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Special ALL-NUDE Kozik interview inside!!!

Beyond the Astral Plane

REMEMBERING MATI KLARWEIN

ON MARCH 7, the world lost one of its last living surrealists when Mati Klarwein passed away at his home in Mallorca. While his name is seldom uttered in the same breath as Dalí's or Ernst's, Mati Klarwein's work is familiar to millions around the world—often unknowingly—because his paintings were used for such historic LPs as Santana's *Abraza*s and Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew*. As a painter, Mati's style was distinct, his palate exquisite, and his sense of composition sublime. He is considered a father figure to the art world of *Juxtapoz* magazine and, in the years prior to his death, brainstormed frequently about planning an epic, international traveling show of *Juxtapoz* artists. His enthusiasm, charm, and lust for life will be forever missed by the staff of this publication. His acquaintance enriched my life immeasurably and, like Andy Warhol, I can honestly attest that "Mati Klarwein is my favorite artist." I can only hope that the afterworld is half as beautiful as one of his paintings.

—Jamie O'Shea



Cover art for Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew*.

View of the Aleph Sanctuary.



Strokes of Genius In Memory of Abdul Mati Klarwein

THE DIVINELY INSPIRED MATI KLARWEIN created some of the world's most visionary and astonishing paintings with meticulous brush strokes of genius. I was introduced to Mati's work in 1974 by my roommate from art school who showed me *Milk 'n Honey* (Harmony Books, 1973), Mati's first book of paintings. The book is now a rare collector's item. *Milk 'n Honey* documents Mati's climactic masterpiece, *The Aleph Sanctuary*, a work dedicated to "the undefined religion of everything." With 70 painted panels, it took him 10 years to complete.

Mati worked for two years on some paintings, like his *Crucifixion (Freedom of Expression)*, an unforgettably infinite interracial orgy spread over a wide-branched tree of life. Another two-year piece was *Grain of Sand*, an inexplicably complex and weird mandala of bodies, melting minds, aliens and flowers, with cameo appearances by Lord Krishna, Salvador Dalí, Marilyn Monroe, Socrates, et al, which exactly duplicated itself in miniature at its center.

In 1976, I was excited to see Klarwein's second book, *God Jokes*. By this time I had taken LSD and, like many other acid heads, found Mati to be my number-one fine-art reference point. Klarwein was able to capture the multicolored iridescent visions and patterns of the inner worlds, demonstrating what an experienced psychonaut and fanatically disciplined painter he was.

Mati was born in 1930 in Hamburg, Germany, and his Jewish parents escaped the Nazis by moving to Palestine in 1934. His earliest memories were of walking through the deserts of Bibleland. With the war in full blast, establishing Israel as a nation in 1948, Mati and his mother left for Paris. Staying in Paris for 18 years, Mati studied art with Fernand Léger, was introduced to the art of Dalí, and befriended the painter Ernst Fuchs, who taught him how to paint like the Old Masters. Mati later lived for many years in New York City, then moved to the island of Mallorca, Spain. He said that he added the name Abdul to his own because every Jew ought to adopt a Moslem name and every Moslem ought to adopt a Jewish name in order to overcome some of the hatred that engulfed his homeland. He was a totally charming raconteur and hobnobbed with celebrities like Jimi Hendrix and Timothy Leary, movie stars, and royalty throughout his life. As Michael Palin put it, "Things happen after a bottle of Klarwein." My own daughter, Zena, who was five when she met the 63-year-old painter, decided that she would marry him when she grew up.

Mati was an example of uncompromising artistic integrity. He once told me that he had prepared a huge book of his paintings for a major art book publisher and that the first word of the book was "fuck." The publisher was anxious to get Klarwein's book in print but said, "You can't have 'fuck' be the first word of your book!" So Mati told him, "Fuck' is the first word, so I guess you can't publish the book." Mati went on to publish his own books *A Thousand Windows* and *Improved Paintings: Bad Paintings Made Gooder*. Klarwein's writing style was as unique and outrageous as his paintings. He was a grand storyteller and spun both long-winded dream epics and psychedelic one-liners like, "Ecstasy is my frame of reference."

