

Art, Politics & Spirituality

Spiritual Refugee (Part 2 of 2)

By Junko Chodos, Artist
Los Angeles

The process of separating from the primeval, unconscious state from which we are born and actualizing our adult selves is the process of individuation. This process always requires a struggle, and because it requires a struggle it also requires courage.

Mythological representations of this process include the image of a great man slaying a Dragon. The Dragon represents what Erich Neumann calls the "ouroboros," a primordial evil force which lives often in deep water, and which refuses to allow the healthy individual to leave and grow and do his work in the clear air. The ouroboros is the umbilical cord in its active form. If one has not the courage to fight with the Dragon, he will remain forever imprisoned in the dragon's realm: something that Neumann characterized as a maternal-tribal-racial-national-religious fixation which is the core of fascism and totalitarianism.

The Process of creating art

Art plays an important role in this process of individuation, and it also plays a role in the fight against fascism, totalitarianism, nationalism, and the whole repression of freedom. Art has been playing this role, and will probably continue playing it, throughout history. It does this, not by creating political messages, but by each artist accelerating his own inner process of individuation.

This can be seen most clearly in the kind of art called "expressionistic". In this kind of art, the artist does his work by going deeper into his own inner world. Carried downward by his emotion as by a vehicle, he encounters the Image in the depth of his unconscious. Then he brings that Image back to the canvas. If his emotion is strong enough, he has the greater chance to reach the place we call the "collective consciousness"—that vast ocean of universal consciousness spread beneath the depth of unconsciousness.

When that happens, the image which the artist brings back to his canvas will work as a symbol for the viewer. That symbol has presence. The more the artist's emotion is personal, the more presence and universal power that symbol gains. Through that symbol, the viewer starts to identify with that particular reality and it becomes part of his own reality. Thus the process of creating art can be described as a process of awakening from

unconsciousness to consciousness.

The entire process of creating art in this way takes the form of a process of fighting: a battle between emotion and intellect, between creative and destructive forces, between *Thanatos* and *bios*. The main protagonists in this battle are lines: the artist fights with lines, literally one stroke by one stroke. Line has two aspects. The first is emotional: line

reflects the range of the artist's emotions from the most subtle movement of mind to the most stormy passion; through the physical trembling of fingers and arms it reflects the movement of the artist's breath. The other aspect of line is its intellectual component: there is after all no line which exists in nature; line is a product of the human

mind. Line is a basic element of forming consciousness, an act of will and an expression of commitment.

These two contradictory aspects of line engage in a struggle against each other until they finally dance together in the pictorial space. The purpose of this fighting is for the artist to reach his own truth and the destroyer of this fighting is the artist's own defensiveness and fear of being individuated: these try to prevent the artist from reaching the truth and try to swallow him into the chaos out of which he was born. Thus, this process coincides with the psychological process of individuation. Any disruption of honesty during this process, any break in the intense concentration, will instantly kill the legitimacy of the work. But it is through this process that the artist might finally be able to have the experience of transcendence and reach integrity in

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Through the friendships which my husband and I have formed with several members of Los Angeles' Coptic community I have come to realize that many Copts, like me, are "spiritual refugees" or "exiles." We share a common sensitivity and longing for what is honest and universal. The passionate earnestness of our struggle is our humble contribution to the society in which we have resolved to make our home.



Forest of Amida Buddha No. 24 (1993), Acrylic and Sumi ink on Mylar, 104x42 inches

the work. There is no guaranty of these results: only if God has blessed this particular artist at this particular moment.

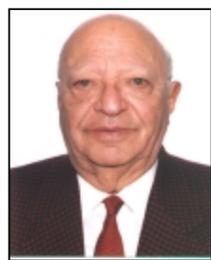
Appreciating art is one form of creating art. Serious appreciation of art requires the viewer to be honest to himself and to go through a deep inner revolution — just as the artist had to do in the process of creating the art. Thus artists and viewers both participate in the art: the viewer by standing in front of the art work, and the artist by standing behind it. And from both sides of the work, we artists and viewers start out on our difficult journey of individuation - a journey which hopefully will lead us both to some experience of eternal reality.

