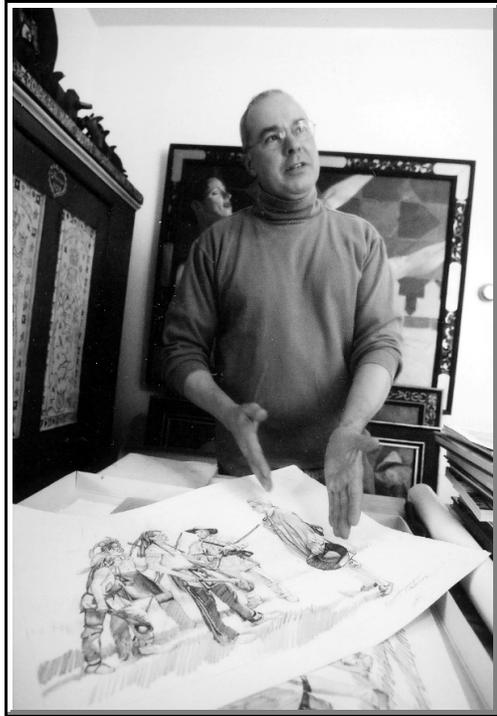


# Famed Quaker Painter Adrian Martinez tackles Quakers and Native Americans project

Photographs and text by Blair Seitz

The successful art career of FQA member Adrian Martinez is rooted in his childhood when he says, "I was steeped, drowning in violence." Martinez, age 53, explains that the emotions formed in his DC slum neighborhood are integral to his current massive 10-year project of putting Quaker interactions with Native Americans into stories in a series of large paintings.



While celebrating his son, Sebastian's, 12<sup>th</sup> year, Adrian found himself connecting his own "soul" to the images of Indians which have stuck in his mind from visits to the Smithsonian when he was 12.

"For 150 years Whites and Indians lived in tension not knowing who would prevail. They accommodated each other. But zoom in to Pennsylvania and Quakers where for 80 years Whites

and Indians lived in harmony. Quakers even went to Indians for advice," Adrian exclaims.

His passion for painting Quakers and Native Americans is "going back to the most frightening place in my life—the darkest part of my soul." He has asked how he will control this "wild beast" of emotion as he lets it out of the gate? For that he turns to his Quaker community at Downingtown Friends Meeting. When he picks up his paintbrush, the Quakers help him balance his "emotion tool" with his "intellectual tool," he says holding his hands in balance.

Recently, in their restored stone colonial Downingtown house, Michael Klinger, a fellow FQA member, and I met Adrian and his wife Leah at a very busy time when they were preparing to move to a bigger Victorian house they planned to restore also in Downingtown. Nonetheless, Adrian did not rush his descriptions of his ambitious undertaking as he explained his roots and showed us his first paintings in the series.

It was important to Adrian to start with his childhood. He told us that he lived in an area of DC where police did not go. As a gang member he was the warlord. The gang was the social structure and affirmation that filled his vacant life. Before the age of guns and drugs, Adrian says, "We were punks beating each other up, but it gave us meaning in our own tribal society hierarchy."

When Adrian walked out the front door of his home he was on his own and in his words, became the "trash on the street without a caretaker." When he and his brother were

beaten up they hid their torn cloth and shielded their blood from their parents because they knew they could not buy them new clothes or pay for medical treatment. "My only emotion was anger. When I saw a murder close-up in front of me, I was so disconnected that I remember laughing."

But childhood drawings sent recently by his mother show Adrian's bright mind and remarkable artistry. One color image dated at nine years old is titled "Manet" and was drawn from his mind's eye, after viewing Manet's work. Where and how did Adrian, society's outcast, see Monet's paintings?

On his long walk from his home, Adrian rarely reached school. Instead, he detoured to the Smithsonian, which became his self-acclaimed "school." After awhile, Adrian remembers, the guards said, "Oh, it's just that boy, let him go."

