DR. CAROLYN FARB’S INTERVIEW WITH

ANDELFERT METOYER

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CF: I’ve followed the career of Angelbert Metoyer for years, ever since I first met you through art collector Lester Marks and saw your work at Barbara Davis Gallery. You’ve become an established artist, living and working in New York. You never cease to surprise me with your individuality, spirit and energy...Angelbert, when did you know you wanted to create?

AM: My work began with me questioning my very existence at a young age – about seven.

CF: Does your art come from your life experiences, family history or do you make it up?

AM: It’s a mixture of all of that.

CF: Tell me about your family.

AM: My father’s family is originally from Montpellier, France. They migrated in the late 1700’s and early 1800’s to Natchitoches, Louisiana. They started a colony in a place called Cane River. I have a suspicion that before my family came to the United States they were already Creole, due to the fact that the Metoyers were wealthy Moors in the South of France.

CF: Do you have a favorite medium in which you like to work?

AM: Drawing, because it is closest to conjuring. The word drawing represents the same thing as conjuring.

CF: All the icons that appear on your canvases, what do they mean?

AM: The saint period began my last semester of school at the Atlanta College of Art when the idea of turning the human form into a deity became important to me...to move it, to transcend people. When I am in a very in-depth period of my work, some people illuminate.

CF: Did being an African American artist present any challenges?

AM: I think you have to look at the whole idea of what it is to be an artist in the sense of our forefathers from Da Vinci to Picasso. Once understood, you move into the personal part of being an artist. It is not about being a black artist or a white artist.

CF: You often describe yourself as an “integalactic artist.” What does that mean?

AM: Someone who would be interested in sewing together all the cosmos and then traveling through it using his own lifetime, without moving from earth.

CF: Do you create a body of work especially for a gallery show?

AM: I create a series of work for every show, so I can document where I am at a given moment. A period of work can last for years, like the work I created between the start of college through my first gallery show. My second period of work began in 1999 with the “babies” series and has lasted through this year. My work changed in 2003 when I moved to New York.
CF: I have been to your studio in Houston when you've been working on several different paintings and sculptures simultaneously. Do you ever sleep? I noticed a prayer room.

AM: I don't sleep much. I retreat to my temple. I listen to a lot of music from south India and old Gospel hymns. They travel through my mind and motivate me.

CF: Tell me about your "door" series.

AM: There were 13 doors, and I think those doors took me to New York, as opposed to those doors just being a body of work. Those doors led me to create the body of work I am creating now.

CF: In your recent exhibit at the 9W Gallery in New York, were there significant changes in your art?

AM: My work changed tremendously between the Atlanta show and my show in New York. I recently discovered what it means to build a painting as opposed to painting a painting.

CF: Your work always has so many layers of intrigue to me. What was the piece, "War with God," about?

AM: "War with God" was kind of a secret battle that took place between the desire to change and actually changing. At the end of the painting, I realized that not only did I survive a challenge, but also I created a world in the midst of it.

CF: You have just taken me inside the painting. You have actually seduced the viewer, and I'm not even looking at the piece.

AM: But you can feel it, right?

CF: That is powerful.