

## Tree of Life

### Tim Biskup

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*Tree of Life* is a dynamic retrospective of Tim Biskup's paintings, sculptures, and artistic philosophy. His art career balanced chaos with strategy before it veered from showing at galleries to working and interacting with people from a storefront studio.

The book is a dazzling showcase of three decades of Biskup's vibrant and intricate patterned art. It ramps up like a fireworks display to show how his style changed and matured and wraps up with a down-to-earth, intense personal account of his life and artistic influences.

It's a smart introduction to Biskup's art that eschews preconceptions. Some common themes and motifs run through Biskup's oeuvre. There are nods to fanciful retro graphics, like bongo-playing Beatniks and birds sporting glasses, berets, and stylized feather patterns; there are the jewel-tone colors and horror vacui of various folk art traditions; and gaggles of anthropomorphic animals and not-so-frightful monsters romp across canvases or are formed into totem poles and other sculptural figures.

Later works depart from this mood and color/pattern razzle-dazzle. The playful psychedelia morphs into more unsettling, abstract imagery of knives, skulls, and women in contorted positions. The color riot subsides into somber palettes of smoke and scarlet, acid tones, and the monochromism of a more gestural series of graphite, gesso, and acrylic works. Such paintings are perhaps less immediately engaging, but within them, visual complexity is traded for more layers of meaning.

*Tree of Life* is an inspiring and rich visual survey of an art career forged on the artist's own terms, but that also acknowledges that "being an artist is difficult." Biskup's interpretation of his life and work uncovers a sophisticated, evolving, and introspective trajectory.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (September / October 2019)

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