

## cover story

# WHAT'S IN A name?

## Local artist paints to understand self

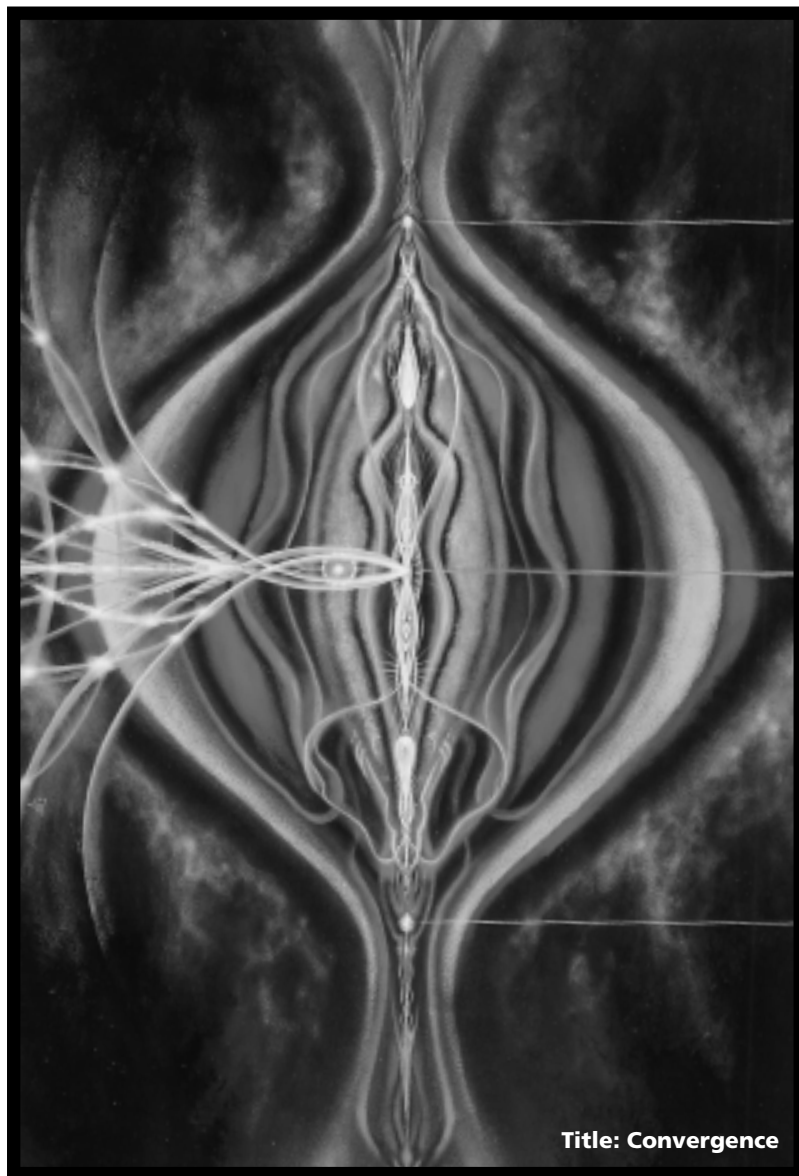
Barb Stewart

In his latest exhibit, *Metanomacies: Beyond an Individual Name*, local painter Robert Pasternak is bringing to light his lifelong search for meaning in his own life, and thus in all of us. While stating this may lead to a heard-it-all-before rolling of the eyes in some potential viewers, given the opportunity to view Pasternak's complex, layered and thought-provoking – not to mention visually stunning – work should quash any such reactions.

"I create to understand what we are," explains the artist. "It first starts with me, to understand myself, wondering who I am, but because I'm a human being, not unlike all the other human beings on this planet, that's the thing we forget about, and that's part of what these symbols are. They are this basic core structure of what we are, and I've been exploring that for a number of years, and it's come to these basic lines... It's mostly who am I? Why am I here? But then because of the micro/macrocsmic scale [one of the paintings specifically refers to both the earth and human body – atmospheres and layers outside-in] it refers to everybody. It might sound corny, but we're all human beings, and we're all the same, but there's all this crap going around making us lose that."

The paintings in the exhibit are mostly part of an ongoing exploration of human existence through Pasternak's unique perspective. The Meta Figures that make up most of this work are not only visual representations of the outer layer of the human body, but also that which lies beneath unseen, yet not necessarily unsensed. Pasternak has discovered symbolic representations of the inner energy/vibrations (call it soul/aura/spirit) which we all possess, but have yet to truly access and connect with.

"My Meta Figures paintings stem from a theosophical belief in our human bodies," writes Pasternak on his Web site. "I paint through a window of intuition, notion of what we can be through transformation and evolution. We are beings of light and energy. Our outer shell is only one layer of a more complex sys-



Title: Convergence

### PREVIEW

**METANOMACIES: BEYOND AN INDIVIDUAL NAME**  
POOL OF THE BLACK STAR GALLERY

tem of vibrations. I converge images of sacred geometry, the flow of energy and the human figure, with fantastical ideas from ancient body memory."

One of the most important symbols Pasternak uses is the vesica, which he believes is the two-sided geometric shape that has fallen by the wayside in our consciousness. We speak of circles, squares and triangles with one, four or three sides, but never of the two-sided shape. For Pasternak, the vesica – a shape in which two lines curve up (or down) from the same point – is his reinvention of the meta-symbol, the cross. The vaginal vesica is the female representation of the male cross symbol. The dualistic world we live in, male/female, up/down, right/wrong, was in dire need of a balancing female aspect to the very male cross and this was something Pasternak's own subconscious guided him to explore.

"What led me to discover it was seeing it in my doodles a lot – phone bills, sketches where I'm planning out other things. And I started investigating those and I had an exhibit based on these

doodles and this whole investigation of what these things were. It goes into subconscious thought and communication – they were speaking to me. The vesica itself, being brought up Catholic there always was the vesica Pisces symbol, the fish, that's probably been in my head for a long time... I think it was when one day I realised it was a two-sided shape and at that point I specifically called it a vesica. Then afterwards you start finding things, and looking for and finding more information about it. I started thinking that because there were those two poles perhaps it could be like the beginning of the universe and there was a book I had that said that, and that was really cool to find that [after the fact]. There's always affirmations afterwards..."

Through his work Pasternak hopes to find affirmations about his views and to help both himself and others begin to recognise and harness the energy that lies within us, perhaps leading to an evolutionary change in our own beings. Who knows what we are capable of, physically and spiritually, once we are made aware of the potential within us?

The great spirituality and beauty of the work can transform those who come in contact with it, which is certainly Pasternak's hope, but it also truly touches the artist himself.

"I have interactions with my work," he says. "There's one piece in the show called 'Convergence with God' and I only called it that after I just had this [reaction]; I wasn't quite finished with it, I wasn't thinking about God, I was thinking of the Meta Figure stuff, but at one point I burst into simultaneously tears and laughter. Hysterically laughing and crying at the same time and maybe it was my own personal connection, I don't know, but I was thinking this must be the closest thing to what God looks like."

*Metanomacies: Beyond an Individual Name* is on display at Pool of the Black Star Gallery in the Manitoba Legislative Building from June 3-30.

# A!

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