

TRAVIS LESTER

BIO FOR 2007 WEBSITE UPDATE

Travis Lester is a California-based painter whose powerful canvases explore human identity and the “interior landscape.” Filling her paintings with bold colors, provocative images and anguished figures she questions and challenges the ways in which society molds human identity. Lester’s sorrowful, vulnerable figures bear entrapment and suffering but the energy and rawness of the paintings suggests an unwillingness to be subjugated.

Working with acrylics, oil sticks, collage, and other media, Lester parodies the obsession with a codified assurance of success, the insane and unthinking cooperation with one’s own spiritual destruction. In that vein, she takes on the Western ideal of the family and how it can function as both refuge and jail. Referencing ancient mythological characters as archetypal representations of unchanging dynamics in contemporary relationships, Lester questions both inherited patterns of oppression and the roles we willingly embrace. Lester also explores issues of power and gender, questioning the roles laid out for women and the ways in which they are defined, validated, and penalized culturally by an ability to give birth.

Despite such weighty subjects humor is evident in the faces of the figures, in the boisterous splashes of color and in the barbed and droll phrases often scrawled across the paintings. The figures in Lester’s paintings struggle to break free from and reject artificially and self-imposed boundaries. It is the humorous element that suggests that it is in these all too human struggles that strength and freedom are found.

Lester brings an extensive background in literature, the arts, and graphic design to her work. She holds a B.A. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (1985), where she majored in English and minored in Studio Art. She later earned an M.A. in English and American literature from the University of Pennsylvania (1993), where she also studied feminist psychoanalytic theory. After relocating to San Francisco in 1995,

Lester studied graphic design at the California College of Arts. In 1997, she established and operated a thriving graphic design business, KEEP Visual Communications, which she ran until she began painting full-time in 2003. Lester's work was included in PRINT Magazine's design annual "Best Design in America 2001," and has been honored by the International Engraved Graphics Association.

Lester currently works as a painter in Sausalito, California. She has had solo shows, "Storms Spell Trouble for Marin" at The John Hope Franklin Center at Duke University; and at the Citibank Artists Series in Tiburon, California. Lester's work has been featured in the "Best of Marin" juried show at the Falkirk Museum in San Rafael, California; and in several exhibitions at The Hanes Art Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has numerous commissioned paintings in Bay Area private collections.