

Beyond The Paintwork By David Silver

You are in the mood to paint something. Something creative. Something new. You've never done this before. You prepare yourself. Red paint. Blue paint. Yellow paint. Mixing palette. Medium-sized flat brush. A jar of solvent. A canvas sized eight inches by ten inches. Oh, and some black paint to deepen the mood.

You mix your palette as you've been recently taught, the Colour Wheel demystified. You now know that red and blue make violet, red and yellow make orange, yellow and blue make green.

You blend and mix, mix and blend, creating all the colours of the rainbow matrix that now holds the focus of your mind – turquoise, magenta, crimson, violet and scarlet. Make up your own names. The great paint makers always did. Red and yellow and pink and green, you quietly sing a rainbow too. Three colours and you can create the world. Add a fourth dimension and you can create the universe.

The stained glass in the antique ornamental window of the atelier casts assorted beams of shimmering beauty upon your hands, seeming to guide and encourage them in their work.

You apply the first tentative lines of a self-portrait, taking your cue from the concave mirror in front of you. What should you create first – the windows to your soul, or the window to your thoughts? Your eyes or your mouth? Your muted ears have nothing to add to this task because you work in complete silence bar the slow, regular pulse of the pendulum clock in the passageway and the gentle sounds of equipment and materials as they engage together in magical creativity. You choose the eyes which of course affix your attention every time you look up, and start to build them within the oval outline you have already prepared. As you work you constantly glance at the mirror, becoming ever more familiar with the person you see before you than you ever have before in your entire life. "Who is this person?" you ask yourself. You wish there could be a reply.

Time seems to hang eternal in the quiet and the peace of your occupation. You occasionally glance at the figures in the window. Historical figures, medieval perhaps, a tableau of mysterious people and creatures frozen by time into strange interactive ritualistic postures.

You become acutely aware of the texture of the canvas, not just the warp and weft of the linen threads but the almost microscopic imperfections, the ridges and depressions in the fibres themselves. After all, this is an organic substance which was once living in its own right. Seeing it now from within the painting, within the same flat dimension as your developing portrait, you find yourself in a seemingly endless plane whilst The Creator, The Artist, You, creates you, progressively and patiently building your substance and your soul. You observe The Artist at work, pausing from time to time to extract this or that pigment from His phials. You observe the labels written in antique script on the containers: *Rubrum* undertitled *Sanguineous Humor*, *Flau* surtitled *Cholericus Chole*, *Caeruleum* as *Phlegmaticus Humor* and *Nigres* as *Melancholicus Humor*.

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As your being builds, the world from which you sprang grows ever fainter, the sounds of brush, breathing, ticking all lessening. As you prepare to depart, to slide away sideways within the dimensions available to you in your desire to explore your new world further, you pause to bid your Creator farewell, but all you see is a motionless, vaguely humanoid shape in the shadows, an empty oval in place of a face, illuminated by many-hued beams of light from the window, visibly faintening in the setting sun.

Every conceivable colour mixes and swirls before you.

Your journey through the Second dimension begins.

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