ForeWord Reviews

Men and Angels: The Art of James C. Christensen

James C. Christensen
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"My spiritual life impacts my life as an artist," writes James C. Christensen, "from the subjects I choose to paint, to the message of the work, to the responsibility I feel to the viewers. My art isn't exploitative, confrontational or negative; there is enough darkness in the world, and I want my art to serve a more constructive purpose."

Christensen was raised in Culver City, California, and attended UCLA. He then moved to Utah to finish his higher education at Brigham Young University (Christensen is a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), and ended up teaching there for over twenty years. His artwork mixes elements of fantasy, whimsy, fairytale, and myth—always with a message, often contained in the title, like, "How Many Angels Can Dance on the Head of a Pin?" (The pin being one from a bowling alley). Christensen wants people to "get it." Painting, for him, is also a way for him to "get it." "Working through a process in two dimensions is a great way to examine a problem and discuss it with myself," he writes. He recalls a painting inspired by his wife's elderly parents, and how what began as a meditation on burdens became an inspiration of matrimonial love.

Christensen began his career illustrating book covers and magazines. In the disposable media world, the window of opportunity is miniscule and color is a way to catch a flighty reader's attention. Using lavish amounts of gold ink to frame and highlight, the paintings in this beautifully produced, coffee table edition colorfully both capture and keep.