

I Know I Know The Answer.

A reflection on the work of Lavar Munroe

The work of Lavar Munroe is a strange room to enter.

When standing in front of one of Lavar's pieces the symbolism in his digital prints is the first thing you notice and almost immediately you are left to decipher the narrative that you know is in there... *somewhere*. This is where the break comes.

Lavar's best works teeter between the familiar and the unfamiliar, between reality and the unreal (never quite fiction). Proportionately rendered figures mix with abstracted forms, eggs hang from ceilings, angels dance with skeletons and the ever present crow and chicken become primeval symbols of... *what exactly?* I know I know the answer, but like a word forgotten it never completely comes. Perhaps that is the point.

Historically, the quality of Lavar's work can be called surreal (de Chirico and Dali sometimes come to mind) but I think that this is a simplified generalization of the visual property of his work rather than speaking to the visceral potency they have. It is right that Lavar should be inspired by dreams, but contrary to composed dreamscapes Lavar's work has a strong anchor in the here and now. Unlike dreams that you can remember, recount and deconstruct, Lavar's work holds you in a different way, like the dream you had and are *trying* to remember, *trying* to hold on to before becoming fully awake. The contradiction of staring into many of Lavar's pieces feels exactly like that... like waking up, becoming aware, while simultaneously losing your footing in the narrative that you thought you initially understood. Again, perhaps that is the point.

Trained as an illustrator the visual pushing of a narrative may be second nature to Lavar, but the refreshing thing is that the push is never overt, never severe. Even when the work seems most grotesque, most disturbing (as with the *Haiti* series) we are still invited to see pass the compositions themselves and decode them based on our own contemporary mythologies. Instead of being forced to react we are invited to reflect.

And suddenly, without warning, we are left navigating the slippery terrain between the subtle distinction of being hunted and being haunted...

Heino Schmid

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