

Love: Sacred, Sensual & Voodoo

Art Adventure Gallery Present Paintings & Hand-Pulled Prints by Abigail Merickel



Artist, Abigail Merickel

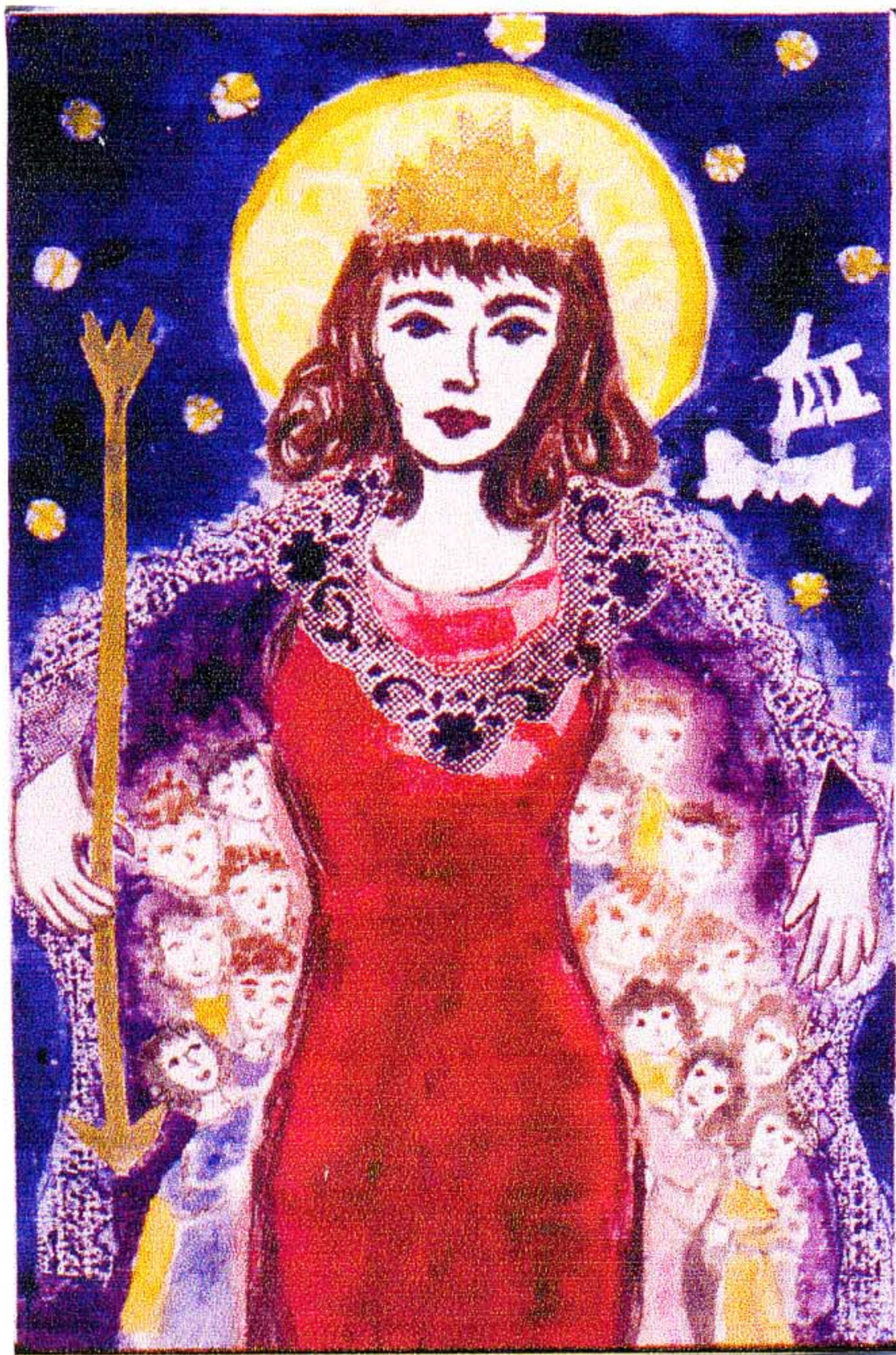
It was not my intention to explore the theme of "love" through painting and printmaking over the course of the last year," reports Abigail Merickel of Sisters. "But the imagery that intrigued me and that I felt compelled to create were saints, lovers and in the 11th hour, voodoo dolls," explained the creative artist. "What they seemed to have in common was love."

