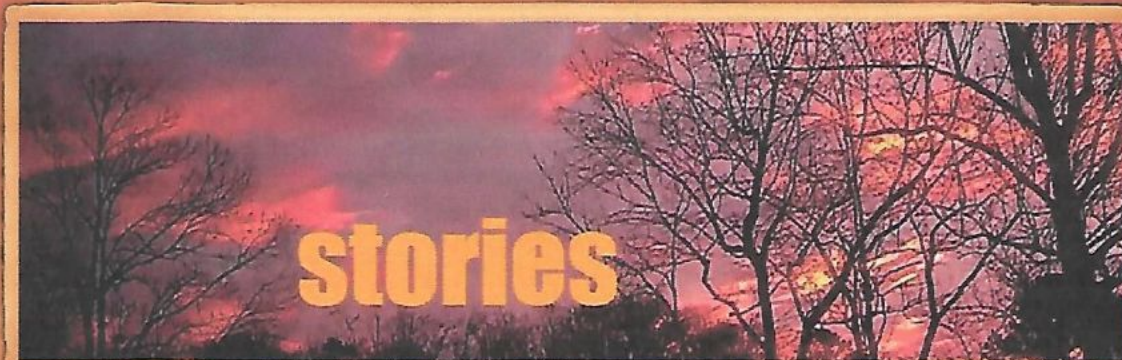




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Woman Of The Painting - Norbert Kovacs

11/5/2021

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I might try the painting, he thought. It would be straightforward enough to paint a woman standing. She would have a simple outline, a basic pose with head erect, and a normal face. He would not belabor her. Yes, it would be a straightforward picture. But he sensed there might be more to painting her than he supposed. He had felt an interest imagining the woman that seemed hard to pinpoint. It might have been because of the steady way that he pictured she faced the viewer. It might have been the angle at which he thought she carried her head. Whatever the woman's unique quality, he wished to show it off well painting her. If only he knew what set her apart.

He traced the woman's figure in light gray on the canvas. She appeared carrying the upright pose he had imagined. There was the basic shape of her front on display. Her arms and dress extended in the right proportions, her form as planned. He noted, then, that he had shifted her torso to a side as if to bear more weight on one leg. It gave a neat skew to her top half. She seemed poised, held an exact way for attention. He sensed it in the small jut of her hip, the curve of her waist. As he studied her outline, his focus held on her mid-section. There is something about that part of her if she is poised this way, he thought. He decided to paint her mid-section. He gave her blouse a long, simple fold at the waist per his plan. He drew a fine line to separate the halves of the blouse and the round buttons that held them together. Then he stepped back and surveyed her. He was struck at once by the surface of the

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blouse. The cloth rippled in ridges and waves that stood up of themselves. It seemed sculpted and natural at one and the same time. The space amid the fabric ridges glistened with a light fresh as sunlight; it allowed almost no shadow despite the many folds in the cloth. The buttons down the middle shone like bright, round emblems. The whole mid-section was unlike any blouse front he had seen. As he looked at it, a strange sense about the image came to him. It was like some vague presence hovered within the blouse. He imagined for an instant it was a face. He tried to see if he recognized any real features in that face but could not.

However, the idea of a face did not leave him for he still had to paint one for the woman. Maybe hers will be the one I hoped to see just now but couldn't, he considered. On the head he had outlined, he painted a flowing line that bent in the middle to mark the woman's jaw and chin. He stopped to look on the small tuck he gave her chin. The line there curled in to form two bumps, each rounded like a geometric figure rather than a natural one. He imagined the chin would be smooth to touch if it were real, the muscle supple. Moved by this thought, he painted the woman's lips the very next thing. He made them small and full. Of course, they were red, no other color suiting. When he stepped back to look on them, he discovered the lips were vivid indeed. Their flesh was round and raised, the light on them flecked, full of texture. The lips pressed together, and it seemed they held back some word for him. He was happy to think this and went on to create the woman's nose. He made its body, long and thin, a lean route to her forehead. Finishing it, he perceived the effect the painted light had on this part of the face. It shone in a strip without blemishes. Very attractive, he thought as he advanced to painting the woman's eyes. He gave her a dark pair, taking care to size them well. Her lashes, brows, and eyelids he made fine. He meant her eyes to be expressive and worked to get them so. Then he gazed on the finished pair. The eyes held intelligence in their dark color. Their coy expression hinted at some kind of knowledge still unshared with anyone else. The arc of light to the irises said she was ready, however, to share what she knew in the apt moment. A keen secret it might be, he thought and smiled. He went on to render the woman's hair. Long, dark locks appeared above her forehead. He had them cover her head as naturally as they might in real life. Surveying the result, he realized the rich nature of her hair. Its dark chocolate tone seemed a solid thing of itself, dense and deep. Yet light played among the locks, creating bright patches like fluid edges. It was lush hair in every sense.

With the vigor he had found making her face and hair, he made the woman delicate ears, cupped tight at their centers. He completed her with two graceful arms and a pair of fine, articulate hands. As he stood back from the canvas, he considered it had not been, as he believed earlier, just one feature of the woman that moved him to paint. It had been his delight in each of them that compelled his rendering one after another with skill. He had followed his pleasure in doing so, and it opened her to him. No plan, he realized, could have told beforehand the wonders that the painting showed; he had to discover them. So, the woman, without a word from her pressed lips and knowing eyes, had led him to make beautiful, not just her waist and hair, but her entire self. The idea charmed him as he admired her poised form on the canvas.

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film (advance apologizes if you've seen it, I was following the producer's instructions), and author of numerous stories and poetry. Hayes has written for Nigel Lythgoe (producer of American Idol), The Weekly World News, and his epitaph. Originally from Cleveland, Ohio, he now resides in Los Angeles where the smog is slowly killing him. He can be found in old parking lots, abandoned malls, or at www.Stormcrowhayes.com.

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