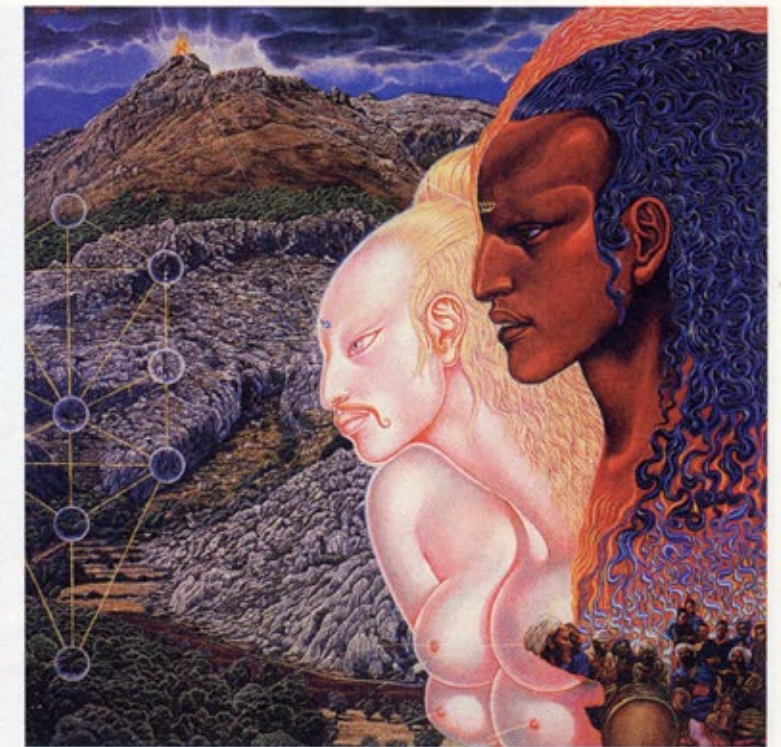
I was thrilled to finally meet Mati in 1994 and glad to know that he appreciated my work and felt a fellowship with so many of the younger visionary artists whom he inspired. Though he knew that the art of the fantastic realists, including his own work, was not accepted enough during his lifetime to find its way into many major museum collections, his advice to me for overcoming artistic disrespect was practical and realistic: "You have to find and pay the best art critics to write about the work and show in respected galleries."

Mati showed his work in galleries and museums throughout his life and also sold works to collectors out of his studio. He never tried to make his work marketable but could sell every painting he made. Outside the confines of the art world, most everyone had seen his work through his record covers for Santana or Miles Davis or Buddy Miles. During his full and adventurous life, Mati traveled the world and maintained his relationships with friends, wives, lovers, and his many children. He was an inspiration to so many artists because he expressed the freedom to imagine and paint anything. He visited and painted mystical dimensions of consciousness and could coax us into spiritualized epiphanies one moment, then plunge us into completely bizarre erotic frenzies the next. I join with many artists and admirers in feeling grateful that Mati Klarwein lived and left us his visionary legacy. Like a cosmic comedian with a wry grin who appreciated God jokes and a magic-mushroom paintbrush, his paintings will continue to provoke both awe and laughter as they tweak the ass of our psyche.

—Alex Grey, alexgrey.com



Time, oil on canvas, 37" x 37," 1965.



Moses and Aron, oil on canvas, 33" x 33," 1971.



Asral Body Asleep, oil on canvas, 27" x 40," 1969.



Eve, oil on canvas, 26" x 38," 1964.



Annunciation, oil on canvas, 56" x 38," 1962.

ABRAXAS, ABDUL MATI KLARWEIN AND ANNUNCIATION

WHEN I WAS 14 and out marveling at the wonders of "synthetic psilocybin," I noticed that all things were literally made of a "fluid text." It wavered somewhere between Mati's Hebrew lettering-scapes and Rick Griffin's indecipherable alien runes. Everything seemed to be, upon closer inspection, made of these "letters." Okay, sometimes they changed into faces, but the point is, you could almost read them. Almost. The answers to the truly burning questions were spelled out right in front of me, I felt, but I couldn't quite get it and, try as I might, eventually I had to take leave of my mind. Mati saw the letters, too, I think.

As with a few other artistic minds out there (Ernst Fuchs, Heinrich Kley, and Salvador Dalí, to name a few whom I love and who obviously influenced Mati), Mati's work seemed strangely familiar to me upon introduction. The cover of Santana's 1970 Columbia LP, *Abraxas*, was quite stunning. The technique alone quickened my pulse with its juicy psychedelic photorealism and rich colors (the originals blow away the album covers in that dept). Photorealistic dream clippings, sort of surrealism meets *National Geographic* in a collage. But painted.

Some of the images seem stiff and studious, as if he projected or traced them directly from a magazine. Some of the images contrast awkwardly, the way religious art often does when form is sublimated to the urge to cram in an extra dose of important and meaningful symbols. Overall, though, *Annunciation*, painted in oil and tempera, achieves a sort of busy grace, borrowing liberally (as much of Mati's work does) from a wide image bank of source material. Carlos Santana saw the original in Spain, and perhaps the artwork inspired the concept for the album, but by utilizing this remarkable painting (and the album's being great helped, too!), Santana helped Mati to achieve huge mass-media exposure, still quite unusual for an outsider/surrealist painter. We probably would have found out about Mati anyway, as talent tends to surface, but this album *is*, by and large, how most of us discovered him.

