

# BEAUTIFUL INTIMATE MYSTERY: A Look into the Work of Christian Quintin

by Ahlia Warren, art critic

Not many people are able to do what Christian Quintin has done. He left his home in Brittany, France, as a young man, and without having any connections in the US, was able to successfully make a life as an artist in Northern California. Christian has been able to achieve the near impossible largely because his art communicates a haunting beauty that feels both familiar and unknown. I was invited to view several of Christian's pieces in an up close and personal setting. Looking into Christian's work is to look into a mirror that reflects the exquisite mystery of our world.

In the oil painting, "Ghost and the Rose," I felt Christian conveys a feeling of familiarity; the very soft human forms that he shapes his trees and folds of land with are a brush with the maternal energy akin to us all. And then, on the contrary, at the same moment, he pushes me to explore the unknown. The woman in the chair casts no shadow, even as the chair does. The soft caricatures of trees are juxtaposed to lifelike clouds and sky. The painting image is layered with superimposed



Ghost and the Rose

doorways and portals that lead to unexplained dimensions, endowed with their own light source. And finally, the enormous pink rose in the foreground has taken on human traits.

I feel that Christian's artistic

skill pulls me into a very real story in this piece, and I want to know more. I have been given just enough to feel that I have been here before. But, just as I get comfortable with what I know, I realize that this familiarity has led me to the steep brink of the unknown. Christian has a beautiful blend of artistic expertise and an open-hearted understanding of the surreal that culminates in my feeling of entering into a safe, striking mystery.

When I consider the oil painting called "A Moment of Peace," I am again looking at beauty identifiably familiar, and yet, what is it? This moment of peace is spellbinding. The focal point is a structure rising out of the ocean. Its shape appears to be growing as roots would, but it looks as if it is stone. It has both strength and filigreed delicacy. Christian uses hypnotic repetitive hand strokes to render the ocean's waves, ripples, and splashes into reality. The body of water painted on its two-

dimensional surface moves. Electric chiaroscuro is achieved in the deepening evening sky contrasted with the under lit clouds. Beautifully rendered landscape coalesces with a fantasy world, inviting all who view it into Christian's moment of peace.



A Moment of Peace

I am in awe of Christian's skill with oils, but he has more to reveal. He shows me a pen and ink piece called, "La Porte Ouverte" (The Open Door). The detail and patterns of the pen strokes are overwhelming and, at the same time, invoke a feeling of harmonious motion and sway. This image draws me into its depths, and simultaneously, elevates me to an aerial perspective. The longer I look into this view, the more dimensions appear to me. Christian has depicted leaves that turn into flowers that turn into water that appears to be both real and imagined. I am left understanding that this world holds me in tight confinement and also offers me a wild freedom.

Lastly, I get the chance to look at one of Christian's pastel drawings, "The Lovers of Willow Creek." This piece is a well depicted view of Bodega Bay from the hills rising around Willow Creek. It has been created with unmistakable likeness, and yet is animated to surpass the energy of a photograph. The blades of grass blend seamlessly into the fur of his majestic wolf dog Tanza sitting on the ocean side hills. The sun, high in the sky, glows with a feeling of well-being and joy. The atmosphere is a visual manifestation of our childhoods' "safe place." The picture Christian has composed is an intimate view of vast serenity.

I do not tire of looking at Christian's work. His work exceeds the borders of the canvas and continually expands inside my imagination. Christian has skill that can not be taught in art school, although he has a firm grasp of all that can be taught there. This is artwork that is exquisite because it is made from a great trust of his soul and abilities, and it resonates in anyone who is open to their own beautiful mystery.



The Lovers of Willow Creek