On a recent trip to New Mexico Merickel became intrigued by "retablos" paintings. A retablo is a miniature shrine or painting, often of a saint, historically used by Latin American cultures to give thanks in pictorial form for divine intervention. "My research led to fascinating discoveries around the legends of the saints' lives," said Merickel. "Particularly inspiring were the lives and work of women saints and early women mystics. These early women of the church were dedicated through their love of God to lives of healing, helping, teaching, creating music and art and even instructing world leaders of the day. Due to our Catholic belief in the continual sharing of grace with the saints, we continually supplicate God through them. I began to see these saints as powerful role models; beacons of light and support for women today."

Merickel explained that the legend of St. Ursula, daughter of a British Christian king betrothed to a pagan prince against her will fascinated her. Ursula received permission to delay her marriage when she begged to make a pilgrimage to Rome, but intending to remain a virgin and dedicate herself to God. She sailed in a ship bearing a thousand companion virgins; accompanied by ten noble virgins, each traveling in her own ship bearing a thousand companion virgins. The trip took three years. On their way back to Britain, they stopped in Cologne. Here Ursula and her companions were overtaken by a horde of Huns threatening to rape and pillage. Ursula urged the virgins to die rather than submit. She and her companions were martyred by the Huns after Ursula refused to marry their

chief. They were all buried in Cologne, and later, a church was built in their honor.

By the 12th century, the legend of St. Ursula and her virgin army—the basis for her patronage of girls and their teachers, inspired another early woman mystic, Hildegard of Bingen, who composed the ecstatic chants—liturgical works of sacred music (very much renowned today)—for the feast of St. Ursula and the eleven thousand virgins. Throughout history women have inspired women and can continue to do so.



Merickel's "St. Ursula."

Merickel's "Saints" series includes images of St. Ursula, St. Catherine of Siena, and Mary Magdalene. Where possible the emblems and symbols of the saints (such as the ship and the arrow in St. Ursula's case) have been incorporated into the imagery to portray the story.

Also included in the exhibit is the "In the Mirror" series which explores physical intimacy between a man and a woman, communicating that commonly held notion that love transforms us. "It includes eight hand-pulled prints of the same image, only the image is transformed as the series progresses by exploration of a changing artistic language. The series begins with a simple line drawing, becomes shapes of color and texture and finishes in abstraction," says Merickel.

"The 'Voodoo Love' series was not planned, but reared its ugly head (so to speak) after many hours of printing variations of the Mary Magdalene image," reports Merickel. "In the 11th hour, after all that piety, I felt compelled to create an image from the dark side. Scattered around the voodoo doll image are tiny Mexican charms called 'milagros'

—symbols that represent what we shun, what we suffer and also, hopefully, what we yearn for."

All of Merickel's work around the theme of Love: Sacred, Sensual and Voodoo was made using the printmaking technique known as Collagraph. Collagraphs are prints made from a collage of various materials (in this case: inner tube tires, lace, corrugated board, jewelry trinkets, cording, feathers) placed together and inked on a plexiglass plate and printed onto paper from a hand-turned printing press. Rounding out the exhibition are some original watercolor and acrylic paintings of landscapes, floral and human form studies.

Native of Northern Minnesota, Merickel spent most of her adult life in Europe, before making her home in Sisters. She received a BFA in painting from the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice, Italy, with an emphasis in printmaking. Further studies were undertaken in mixed media painting, literacy in the arts and more printmaking—in particular, lithography in London. She works as an artist in residence in the public schools in Central and Eastern Oregon and teaches adult workshops from her mountain-view studio. You may contact her at americkel@bendcable.com.

The exhibition runs thru the month of July at Adventure Art Gallery in Madras. Opening reception for the artist is July 11 from 5:30-7:30pm. For more information please call the gallery at (541) 475-7701.



Merickel's St. Catherine of Siena