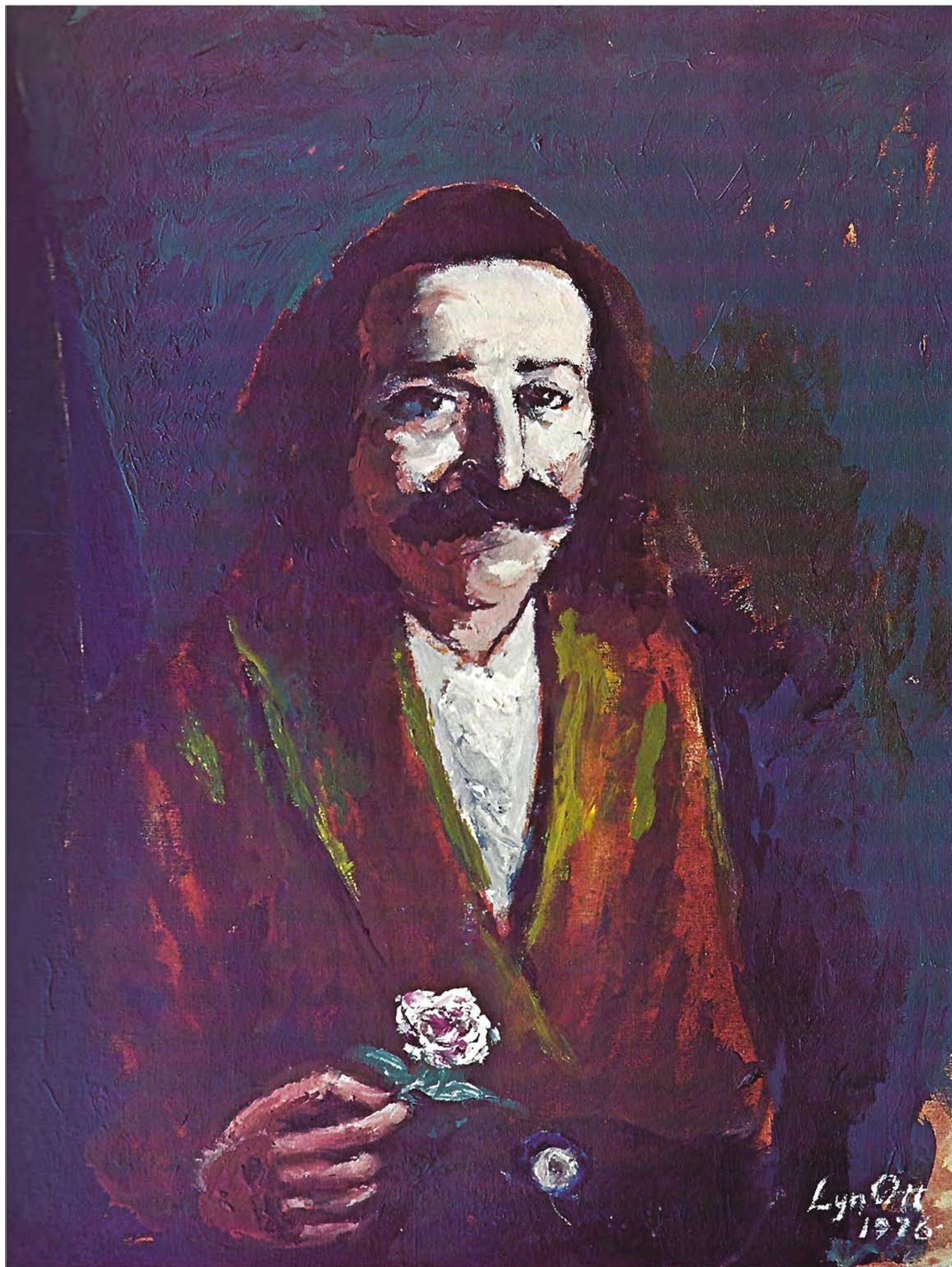
(from The Arti by Francis Brabazon)

Does not the offering of a single flower represent the fervor that is in the heart of the lover? Because of the possibilities opened up through pictorial space, I was freed as a painter to garland Him openly in atmosphere and color without crushing the delicate and graceful image of His form. Thus, in the painting, the Beloved is garlanded by the whole space of the picture which becomes, veritably, a garden of inner fragrance.

*When one remains fully and completely resigned to the Divine Will of God,
all service, sacrifice, solitude, seeking and surrenderance merely symbolize
one's love for God.*

Meher Baba

4. Deliverance. 26" x 34". Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Chris Pearson



BECOMING A PAINTER

Perhaps no one ever really becomes a painter. Perhaps God in His vast system of reincarnation simply designates that in a particular time this one or that one is a painter. So a man does not become a painter; he releases himself into his paintings until his work is done. We can have no doubt that God wants us to understand that everything that happens is the will of God. Who teaches a poet to be a poet? No one. So it is with painters. No one teaches a painter to become a painter. All we can say is that painters are inspired by great artists to become better painters and they can, through love for God, release themselves more fully into their work to become inspired painters.

Thirty-five years ago if a young man wanted to study art as a serious pursuit, it would not have been surprising for him to receive considerable opposition from his parents. But in my case, fortunately, this was not the situation, even though it was known that I suffered from a hereditary eye disease leading to ultimate blindness. I recall my father saying that if one is endowed with a talent he should go forward to try to develop that talent as far as he can. He once said that even if I were to paint only one masterpiece, my career as a painter would be worthwhile. My dad, though an atheist, was a spiritual type and a high idealist. God in His wisdom gave me parents who wished only to encourage and assist me in my pursuit of a career in art.

In those days I was far more shy than I am now. I had not yet learned to cope with the many hardships and humiliations of being visually impaired. But also I had not yet heard of or met the Avatar of the Age. I was very serious then, though I look back upon those times as being quite happy. I stayed to myself, applying all my attention to those studies which were leading me daily into the awesome mysteries of the realm I was entering-the realm of painting with all its incredible alchemy.

I particularly remember one day in my second year of study at the Rhode Island School of Design when the formidable Mr. Frasier, head of the Fine Arts Department, remarked, "You know we don't make artists here; you're either an artist or you're not an artist before you come here."

For me, that was one of those rare moments of recognition that comes in a flash at distant intervals in our lives. Rarely are we presented with the opportunity to make a conscious decision. I knew instantly that I was an artist. I remember this vividly, for it was a moment of decision, a moment of recognition.

That moment of recognizing that I was an artist was cast upon me as a flash of fate, a moment from which there was no turning back. Later that same year I was faced with another such momentous decision, though not so spontaneous. I had to decide whether to go into commercial art or fine art, i.e., painting. Before entering art school, I had not really known that there was a world of painting with resplendent museums, full of wondrous creations of art. Now a door stood open to me, but I did not know whether I dared to pass through.

I remember standing in the doorway of Mr. Frasier's office; I was unbearably shy, unaccustomed to using my rather thin voice. He was so frighteningly imposing, that tall lanky man with his great massive voice. Two of his colleagues, both painting teachers, were sitting in the office with him. The two instructors had a high regard for my talent; I knew that. But Mr. Frasier regarded me, I was quite sure, as the most inconsequential artist who had ever come to that school. How odd that seems by contrast to the warmth and genuine affection with which the Avatar of the Age received me into His loving Presence so many years later.

"Mr. Frasier," I said meekly, "I have decided to go into painting, not into commercial art." Frasier swung slightly in his swivel chair, tilted his head and looked quizzically at me, a touch of irony underneath his bushy, grey moustache, and said, "What's the matter, Ott, don't you want to make a lot of money?" My reply was simply, "No." Frasier swung back around and looked at his colleagues with amused astonishment. They sat soberly and registered no expression at all. My sight was not so bad then: I recall taking in the scene in that room with a painter's eye. That glance was a fleeting moment of impression amidst the worldwind of life which has stayed with me as has the moment when I knew that I was to be a painter.

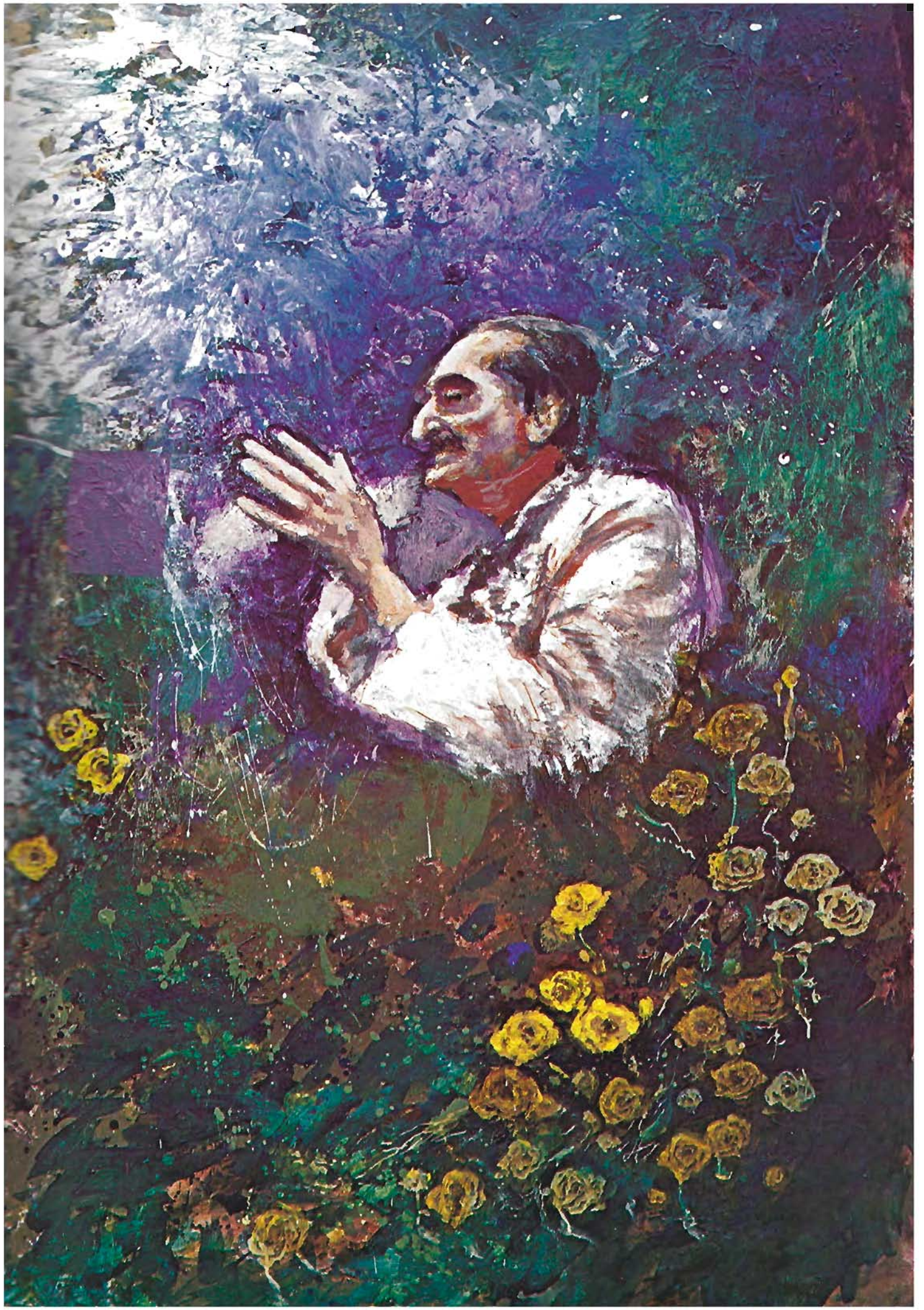
Picasso, as Gertrude Stein firmly stated, "is a great one," a discoverer of worlds. And what am I? Only a seeker of the treasure. So it was that I became a painter. While I have always felt the pressure of never making much money, I have always had the freedom to explore the vast domain of painting purely for the sake of Existence, which is God. And now that I can no longer paint another painting, still the painter exists; but that painter is no longer "me." The painter exists in his paintings-nowhere else.

· .. there comes a time when one longs to reach the Source of knowledge. The journey to this Source can only be undertaken when one learns to love in all simplicity and honesty the One whom the pride of intellect veils.

When mind soars in pursuit of the things conceived in space, it pursues emptiness; but when man dives deep within himself he experiences the fullness of existence.

Meher Baba

5. Out Of Fathomless Depths Love Blooms. 72" x 50". Collection of the artist.



ART AND CIVILIZATION

The paintings reproduced here are very loosely connected to the great mainstream of painting in what we call Western Civilization. These pictures do not rank with the splendid masterpieces of the past. They are something else. They have been painted in a time of confusion which inevitably precedes a universal spiritual awakening, which in turn brings in its wake a new dawn of civilization and the flowering of a new culture. In our Western culture pictures have been appreciated mainly for their beauty and perfection, relative perfection of form. The paintings in this book do not really belong to that Western tradition but are intended to be valued mainly for the image portrayed of the One who embodies in Himself the real beauty of perfection. The value and appeal of these pictures is supported almost entirely by that Image. Anyone not inwardly pulled to that image may find it difficult though not impossible to comprehend these pictures.

When I was in art school it was required for students to take three years of art history in order to graduate. The subject of art history was extremely interesting to me, and was one of the few academic courses I ever did well in. This part of my education provided the first motivation for me to become a serious painter.