The subject of the painting is plain to see. The title kind of gives it away. The piece is called *Annunciation*, and Mati did it back in 1962-63. A white dove, undoubtedly cooing comfortably in the ... lap of a voluptuous, nude black woman, a pure woman, a Virgin Mary [but not shy; she has her beauty products out and she knows she's got it going on]. She is seemingly asleep or oblivious to the winged messenger, but Angel is announcing anyway. Angel basically ruins this painting. She blew my mind when I first saw her. There's nothing wrong with a Gabriel, but Angel-girl here is a hottie. Maybe all this nonsense about virgins and fluffy angels is a bunch of hooey. Sensuality doth help the spirit meet the flesh. There is nothing wrong with how we all incarnated. The birth of mankind must have



Top: Nativity, oil on canvas, 38" x 55," 1962. Above: Live, oil on canvas, 52" x 52," 1971.



Above right: Evil, oil on canvas, 52" x 52," 1971.

been ... human. Christ was undoubtedly born the same way, if truth be told. Nothing wrong with that. Hey, see old Mati over there with the three wise ... African gals? Why do you think he's smiling? Same reason old Joseph probably was smiling, too, if truth be told. And you know that. So back at the ranch, our rather bodacious angel is packing a conga drum. She may be a silent/telepathic angel, pointing her hand to a symbol in the sky (first and silent Hebrew letter "Alef"), but you just know she can wail on that drum, too (remember, drums were the original wireless). So Angel, her blue tattoos contrasting nicely on her buck-naked red skin, is pointing to and announcing something: that "everything" is born of "nothing?" To look beyond what may seem a paradox, to harken.... Yo! Wake up. She's trying to tell you something, homegirl. You pregnant girl! The Angel looks experienced. So does mommy-to-be, for that matter. And yes, Mati, I like that hat. It's very ... jaunty yet practical, out there in the Mediterranean sunshine, sitting amidst a cornucopia with the three perky gals. And that's Mati. Maybe he's not the Joseph figure (as some contend) but just another wise guy. Perhaps that's Mommy's real baby-daddy with his head sticking out the window just behind the ladies. He wants to be with Mati and the three wise back-up singers at the smorgasbord.

On the *Abraxas* LP's back cover, there is printed an excerpt from *Demian*, by author Herman Hesse, regarding a painting that induced in viewers the whole range of conflicting human emotions. How they called this painting *Mother and Whore*, questioned it, berated it, and then made love to it ... and finally, they called it *Abraxas*. I'm sure that somehow, Mati himself, in the creative process, went through a bit of the same. ☺
—Jacaerber Kastor, *Psychedelic Solution*, 800 558 7950 or psychedelicsolution.com.

All images are © Klarwein family. To learn more about Mati Klarwein, contact abdulmati@free.fr or 011 34 971 639 281. www.matiklarwein.com.



Photo courtesy of Alex Grey

FROM IMPROVED PAINTINGS (MAX PUBLISHING, 2000):

XENOPHOBIA:
I HATE GERMANS
BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT JEWS
AND I HATE JEWS
BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT ARABS
I HATE ARABS
BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT AFRICANS
AND I HATE AFRICANS
BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT ME...
OH, AND I HATE MYSELF BECAUSE
I'M NOT A CUBAN BABALOA
AYE CHANGO OBATALA

I AM ONLY HALF GERMAN
AND ONLY HALF JEWISH
WITH AN ARAB SOUL
AND AN AFRICAN HEART

I DON'T KNOW WHICH ONE OF THE ABOVE
IS WRITING THIS SHIT
BUT WE ALL DANCE GREAT SALSA TOGETHER
LIKE MONKEYS ON A HOT TIN ROOF

TILL DEATH DO US PART
(JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS):
I WILL NEVER COMMIT SUICIDE OUT OF DESPAIR
I WILL ONLY DO IT WHEN I AM IN TOTAL ECSTASY
BUT THEN AGAIN, WHEN I REACH THAT STATE
I WON'T REALLY CARE
ONE WAY OR ANOTHER

MY ONLY REASON FOR STAYING ALIVE
IS THAT I CANNOT FIND ANY REASON TO DIE

IN AFRICA THEY SAY:
"VOUS PAS DANCEZ
VOUS MALADE"
MEANING:
IF LIFE IS NOT ART
THEN LIFE IS NOT LIFE
(...SINGS NERO AS HE PLAYS HIS FIDDLE WHILE ROME IS BURNING...)

DEER ME:
TO BE A SLAVE OF MY BODY
AS IT IS MILLIONS OF YEARS OLDER THAN I AM
AND BE A MASTER OF MY MIND
BECAUSE IT WAS BORN YESTERDAY

—Mati Klarwein