

JEFF FAERBER STATEMENT

I was raised in a religious environment that I found did not work for me. As a result, I am fascinated by what I consider the arbitrariness of worldviews and dogmas, and how even within one system of beliefs there can be contradictory views. My paintings explore the values and spirituality that I believe should (but often do not) underlie religious beliefs. They delve into the feeling of alienation that can result from trying to define one's identity under the shadow of an overly rigid religious doctrine.

I am fascinated by the act of creation, whether in a set of beliefs or in a painting. By recreating the world—making a fake world on a two-dimensional surface—I often find a truth more understandable than that of the real world. What systems can I (we) create to understand the universe, good and evil, bliss? Metaphors simplify elusive ideas so one's mind can wrap around them. I use them to help define an emotion, capture a faint impression of reality—evil can become a snake, God's spirit can descend like a dove, a downcast eye can define sadness. The intangible become tangible.

I often use narratives (or implied narratives) to set a mood, to immerse myself in a feeling. My work reflects my attempt to find a balance between outward- and inward-directed energy, between the individual and the larger world. Between cynicism and activism. My goal is not to find answers, but to define the journey taken while searching. My artwork is an inquiry into the ambiguous and subjective qualities I find in my own values and life. Can the tragic and the hopeful exist at the same time?

As one who has "fallen from grace," as it were, I have a natural interest in the underdog, the discarded and unwanted. Hence, I often paint on or incorporate cardboard, trash, society's forgotten, landfill-bound material. I react to what I feel is often an overly sanitized, saccharine façade that is projected on us by mass commercialization, or groupthink (or religion or politics or whatever.) There is often beauty in despair. I hope to find hope in "ugliness," in muted colors. While not dwelling on cynicism, I try to expand the scope of beauty by having it encompass and confront the abuses of "civilized" society, the decadence, the rape of the environment, narrow-mindedness—what is not generally regarded as "pretty."

If I can find salvation for a piece of cardboard, then maybe, just maybe, there is hope for me, too.