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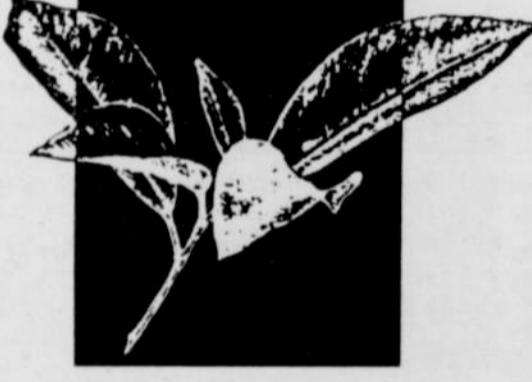
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Continued from Page 25

Paul Soriano Lets It Out

Like Carravagio, his favorite Baroque painter, Paul Soriano is a gay artist who used to hide messages in his art. He would create homoerotic figurative paintings but supplant their true meaning with religious titles.

"I would hide my messages in other narratives to make the art more acceptable," says Soriano. "Now I am more direct. The message is so important since everything in painting has been done."

His pieces "St. Sebastian" and "The Incredulity of Thomas" are both examples of Soriano using religion to cover up porn. Both paintings are oil on wood and use bold, solid colors to highlight the stark male musculature of the figures. "I once described the 'Thomas' piece to a writer as being about

penetration [the hand entering the wound of Jesus]. Needless to say, she didn't write the piece on me."

Originally from New York, Soriano has lived in Portland off and on; he joined the Portland Association for Gay and Lesbian Artists after his most recent move back to the city two years ago. "Lawrence Ferlinghetti once said that art was revolution. That is essentially my work's inspiration," he says.

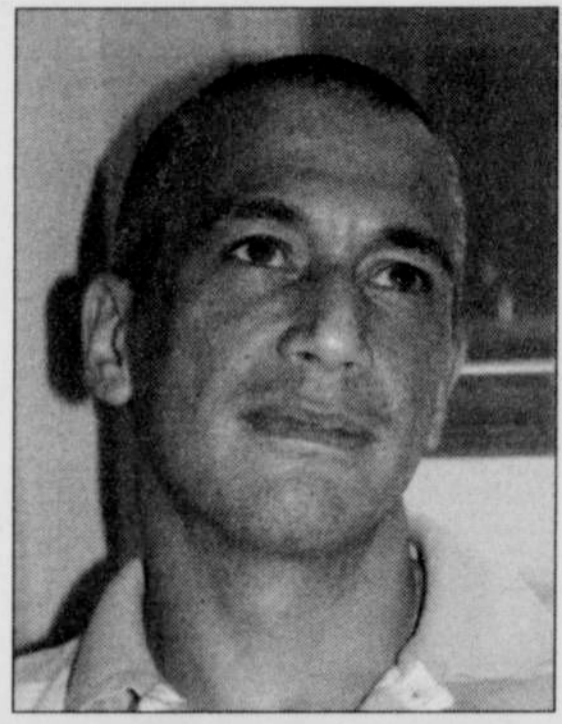
Soriano strongly advocates an active gay culture and doesn't accept the notion of equal rights for gays and lesbians. "We are an evolution of the human species, and we deserve more than equality." Identifying and documenting the gay culture in his art is how Soriano plans to keep the enemies of the culture at bay.

His art is meant to be provocative. He'll be showing the piece "Party Play Die" at City Hall's First Thursday show. "It's an extension of the 'party and play' epidemic in the gay culture that is a real problem," says Soriano. The large painting is very bright and incorporates text to convey his message. "The text is set in mirror image so that it takes a person longer to read and therefore absorb it."

Who Isn't David Strough?

Lulla Boots, son of a Native American father who was eaten by a bear and a Cajun mother killed in a combine accident, is a young artist from Selma, a small town in southern Oregon. Myrl and Delia Buford are painters and conjoined twins.

MARTY DAVIS



Portland artist David Strough is all of these people, as well as Bouch de St. Rough and others.

Strough moved to Portland 30 years ago for three reasons: to have his first one-man show, to get a master in fine art degree and to have his first love affair. For a while he chose not to show but watched the art world closely and realized something very important. "I'm not very interesting," says Strough, "and I'm getting to be an old fart." But by inventing young minority artists with absurd personal histories, he found a way to get his art out.

"People pay more attention to the story of the artist than the piece they're buying," says Strough. "One of Lulla Boots' pieces sold, and I saw it in a shop one day. The owner said it wasn't for sale. She repeated my story of Lulla Boots to me verbatim!"

Strough continues to create art in his own name and will be displaying a wall piece from his

series "Tools of the Empire" at City Hall's First Thursday show. The piece incorporates the lined children's paper we all learned to write on as well as chalk on a board to answer the question "What happens when your world has to come out?" In

"The Length of a Lie," the phrase "My dog ate it, honest" appears at the bottom of the piece.

Also in the series is the piece "Self Sentenced," which repeats the sentence "I don't know" down the length of three pieces of the children's paper. "This is how we all dealt with being gay in my generation," says Strough. "We made sure we fit in to the world outside, without considering how that outside world affected us."