The first year of the three year art history course was called "Art and Civilization." It was meant to make us aware of art as one of the major barometers of civilization. We learned that it is mainly spiritual and religious understanding that comprise the substance of the art of any culture. I found that educated people take a great deal of pride in their civilization and identify strongly with it. In our last year of art school we were expected to be able to use all that we had acquired from our study of art history for creative purposes. I took this quite seriously.

I had become, through my education, a participant in the tradition of Western painting. I learned that following out of tradition, not breaking with it, was necessarily a part of being a painter.

Somewhere in that last year, I came across a book by the German historian, Oswald Spengler, called *The Decline of the West*. This book shook me deeply, undermining my faith in all that I was accomplishing in art school. It made me ask: what does it really mean to be an artist?

Spengler held that civilizations are merely cyclical in nature and that the history of man is not divided, as had been previously taught to me, into ancient, medieval, and modern periods, but that there have been many civilizations, each having a life span of about sixteen-hundred years. He wrote

that these cycles of human existence turn on each other like wheels in a clock with definite patterns of rise and decline.

The devastating thing about Spengler's revelation was that he said we are in the last phase of Western Civilization in which all of the forms that have marked this culture with a particular grandeur are now falling into confusion: art, literature, music, religion, politics, everything. This final period, according to Spengler, lasts two hundred years. In fact, Spengler saw the many unfinished paintings of Renoir and Cezanne at the close of the nineteenth century as signs of this decline. I realized in complete dismay that, if all this were true, then there would be no ongoing tradition for painting in the West.

So great was my shock and dismay that I took leave from my classes for several days to think it all over and to decide what to do. I probed more deeply into the book discovering that in the last fifty years of a civilization art becomes noise. And I thought then, "Here I am in the middle of the twentieth century with exactly fifty years left according to the Spengler time-table."

Finally I went back to classes having decided that whatever was happening to civilization in its vast turning cycle painting was my work.

Then, several weeks later, my instructor, who had also coincidentally come across this book, confronted my class with the same questions that I myself had pondered: "What are we to make of this?"

The rest of the class was silent. I replied, "I have read most of the book, and I believe it to be essentially true."

He responded, "Then how can you continue to sit there trying to learn to paint with Western painting altogether at an end?"

I was able then to put into expression the resolutions which I had made when I came back to my classes: "Painting as a whole may be dead as a vital tradition in the West, but I am a painter. By fate I am living in the twentieth century and there is nothing I can do about it but go on with whatever I am able to do as an artist. If this is the end, then there has to be a new beginning."

I began to feel at that time that my contribution in art was not going to be in style or technique but rather in the content or subject matter of my paintings. I knew that I needed to find the perfect subject worthy of painting, and my own helplessness was that I had not yet found the central theme for my life/s work.

I later noted that this was in the year 1949, the year Meher Baba went into "The New Life" phase of His Universal work. The attitude that characterized "The New Life" was that of spiritual "helplessness and hopelessness," reliance wholly and solely on God with no expectations for the future, creative resignation to whatever might be the circumstances of life.

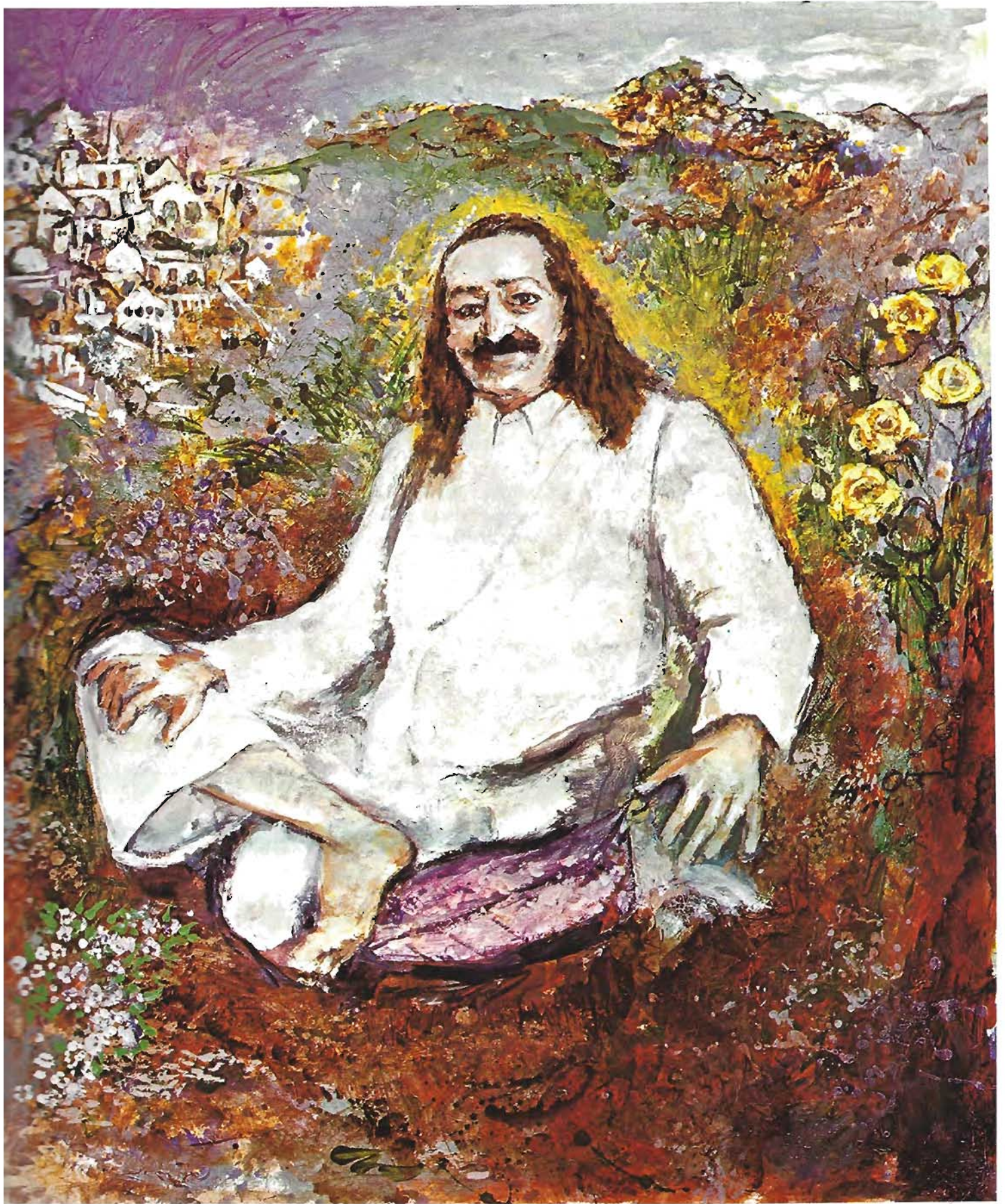
I could not have imagined during those last years of school that some day I would go to see the Avatar of the Age and become His adherent. Because we at the very end of an age, God has given to us His Avatar who gives to the world and to each of us a new beginning. And since that meeting with the Divine Beloved my work in painting has become the first infant steps in my new beginning.

*Love makes the Formless and Infinite become enformed and finite as the
God-Man among men. Love me more and more because for the sake of
Love I have come among you.*

*When, from the depths of his heart, man desires something more real than
material power, the wave of destruction will recede. Thence peace will come,
joy will come, light will come.*

Meher Baba

6. "This New Life Is Endless." 60" x 54". Collection of the artist.



THE SEARCH FOR THE FACE OF GOD

In the eternal cycles of the world every civilization has its spiritual origin, its long aspiration, its summit of achievement, its decline and its final desperation. Art always prefigures the general conscious awareness and search for truth in any civilization. By the seventeenth century, the aggressive spirit of England had invaded India, and the West had overreached its limit. The secret mystic truth that had been hidden in India was unlocked and began to permeate the consciousness of the West affecting Western intelligence and art with a growing intensity of search.

French Impressionism was the first radical break with tradition in Western painting in its intense search into the possibilities of forms of nature seen as projected daylight. Out of Impressionism came Paul Cezanne who stated, "I want to make of Impressionism something solid and enduring like the great art of the *museums*." Cezanne, through the use of impressionistic color and light, re-established the inner stability of forms and their relationships by redefining pictorial space. In the section, "*The Eternal Nature*," Cezanne's own fervent searching for reality through form is discussed in greater depth.

The final disintegration of form in painting, Cubism, began soon after the death of Cezanne. Cubism, with its breaking up and analysis of the elements of form for their own sake, was a dead end. It is my feeling that the Cubist painters were endeavoring to take the art of painting into the fourth dimensional experience of the world by replicating their visualization of objects seen from all sides simultaneously. Cubism was an intellectual attempt that failed, the result being that a Cubist picture creates the feeling of falling back into an almost two dimensional arrangement of flattened-out surfaces. Intellect and rational analysis are not the way into a fourth dimension. The Cubists, though motivated by Cezanne's analytical methods in painting, misunderstood the high constructive aims of Cezanne's work. Cezanne, by the start of the twentieth century, had made a monumental effort to renovate Western painting, but Cubism squandered the profits of that effort and brought Western art one step further into its decline.

Now the stage was set for a whole new cycle of human consciousness. By the time Merwan Irani had received that unveiling kiss from Hazrat Babajan in Poona, India, the time of Cubism in France was finished. During the conscious advent of Meher Baba, who by the turn of the 1920's had set Himself to the task of reconstructing the destiny of the world, the most significant modern painter, Claude Monet, reached his full magnitude of vision and a new epoch had begun.

Monet succeeded in breaking through into the fourth dimension of vision

where painting is utterly beyond words, and silence is contained in the whole fragrance of seeing. In the final years of Monet's life his garden had become the doorway to his own intuition in art. The culmination of all his life's work, the "Water Lily" paintings, are conceived simultaneously from both indoors and outdoors. His water garden floated visually into his studio where he worked on huge canvasses; the specially constructed studio was integrally a part of the atmosphere, space, light and fragrance of the garden. His paintings had the profound feeling of something truly sacred, evoking reverence for that mystery which is the essence of the eternal nature. Studio painting and outdoor painting had here at last become one and the same in the fourth dimensional continuum. Part of his painting work was developing and landscaping his subject, the garden to which he devoted as much time and attention as he did to his painting.

Those paintings which we call "The Water Lilies" of Monet constitute the last most delicately fragile veil from which have been removed all other veils of material associations. Monet ignored the form and saw only the light itself. If that veil of light itself were pulled away, we might see the face of Reality, the face of God.

Cezanne had said of Monet, "He is just an eye, but my God, what an eye."

The vision of Monet transcended all of Western painting and left it literally a closed book. Monet did not disintegrate form as the Cubists had done, rather he elevated the art of painting into the domain of pure vision. Through his painterly intuition he had given a new pronouncement to the act of seeing. His vision began to prepare our sight for a new age of seeing, which would transcend the tradition of both Eastern and Western painting. God used the pure vision of Monet to focus our conscious awareness on the act of seeing itself.

During the years of work on the "Water Lily" paintings Monet was increasingly troubled by the loss of his eyesight. Until now, when I am so close to completing my work on the text for this book, I have been quite reticent to discuss at all what I went through during that year, 1976, the year in which all but one of the pictures in this book were produced. Monet's words, read out to me, now recall to my mind the agony and travail of my own struggle to continue to paint the image of Meher Baba during that tortuous year. These are Monet's words:

In the night I am constantly haunted by what I am trying to realize. I rise broken with fatigue each morning. The coming of dawn gives me courage, but my anxiety returns as soon as I put foot in my studio printing is so difficult and torturing. Last autumn I burned six canvasses along with the dead leaves from my garden. It is enough to make one give up hope. Nevertheless I should not like to die before I have said everything that I had to say-or at least having tried to say it. And my days are numbered

God alone can know the anguish of a painter going blind at the full prime of his life's work. What Monet describes for us here is a living death, a destruction of one's self contrary to one's own wish because, for a painter, seeing is the fulfillment of life. To see the human face of the God-Man expressed in painting was for me everything. I had become an archeologist uncovering immeasurable treasure hidden in that one image explored over and over again. Yet all the while from month to month, that image was fading away into a mist which for me seemed hopeless emptiness, a helpless void. But the blindness is as far as the comparison between myself and Monet can go. It would take a hundred painters like myself to equal a Monet. I was simply fortunate enough to have been allowed to set my eyes upon the one Face appearing in the midst of illusion, signifying God.

