

New Work by Tara Sabharwal

Because we find titles that so often include the words “path” or “home” in Tara Sabharwal’s work, it might be tempting to assume that she is intent on some subjective magical landscape. If that were so, then she is excellent at her craft, certainly. We can be delighted and entranced and charmingly baffled by her work.

If we did this, we would not only be misguided, but it is likely that we would miss the true significance and beauty of her work. Yes, there are perhaps landscapes of a sort—sometimes seemingly subterranean or filled with an astonishing luminescence. But these are inner landscapes with a cosmic sense. For they are the soul’s landscapes, the journal of the soul’s encounter. The soul is, after all that part of us that is made beautiful by its commitment to a true and compassionate living. And the soul is that part of the human person that meets the needs, delights and terrors of our mortality with a sublime combination of innocence and wisdom. It observes what happens in the heart when the world outside creates catastrophe—war, famine, earthquake or flood.

But then the question arises, “How does the soul record its experiences, its observations?” There is a need for a visual language that is nuanced enough to bear the content of those

observations. And that language cannot be a “merely” symbolic language that the viewer can find some magic key to de-code. That language must speak directly to the soul of the viewer, resisting premature attempts to de-code it with the language of the critic or of the psychologist. How can this be? Here metaphor becomes a more powerful tool than symbol could ever be, for every viewer has a resonant metaphor so that the meaning is experienced as though soul were speaking to soul in the soul’s own language which is silence.

Bottles become containers for the self but in a way that completely transcends the notion of bottle-as-container. Eyes become windows into the body and then paths into the soul. Paths lead like the life sap of trees to the doors of houses and apartment buildings. Elephants carry us inside them because they recognize our capacity for compassion. A work such as “Homes and Holes,” creates an exquisite experience of our simultaneous uniqueness and interdependence. “Body Dress/Home” reminds us that the soul is clothed in this temporary moment but continues despite the ephemeral encounter.

It is easy to fall in love with an image such as “Home in the Clouds,” with its airy luminescence. Yet it must be taken with “Rain,” for example, in which the rain falls on the soul hard drop by soft drop

by hard drop. The journal is not an easy one, it does not shy away from pain or fierce examination. And it is finally, completely accountable to its own truth and shares that with the viewer unselfconsciously. Tara Sabharwal's work is to be savored and revisited and savored anew. –Orlanda Brugnola, July 2006

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(www.sarcc.org) and served as the organization's President for six years. For 25 years she has taught Philosophy and World Religions in the City University of New York. She is a painter and poet. Some of her paintings may be found at http://www.geocities.com/rosehbrooks/brugnola_works.html