Adrian explains that every Smithsonian exhibit had long descriptive text— "stuff kids don't have time for today." Adrian recalls being mesmerized by the exhibits, especially of Native Americans. "I was starving to death and the Smithsonian was prime rib," Adrian exclaimed.

He read every bit of the text and "I began living in those sets." The cultural dioramas became his mentors. Adrian explains, "They talked to me and told me how to aspire and live." Again and again he returned to the Native American warrior culture which seem to relate to his own. He virtually memorized the text and, he says, "I ached to make the things I was seeing. I would figure out in my mind how they did it."

Adrian says with soft intensity, "Without the art at the Smithsonian, I'd be dead."

In a tour of his house, Adrian showed Michael and me one of his many colonial creations, a step back cupboard he built himself. Adrian rubbed his fingers across places of deep wear and noted the antique finish. Though made by his hands, the piece of furniture appeared more than a century old. "I do this to help me feel the precise texture and appearance of aged pieces I paint." Adrian's paintings such as "Coldren's Antique Shop" which show antiquity are authentic in every detail.

Indeed, Adrian is employing an extraordinarily authentic process to create his ambitious Quaker and Indian paintings. In order to acquire a deep sense of feeling for the subject as well as a graphic knowledge of shape and texture, Adrian makes the artifacts and costumes that appear in his paintings. With the theater background of both he and Leah, they then select models (his son Sebastian has played some roles) who create the dramatic scene Adrian has in his mind's eye. Leah works to help get the muscle tension and posture optimum. Then the scene is photographed.

No, Adrian does not paint from the photograph. He



uses the photograph to further evoke his emotional involvement in the scene and action as he makes a sketch of the scene, then having solved technical problems of space, he moves on to the large canvas (actually Adrian paints on wood), without the sketch and photograph in sight. He allows his emotional involvement with the subject to guide him. "There is often a great difference between the sketch and the painting. The sketch gives me dimension and light but the color in the painting is a whole new dimension."

This project is like "letting a wild horse out of the house," Adrian says, (many times I am) "going back to the most frightening place in my life; (but now) with the Quaker community and as an adult."

Adrian's wrestling with his angry, violent childhood and his Quakerism is linked to his affection to Thomas Moore's book *Care of the Soul*. One senses that Adrian has plumbed the depth of his emotions. "Quakers have seen my soul, my blackness and it is OK." Further, Adrian explains, "my Quakerism is a practical thing to get me from one place to another. My community helps me be the best artist I can be."

He says he struggled with finding a way to turn all the "shit" (of his childhood) into gold. "Could I find resonance or spiritual meaning or was it going to be just a horrible past?" he asks. "The Religious Society of Friends changed my life and gave me a deeper meaning."

From his dreadfully impoverished neighborhood near the capitol in D.C.—which he describes as "the seat of the power of White man"—he said, "I leveraged myself into the bourgeois by going to art school, which was terribly frightening." He studied at Maryland Institute of Art and St. Martin's School of Art in London. After a job at a Midwest museum Adrian became an exhibit designer at the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, Texas. While working in theatre production in his evenings, he met Leah, who is his spouse and promoter.

One of Adrian's Kimbell projects took him to Doan's Crossing, Texas. Here he met Quakerism in its purest form. He explains that in 1870 the Doans who were Quakers ventured from the East to this incredibly dangerous cattle crossing, the wildest of Wild West violence. But the Doans, Adrian learned, kept no weapons. Remarkably, as merchants and residents, they were respected and never harmed. The impact the Doan story made on him led Martinez to Quakers.