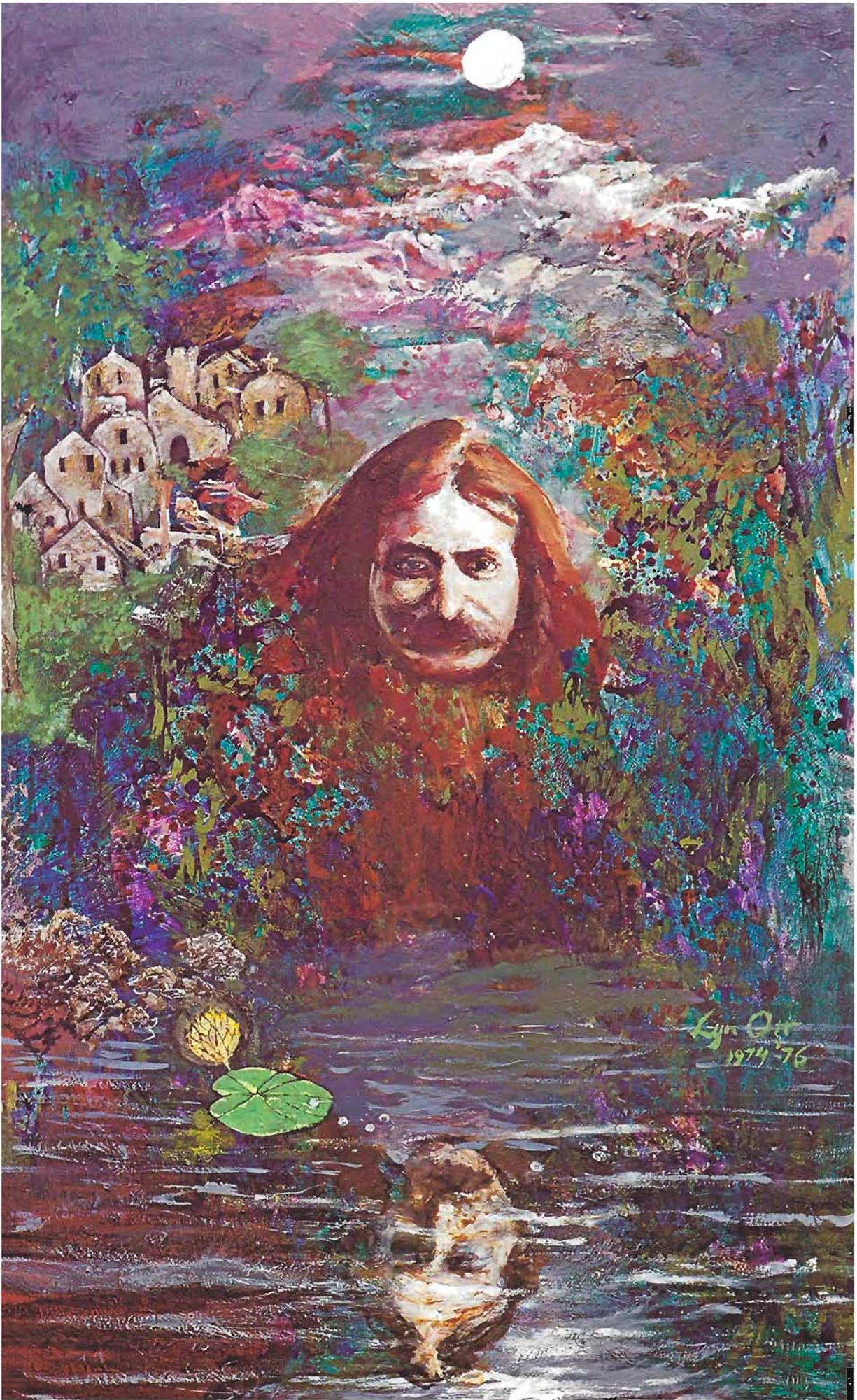
Painting is a great art because of its silence. It is in its way a small part of that great silence, His silence. And with that Face of silence gone from before my sight, all that is left is this rain of words, falling from fingers now cleansed of paint.

So where is the Face of God now? It is in the heart of the lover.

I veil myself from man by his own curtain of ignorance, and manifest my Glory to a few. My present Avataric Form is the last Incarnation of this cycle of time, hence my Manifestation will be the greatest. When I break my Silence the impact of my Love will be universal and all life in creation will know, feel and receive of it.

Meher Baba

7. Moon Over Srinagar. 72" x 44". Collection of Bruce and Gilda Kelsey.



THE WESTERN PREDICAMENT

The story of Western painting is characterized and given life by the presence of a deeply abiding inner tension between the spirit and mentality of Western man. That tension is the great pull between theism and humanism. Theism in art is the conscious glorification of God manifest. The spirit of humanism is the conscious glorification of man on earth as the supreme fulfillment of Creation. The tension between these two poles, theism and humanism, is what has given momentum to the ongoing current of Western painting.

The Renaissance was the period in which the titanic struggle of this Western predicament emerged. Leonardo da Vinci, the great scientist and mystic, feeling that he had been discovering a reality in the world around him died in a deep depression because he could not discover where his own profound spiritual feeling fit into that reality. The problem is that the occidental mind tends to see God and man each in his own separate and distinct realm.

This is perhaps why the towering Michelangelo lived on and on in his art a life of such continual agony. In the young Michelangelo humanism had gained complete ascendancy. He brings us face to face with the conflict in the creation of his statue of David: David, the uncircumcised secular figure of human beauty, the ideal human, the triumphant young hero is, in his own right, simply a man in his unabashed naked splendour. David we know from Scripture as the real lover of God, yet here we see him as purely and sublimely human, not at all theistic in attitude or form. We can be quite sure that this is the conscious expression of the sculptor's powerful mind, breaking down the last vestiges of theistic form in occidental art. But then, in the later years, with the accumulation of his own life's suffering, we see him tormentedly painting the "Last Judgement," with its turbulent religious upheaval.

The ongoing current of Western art leading out of the Renaissance might be seen to be the tremendous effort to reconcile the newly awakened humanism with the particular spiritual consciousness inherent in each of the diverse European cultures. All subsequent Western painting up until the time of Rembrandt came out of this effort to bring into balance the pull between theistic and humanistic vision.

Though Michelangelo was clearly a soul in torment over this predicament, Titian, the great Venetian painter of opulence and beauty, in his earlier years, was not. In his paintings the human form had become the image of pure beauty and the theme of these pictures was pagan, derived mostly

from Greek mythology. Titian was in love with painting for its own sake.

However, the Western spiritual predicament was also finally to touch his work. He became repentant at the age of seventy and underwent a transformation of his whole style of painting. Both theme and substance were turned to God and a profound depth of religious inspiration was reached. He painted in this new and deeper mode for another thirty years, until he was more than a hundred years old.

Titian became one of the greatest of the Italian painters because he loved God simply by expressing through the inner glow of his paintings the vision of beauty that God had given him. And when in later years his heart turned more directly to love for God, his style deepened and enriched itself, yet all the while he was steadfastly the humanist, drawn back to God in His human image as Jesus. The later paintings of Titian were not ecclesiastical but were consistent with his humanness of vision in his portrayal of the human drama of the life of the man, Jesus.

Until I was thirty-eight years old, painting itself was my religion, but once I had met face-to-face the Highest of the High, His image became the center and core of that religion. In 1968 Meher Baba sent me this message, responding to the first exhibition of paintings of Him anywhere:

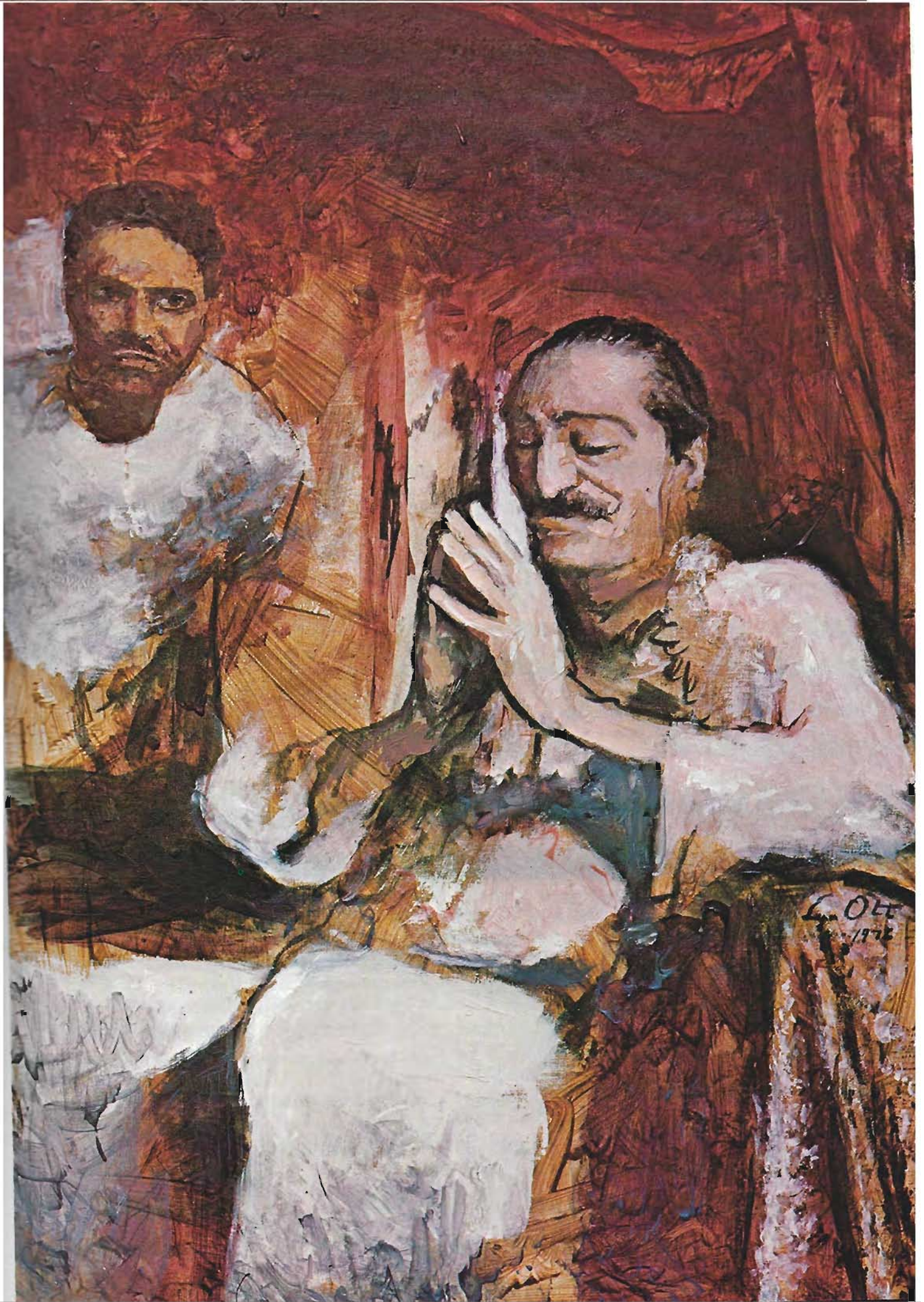
The image of the God Man will help enshrine Him in the Hearts of His Lovers.

This message made me feel that God as Avatar was using me to help bring painting back to its original source of inspiration-the appearance of God on earth in human form.

*Although I take birth for all mankind Fortunate are
the ones who love Me While I am on earth.*

Meher Baba

8. Master And Disciple. 52" x 36". Collection of the artist.



THE GREEK

In the late sixteenth century, in the time of Titian, a man from Greece named Theotocoplis arrived in Italy. He stood in the Sistene Chapel amazed at the titanic spectacle of the "Last Judgement" by Michelangelo. Then turning his eyes to the ceiling he beheld the most miraculous painting achievement ever seen on the continent of Europe. It was as though the very breath of God had moved upon that ceiling to expound in painted forms his own Divinity and His own Creation, Theotocoplis, overwhelmed with the inspiration of Michelangelo's work, knew without a doubt that his own destiny was that of a painter.

He found his way to Venice and to the workshop of the mighty Titian, into whose hands he placed himself as an apprentice. No doubt Titian recognized the promising talent of this young man. During his years in Titian's workshop a deep understanding of the pictorial potentialities of human forms was conveyed to him-forms moving in space by means of the fluidity and internal glow of oil painting.

Legend has it that another great Venetian painter, Tintoretto, had earlier been a student in Titian's studio. Tintoretto, whose painting Titian did not like for its excesses in design, left the studio after one week. Whether Titian threw him out or not we don't know. Their personalities were too dissimilar for them to have worked together. Titian, the humanist, could not appreciate Tintoretto's human figures flying freely in space like angels. But this feature of Tintoretto's design captured Theotocoplis' imagination and appealed greatly to the Divine fervor of his more spiritual state of mind. Though Titian was the teacher, Tintoretto was to be the force that inspired Theotocoplis.

Having learned from Titian the management of opulent designs of color on canvas, Theotocoplis migrated to Spain where he set up a studio in Toledo. It was here that he became known as El Greco, the Greek, and here he produced the Godliest paintings ever seen in all of Europe. In huge rhythmic compositions, the manifested image of Christ is borne aloft on wings of ecstatic movement, ever upward in utmost clarity of color, line, light and space. Conveyed to us is a feeling of deep assurance that the painter's hand has been moved by Divine inspiration. This was the last great flash of purely theistic vision in Western painting. It could not have happened in Italy where the humanistic vision of the Renaissance had gained supremacy. The mystic atmosphere of Spain was perfectly suited to the temperament of El Greco.

