

Figurative Artist's Statement

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We learn and remember through objective and subjective juxtapositions. We compare, contrast and categorize to understand what we see. The context that results from our analysis helps us to both clarify and pervert what we are trying to understand. Certain juxtapositions of subjective and objective understanding and experiences have swirled within me since childhood - the most significant combination being: art, medicine, vulnerability and beauty.

At five years old, I had a minor operation. During my four day hospital stay I had meals with another boy about the same age as me. He was a sweet, quiet person and small for his age. He had scars and bruises on his arm from needles. Shortly after each meal, he would be carried away, placed in a bed behind a screen and tubes hooked to him. At some point, I realized that he would probably never leave the hospital. From that day forward, sweetness, vulnerability and mortality have been intertwined in my mind.

A second encounter reinforced this combination of traits and inevitabilities. When I was about nine I followed my mother to an appointment with my Pediatrician at the Palo Alto Clinic. Right before we entered the clinic I glanced up and became transfixed. There in front of me was a W.P.A. mural of an older male doctor using a stethoscope on a young female patient, her dress pulled down to her waist. On a table were tongue depressors and a blood pressure gauge. In the background, a nurse inspected a test tube of red liquid. On an adjacent panel were books and a human skull. A third panel showed a horned ghost/demon form emerging from the mouth of a nude woman on her knees. Another woman pulled at the sick woman's arm and seemed to be pleading with the spirit to release its hold over the sick woman. I was mesmerized, simultaneously experiencing deep attraction and repulsion. I instinctively understood the adversarial relationship of medicine and mortality and that death would always win in the end. The wisdom of the physician was apparent, as was the seductive quality of the women's breasts and the vulnerability of us all. The elements swirled together and I was left with total understanding and no comprehension.

Nine years later I watched my mother unexpectedly die one evening and again I was struck by the familiar mix of beauty, vulnerability, medical intervention and mortality. Some paintings address these memories directly, while in other paintings, the memories are embedded within another issue. Regardless of the changing focus of my work, these memories and others like them, are always a filter for my imagery.