

# IGOR STURMHEIT

## BIOGRAPHY

Born on the 2nd October 1971 in Johannesburg South Africa. In 1978, I attended the Michael Mount Waldorf School in Bryanston, Johannesburg whilst growing up. It was there that I first met Mr Beniamen Kleynhans who was to be my Class Teacher, who had just just arrived back from Emerson College in England. He was a young man; I still remember his kind eyes and warm deep voice as he shook my hand on my first day of Class 1. Beniamen was to become an important influence in my biography. As well as being a teacher he was also an artist whose works I loved from the first moment I saw them. It is with thanks to him that I wanted to be a painter and to use colours. His works still mean a great deal to me and the very first painting of his I ever owned, having been bought for me by my parents at an exhibition in 1982/83 when I was 10 years old, still hangs in my bedroom to this day.

As fate would have it Beniamen was unable to complete the full 7 years of Class Teaching. However, on leaving school I made a decision to go to Cape Town (1992) to study a one year General Arts course at the Novalis College which at that time was in the suburb of Plumstead. Through an unusual twist of destiny the teacher of the course was Beni Kleynhans ... and so my painting life began. Again our relationship was cut short. I was only able to do three months of the course as Beni was taken ill and died later that year in Australia.

## ARTISTIC INFLUENCES

My admiration for art is diverse and while I certainly have a leaning towards bold and colourful pieces I also find the work of Hieronymus Bosch and others in that genre intriguing. As a schoolboy my life was richly coloured by the work of the Blaue Reiter, particularly Franz Marc whose paintings hung in our Classrooms. The way the colours held the forms has always remained in my being. Also defining is the work of Kandinsky with its amazing fluidity and language.

## PAINTING TECHNIQUE

In most of my paintings I make use of Stockmar beeswax crayons, with genuine turpentine as a melting substance. I love the smell of the beeswax and also the colours, texture and depth that they give me. Usually I use them to create a foundation colour (Grund farbe) and then I add in oil colours which I mix down with either sesame oil or Turps in order to get a translucency. This is the reason I use 50 to 100% cotton paper, which allows the colour to breathe more freely.

I have never had a dedicated Studio space and so have had to make do with sporadic space opportunities.

In more recent times painting outdoors has helped me deal with turpentine contact-issues as well as an intolerance to the smell. Sometimes bees are attracted to the working area (possibly by the mixture of the scent of pine and beeswax) which I find uplifting.

Colours in my experience are a living world and I am always deeply grateful for them. They allow such freedom in their application and, though retaining certain tendencies and characteristics, one is never hemmed in by them. The Beings of colour work through the process and I am allowed in a sense to interact and work with them. Often this is a humbling experience for me, working in this space between light and dark.

## PERSONAL ARTISTIC PROCESS

I have always admired those who are skilled at detail and worked hard at refining their technical craft and thereby being able to depict what meets the senses accurately. In my own creative process I am too impatient for the detail and need to work spontaneously. By entering something of the Inspirative state, I create space for myself to work out of moments of nurtured imagination, forming windows through which my consciousness meets something that illumines and allows. Through this allowing, ideas are able to flow from the applications and colours which suggest, through an intuitive interaction or perhaps reaction, what I need to clarify in order to come to reality that strives to be sensed objectively. This is admittedly a difficult space as one is constantly dealing with subjective nature.

## THE ARTISTIC EXPERIENCE

Sometimes I experience this process as painful, a sense of something reverberating in my heart space, like a pulsation, as it listens to the direction of what has been filtered through the reflections of the head. I allow my hands to busy themselves out of this process, often standing back to see what offerings come as new possibilities wanting expression. Occasionally people comment that I should have left certain images hidden but I struggle sometimes not to bring them out.

## DEVELOPMENT

During my twenty-four years of painting there have been shorter and longer gaps between the periods of Inspirative space. Over this time I have noticed how my work has changed. When I took my art seriously in my early twenties something new entered my ability to see. For example, if I observed a piece of wood I could experience in it the workings and movement of Beings. I could see something that lived and through its shape or form could reimagine its past. The more I worked with these experiences the more fascinated I became by the "scripts" which, as living memory-threads, were carried through into my work. Later, through more human-centric observation and my own inner development, the expression of experiences evolved to become increasingly ensouled.

## NAMING

I find the process of naming pieces problematic as I seldom know, at the time of completion, exactly what a certain piece is about. What I experience, may be totally different to that experienced by another observer. I feel naming can confine. Does the painting have a language of its own perhaps, through which it can speak for itself? Does it express something objective or is it only a subjective creation? I find that time is needed for things to reveal themselves.

## THE VIEWING PROCESS AND THE QUESTION OF OBJECTIVE REALITY

The viewer has to go out of the self on the raying of the eyes in order to meet the colour-image. It is through this meeting that each individual becomes the interpreter, enabling a process through which, an objective reality can be revealed. I hope that the outcome of my creative endeavour will be able to speak for itself.

This is one of the reasons why research in this field is so difficult; prejudices lie deeply concealed and so, constantly, we are confronted by our own characters and opinions which divert us from reality.

Through the process of sensitising oneself to that which lies hidden, archetypal realities or beings can be experienced objectively.

## CONCLUSION

For me painting is a Soul experience and it can be taken up in such a way that the Soul of the Individual can be recognised in the Soul of the World. This process is painful at times and liberating at others. At its deepest it can carry the experience of death; at its most sublime, resurrection.