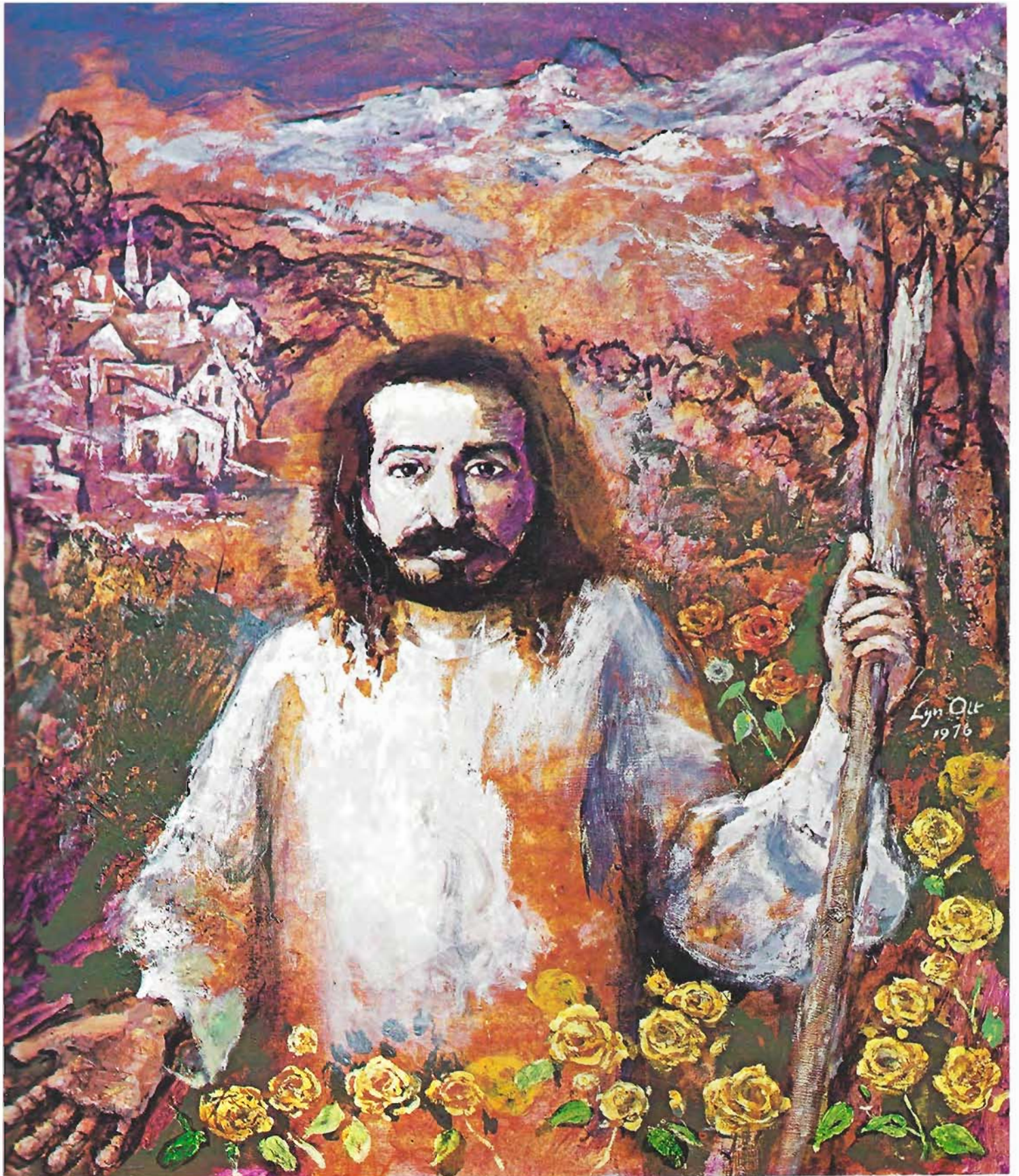
Thus it can never be said that the West did not finally glorify in art the transcendental reality of Christ. It is told that in his visit through the Prado Museum in Madrid, Meher Baba gave particular attention to the paintings of Jesus Christ. Baba must surely have been touched by the earnest fervor and grandeur of El Greco's aspiration to reach for the highest realm in art, which is the effort to please God.

What do I know really? I have never been to Europe to see these great works. I have, in fact, only seen picture books, together with my gleanings from our museums. And now, being blind, I write only from fond recollection and nostalgia. But I did see something very important while I still could see: it was that one glimpse of the human form of the living Christ. We live in a time now when most artists have forgotten that art is only about God. My experience has emboldened me to offer the contents of this picture book to whomever is destined to see it, and perhaps to provide through that experience some usefulness for Him, in the fathomless working out of His Divine Will.

Why and how can I suffer when I am the Ocean of Power, Knowledge and Bliss? God has infinite Power, infinite Knowledge and infinite Bliss. The Avatar is God Himself incarnate on earth as Man. During His ministry as Avatar, He uses only infinite Knowledge. He does not make use of His infinite Power and infinite Bliss. This is because God incarnates as Man and goes through universal suffering and helplessness in order to emancipate mankind from its ignorance of suffering and helplessness. If the Avatar were to use His infinite Power, how could He experience helplessness? If the Avatar were to use His infinite Bliss, how could he suffer? He therefore does not use either His infinite Bliss or His infinite Power. Such is His infinite Love and Compassion for His creation! Jesus Christ, Who had infinite Power, let Himself become helpless and suffered the humiliation of letting the people spit on Him and jeer at Him. He suffered crucifixion, but even while on the Cross did not help Himself from the Power and Bliss that were His. Instead He cried, "Father, why hast Thou forsaken me!" He said it to Himself, of course, for He and the Father are One.

Meher Baba

9. The Eternal Shepherd. 50" x 44". Collection of Bob Brown.



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF REMBRANDT

To go on with the story of painting we must move from mystical Spain northward over the Pyrenees, across France, into the low country where there are no mountains. How can a painter be inspired without mountains to look at through his window? That is a question I have often asked myself here in Myrtle Beach.

By the seventeenth century Amsterdam was the most flourishing and bustling city on the continent, alive with commerce and international trade. Its people were hardworking, energetic and orderly. Science and medicine prevailed in the modern enlightenment. Neatness and tidiness were the way of life for the growing middle class, and painting portrayed with crisp realism the prosperity and orderliness of the time.

Into the midst of this puritan atmosphere strode a flamboyant nineteen-year-old Dutchman, a brilliant painter, and a full-blooded romantic. Humanism prevailed in Amsterdam unlike anywhere else. Theism was confined to the printed Bible which all the people, being Protestant and literate, were free to read and understand for themselves. Man and God coexisted nicely, neither infringing too heavily upon the territory of the other.

The young Dutchman came from the countryside. His father was a miller, a practical man; his mother was very religious and is seen in one painting with spectacles intensely reading her Bible. Rembrandt was a genius born to paint, and his parents were very proud of him, despite what may have seemed his audaciously impractical nature. Where did he really come from, Rembrandt Van Rijn, this genius? His personality and his painting vision had a breadth that was not confined to the Dutch conservatism. All we know is that by his mid-twenties Rembrandt's name had reached out over all of Europe and he was already the most prominent portrait painter in the world.

Rembrandt married the lovely Saskia, so often portrayed in his early paintings, and set up his studio on the third floor of their large Amsterdam house. Noblemen from as far away as Italy came to have their portraits done by the young master painter. And so, like his city, he flourished and prospered for more than a decade. But the restlessness of his great talent would not allow him to remain with the style that had brought him so much success. He began to look beneath the polished surface of Dutch life to see the humor and the pathos that were there. A golden light began to glow from beneath his brush. He could not help it; he found himself not looking at things but seeing into things.

He began to think more of Jesus and to paint Him and the scenes from the

life of Christ in every man's face and the face of every man in the face of Jesus. Every painting was now a meditation on the way to God, no longer simply a Dutch picture but a universal vision, full of inner radiance.

Rembrandt, at the age of thirty-five, stood apart not only from his countrymen and contemporaries, but from all other painters who had ever lived. His uniqueness was in the fact that his pictures are about the life of the spirit; and each individual canvas is the achievement of that symbolic alchemy in Western art, the transmutation of the materials and process of painting into shimmering gold. Here at last was the resolution of the Western predicament. In Rembrandt we witness the spirit fully emerging as form in art.

By now Rembrandt was fully aware of his capacity to realize anything he wanted with pigment on canvas. He had already reached the full measure of worldly success in art. His appreciation of the abundant materiality of seventeenth-century Holland differed from that of other Dutch painters in that this enjoyment was fully used in the originality of his great pictorial instinct.

This originality was most fully expressed in his grand masterpiece, "The Night Watch," the triumph and disaster of his career. It was a commissioned group portrait depicting the gathering of militia. Rembrandt broke with the stiff compositional arrangement of traditional group portraits and arranged his figures in a deep spatial setting in which only a few people were given prominence in the composition. He went deeper into pictorial space, deeper into his own inner feeling about the handling of color and tonality, and deeper into his sensitive observation of the souls he was painting.

In that painting, Rembrandt's courage and audacity brought about the undoing of his reputation as a painter. He had produced a canvas of such apparent chaos and confusion that it was seen as an affront to the orderly and civilized attitudes of the Dutch people. As a result of one supreme stroke of inspiration, a great action, a great reaction occurred causing his fall from public favor, the collapse of his career, and the name Rembrandt to be appreciated no more by the contemporary world.

He lost his wife, who died of tuberculosis. His wealth and his fine house were also gone. Bankrupt, he went to live in the ghetto of Amsterdam. Then at last he was free, free to surrender his brush, all he had left, to God; and that brush was an instrument of a truly Divine vision. That vision entered into everything his brush touched, however trivial or mundane. Rembrandt was then able to invest his feeling for the poignancy of life itself into his painting, endowing it with a mysticism brought from beneath the surface of even the most common objects. Here, in the humble conditions of his new environment, the materiality of Dutch life was surpassed and transcended. All became aglow with the inner light of compassion, love, mercy and empathy.

Having virtually no patrons for his paintings, Rembrandt chose whomever he wanted as subjects for his portraits. And in each face he painted, he revealed the countenance of a potential saint or even a prophet.

Living in the Jewish ghetto, Rembrandt now turned more and more to the Scriptures and imagined scenes from the Old and New Testaments and from the legends of classical antiquity. It was all the same to him, all replete with deep spiritual meaning to be revealed through the marvel of his evolved style. The magnificent canvas in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, "Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer," is a marvel of insight into the deepest understanding latent in all human experience. In this painting there are no longer divisions between secular and religious, no distinction between pagan and ecclesiastical. The face, the objects, and every bit of fabric are endowed with light and the poignancy of love and understanding.

Aristotle's face is no less spiritual in feeling than Rembrandt's many portrayals of the face of the God-Man, Jesus, with its human warmth and suffering. At this point, by the mid-seventeenth century, Western painting had reached its summit, completing that great quest for the unification of theism and humanism in art.

A picture conveys an idea or a story. A painting gives to the viewer of the picture a fullness and richness of experience. The picture tells us what it is about, while the painting carries and conveys the mystical substance. It must be kept in mind that the pictures in this book are of real paintings, and it must be remembered that a painting is first and last a painting, irrespective of what it may or may not depict as a picture.

Rembrandt was a real maker of pictures, but above and beyond this he was a painter, one of the greatest, because his paintings undoubtedly do convey to the perceptive eye that mystical substance.

As a maker of pictures, I have tried to be adequate to the task set before me by God-Man. But beyond picture-making I have been a painter, expressing the joy and exultation springing from one glimpse of the Divine Beloved.

For me it seems most natural to revere the painter Rembrandt as one who surely had a glimpse through the veil of earth's shadows into the deepest nature of all things seen, a look into the inner luminosity emanating from the human soul. To Rembrandt alone was given this profound inner vision of the unity of the human and the Divine in Western painting. I am not what he was. I am one designated to perform a task beyond my natural reach.

For the last fourteen years I have been a painter by designation. It happened while I was in Baba's presence when He asked me the friendly question, "How is your painting?" At that moment I put in my resignation by responding that I was not really much of a painter. I had been hoping that by

becoming a disciple of the Master, I would be given something else to do and hence to escape some of the problem of losing my sight. But it was not to be, for He made it clear to me that He was not accepting my resignation nor my retirement from painting. So it happened that I came to paint all of the paintings of the Beloved leading up to the ones shown here in this book. Only now am I allowed to think of my retirement from painting.

Rembrandt, as a painter, was endowed with gifts that we can only describe as Divinely inspired. But to be designated to paint the image of the God-Man is an entirely different calling. The paintings seen pictured in this volume can in no way be compared to the great masterpieces of Rembrandt but are examples of work which I felt convinced were being required of me by the Master, in spite of my seeming incapacity to accomplish the required task.

All but one of the paintings reproduced here were painted in 1976, a year in which my eyesight was virtually gone. This was the last year in which I worked alone without an assistant. These paintings are the fruits that have come out of a final urgent and desperate effort to see the face of the Beloved in the final twilight of seeing. The level of work produced from this period belies the state of my eyesight during that time. With a sharp decline of sight one would expect an accompanying abatement of quality. But this was not the case. Thus I am made to feel that the work done during this period especially was being all the while sustained and pushed forward by the hand of Divine assistance and guidance. I can only conclude that the Master Himself was at work with me as my companion.

And so these paintings are in a unique way a new bringing together of theism and humanism in the art of painting. Meher Baba, in human form, becomes for us in this age the manifested perfect balance of the unification of theism and humanism. The act of painting here is not simply the act of making a painting of Meher Baba. The act of painting is Meher Baba, Meher Baba with me and with us as both God and Man. And the pain of not seeing has become the vehicle of that very presence.

What is illusion? Illusion is that which is not real and hence false. And what is vision? Vision is the Beloved in one's heart. When I came into the presence of the Beloved in physical form, and He had me sit at His feet, He gestured to His mandali, His disciples, "Lyn is very fortunate, for he does not see so much of the illusion." Without this reinforcement I would not have had the courage to attempt what was virtually impossible.

