

## Seeking the Essence: Profile of British Artist Jan Parker

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*True Father & Jan in Honolulu in 1989*

“True Father once advised me,” recalls artist Jan Parker: ‘As you develop in your art, always go deep; always be deep in your heart. Never be just on the surface or superficial. Always try to find some great depth in your heart.’ He said that if you really try to do that, your paintings will remain in history.

“That was something I never forgot,” Parker continues. “Father is the kind of person who can feel the essence of something—he can cut through all the surface stuff and go right to the core. That’s what I want to do with art—to somehow go into the very heart of things, the essence.”

Jan Parker was born in 1941 in England, of a Danish mother and English father. Before he joined the Unification Church in 1969, he lived intermittently in Britain and Denmark, graduated from art school in London, and had a successful career as a cartoonist and book illustrator.

Parker had always dreamed of becoming a formal painter, but as his responsibilities as a pastor increased, the chances of pursuing a life in art dwindled. Around 1978, however, Heung-Jin Moon—the second-eldest son of Reverend and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon—spent some time in London, and a friendship sprang up between them. Just before departing for America, Heung-Jin Moon turned to him and said, “Jan, whatever you do, keep that flame of art alive in your heart. Don’t let that flame die, because one day in the future, God will use your talent in a wonderful way.”



*Jan's studio*

In 1980, Heung-Jin Moon's words began to come true. Parker was asked by Reverend Sun Myung Moon to come to the United States to head up a grand art project—a series of paintings bringing the Old Testament, New Testament, and Completed Testament eras alive for viewers. Originally, Parker was to do only the Old Testament paintings, but after another artist left the project, he took on the New Testament themes as well.

For this series, which were often five-foot paintings, Parker drew on inspiration from the Old Masters, immersing himself in the works of artists such as Rembrandt, Michelangelo, and his particular favorite, Fra Angelico, as well as later masters such as Turner. Within nine months, acrylic versions of the paintings were completed and mounted in place on the mezzanine level of the Unification Church's World Mission Center in New York, awaiting approval from Reverend Moon before final oil versions would be painted.

Parker remained in New York City and studied the work of modern painters such as Hans Hoffman, Mark Rothko, and especially Joan Mitchell. He did a number of abstract paintings that in 1982 were displayed in a one-man show in New York's Horizon Gallery.



*Celebration acrylic on canvas 30x30*

Moving to upstate New York, Parker turned to exploring the techniques of the Impressionists. Impressionism and Fauvism would predominate in his art until around the dawn of the new millennium, when his primary focus again became abstraction in works he calls Spiritual Paintings.

The artist muses, “I really almost went through the history of art in my paintings, beginning with a classical foundation drawn from the Old Masters. I went through all of Impressionism and gradually into the twentieth century, into Abstract Expressionism. Then I went into the twenty-first century, into really spiritual art that is not figurative.”

When living in upstate New York he preferred to paint outside amidst nature, following the example of the Impressionists, but in 1985 he fractured both wrists in an accident and it became too painful to paint in the cold weather. He and his family moved to Hawaii, which had not only a warm climate, but the vivid tropical colors that most attracted him. He has remained in Hawaii ever since.

Parker did quite a number of paintings for King Garden and Queen Garden, the Reverend Moon’s residences in Hawaii. Because True Parents favor paintings of nature, Parker did representational works in his Fauvist-Impressionist style, celebrating the natural beauties of Hawaii.

His preferred focus now, however, is his Spiritual Paintings. These employ color, line, and form to convey pure feelings. Once, when Parker was still a pastor in Britain, he had a vision when waking up from a nap. The entire ceiling of the room opened up into a magnificent, scintillating, non-figurative painting with beautiful colors that seemed to be alive; four other paintings followed. One was a vibrant study in greens with some pinks and purples. “All I can say is that it was a painting of true love—the essence of true love in visible form,” he recalls. “I thought: One day I would love to paint like that.” He now pursues this quest in his Spiritual Paintings.



*Heavenly Father-early work-oil on canvas 20x16*

Color is the artistic element that most galvanizes him. In another spiritual experience that occurred, he had what he believes was a glimpse of high spiritual world. After spiritually ascending up an almost interminable black wall, he was able to peer over the edge onto a landscape of breathtaking beauty. “Love was coming from everything,” he recalls. “The colors were absolutely unbelievable. I felt somehow that color was the expression of God’s heart—that color comes from the emotions of God.”

Parker’s early Spiritual Paintings were like gentle waterfalls of healing color. In recent years, his works have become increasingly bold and dynamic, and also more complex. They seem to pulse or even to explode with a force that is quite beyond the mortal realm. He hopes that for viewers, these works can be more than just paintings; that they can act as portals or entranceways to the beyond, leading people to their own experience of the love of God.

Parker realizes that Abstract art is a challenge for many viewers. “You have to give art time,” he comments. “It’s not enough just to glance at it; you have to look at it— and study it while looking. I think that with my Spiritual Paintings you have to be willing to go some way—you have to offer something, open up something inside. You don’t need to think, ‘What is it meant to be?’ Just look at it as it is—the colors, the shapes, and where they lead you—the feelings. No two people see the same thing.

Parker has continued to grow and develop as an artist despite a number of health problems. For fourteen years he has struggled with cancer, using natural methods. Late last spring he had a near-fatal case of blood poisoning. A week after being released from the hospital for that, he had a

heart attack. On the way to the hospital his heart actually stopped, but a defibrillator got it going again.



*Jan and Sawako Parker*

“I was prepared to move on”, he said. “When I came to, the only feeling I had was one of absolute calm, absolute peace. But for some reason heaven brought me back again to continue. So I feel there must be more to do. I really want to find a way to be a witness, through my work, to the incredible historic time we are living in, when the living Christ walks the earth—the only time in history this will happen. This is something that I deal with: How can I be a witness? I have done portraits of True Parents with crowns and light, but to only do portraits of them seems to be rather external, somehow.

“So I am really searching for the essence, the true flame, the very heart of heart. Art and life and everything have to merge into this one great true love.”

*To learn more about Jan Parker and see more of his paintings, visit his website at [janparkerspiritualpaintings.com](http://janparkerspiritualpaintings.com)*