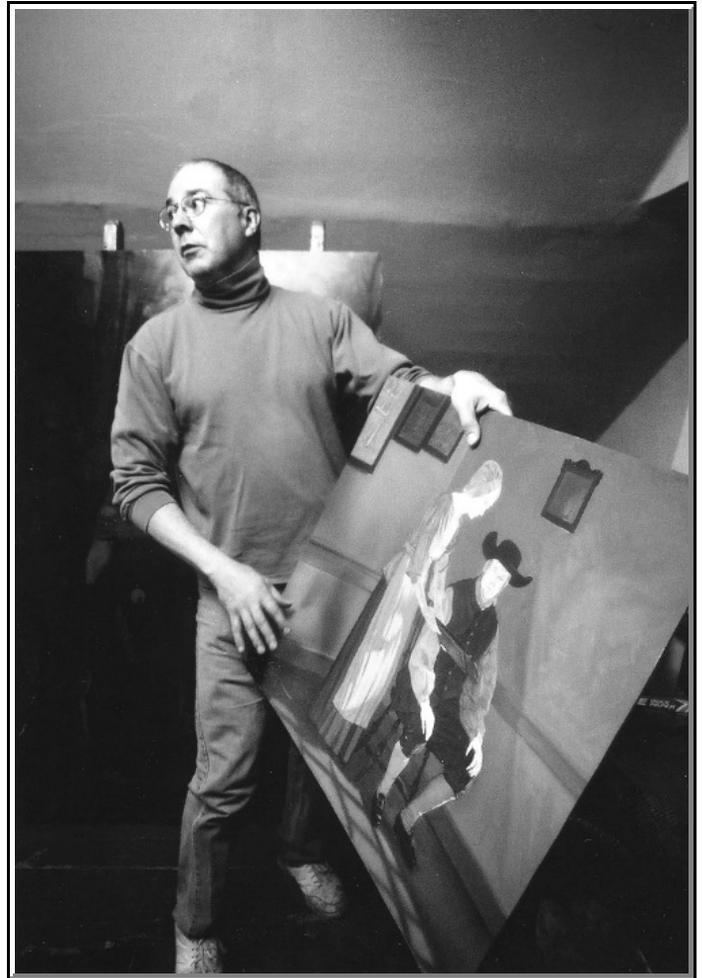
The non-judgmental attitude of Quakers provided a safe place for Martinez to internalize his worth as a person separate from his art.

Adrian observes that he needs to make many judgments while doing his art. "Art may have elements of therapy, but it is not therapy." He notes, "I need, to exercise a great deal of professional criticism over my work."

In London, Adrian painted cityscapes, then, he moved to the flat plains of Indiana and to the oil derricks and parched land of North Central Texas. No wonder he has become happily absorbed in the lush, vibrant landscapes of Chester Co., Pennsylvania, some of the same terrain interpreted by the Wyeths. In fact, Adrian's paintings of detail and subtle earth tones have a resemblance to those of Andrew Wyeth. In a solo show in 2002, Adrian's wide range of subjects graced the walls of the Chester County Art Association, the same venue that has displayed art of the entire Wyeth family.

Adrian's paintings—landscapes, portraits and still life—are vivid works of marvelously meticulous detail. Every crease in an orchid, the subtle treatment of eye and brow or exquisite detail of wing feathers of geese in flight are painstakingly made and widely admired distinctions of his famed work. His paintings have graced the Allan Stone Gallery in New York, the Newman Galleries in Philadelphia. His Christmas card for the White House in 2001 was highly acclaimed.

Adrian, born in Philadelphia in 1949, is a member of Downingtown Friends Meeting and is enthusiastic about being active with us in FQA. He plans to show the first from his extraordinary project of Quaker and Native American paintings at West Chester University in 2005.



For more information about Martinez' work and many full-color illustrations of his paintings, check his website:

<http://www.adrianmartinez.com/>

## Reimagining the Psalms – Seeking the Sacred At the Core Robyn Kermes, Harrisburg PA Meeting

There are many deeply Spiritual people who have never felt empowered to name the sacred out of their own experience. There is a certain modern permission to jettison namings that do not work for us out of a healthy recognition of the oppressive history of the church. But the leap into creatively reconstructing a language within which to celebrate and express gratitude and lament and love the Sacred . . . this does not seem to have happened for lots of folks.