Jesus Christ, in His unlimited mercy and beneficence, healed the blind. Meher Baba, in His unbounded wisdom and compassion, performed an even greater miracle, the miracle of inner vision, which is the Beloved in one's heart.

As the heart is, so is the house; as the eye is, so is the Image within the house. The heart of man has always been the ancient temple for the worship of the Ancient One.

Nothing can house the Ancient One that does not house love.

Meher Baba

10. The Beloved In One's Heart. 44" x 50". Collection of Sheila Krynski.



THE QUESTION

It is told that on her deathbed Gertrude Stein said to those gathered about her room, "What is the answer?" And when no one replied she asked, "Well, then, what is the question?"

Meher Baba puts it so simply: the question is just, "Who am I?" And all other questions are the reflection of that one Divine Absolute question.

Actually for us, in duality of experience, there are two questions. The first is the question of identity-the question "Who?"-and this creates the whole vast enigma of portrait painting. The second is the question "Why?"-i.e., What is it all for, what has real value? Meher Baba has told us that all seekers of Truth ultimately come to ask these questions.

One of the great paintings of our century is the painting of Gertrude Stein by Pablo Picasso. It is one of the most compelling and powerful portraits ever painted, both in its grandeurmatic style and its psychological impact.

Gertrude Stein was the patron and outspoken protagonist of the new generation of painters after Cezanne. Picasso and his associates became the devoted friends of Gertrude Stein and her home became a headquarters for the ideas in painting being generated in Paris in the first and second decades of the twentieth century.

This portrait of Gertrude Stein is the beginning of the final break from the conventional imagery in portrait painting. Picasso was feeling his way into the possibilities of the future of modern painting.

After more than a hundred sittings of the great American writer, Picasso found himself confronted with the enigma of portrait painting. He began to reexamine the imagery of traditional portrait painting and perhaps to wonder who this person was so patiently sitting for her portrait.

This enigma loomed with great immediacy in his work on the portrait of Gertrude Stein. That feeling of immediacy drove him to the dramatic gesture of finally wiping out the face in the portrait. He left his studio with the painting unfinished, facing the wall. Picasso went to Africa to research and uncover the mystery of African Negro art-to discover the element of "significant form." This expression of the innermost symbolic mystery of the life principle is revealed through simplification of human forms in African sculptures and masks.

When Picasso returned to his Paris studio, he looked again at the portrait of Gertrude Stein. The painting was unquestionably a work of monumental grandeur-everything so solidly designed, so beautifully arranged, so

masterfully composed. The hands were painted with gravity and expressiveness, but there was not yet a face. There lay the unanswered question: Who is this person that I call my friend, my patron?

As he stood there looking at the painting he must have sensed that this work of art was to be the transition from the old to the new style, both in his own work and in all of modern painting.

In a spontaneous hour so characteristic of the legendary Picasso, he painted into that portrait a face derived completely from his experience of the primitive Negro mask, and the painting was done.

In the portrait of Gertrude Stein, the face having become mask became Picasso's dramatic statement concerning the enigma of portrait painting. By this choice Picasso had declared that real identity is concealed within and behind exterior appearances. The mask used in African culture is ritualistic but transposed into Western culture by Picasso it takes on for us a different social and spiritual significance. The mask in Africa was used ceremonially to express an identity with a larger self but in Western art it is used symbolically to express the concealment of and separation from real identity that exists in our culture.

Picasso was the greatest of innovators in painting. His greatness was not in exploration but in discovery. Picasso said, "I do not search, I find."

We have asked the question, "What is identity in painting?" and we have seen a great modern painter working with this question.

Someone once told me that when he was first shown a photograph of Meher Baba that person asked, "Is he wearing a mask?" That was a meaningful question because Meher Baba has told us, "I am not this body that you see," and further, "Try to see me as I really am." Baba said to me personally that some day He will show me His face "as it really is."

My paintings of Meher Baba are directly concerned with the question of identity and each painting is a posing of the question: Who is this person? The answer to that question is the central theme and content of this picture book.

There are two kinds of painting: modern painting and academic painting. Academic painting employs the safe, the tested, the known; modern painting searches, discovers, exposes. Academic painting leaves all as it was, but modern painting changes our consciousness to bring us more in touch with the "now" of seeing.

Modern painting is recognized more by its expression than by its depiction. When I speak of modern painting, I do not mean simply twentieth-century or late nineteenth-century painting. I mean painting in any time,

painting that is perennially fresh, alive, meaningful, not only for its own time, but for all time and in all places. Modern painting is the painting of Giotto in the fourteenth century, of Piero della Francesca in the fifteenth century, or of Pieter Brueghel the Elder in the sixteenth. Modern painting is painting that remains alive and does not fade.

About ninety percent of all twentieth-century paintings that I have seen are not really modern, just contemporary. This includes a considerable amount of Abstractionism and Surrealism. Modern painting in any time expresses, reflects and influences the change of consciousness occurring in that time. A modern painter is in touch with his time, in touch with himself, and in touch with his God.

I became an art student when I was nineteen years old. That was 1945. In 1965 I came to sit at the feet of the Highest of the High. During that twenty-year span I became completely engrossed in the problem of modern painting within the question of modern art.

Before I met my Master at the age of thirty-nine, I needed to have some real work to give meaning to this life and that was my study of painting. All along God was with me in my studies, but I didn't know that He was there. Painting has always been for me the most meaningful art form, and even now it lingers as an afterglow in my mind's eye.

Finally a day came when I sat at the feet of the Master, sat looking and looking, to see as best I could the countenance of my Beloved, the One who was thenceforth to give real meaning to my life and work. All that I have written here and all the paintings that I have done are but variations of experience flowing from that first experience of being with Him.

My paintings are concerned with the personal aspect of God manifested in human form. But what I write about is art. All that I feel about art and wish to communicate with others, shares company with my paintings of the Divine Beloved.

In the earliest days of my career, I began the exploration of the ongoing complex question, "What is real painting? What is a valuable painting? What is a great painting?" And finally the deeper question:

"What actually gives a painting real lasting value?"

All my life I have been concerned with this question, and I cannot say truthfully that I have the answer. But I do have an interesting story in connection with this question: In 1967 I began to paint in my studio in Myrtle Beach, a studio then brand new, the same one in which I am now composing these words. I had begun to paint a number of paintings of the Highest of the High. After only a few months working in this studio, I received an invitation from Baba's sister Mani, expressing how delighted they, the close ones, would be to see one day a painting of the Beloved as my eyes have seen Him. I set to work and painted a very colorful and unusual canvas, thinking thoughts of the Beloved every moment while I was painting.

Finally, after many fervent hours and weeks, the painting was completed as far as I felt that it could be done, and so I sent the painting by the slow ocean freight to India. I felt reasonably satisfied and confident with the beauty of the work accomplished, but as soon as it was on its way I began to have serious doubts. My thoughts ran like this: "Who am I? How do I have the audacity to send a painting of mine to the Avatar Himself? How could I imagine myself to be a painter of the God-Man? Who could make a painting of Him, worthy of Him, least of all I?"

"Surely," my mind went on, "it is in no way worthy of Him. I did not work hard enough to make it good enough for Him. I did not have enough talent to attempt such a gesture. He will not like it at all. It will greatly disappoint Him and displease Him. It will cause Him a great deal of trouble, even annoyance. It will interrupt His Universal Work, and hence it will be quite bad for the whole world. Perhaps I have even insulted Him."

All these thoughts went through my mind during those several months of the painting's transit across that ocean of despair and doubt. I had to face my own mockery of myself as a pretender at the art of painting. I thought with horror, "They will have to go to all that trouble to get the painting up to Meherazad, to unpack it, restretch the canvas and frame it, and then what will they have? Nothing at all, just a smear, and one that is much too large to be in any way practical. What on earth will He do with it?" And months of such ideas went by. I thought, "Perhaps it will get lost, and there will be no problem."

Then one day the telephone rang; it was a cable from India. Here are the words that were read out to me:

Your beautiful painting has reached Meherazad and makes me very happy. The expression of your love in the expression of my beauty has deeply touched me.

Meher Baba

Then at last I understood something, that my ideas of qualitative good and bad were of virtually no importance, that the only thing that is really important is love and the expression of that love in one's own best way. I had not done so badly after all. I had given my best, and it had been received with real love. What the world calls art appreciation is really nothing but love, and that love gets expressed in the sight of beauty. This is the answer to the question, "What gives a painting real lasting value?"

The expression of the heart is what has lasting importance.

There is only one question. And, once you know the answer to that question, there will be no more questions to ask. In fact, there are no two questions. There is only the one Original Question. And to the one original Question, there is only one Final Answer. In between the original Question and the final Answer there are innumerable false answers.

From out of the depth of unbroken Infinity arose the Question, "WHO AM I?" And to that one Question there is the only Answer, " I AM GOD."

Meher Baba

11. The Light In The Forest. 52" x 40". Collection of Michael and Cynthia Shepard



THE WHOLE VAST ENIGMA OF PORTRAIT PAINTING

Part 1: The Eternal Nature

It seems to me that the whole panorama of Western painting is woven together by a single thread which has come to be called portraiture. In the broadest sense a portrait is any work of art that depicts or expresses the living form of any particular human being. This covers a very broad range of pictorial possibilities from the solid realism of Albrecht Durer to the abstract symbolism of Modigliani.

Beyond the formal requirements of painting itself, portraiture searches for something impalpable, something not fully known, a mystery. It is a particular essence that the portrait artist seeks, one unique-distinct from all other elements in creation; that is, the human essence. In portraiture the painter seeks to bring together theism and humanism in a process identified with the search for soul itself. Hence in portraiture the deeper spiritual aspect of the person is often sought out by the painter.

Cezanne said that he wanted to bring to modern painting something solid and enduring like the great art of the museums. He was concerned entirely with the substance of things seen, which is the eternal nature of all, and he painted as if he were piecing together the atoms and molecules of creation. It is my feeling that Cezanne always wanted to be a portrait painter, to express through human form the eternal nature and essence of life's substance, to paint living form at its highest, the human level. Few sitters could have had the patience to endure the slow, methodical laboriousness of his work method. So Cezanne resorted primarily to still life painting in which the forms remained stationary for his prolonged, penetrating observation. He even went to the extent of substituting artificial flowers for real flowers so that they would not wilt during the long work process. This is ironic, for Cezanne was not trying to turn away from nature, but was in fact trying to revitalize our consciousness of nature through the means of his inner vision of the world expressed in his highly evolved painting method.

The art critic Volard, who actually discovered Cezanne and brought him to prominence, did have the patience to sit for a portrait. He tells the amusing story of how one day after more than a hundred sittings, Cezanne, in a despondent mood over the progress of his work, became aggravated by some dogs' barking in the neighborhood. He seized a palette knife and held it high for one moment in a gesture of rage, as if to slash the painting to ribbons. And then, dropping the knife, he turned, grabbed up a handful of exquisite water colors and shoved them passionately into the flame of the wood stove. Volard, knowing that this painting was going to be an important work of art, heaved a sigh of relief that his own portrait, for which he had so patiently endured all of those sittings, had been spared.

For more than seventy years the momentous accomplishment of Cezanne

has been looked upon essentially from a formalistic point of view. I know well that point of view for it was the backbone of my own training in the art of painting, but I no longer see Cezanne that way. I see him as a philosopher, the mystic, the seeker of Truth. Concerned as Cezanne was with form in painting, he employed form as no more than a tool, the instrument used in the struggle for what he called "realization," to capture on his canvas a glimpse of that eternal nature. I feel akin to Paul Cezanne because I know so well the tortured struggle and search to make the elements of painting go beyond themselves to express the life of the spirit.

Cezanne, with his high intuition, was actually the first painter to seriously reach out beyond the three-dimensional illusionism that painting had become. In Cezanne we find an almost metaphysical idealism that, for the first time in painting, touches upon the time-space continuum of all things perceived and experienced in the phenomenal world. Intuition was the key to Cezanne's experience and to his expression of that experience. This widening of experience was to become known as the fourth dimension which is discussed more fully in Part 2.

One day while I was working on the painting in this picture book called "Darshan," I was struggling to make one last portrait of Meher Baba based on a photograph which He had given to me at the time of our meeting. I wanted to make a portrait of the Beloved that, while being of our own time, might stand with the great paintings of the past. I was immersed in the deep inner struggle to achieve for Him something of enduring majesty and perfect simplicity. I was trying to make in a painting of Meher Baba something "solid and enduring," something for future generations. Then for a timeless moment I felt the presence of Cezanne, not as the giant in the history of art but as my brother with me at my easel.

