

A Life in Art

Written by Adam Wieland

Originally Published in [Shadowed Realms](#) – Volume 1

Lining the walls of the studio were rows of painted canvases - an assembly of designs; thoughts and carefully controlled madness. Dream fragments, the after-effects of spoiled fish, hallucinations of the sky and the moon. Representations of the world as he saw it; failed love affairs, Twin Towers, planes crashing, the Pope, aborted fetuses... On each painting, juxtaposed colours, transcendent experiences and waking nightmares. The painter sat amidst his life, and it was good... but there was one more painting needed.

The blank canvas before him offered boundless possibilities, limited only by human capacity and frailty. Becoming a masterpiece or a failure would be determined by mere chance. To strive, to bring forth the truth of existence, the hidden darkness made light, and the artificial line between good and evil, prayer and fornication, was his reason to be. Picking up his brush, he made his first stroke on the final painting of his retrospective exhibition; a culmination, a confession, his soul laid bare for now and eternity.

The first colour stained the surface; white changing to blue, the beginning of an ocean, a nebula, the inner mind? He painted frantically, alternating brushes, sponges and scraping tools. He paused, the life he saw on the canvas was close to abstract, and he was not happy with it. Eyes closed, he meditated on the collective unconscious, but the images would not come, nothing to shock or break through his conscious barrier.

How do you represent a life? Looking at what he had painted, there was no elevation of the mind or spirit, only repetitions from his earlier work, copies of other artists; there was nothing new and original in what he had done.

He grabbed a knife from a table nearby and struck through the canvas as though murdering a mortal enemy, knocking the tattered remains to the floor. Dropping the knife, he picked up another canvas and slammed it on to the easel to begin again.

Trying a different style, more 'Dali-esque', a self-portrait forming. Every line on his face exaggerated; a disintegrating face, like a zombie devouring the lives of others but feeling nothing, never satisfied. He dabbed a background behind it; muted colours, a society bled dry. He placed a speck of blood on his portrait's lip.

Almost there... but am I really that ugly? He never realized.

It needed more - he placed a few strokes here, there, but no improvement. Was this to be his final image - a vampire feeding on the lifeblood of the world?

His thoughts turned to his place in art history. Would he be remembered? He hesitated, dwarfed in front of God, and by existence. The tools at his command could not give justice to his ambition. Grabbing the knife from the floor, he cut, slowly, deeply. Blood flowed and he tried to contain it, manage its flow. His arm became a clotting palette, blood mingled with the paint as he perfected his final strokes. Bypassing the brain altogether; beyond the conscious and subconscious, he had surpassed the limits of tools, and the domain of representation.

Visualizing the collective life force projecting from his body back to society, he cursed himself for forgetting to write a note to further secure his name. Although he had always denied it publicly, he secretly lusted for fame and craved immortality. Satisfied, he slowly sank to the ground, allowing the darkness to engulf him.

The End.

Author's Note:

All of the stories in the first six issues of Shadowed Realms are included in the anthology "Book of Shadows Volume 1" published by Brimstone Press. Includes stories by: Poppy Z Brite, Terry Dowling, Robert Hood, Stephen Dedman, Kurt Newton, Greg Beatty, Martin Livings, Lee Battersby, Josh Rountree, Mikal Trimm, Melissa Marr, and many more. Click [here](#) for more information about this anthology and for purchasing details.

Author's Bio:

Adam Wieland was born on Easter Sunday, 1981, in Rockingham, Western Australia. Adam writes mainly in the Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror genres. He completed a Media Studies degree at Edith Cowan University in 2002. One of his short stories, "The Border" was published online by "The Murder Hole" E-Zine the same year. Since then he has had a story published in "Shadowed Realms" and a story in the first issue of Short Stories Australia magazine.

Please visit his website at <http://www.adamwieland.com/blog/>

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