It is this reconstruction process that fascinates me. Letting go of anger and resistance and finding an empowering true connection to Spirit Energies through the increased awareness that comes with using ones own language to express ones own experience – this is what I would hope for the world. To harness this untapped potential for Power, Truth, and Health seems key to a healthier saner society.

*The Psalms: A Celebration of the Sacred at the Core* is a work in progress that was born from a Spirit led challenge to articulate the spiritual knowing that was coalescing in my life. I was sure of The More and in a place of Faith that had deep integrity. I could stand squarely firm in my Knowing and hold all the Unknowing lovingly in my arms. Yet my discussions about Spirit were still caught up in resisting the limitations of traditional language and concepts. Spirit challenged me to advocate with my words what I knew to be Truth – to minister.

I hope that *The Psalms: A Celebration of the Sacred at the Core* will inspire others to do their own re-imagining! Building a transforming relationship with the sacred is the point. Naming the Sacred through re-imagining is one tool to get you there. If the names offered by others work for you, celebrate! If you feel empty and seek Spirit, try re-imagining and letting your own naming of the Sacred roll off your tongue.

(*The Psalms: A Celebration of the Sacred at the Core* is a collection of 25 re-imagined Psalms available from the author on a CD of Microsoft word documents for \$15.00 each. Each Psalm is formatted as a poem and again in comparison with the Revised Standard Version. Robyn can be contacted at [robynkermes@gmail.com](mailto:robynkermes@gmail.com))

### Psalm 28

(Reimagined by Robyn Kermes © July 2002)

To the Great Mystery, I call,  
Ever Present, I trust I will be heard.  
In the Speaking and the Listening there is Power  
To rise up from despair and know Life.  
I cry out for help  
It is All that hears the prayer that is key  
I lift up my hands and breathe the wisdom of the ages into  
my heart,  
I reach down and gather the Earth's grounding  
forces into my heart.  
  
It is my intention to live with compassion  
To be among those creating a world that knows  
peace, Who speak peace with their neighbors,  
And transform the world through what is in the  
heart. Interdependence is the way of our world.  
My thoughts, words, and deeds will come back to  
me  
Transformed in the energetic web than connects the works  
of all creation.  
Those who choose to ignore the More  
Who do not see Eternal Beauty,  
They will feel discontent and unhappiness no matter  
what earthly riches may be theirs.  
  
Sprit of the Dawn, help me greet each day consciously  
Awake to the sound of my prayers  
Gaining the mindful perspective of Watcher is my strength  
My trust is in knowing the Power within as one with  
the Power  
Without, which is so much More  
Just so I am helped, and my heart exults  
My singing voice and my singing heart give thanks.  
The Insatiable Will to Live and to Love is our strength  
We can rest in knowing its Presence in each  
moment.  
May people dare to live with open hearts, claiming  
Their birthright to Love and be Loved  
in a Universe created from the very energy we name  
Love.

(Psalm 28: Revised Standard Version)

To you, O Lord, I call;  
My rock, do not refuse to hear me,  
For if you are silent to me,  
I shall be like those who go down to the Pit.  
Hear the voice of my supplication,  
As I cry to you for help,  
As I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary.

Do not drag me away with the wicked,  
With those who are workers of evil,  
Who speak peace with the neighbors,  
While mischief is in their hearts.  
Repay them according to their work,  
And according to the evil of their deeds;  
Repay them according to the work of their hands;  
Render them their due reward.  
Because they do not regard the works of the Lord,  
Or the work of his hands,  
He will break them down and build them up no more.

