From Myth to Muse

Workman Arts is a Toronto-based organizations that works with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in that city. The mission of the Workman Arts Project is to support aspiring, emerging and established artists with mental illness and addiction issues who are committed to developing and refining their art form and promoting a greater understanding of mental illness and addiction through film, theatre, visual art, music and the literary arts. For more information, see <http://www.workmanarts.com/>

As part of Toronto's 2005 Metamorphosis Festival, Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra commissioned a series of paintings from eight Workman Arts Members titled *From Myth to Muse*. These nine large-scale paintings were inspired by and depicted various stories from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The spectacular works were unveiled during a three-day concert series. John Ralston Saul, Honorary Patron, spoke at the opening and actor R.H. Thomson narrated the *Metamorphoses* stories during each performance.

This collaboration was not limited to the concert's 3-evening run. The work of the *From Myth to Muse* artists was introduced to a much wider audience. After the initial concert, the paintings were shown at the Metamorphosis Festival's March performance of the Toronto Consort, an ensemble dedicated to music of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. In May 2005 the exhibition moved to the Paper Mill Art Gallery at Todmorden Mills Heritage Museum, was then displayed at the Ontario Lieutenant Governor's suites for six months and finally on to the National Arts Centre. The *From Myth to Muse* paintings have now been purchased by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and are part of their significant permanent collection.

"The fascinating paintings in this exhibition show that myths still have the power to capture our imaginations and connect us with eternal truths. These paintings invite us into a deeper world where symbols and poetry speak to the human condition."

- The Honourable James K. Bartleman, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario

The Brock Review is pleased to present a selection of the artwork from the *Myth to Muse* series. On the following pages you will find work by Alan Parker, Henry "Banger" Benvenuti, Peter Smith, and Stephanie Anne.

Alan Parker, *Minotaur* (oil on canvas, 4' x 7'), 2005

Artist Statement: Art is a kind of kinship with history as presented by the artistic temperament of the times. As a student I was a failure in the sense that, unlike my peers, I had nothing to say artistically. But I was given a four-year respite in the country, across from a library and I read and developed a set of principles for my art. Information that is relevant today influences the continuing process of learning how to paint. My mentor and teacher was Frederick Hagan at the Ontario College of Art. He taught me the fine art of printmaking and I fell in love by the work of the German Expressionists, something that has transferred into my painting.

One makes art to communicate. You may not always agree with trends or fads but communication is there and it changes us in some way. Art is often isolating and yet revealing. The work itself represents all of these dynamics: the literature of art; the often-found meaning and memory in the expression of art; an interest in the structure and colour of art. The possibility of communicating ideas is however subtle.

-Alan Parker

Henry "Banger" Benvenuti, *Battle of the Centaurs* (oil on canvas, 5' x 6'), 2005

Artist Biography: Born April 16, 1952 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Henry received 2nd prize in the Kaufman's annual scholastic art competition at the age of 13. He studied 2 years of fine art after 12 years of elementary school. Drafted into the military in 1972, Henry received various illustrator-journalist awards by the U.S. Pentagon. In 1977 he moved to the Lower East Side of Manhattan and joined the Nonson Gallery of Soho. After curating the Punk-New Wave Art Expo that the critics dismissed as "just another rock-n-roll party", Henry, being very depressed chopped off two fingers, protesting the neglect of serious young artists. He ended up, after vigorous attempts to exhibit, black listed from the established galleries. His back to the wall, he became a heroin addict. In 1989, after a traumatic auto accident, Henry flew to Paris and joined the great sympathizer of struggling artists, Agnes B. Agnes exhibited Henry's work at the Chalon-sur-Soane Espace des Arts, and at the Picasso Museum of Antibes, France. In 1993 he moved to Toronto and was married. Henry has shown his work at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa. He is currently working on his most important piece to date, *9/11 The Massacre of the Innocents*.

Peter Smith, *Morpheus* (oil on board, 5' x 6'), 2005

Artist Biography: In my early 20's I did a favour for a friend, who happened to be an artist. In return, he taught me to draw. During this period, I took courses with various artists in Toronto and attended the Ontario College of Art and Design. After college I spent many years struggling to find a personal vision. Over the past 2 or 3 years that vision is starting to come together.

Stephanie Anne, *Apollo and Daphne* (oil on canvas, 6' x 8'), 2005

Artist Biography: Born on the outskirts of Toronto in 1956, Stephanie spent most of her childhood hiking and horseback riding in the Rough Valley. She sought refuge and peace as she read, sketched and wrote both short stories and poetry. She also found a passion to paint and dreamed of attending OCAD but instead, found herself moving to the wilderness of Northern Ontario at 16 to build a log cabin and live for six years. Her only "art book" was a large volume of the Group of Seven's work. Given to her by her father at age 11, she had it signed by A.Y. Jackson and cherishes it to this day. She loves the way the group captures the 'real' feeling of the woods; the light and mystical qualities of Monet; and the passion and fluidity of Renoir.

Stephanie spent much time in the last 10 years in prayer and meditation and attempting to transpose the visions from her mind to canvas. It has been said that few artists have picked up a brush and been able to paint so well right off the top. Her third painting was entered in the Art of Stone show and was voted by 80 artist and friends as the best acrylic in the show. As well as painting, she facilitates Relaxation and Meditation with art groups. She hopes her works will encourage and inspire others.