



FINAL AGONY SERIES

Notes and drawings by Rex Amos

The drawings are inspired by the novel, "The Last of the Just" by Andre Schwarz-Bart:

"To understand this metamorphosis, one must be aware of the ancient Jewish tradition of the Lamed-Vov, a tradition that certain Talmudists trace back to the source of the centuries, to the mysterious time of the prophet Isaiah. Rivers of blood have flowed, columns of smoke have obscured the sky, but surviving all these dooms, the tradition has remained in violatate down to our own time. According to it, the world reposes upon thirty-six Just Men, the Lamed-Vov, indistinguishable from simple mortals; often they are unaware of their station. But if just one of them were lacking, the sufferings of mankind would poison even the souls of the newborn, and humanity would suffocate with a single cry. For the Lamed-Vov are the hearts of the world multiplied, and into them, as into one receptacle, pour all our griefs. Thousands of popular stories take note of them. Their presence is attested to everywhere. A very old text of the Hag-gadah tells us that the most pitiable are the Lamed-Vov who remain unknown to themselves. For those the spectacle of the world is an unspeakable hell. In the seventh century Andalusian Jews venerated a rock shaped like a teardrop, which they believed to be the soul, petrified by suffering, of an 'unknown' Lamed-Vovnik. Other Lamed-Vov, like Hecuba shrieking at the death of her sons, are said to have been transformed into dogs. 'When an unknown Just rises to Heaven,' a Hasidic story goes, 'he is so frozen that God must warm him for a thousand years between His fingers before his soul can open itself to Paradise. And it is known that some remain forever inconsolable at human woe, so that God Himself cannot warm them. So from time to time the Creator, blessed be His Name, sets forward the clock of the Last Judgment by one minute.'"

The Final Agony Series goes beyond the novel

and reflects my own symbology and sense of destiny. Perhaps there is a Preliminist persuasion to them. Although a skull symbolizes the agony in each drawing, the agony is not the end. For me, the final agony is Tao, the final step before enlightenment or arrival, the final test, practice before deliverance which is merely another name for beginning. As one basic Preliminist tenet goes: "Practice makes practice." Process (not progress) is Preliminism's most important product. So, in each Final Agony drawing there is also the hint of hope, the symbol of awareness.

Each drawing takes at least a week because I fuss over content and, since the subject matter is done with felt tip pen, I have to begin the drawing with pens that are almost worn out and work up the surface from light to dark slowly as in an icon. I ask all my friends to save fine-point felt tips (black) in different states of wornoutness so I can have enough on hand to finish the drawings, because there is no subtlety in a new felt tip pen.

Rex Amos is the founder of Preliminism, which is the theory and practice of practice. ("Like most good forms of contemporary thought, Preliminist logic is unabashedly non-Aristotlean. Unlike most other forms of contemporary non-Aristotlean logic, nothing follows from its propositions, theorems and arguments since in Preliminist logic there are no conclusions to be reached" — Professor Graham P. Conroy, "The Preliminist Manifesto," Times Eagle, 13 June 1980.) An artist, Amos is particularly known for his classical collages. Twenty years ago he was one of the first western artists to successively create sculptural assemblages from found objects. He lives in Portland and in Cannon Beach.