Blessed be the Lord,  
For he has heard the sound of my pleadings.  
The Lord is my strength and my shield,  
In him my heart trusts;

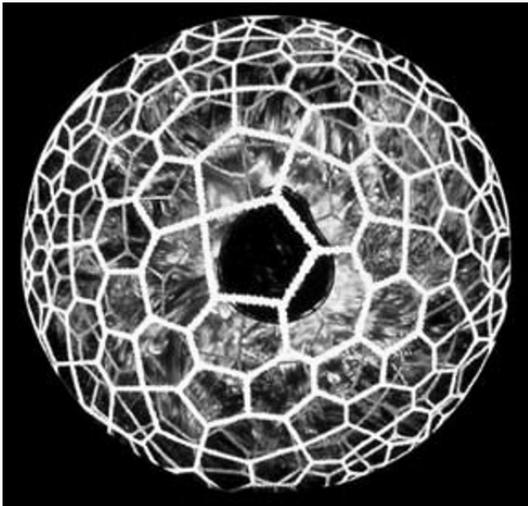
So I am helped, and my heart exults,  
And with my song I give thanks to him.  
The Lord is the strength of his people/  
He is the saving refuge of his anointed.  
O save your people, and bless your heritage;  
Be their shepherd, and carry them forever.

## Friends on the Web: Selected FQA Member Websites

**Trudymyrrh art**  
**Palo Alto CA**  
<http://www.myrrh-art.com/>

Trudy Reagan, whose *nom d'artiste* is Myrrh, says of her work, "Looking back 30 years, I am amazed at how I backed into working with patterns in nature and science images. Some who realized Abstract Expressionism was getting hackneyed were turning their sardonic eye to pop culture, soup cans and pies. I dropped out, and only gradually restored my faith in art-making by seeing images I really liked, the framework for a new art vocabulary.

My interests have expanded from merely playing with patterns to the attempt to get some overall feeling about the universe in which we find ourselves: creating context.

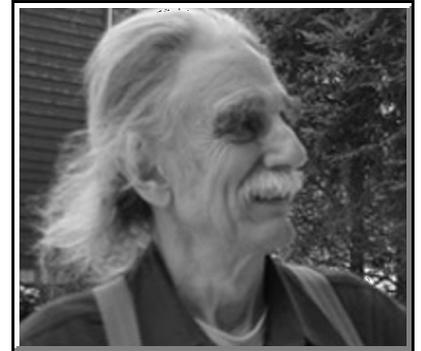


"Life Creates," from *Essential Mysteries*.

We have always tried to create a context, a story about where we are. One reason the study of these patterns inspires an almost religious awe is that we feel we are touching on something fundamental, a ground of all being that we have lost in our secular lives. We feel a kinship with the ancients like Pythagoras who were fascinated by patterns and regularities that they observed."

**Hugh Ogden**  
**Glastonbury CT**

An accomplished and prolific poet, Hugh Ogden ought to have a website of his own. And one of his books suggests that he once did. But a search for it proved fruitless; it appears to have expired.



However, in the process of seeking, numerous webpages turned up carrying his work. So instead of one site, here is a selection of pages, beginning with a profile from *Mosaic*, the magazine of Trinity College, where he has taught English for many years:

Profile:  
<http://www.trincoll.edu/pub/Mosaic/5.00/ogden.htm>  
An Essay, "The Poem, Balm for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Wounds":  
[http://www.42opus.com/contents/contents.php?iss=v4\\_2&pg=thepoem](http://www.42opus.com/contents/contents.php?iss=v4_2&pg=thepoem)  
Poems:

<http://www.mipoesias.com/September2004/ogden.htm>  
<http://www.hausemusic.com/httpdocs/Conservatory/ConservatoryMP3/Loons/Loons.html>

**Friend, Does Thee Have a Website? Does it relate your art To your Quaker path?**

If so, and thee is an FQA Member, *tell us about it.*  
Let us share it with others. Write to: [fqa@quaker.org](mailto:fqa@quaker.org)

**Not a member?** That can *easily be fixed.*  
\$25 per year for individuals \$50 for a group.  
Send membership dues and your address to:

**FQA % PYM**  
**1515 Cherry st.**  
**Philadelphia PA 19102**