

**I do not create images, I discover them -
On the recent works of Stephen Sack -**

The world of the latest works in the Chromosomic Memory series is the realm of Gargoyles, the grotesque stone creatures that adorn medieval cathedrals. They belong to those fantastic figures people have conjured since the mists of time to represent daemons and evil spirits, in order to protect themselves against them in the only way they deemed feasible: by recognising them, giving them concrete form, and thus taking away their magical powers. In this respect, Ancient Near Eastern religions did not differ from the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Art and religion emerged as champions of enlightenment, conferring on man the requisite knowledge and deportment to harness the effluxes of the unconscious in a mythological order and to confront them with divine power. This is how the many faces of Evil roused from countless dreams and irrational fears came to oppose the forces of Good. They sprang from a flash of inspiration or revelation. The struggle between Good and Evil could now commence, and the ardently desired triumph of Good over Evil could at long last be attained and celebrated.

An ancient precept of human history and culture painfully learnt from experience, assumed concrete form on the cathedrals of the Middle Ages: Never wipe out the vanquished. For he was subjugated to serve the victor and pay tribute, but otherwise to be left to his own purview. This attitude was spelled out literally in plastic terms on old churches. The gargoyles were banished from the inner sanctum of the houses of God, expelled from the Kingdom of Heaven; but they were allowed to linger exposed and to suffer privations outside, at the edge of the world, concomitantly condemned to stand guard against and ward off their evil kin 'similia similibus', with their own hideous countenance and frightening grimaces. Dreadful in demeanour and regurgitating water, like a phalanx of scarecrows, they chased Evil away.

They would vanish later, when Rationalism ushered in the illusory madness of the scorched earth policy, the final solution, and the fanatical and systematic destruction of the enemy. Mankind now believed that the gargoyles had been vanquished for ever, considered them mere ghosts of a bygone age, thought that their mystery had been solved once and for all, assumed they had been utterly annihilated ... and yet, was astonished at the inroads irrationality was making in the subjective as well as social spheres, and amazed at the rise of blind hatred, fundamentalism, aggression, violence and occultism.

The art of Stephen Sack has its social setting here. As an artist, he knows how to tune in to inner voices and

premonitions, to all the images and frightening visions that appear in the human mind, come alive and embark on their evil escapades. He knows such escapades can no longer dwindle in the dark nowadays; so he tries to shape them in his own vision. He delves in his own inner images and seeks a place where they can materialise and assume shape. With the help of binoculars, he has finally found an archetype in the Gargoyles. For centuries, they served as ornaments on cathedrals, but their meaning got lost long ago. Even their shape had been extensively deformed: details had broken off, the weather elements had taken their toll, the stone had eroded, they were hardly noticed any more ... Stephen Sack approached them from his perspective, photographed them as well as possible from a distance and under varying light conditions. He developed the negatives, put the photographs under a microscope, and then focused on these fantastic creatures to photograph them again in enlarged guises, thereby conferring on them their proper contemporary shape. They no longer appear like monsters from the past, but intermix with the divagating photographic reproductions; they are not illusory now, but conjure a host of

allusions and associations. All of a sudden, the spectator sees no mere allegories of the past in these abstract monsters, but reflections of his own inner unfathomable depths. They function as fixed points to summon one's own visions in the perceptible world. As such, they resume their function of old: artistic forms that evoke forms of the unconscious from the deep chasms of the unknown. Art is again in its element, inquiring and giving form to inner representations and structures - an on-going creative process that turns visual concepts into images which in turn crystallise the stream of consciousness. Art as a means for gauging and shaping the quintessential, inner meaning of life to be contemplated by mankind.

I do not create images, I discover them. With this sentence, Stephen Sack attests the degree to which the artist is intertwined in the nexus of the world and life, existence and history. This artist is driven by an inner compulsion towards perpetual creativity. This is art that reaches for the future, yet is based on the experiences of the past. Whereas these gargoyles were able to uphold and help a bygone world to survive, Stephen Sack knows how to breathe new life into them in a surprising and bewildering manner, enriching those round him with his critical and creative talent in the process.

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