

Robert Jackson: Approaching Wholeness

For a long time I couldn't make a photograph or a painting without thinking, "Will this impress them, and will they think I am a good artist". It was because I had lost touch with my true self. It took an army of people to get through to me. I would like to thank especially Dr. Moe Abdel-Fattah for reminding me I am an artist, my art mentor and part-time father Wayne Eastcott for taking me under his wing, my spiritual companion Ibrahim Durrani for helping a fish out of water, and my wife Neslihan for her beautiful heart.

I came to realize that art comes from reaching and truly pleasing one's true self. Far from easy, on most days it's close to impossible because we have been pushing this real self away every day of our lives.

I was curious about the masks we all wear. This exhibition starts with images of several artist friends who chose a mask from my data base of several hundred. Recently I met a famous musician who said it's so difficult to put on this mask every night and perform and then try to find me at the end of the day. I made each mask by printing it and gluing it to formed Styrofoam. After photographing them wearing their mask I would often print a small paper doll sized version of them and place that little figure in a tiny movie set. I photographed this tableau and digitally painted over it. Finally, I printed the image on canvas.

My next experiment was with some of the same artists and myself playing with toys in a sandbox. I thought if we could become like 4 year olds, just playing, not making art, we would be truly pleasing ourselves. I didn't realize that Carl Jung had pioneered this sandbox play as a device to get at the true self. It didn't happen very often but when we were able to just be ourselves and play, it became a spiritual experience. Again I used the same procedure of photographing the scene and then printing onto canvas.

This reaching your true self is what Zen is about, what the Sufis call drunk with God, what Jesus tried to tell us when he said the kingdom is within. You may notice some dark mask images and more joy in the later toy images. My life now is filled with love beyond my wildest dreams, but I still remember photographing toy pigs on the railroad tracks as people passed by drinking Starbucks coffee and shaking their heads.

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