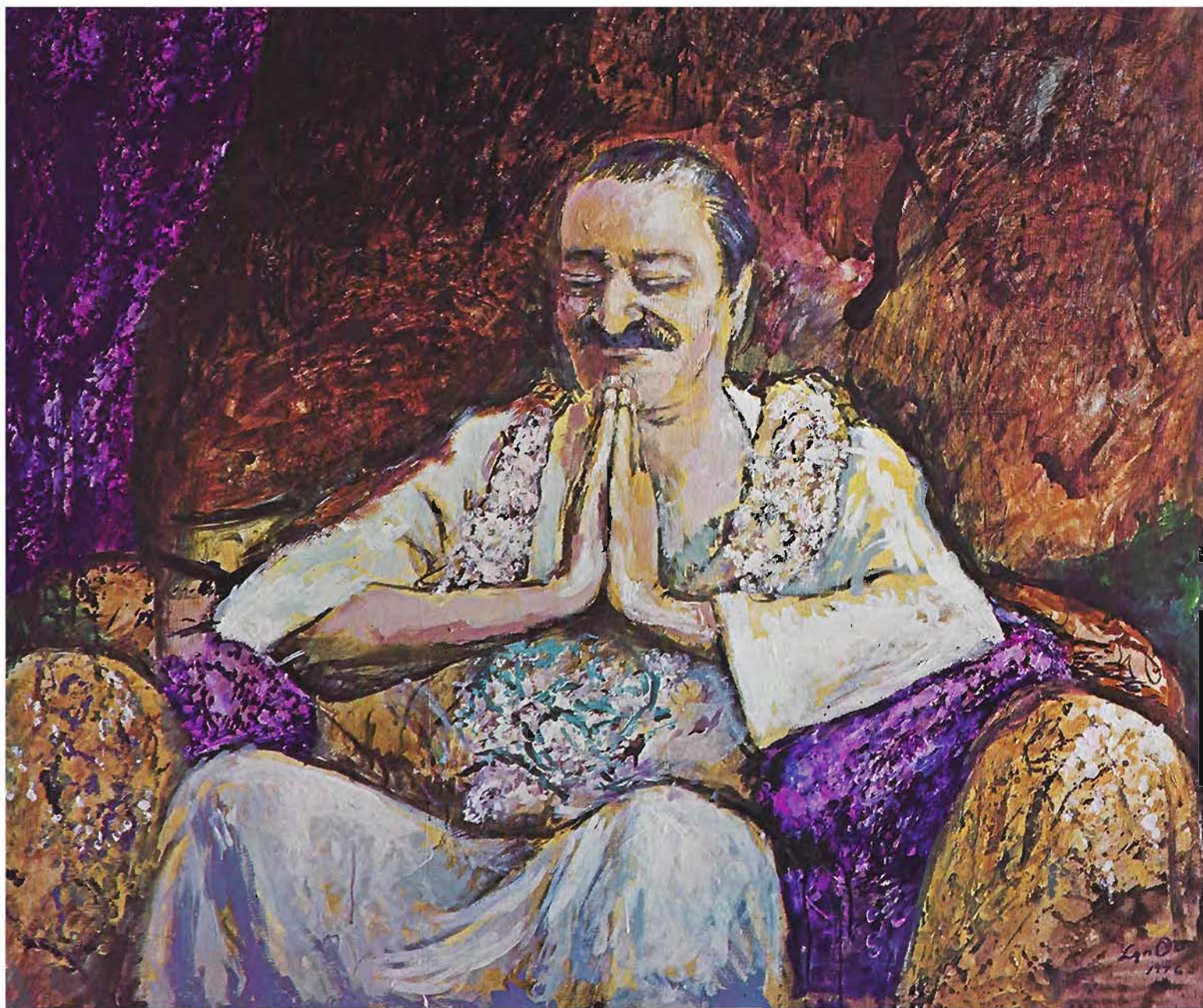
: Cezanne, in his search for expression of the eternal nature, called his desperation the struggle "to realize"; I call it the struggle to see, to try to discover in painting the face of the Beloved Himself.

People have often asked me, did Meher Baba actually sit for me to do His portrait? My answer to that is yes, He allowed me to sit at His feet and to look at Him for one hour and a half. And all of these paintings have come from that glimpse, one glimpse of the eternal Reality abiding in human form.

*God always existed.
God will always exist.
He is never changing, ever the same
And Illusion is His eternal Game.*

Meher Baba

12. Darshan. 50" x 54". Collection of Frank Smith.



Part 2: The Fourth Dimension

To incorporate into one's innermost understanding the concept that it is inevitable for the almighty God to consciously descend to our level from His Station of Infinite Power, Infinite Knowledge, and Infinite Bliss, is for us to walk carefully that high narrow ridge of the heart-mind. To make this walk we must necessarily be sustained and supported by the Master lest we should fall. This requires poise which we cultivate by faith; and this faith propels us in the great leap that need now be made from reason to intuition.

Intuition is the fourth dimension of awareness. The first dimension is consciousness itself, piercing through from the infinitely finite point of zero dimension, the Om point, the beginning of all movement, the spewing forth of creation from God in His original state of being, like the movement of a pencil, a crayon, a brush. It is the first reaching out from His original Source.

The second dimension is our perceptual awareness. This awareness is the experience of perceived surfaces. The two-dimensional world begins when the line of the first dimension broadens out to become a surface. The consciousness of animals is limited to a two-dimensional experience of the world. Human beings, however, experience surfaces as the limitation of vision. The painter uses this limitation as the vehicle of his creative work.

The third dimension is our conceptual or rational experience. It is a construction of the mind, made up entirely of the relationships of perceived surfaces, the mental fabrication producing that which we call the environment. With the perfection of sensory perception dawns the rational three-dimensional experience which has taken humanity through the growth of all previous civilizations. Now humanity has reached the threshold of the age of intuition.

Intuition is the perfection of reason and the fourth dimension is the transition of our entering into a higher spatial experience. This experience will come to be our everyday reality which is to walk that high narrow ridge that will lead everyone toward a new freedom of ever-increasing love, understanding and compassion.

A large part of the story of Western painting was the development of the sense of the third dimension. Looking at the paintings of the Old Masters is like looking through a window into a space that is created into and behind the picture plane. That was the time called the Age of Reason, when reasoning was realistic and achieved representational results in art.

When we look at a painting by the Dutch painter Jan Vermeer, we have a magical experience as if we were looking through a doorway into another room in another time. Vermeer's pictures are the perfection of three-

dimensional space in painting. He succeeded in removing himself as ego from between the viewer and the picture, so that in spite of the time-space lapse there is no gulf between the work of art and the viewer. Without intruding himself his aesthetic sensibility becomes the bridge between the world he paints and the world we now live in. Vermeer's great vision in conveying this experience is what makes his paintings perennially modern.

In twentieth-century painting, the image is moved closer to the surface of the canvas in order to make a firm contact between picture space and our actual space. In my paintings of Baba the image tries to emerge from that space into our own living space, making a bridge into the fourth-dimensional timespace continuum, to bring us into the living experience of that Presence through art.

A painting of the Beloved creates for us the experience of what we call His Presence. This gives us the real experience of feeling Baba with us, rather than simply remembering Him. The paintings which we see here have been motivated out of the longing to see this Presence manifest. The intuitive experience of this Presence is natural and becomes woven into the fabric of life. It is so perfectly natural that it has no effect on the ego-mind as an extraordinary experience. And so the fourth-dimensional experience becomes far simpler than that which is limited by the third dimension.

My own experience of the fourth dimension happened in the doorway of Meher Baba's room.

Standing in the doorway, having spent an hour and a half in that wonderful Presence, my wife and I lingered a moment longer for one last look. Meher Baba looked so very tiny, sitting in His chair in the corner of the room. I could have picked Him up and put Him in my pocket.

And His very last words, His confirmation, given to be carried away with us, the simple words:

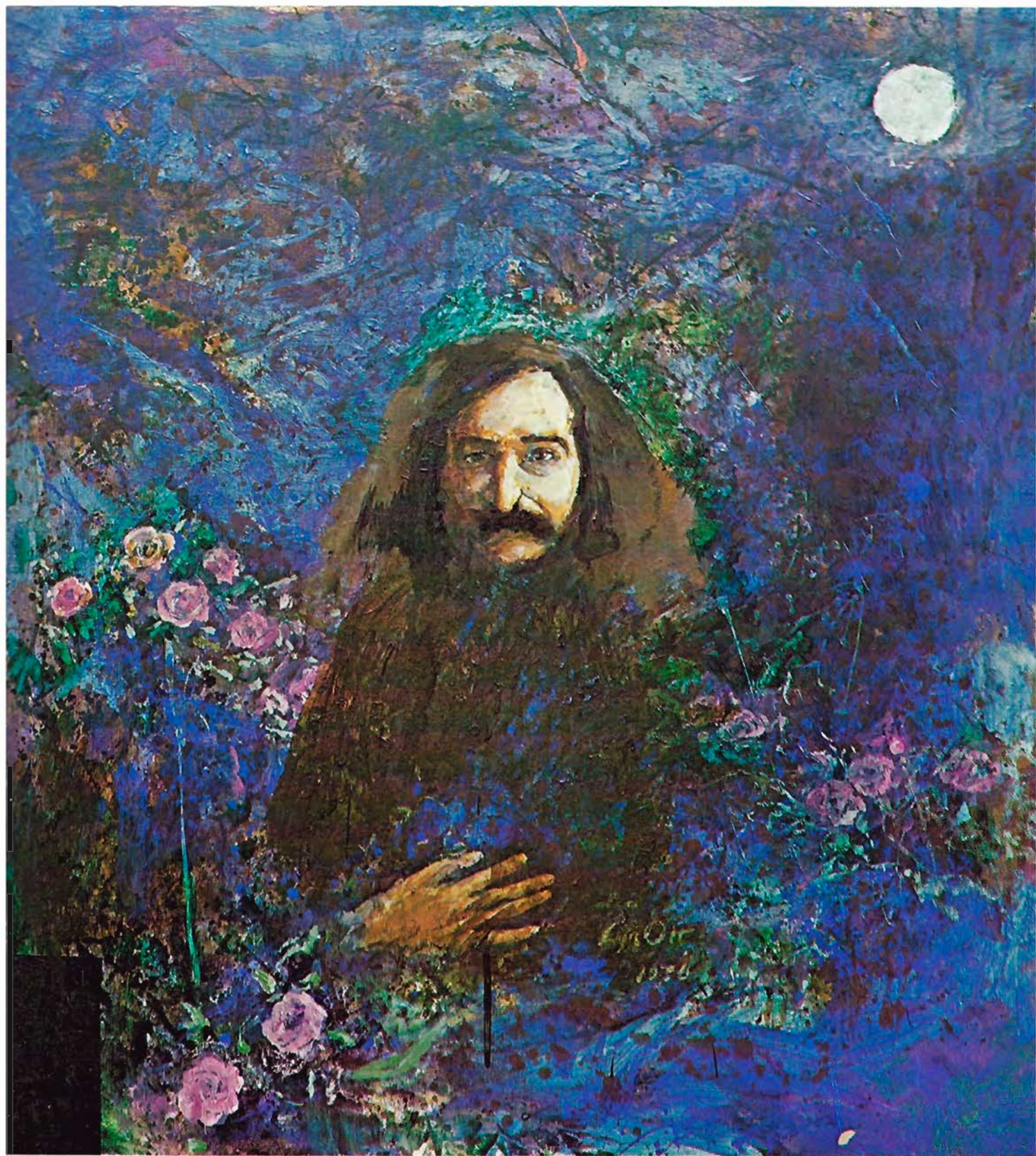
"I AM ALWAYS WITH YOU."

You have had enough of words, I have had enough of words. It is not through words that I give what I have to give. In the silence of your perfect surrender, my love which is always silent can flow to you-to be yours always to keep and to share with those who seek me.

When the Word of my Love breaks out of its silence and speaks in your hearts, telling you who I really am, you will know that that is the Real Word you have been always longing to hear.

Meher Baba

13. Blue Nocturne. 60" x 54". Collection of the artist.



Part 3: Realism

Once, all of a sudden, Infinite and Formless God in His Absolute, Divine, Vacuum State was prompted, for no reason at all, to want to see Himself and to know Himself. That brought about the beginning of the phenomenal realm called Illusion, and it was also the beginning of God's being the sublime artist, the real painter of imagination and its manifold dreams.

It was a long time before God finally painted Himself into the seemingly endless painting. And that Self-portrait He called Avatar, the Highest of the High, the Self of Everything in the form of man; and He was well-pleased. Art is the grand creative scheme that God prepared for Himself so that He could stamp into Illusion the tangible mark and sign of His Reality.

When Meher Baba had me sit down at His feet on that singular day, He impressed upon His disciples seated across the room how fortunate I was not to see so much of the illusion. It rather amazed me that He did not find it at all unfortunate that **I**, a painter, was quite apparently going blind. As I was losing my sight there became less and less chance of my drifting towards what is referred to as Realism in painting. From my youngest days as a painter I always had a sneaking suspicion that what is called real, the actual world, is not the reality we take it to be. And this feeling suggested to me that art can be more real than what we see normally in the world around us. Realism is the honest attempt to depict or portray that which appears to be real in the shimmering mirage that we call the world. Actually, the authentic realism of any artist's work is the genuine honesty and sincerity that his creative and imaginative spirit impresses into his work. Thus, at its best, the work of art can become even more real than what it represents.

In the truest sense, it is the genuine experience of art that should be called Realism. What has come to be called "realistic" in painting is usually nothing more than illusion. To represent the illusion cannot in this sense be called Realism; it is Illusionism. Plato described the "realistic" painting of his time as "an illusion of Illusion."

Thomas Eakins was a great American portrait painter. Among the various schools of painting he is referred to as a "Realist," but I feel Eakins to be one of the most mystical painters America has produced. That mystical quality emerged in his work as a result of the almost naive earnestness and sincerity of commitment that went into his painting. It was the honesty of purpose in wishing to portray on canvas exactly what the eye sees when looking at a particular person that gives to Eakins' paintings an almost transcendental vision, an image that surpasses all that the normal eye thinks it sees. An Eakins portrait gives one the feeling of physical and spiritual closeness to the person portrayed. Because of this, his paintings are not illusionistic.

