

CHARLES IRVIN

STINKY MAGIC 2 - METAMORPHOSIS

15.9 - 16.12.2017

Opens
Thursday / Friday 2 - 7 pm
Saturday 2 - 5 pm
and by appointment

We experience the world as material, made of things. Magic is immaterial. It's creating something from thin air, transcending limitations of time and space. Truth is you can't know one without knowing the other. You can't have magic without the mundane and vice-versa.

This is the subtext of the 1963 fantasy film *Jason and the Argonauts*. In the film Jason criticizes the gods and speaks of their demise, yet they repeatedly save him and his crew from annihilation. The future age Jason prophesies-when humans are free of "superstition"-is the scientific, materialist age of the early 1960s. Yet the by the late 60s, people of the western world were seeking something more than material comfort.

Jason and the Argonauts in its many iterations is one of our countless cultural expressions that much more exists than what the 5 senses describe and verbal language can explain. The 1963 film version also vividly illustrates a fundamental aspect of this expression: it always struggles with the medium it speaks through.

Of course these boundaries on our imagination are constantly being expanded-more so now than ever before. In the world of the moving image, for example, so much has changed since 1963. Yet limits remain. In season 7 of *Game of Thrones*, scenes featuring dire wolves were cut because there it was too expensive to create the computer generated imagery for them. Pity that our society doesn't have its priorities straight. Why not use money from the bloated US military budget for better CGI? A civilization is best remembered by its cultural artifacts anyway.

While the nations of Earth should certainly spend less on their militaries and more on producing spectacular entertainment, a bigger budget does not mean better art. *Jason and the Argonauts* entertains because its effects, though crude by today's standards, are wildly imaginative. This is the key to great art, whether it's film, music, painting, etc. It doesn't have to make sense, or be technically perfect, but it does need imagination, heart and soul.

Painting is a primal example of imaginative expression. Its power lies in its simplicity. It will never be replaced completely by the digital because we need its materiality and earthiness. We need a window to the fantastic that you don't have to plug in.

Ovid's Metamorphosis exploits this interplay of the material and spiritual, the mundane and the magical. Gods and mortals quarrel, mate, and produce offspring. People are transformed into real birds, animals, plants, and rivers. Mythological events occur at cities or Islands you can visit today.

Most of *Metamorphoses* draws on tales from prehistory, times further from its composition in the first decade BCE than we are from Ovid's time. Yet through the imagination of Ovid we can experience these times, bridge the gap between these worlds. Imagination breaks the illusion of time. The scientific method will illuminate some aspects of these distant cultures, intuition will illuminate others.

I see my paintings as glimpses or illustrations of this world outside of time. Illustrations that are grounded in the physicality of oil paint, the earthiest paint. Astrological and shamanic images morph into mundane objects and back again. The spiritual and corporeal flow together. I present to you *Stinky Magic 2: Metamorphosis*.