



KINDRED SPIRIT

MERCEDES HELNWEIN EPITOMIZES THE TRUE PURSUANCE OF ART

Mercedes Helnwein likes pencils, pens, paper, knitting, hot tea (green, I think), Mark Twain and Blind Willie McTell. She's from Austria but is fascinated by America, and what she does in the form of drawings is baffling, to say the least.

Taking her inspiration from her father, Gottfried Helnwein, and other artists like R. Crumb, Mercedes has crafted a style of drawing that would not only grow to define and voice her unique style, but would, on some levels, surpass the talents of her influences. She's a miraculous mistake, an unexpected accident. She's here and breathing and alive like all of us, but I think her otherworldly talent has surprised even her. And what's as impressive as her art is how little she strives to sell herself. Where it seems so many artists seek to create an interesting persona for themselves, Mercedes simply stands back and lets her work do the talking, and it's artists like her that have always stood out and inspired me.

Having first discovered drawing at an early age, Mercedes would later, at age 10, take up writing. Being aware of her father's success as an artist, she didn't want to compete with him, therefore taking up writing and forgetting about the possibility of being a great artist herself.

However, it wasn't until 2001 that she would begin drawing again. And when she sat down to draw once more she knew this time around that she wanted to make something of it. Since that time, she's gone on to become one of the most respected and intriguing young artists of our time.

To me, Mercedes epitomizes the true pursuance of art, and my hat's off to her for maintaining that thing that too many creative folks either never had, or let go of because they've somehow lost their way. I'm talking about sincerity and purity. Mercedes has the kind of discipline you might find in a great concert pianist; she

never stops working. And with artists like Mercedes, I can always rest assured that there is still in fact a real drive somewhere out there to maintain a tradition of intelligent and sincere artistic progression.

But as dedicated as Mercedes is, her sense of humor is perhaps as sharp as the work itself. I guess that's really what makes her so interesting; to see these amazingly well-drafted pieces of pencil and ink, and then to be able to laugh inside at drawings like "Jeff" from her *BOOK OF DISQUIET* series.

With more and more exhibitions in the works, a publishing company, a completed novel, and with people all over the world owning her art, Mercedes is not only settled comfortably into a brilliant career, she's the finest redhead this side of Gustav's bakery in Vienna. Ladies and Gentlemen, please meet the great Miss Helnwein. ■

www.mercedeshelnwein.com

Jason Lee: Text/Images



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SPIRIT

THE LANGUAGE OF ART



Can you take us through the past and present and how you got involved in making your art?



left: **"Last Chapter of Dreaming"**
 Size: 26 x 19 inches
 Colored pencil on paper

above: **"Queen of the Underground"**
 Size: 25 x 35 inches
 Black pencil on paper