Though not a "Realist" myself, either in temperament or technique, it was definitely my intention in painting the portraits in this book to express with all honesty the genuine feeling of the Real that I have derived from my contact with the person Meher Baba. That experience of His Presence, with the feeling of love and joy which he bestowed upon me, is the underlying theme that marks the particular kind of Realism of these paintings.

While being inwardly concerned with the Real as Meher Baba, these paintings are at the same time outwardly expressionistic. They express the particular nature of my personal response to Meher Baba's Love.

*Be composed in the reality of my Love
For all confusion and despair is your own shadow
Which will vanish when I speak the Word.*

Meher Baba

14. "It Is I." 60" x 54". Collection of the artist.



Part 4: Expressionism

Let us imagine that in the uttermost beginning God, from out of the infinite tranquility of His limitless Silence, miraculously spoke. And that speaking became a limitless reverberation issuing forth billions and trillions of stellar clouds and systems.

And in it all God said, "Let there be Light!" That Light was God's consciousness, and the Light was indeed dazzling and blinding to the eye of God who was yet unaccustomed to His own great Light, having just awakened from the Absolute Divine Vacuum State where there was neither Light nor Darkness, no contrast by which to distinguish one thing from another, for all had been simply the absolute uniformity of Oneness.

Thus it was in His most original speaking, God said, "Let the Light be divided into light and darkness, consciousness and unconsciousness." And by that great dividing, God made a universe of light and shadow, and by means of the contrast of light and shadow, God was then able to see, to see the reflection of Himself everywhere He looked.

God felt the infinite exultation of being the Creator of the reflection of Himself all around Him ad infinitum. And God turned in all directions, to the North and to the South, to the East and to the West, and He saw nothing but Himself in the vast painting of Himself. But, alas, God saw that it was not really Himself but only a reflection, an illusion.

Then God said to Himself, "This cannot be, I am not merely this vast Painting, I am Myself." So as to have someone in His image to eventually see Himself as He really is, God put His Self directly into the Painting as a man.

Then God, as man, was lost, lost in his own painting. But he was not afraid for within his heart he knew that sooner or later he would find himself in the painting as Himself. The great Leela, the game of hide-and-seek, had begun in earnest. It was like searching for the proverbial needle in the haystack.

The substance and content of this picture book is the glint of that needle uncovered, found at last in the midst of all. And now we must hold it, treasure it, guard it and not lose it, for it is the purpose of the Painting, the aim of all searching, the meaning of the Game. In that human image we have the very needle with which to stitch into a shining raiment the fabric of our own Divinity.

In the vast enigma of portrait painting expression is focused primarily on the face, and on the infinite possibilities of the expression that the features of the face can pass through. The great portrait painter, John Singer Sargent, once said, "A portrait is a picture in which there is something the matter with the

mouth." Sargent meant by this that the mouth is the one feature which shows most vividly the changes of expression and therefore is of greatest concern to the portrait painter because it is the key to the entire picture. That is interesting because in my paintings of Meher Baba, the mouth is frequently hidden under the shadow of His moustache. In my portrayal of Him in His middle years, the center of the mouth is clearly seen between the sweeping part of His moustache. It gives to the face an intense seriousness, even sternness of expression. But my portraits of Him in His later years show the lips pulled together more thinly, and with the moustache more closely trimmed, the corners of the mouth are more in evidence giving a far broader range of expression, and His appearance becomes ingratiating and inviting, even when showing sternness. I was able to see that range of expression when Mani put a bright light on His face while I was in His physical presence.

Why is it that Baba's mouth is more often hidden than are His other beautiful features? Is it not because waiting behind those lips is the fountain-head of all expression that ever was or ever will be? Poised upon that tongue behind those sealed lips is the Word that was in the beginningless beginning and out of which the whole vast enigma of the painting of the cosmic illusion was made.

On the day that He and I embraced, the day of our meeting, He held my face very close to His and looked into my eyes for a long while. It was the Painter meeting the painter and the beginning of the Painter painting into me the colors of His own expression.

By the time I had heard of Meher Baba in 1964, Expressionism was all that was left of the living virile movement in Western painting. In Expressionism, real painting struggles to find a Real living image. Expressionism is a form in which the raw material, i.e., color, line, mass, etc., of painting itself becomes the very subject matter of the picture. There is yet life in Expressionistic painting because the elements of picture-making are in themselves the potentialities for discovering that Real image.

We are now living at the end of one whole cycle of existence. This means that we are being compressed in time and feel squeezed by it, squeezed as if through a wringer of no-time. We move faster and faster with the aid of technology yet we feel that we have less and less time. Hence, more and more, we feel the need for it. But what am I to make of this? For Meher Baba told me, personally, "Time never existed at all."

Because there is no time, art becomes urgent, and that urgency creates Expressionism. That Expressionism gets into the mood and attitude of the picture of even the most "realistic" painters. This urgency causes the focus of creative expression to be concentrated in the immediacy of the raw materials of painting.

Out of this desperation concerning time comes a great emergency, a transition in the evolution of human consciousness. And this emergency is the prelude to the life of the fourth dimension, the new age of intuition. This no-time of time-run-out that we are hopelessly experiencing is the seed germinating into a new kind of spatial experience that future generations will live in. And that life will be infinitely more expanded than the spatial existence which we now know. Then time will no longer be our burden, it will be our inspiration-a fifth dimension-and it will make room for love in its fullest mobility of expression.

I am silent. My Silence is not merely an observing of silence. My silence has a purpose behind it. When I break it, all will know. The breaking of my Silence will be as forceful as thousands of atom bombs exploding together.

Meher Baba

15. Out Of That Nothing Came This Everything. 72" x 66". Collection of the artist.



Part 5: The De Kooning Enigma

The joy of awakening in the new age of consciousness will be for all humanity a triumph of expression in the fulfillment of the communication of the heart. Perhaps Willem de Kooning is the contemporary painter who struggles most fervently to open the pathway to that new age in the art of painting.

Back in the early fifties de Kooning was at work on a series of paintings called, "The Woman," and it was the strong impact of this work that brought him into public prominence. These paintings were vehemently Expressionistic, conveying the completely untamed aspect of the female image. In everyone of those paintings there is something definitely the matter with the mouth. In each painting the dominant feature is a row of enlarged terrifying white teeth, revealing some deep inner torment that de Kooning must have then been working through. He released something that no one wanted to look at, a terrible image of woman. It makes me laugh to think that those frighteningly horrible teeth, so clearly signifying the aggressiveness of the ego-life, were the focal point of the paintings that made de Kooning so famous. I never liked "The Woman" paintings, seeing them as more of a catharsis than the work of a really great painter. But being a great painter, de Kooning moved on into the broad, opulent, color-drenched paintings of his mature style.

Around 1956 my own life had reached a low ebb of despondency; painting had almost lost its meaning for me. I took a trip to New York City to visit the galleries. I walked up Fifth Avenue to the Guggenheim Museum, the old Guggenheim, and as soon as I entered I was stopped short by a large, recent acquisition. In the front room was hanging a new. de Kooning, perhaps not a month off the easel. It was entitled "Transformation." I was dumbfounded. The paint itself was the very subject and theme of the work of art. It seemed to me to be a self-portrait, full of anguish, torment, struggle and triumph; yet it had no figurative image in it at all. It was as though the life of the painter himself was the same as the life of the pigment erupting before the eye with vivid chromatic tension and thrust. I felt from the fervent desperation of the work in front of me that I was meeting and confronting not just the painting, compelling as it was, but the artist as well. It was like a mystical experience, a communion. This was obviously a new dimension of painting in which the artist and his painting were one being. There was no separation. It was not even a painting really; it was a de Kooning.

The effect of this experience unconsciously prepared me for the introduction of the image of the God-Man into my own later paintings. I had discovered something extremely important while standing before that vibrant masterpiece. I had not dreamed until that moment that the artist could be more than the painter of the painting. So for years I came under the spell of

this one painter.

De Kooning's powerful expression opens a broad new path, but he seems, in the virtuosity of his talent, oblivious of where that path is leading. The tragedy in these paintings, with all their splendor, is the painter's wandering in the wilderness of his own genius for painting. He uncovered for the sake of discovery potentialities of painting without ever having found the real oasis of singular seeing where there is peace and inner fulfillment in the finding of One-in having a glimpse of that Eternal Nature.

To be great, a painting must be centered in love. Of this there can be no doubt, and de Kooning knows this. He knows it so well that in one of his paintings he scrawled out the words "I love you."-I love who?

The paintings shown in this picture book are centered in love, the Love of loves, the Avatar; and that Avatar sees to the resultant image in His own picture. My task was simply to do the work for as long as I could.

Now it is done and I am given time to reflect and meditate on all of this that is written here. My love for painting was given to me by God, but the focusing of that love was taken and given guidance by God's Avatar, Meher Baba.

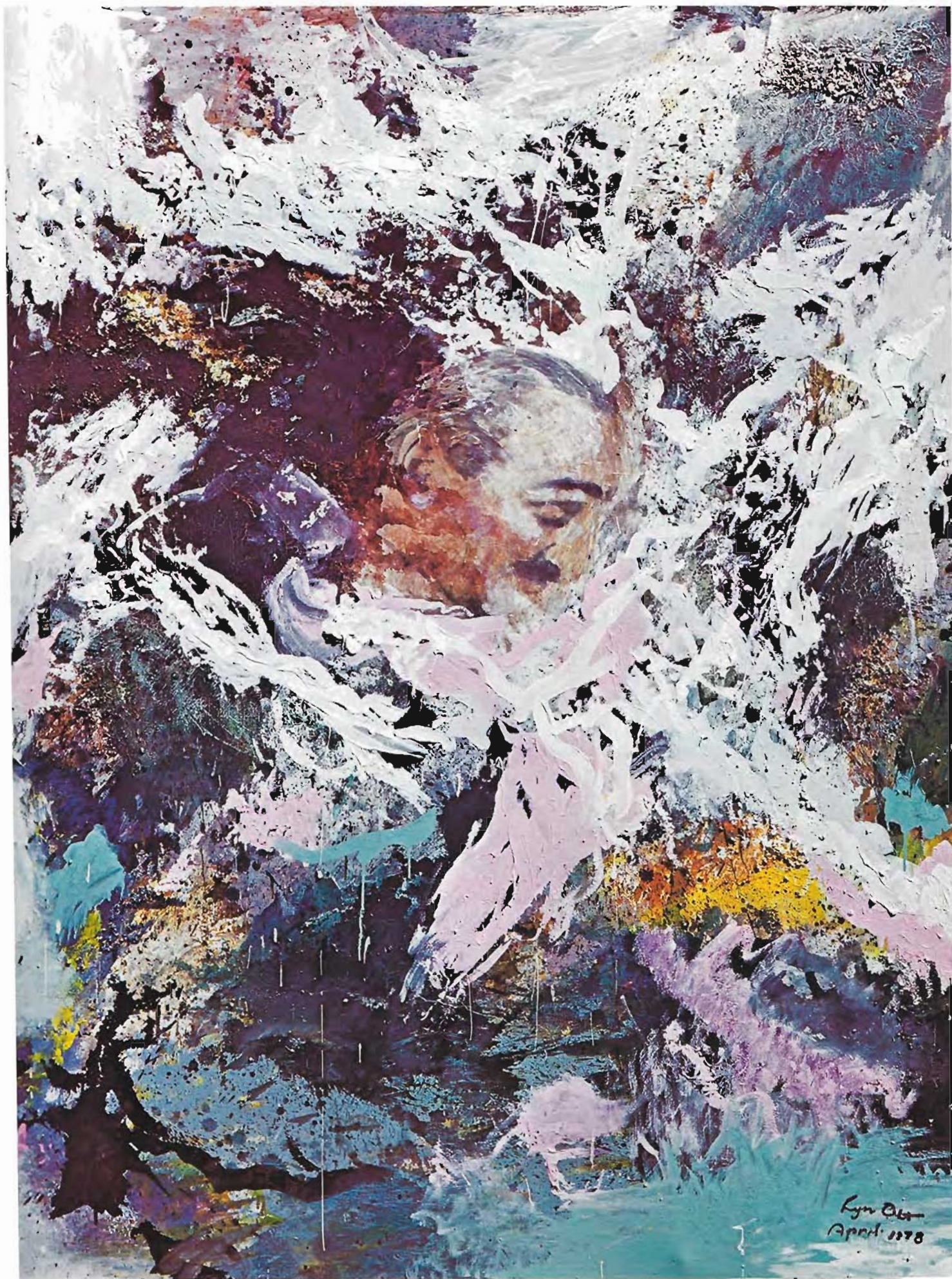
I AM THE ONE

*I am the One Who is always lost and found among mankind.
It is your love for yourself that loses Me
and it is your love for Me that finds Me.
Love Me above everything, for now
while I am in your midst, I am
most easily found as I really am.*

Meher Baba

16. Balancing Of The Universal Mind And The Universal Heart. 1978
72"x54".

(My last painting of the Avatar) Collection of the artist.



