

The Burden Borne or MANIA
by Richard Tornello © 2010

His paintings were wooden, but his drawings, they were different. Some would claim they actually had a life of their own. Those statements were made by the serious collectors, grabbing every drawing offered. The price was never an object. They sold for a pretty penny too.

He cared little for the fame. Success allowed him to live a comfortable semi-reclusive life of his own choosing.

He could cross the street. He was able to walk down the stairs. He couldn't drive his vehicle. The mania, when it pounced, hit red hot, was mind searing accompanied with mental tunnel vision. He never knew when or why. He had to do it. He wanted it. He could do little else. He had to finish the drawings. When it left, he was both physically and psychically drained to the point of fever. No force except death could stop him until it was completed.

And then, his creations stood there in front of him, if only for awhile.

As a child he had the same "fits". That's what they were called back then. The monster is what he called her. She would wake and demand. She wanted something. Heat, rage, pin point focus-desire and then attack. When they occurred during his childhood, the end result was an altercation and violence.

His parents withdrew from most social events that would have a potential for the monster to strike. He became meek if only to protect himself as well as others, but the monster lurked. When she struck, he never had control over the burning desire. As a child he rarely remembered. He just did whatever it was. Regret was the by-product.

After some time, and severe mental training, he found that he could actually channel that energy and solace with literature and art. Later, these channeled fits allowed him to see and do things he wouldn't understand for years. It was as strange as it was ineffable.

He matured learning to live with these attacks of mania. He studied art but never mastered the pigments. The paintings were mediocre at best except for one or two and they got him an interview at an art

academy. “You know son,” they said. “Have you thought of teaching?” That was a polite manner of suggesting his work was not up to the quality they expected.

And then She hit like never before. She knew what she wanted. Graphine transmitted, then imparted life from his fingers to the paper, to the physical beauty portrayed. Then gone. Exhausted, “Here,” is all he said. The drawing was handed to the committee. There was silence. He was admitted.

When the mania took over, when She was hungry and turned her eyes toward him and pounced, there was no concept of space or time, and no need for food. He could never explain it. He knew better than to try. He had an internal burning fever of desire for? They just happened. He created the renditions and they were alive. He was the only human who ever got to meet them.

“Please don’t send us back.” They would beg. They didn’t want to return to the paper, or to the sketch books, but they had to. He had only so much energy he could funnel into his work to make them come alive. They would live for those brief time periods.

He loved his drawings too. They were his children, some his lovers and others just passing friends. They always came alive if even for seconds, minutes and rarely, oh so rarely and so lovely, sometimes for a few hours.

“Thank you,” is all he ever said.

People said, “We could see them breathing in the frame.” They were quoting from one critic’s art review. “...an alchemist, a genius, or a devil...” was what he wrote. The critics love his drawings. “Why do you waste your time painting? Your draughtmanship is a god sent gift.”

Some viewers would retreat, fearful or awe struck by the reality staring back at them. Others fell in love and paid any price. One patron, as he left the artist’s studio with his new purchase noticed what he thought looked like water stains on the face of one of the drawing.

Over time, the constant loss of all his art was too much. He drew very little.

The completed drawing was different than any of the others. The long flowing hair was typical, but the wings, he never drew wings. You could almost feel the feathers. The woman had a seductive smile, and a warm loving presence, that if she

were alive, would bring a man to his knees and women would step back in awe and respect.

The corner's report stated heart failure. They found him with this one in his hands.

THE END