THE BOY PHARAOH

King Tutankhamun

Mystery of Death Chain Since Discovery of His Tomb

By Mahfouz Doss, Los Angeles



He is being called King Tut for short. He died at 20 years old leaving all kinds of speculations for his premature death. This mystery was unveiled as a hole was discovered in his skull under x-ray. Was he murdered? Was he injured? Speculations are numerous.

His tomb was discovered by Howard Carter in 1922. This expedition was financed by Lord Carnarvon. Carter wired Lord Carnarvon who was in England at the time informing him of a marvelous discovery following his digs in the Valley of the Kings at Luxor. Imagine yourself in the 1920s where communication as well as transportation were em-

bryonic in comparison to today's supersonic transportation. It took Lord Carnarvon 15 days to arrive to Egypt with his daughter and they headed to Luxor and the Valley of the Kings.

Since then historians and common people have witnessed a chain of unexplained death that they labeled the curse of King Tut.

Lord Carnarvon was bitten by a mosquito upon entering King Tut's tomb. He died shortly after returning to Cairo. Is it a coincidence that at the same time the lights of Cairo went off and the city was in complete darkness? Was it a coincidence that his dog in England died at the same time? Even more strange, when King Tut's mummy was unwrapped in 1925, it was found to have a wound on the left cheek exactly in the same place as the insect

bite on Lord Carnarvon that led to his death.

In 1970 the treasures of King Tut visited several American cities;

the day he signed the order allowing King Tut's treasure to tour America. Mr. Mohamed Ibrahim's daughter was nearly



Los Angeles was one of them. Mr. Mohamed Ibrahim, Egypt's Director of Antiquities at the time was killed in a car accident upon leaving the Egyptian Museum

killed in another car accident.

Some other strange death occurred. Richard Bethell who worked for Carter died mysteriously in London. His father

committed suicide.

To discourage and prevent grave robbers from invading their tombs, the pharaohs used to inscribe at the entrance of their tombs that whoever enters their tomb will be met with death. Inscription such as these were often found "anybody who shall enter this tomb in his impurity; I shall break his neck as a bird's." A further warning was also inscribed, "who shall destroy this inscription, he shall not reach his home."

Grave robbers were not deterred by these warnings. They knew that the pharaohs have been buried with priceless treasures and gold objects. Greed to acquire these treasures did not discourage them as several burial chambers of many pharaohs have been depleted. We will never know if any of

these thieves suffered the wrath of the curse. Is it true that an inscription was found predicting the violent death of who would violate King Tut's

tomb? Some even mentioned the inscription read "that death will occur by wings." The mosquito bite certainly falls under this category!

Are these a chain reaction, a coincidence or a curse?

Your speculations are as good as any. You could decide for yourself if there is really a curse or that the power of the curse is in the mind of the person who believes in it.

Maybe you will accept the scientific explanations by the French scientist Sylvian Gandon whose research supports the theory of the curse. It's in the form of a killer bug that has survived for thousands of years. Sylvian Gandon has demonstrated for the first time how potent a mixture of microscopic spores could survive for a long period of time. If breathed, the deadly germs in the burial chambers can cause death.

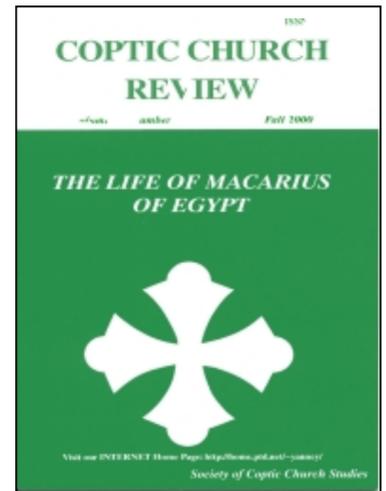
Nowadays archeologists protect themselves by wearing masks and gloves. A practice not used during the excavation of King Tut's tomb. We can assume that the ancient Egyptians were intelligent enough to put a pathogen in the tomb as a protection to the burial chambers and its contents to preserve the Pharaohs and their treasures.

FOR YOUR BOOKSHELF

Coptic Church Review
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The *Coptic Church Review* is a quarterly journal of contemporary patristic and Coptic Studies. It is published by the Society of Coptic Church Studies, New Jersey, which is a non profit organization.



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