Kym Olsen
April 1978

Part 6: The Painter's Fantasy Of Creation

Once, in the uttermost beginning of all that seems to be, for no reason at all and with no forewarning whatsoever, God moved His hand, and from that first stirring trailed universes.

In the beginning when God said, "Let there be light, that I may see myself as I really Am," God was amazed and dazzled at the limitless radiance of His own being. And He Himself was bewildered at the limitless and very brightness of that unlimited light. So God said to Himself "Let the light be fractured into a myriad of lights"; and He called the myriad of lights color; and that color He shaped into the rainbow of creation, and this He called beauty. And God was pleased with and delighted by the beauty that lay all about Him.

In His Most Original State of being God is "without color, without expression, without form and without attributes." But in His Beyond State as conscious God, He loves all of the manifested attributes of Himself. He loves the limitless reflection of Himself as color; He loves the re-echoing of His Divine expression back to Himself; and He loves the limitless attributes of Himself reflected before His own Divine eyes.

God wants but one thing: to be pleased with the reflection of His being. And especially God loves that reflection of Himself which is Color. When God said, "Let there be light," He meant, "Let the Universe be a fountain of color from the beginningless beginning to the endless end." And from that first stirring trailed spiraling worlds of form.

So it was that the vast colorful phantasmagoria sprang into being, weaving a hypnotic enchantment through the consciousness of its countless numbers of evolved forms of life.

Man, the final one to appear from out of that vast myriad, was lost in the great wilderness. Unaware that he was lost, he sat down contentedly by a bush laden with berries, picked some and began to eat until he was satisfied. Then, having nothing to do, he picked some more berries and began to squash them between his thumb and finger, and taking the purple juice that was on his fingers, he began to smear it onto a flat surface and found that he was delighted with the colorful impressions that he saw. It was his own little creation, his game, and he loved what he had made.

He went to show his creation game to others, and they all loved it and encouraged him to do more with still more varieties of colors. With enthusiasm he went searching for all sorts of bushes, discovering blueberry bushes, blackberry bushes, and raspberry bushes. He found that the fruit of each bush, while tasting uniquely delicious, also produced for his eyes pleasing varia bons in color. And so as to give more body to the images of his designs, he

gathered earthen colors from the ground and the stones beneath his feet. And no colors were too luxuriant for his taste.

Then God, gazing upon the accomplishments of this most-first painter, said to Himself, "Now let even this beauty, which is of Myself, be multiplied unto itself, so as to glorify My very Being." So God created battalions of colorists whom He called painters. And the painters rejoiced in color for the sake of which they, the painters, had been created, and the eye of God was delighted with their work; and the painters set out to bring even more charm into creation by refiguring the rainbow out of pools of pigment.

God's most-first painter discovered that God wants to see the beauty of Himself reflected in a vast rainbow after a tempest or as the moon revealed by the parting of clouds in a wind-drift sky.

Color is the one element in painting that is simultaneously most human and most Divine. It is light that makes color. The Impressionists discovered that for us. But it is color that makes a game out of what might have been drudgery. It is color that gives dimension to the flatness of impressions. It is color that makes the Music of the Spheres. It is color that makes the heart sing endless praises to God and makes us feel that this is what it is all for, the Universe, this Festival of color.

Color is like the Original Whim, the Lahar, existing so that God can show us some small measure of His Beauty. The intensity of color shows the temperature of the heart. The range of color reveals the breadth of the heart. And the organ tones of color harmony reveal the depth of the heart. These are the three dimensions of color leading to a fourth dimension. There remains more variety and intensity of color than we can describe through language. We have not yet developed the language to name what we see in the fourth dimension. But I have no doubt that there is a fourth dimension of color. This color realm differs from the color that we perceive in the third dimension and the language that would describe this color will be part of the language of intuition.

I know far more about God than I knew before I came to know of the Avatar, God's Personification. I know through His personal touch that what He most wants revealed in painting is the fervor of the heart. I know that He wants to hear His very own Truth resounding back to Him. God wants to be reassured that we have understood and appreciated just a little bit of His Truth and Beauty. And that is why there have been legions of painters to help fulfill that part of God's longing. And it is also why color, being Divine Reflection, is everywhere in the life of man, for that reflection gives God His pleasure which then becomes our happiness. In that happiness the art of painting portrays to God the charm and splendor of His Creation. My own happiness has come out of my effort to please the Beloved by opening the floodgates of color into my own paintings of Him.

The paintings pictured in this book take extreme freedom of artistic license in the use of color to portray the image of the God-Man, Meher Baba. If it were not for color there would be no pictures here at all, for I would have had nothing out of which to make any paintings whatsoever. I, the painter, exist because of color; color is because of light; light is because of the Creator; the Creator is because of Himself; and that Self is Beauty itself.

Line in painting is the vehicle of decision, the establishment of things in their correct order and arrangement, but color is the full flood, the tide of oceanic ebb and flow. It is the great explosion that makes picture-making into painting and painting into the real picture, the thing of beauty, shining in the sun.

I have often thought, since my meeting with Meher Baba, that when the Avatar who is beauty itself descends to our level, He should be painted in a raiment of colors and tones so dazzling to the eye that even the angels would rejoice. I would have needed the talent of a Gainsborough to have painted Him as He ought to be painted.

Great painters have lived, produced monumental achievements, and died. But who has had a chance before now to paint the living Avatar? The whole of Western painting has had its shining day between two Avatavic advents in which the portrayal of the world's Saviour has been left to the imagination of painters seeking to express their love for God but who had not seen Him in physical form. The face of Meher Baba, the One unveiled as the Avatar of the Age, is not subject to the interpretation or the imagination of a painter who would paint Him in this time. For we have seen Him.

In the sunset of this Western age, in 1965, Baba held between His hands my face close to His, for what seemed a very long time. Then, still holding me close Baba asked me, "Can you see my face?" And I replied softly, "Not very well Baba." I said it almost apologetically, feeling somehow that I was letting Him down, disappointing Him. I had come all the way to India to find that I had nothing to give. Then, in the next moment He said, "Baba wants you to bow down to His feet." I set my head down upon the resting place of Creation, and all was His. So it happened that the painter became a pilgrim.

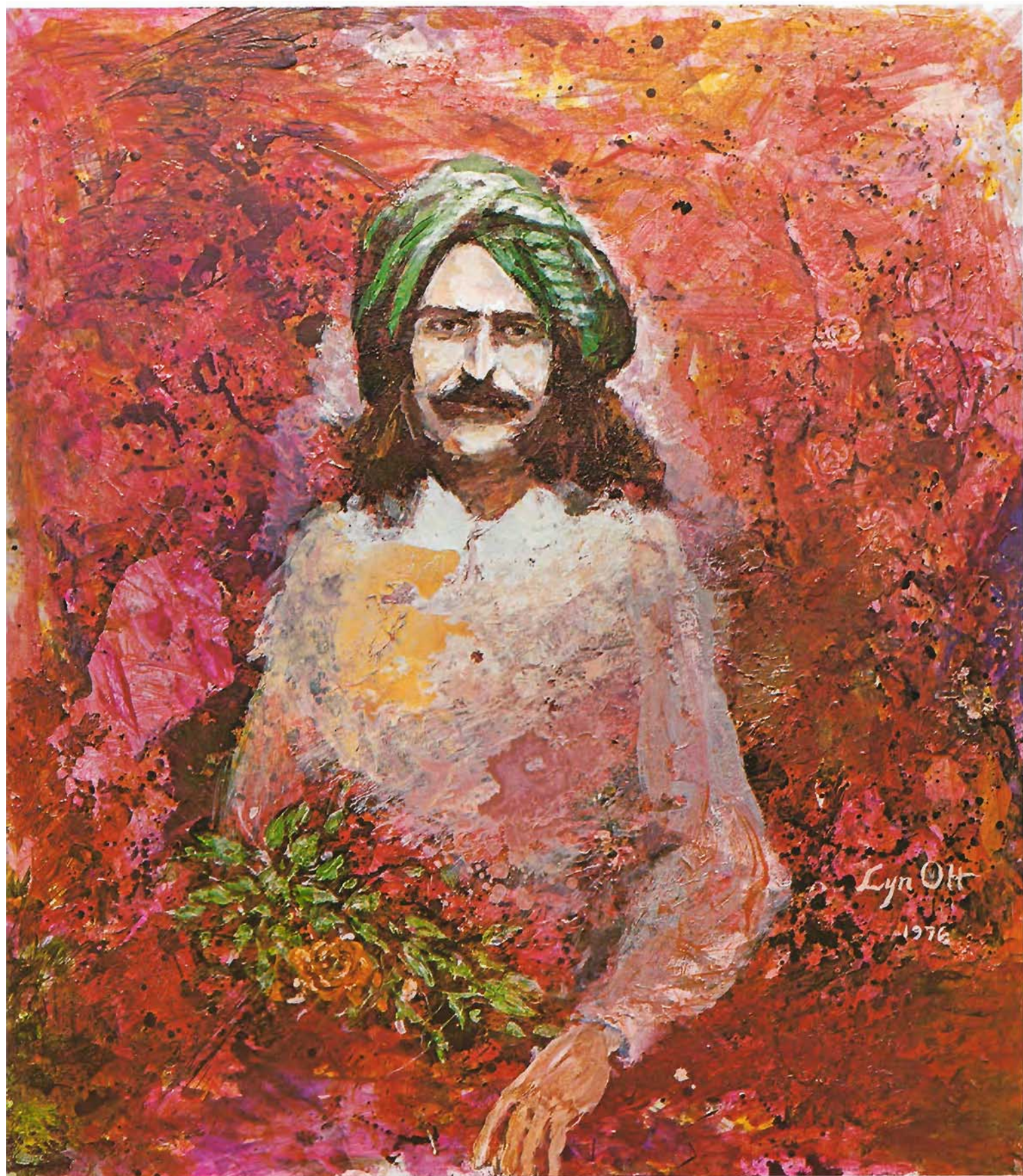
Man has no real work. He is at best a mere pilgrim on his way to the Beloved. His only task is the quest for the Face of God. All real work is done by the Father, the Creator of all that is. Man makes his work as the imitation of the Creator. This imitation becomes the reflection of the Creator. Being the reflection, it pleases the Creator, and that act of pleasing is called Art.

Hold fast to Me so That I will take you where I go, otherwise you will be lost. I am the Emperor. If you belong to Me, you will have access to the Infinite Treasure that is Mine. But if, instead, you go after the guards and servants of the palace (the Saints and Sadhus) it is sheer folly on your part!

I suffer physically and mentally. My physical suffering can be seen. My mental suffering is much more intense than the physical, and is due to the anti-God element that is at its height, and the universal prevalence of hypocrisy—specially of those who profess themselves to be saints and spiritual personalities. I suffer spiritually because, although in Me I am Free, in you I see and feel Myself bound by your ignorance; and so I suffer infinitely. In no previous Avataric period have I disclosed these secrets, because the time was not ripe for it then. At present science has advanced by leaps and bounds; and anti-God element is at its maximum! Blessed is he who holds fast to My daaman.

Meher Baba

17. The Fiery Free Life. 60" x 52". Collection of the artist.



Part 7: A Pilgrim's Offering In Behalf Of The Painter

It was ordained by the Avatar of the Age that I should live on after the death of myself as a painter so that I might lay the whole substance of my life's effort before the Beloved, here on earth, rather than in the heaven of the hereafter.

You see, there was a young painter, frail and tender, who set out to be a portrait painter, to make the human image pulsate with life. But the frailty of his limited ego could not quite cope with the frailty of the egos of his sitters. So he gave up portrait painting until he met a Man Who had no ego, and Who was pleased to be painted in whatever way the painter saw fit to paint Him. It was then that the floodgates opened. And the Ocean became running rivers of pigment overflowing their shores in the heart's full flood, and that tide carried him, the painter, beyond the limits of his own dreaming. He set sail in gale winds upon the seven seas of painting, in quest of the Face of God.

God came down to us in the form of a man so that He might be seen. And the painter, having seen, was compelled to go on painting even beyond the limits of his seeing. The Beloved bestowed upon the painter, His lover, the gift of encroaching blindness so that the lover could learn something of the great lesson of sacrifice.

For the painter the image of Meher Baba is no longer to be painted with brushes and canvas. In the end there is nothing left for that painter to do but let go of the results of his effort. Painting is an action, a work, a calling, but pictures are images. The offering of this book is a letting go of those images.

My Beloved has made it possible for these pictures to break free from their moorings as paintings to sail the seas into limitless horizons. They are vessels of the pilgrim's voyage in search of the real Hero, whose face is the rising sun.

To love me for what I may give you is not loving me at all. To sacrifice anything in my cause to gain something for yourself is like a blind man sacrificing his eyes for sight. I am the Divine Beloved worthy of being loved because I am Love. He who loves me because of this will be blessed with unlimited sight and will see me as I am.

Meher Baba

18. The Sun Is God. 60" x 54". Collection of Jon and Debbie Meyer.



REVELATION

A glimpse is but a fleeting moment of impression amidst the whirlwind of life. To look is to exercise the faculty of sight in the conscious effort of seeing. To see is to grasp inwardly by means of vision. To envisage is to be lifted up through vision into the realm of art and beauty. But to gaze is to burn and burn and be consumed.

Yet, from just a glance, a pilgrim went blind in having set sail, face on, into the all-consuming imageless blaze of a rising Sun.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jm. O'Connell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Further information about the life and work of Avatar Meher Baba can be obtained by writing to the

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