

It Seems Like Yesterday  
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My first real memory of my uncle was while he was working on his remote viewing project at Stanford Research Institute (SRI). He would, on occasion, bring his students over to our house or we would meet the group for dinner. I was 11. Every time we would meet up, I was scared to death that he or his students would read my mind. Looking back I question what on earth was so super top secret at 11 that would throw me into an utter panic at the idea that they could read my thoughts; but I guess it was because I would spend the time focusing on thinking about butterflies to throw them all off.

He enrolled me and my sister in disco dancing lessons, he in the adult class while we were with the kids, he came to my middle school graduation and then from college; yet through it all he was to me a non-stop cigar smoking enigma. However when I needed a place to stay as I made my way in the world of New York City, he invited me to stay with him. It would be the first of three times: the early 1990s, the mid-1990s and in late 2009 to early 2010. We grew very close and in many respects my uncle was more like a father to me.

It seems like yesterday, but of course I rationally know it isn't, but it still feels that way to me. I lay there on the small carpet covering a patch of old wood; I feel the warmth from the boiler in the sub-basement below me as I listen to ACROSS SPACE AND TIME, the lyrics from one of the songs from Star Children<sup>1</sup> resonate around the room. I fluff up the pillow under my head and turn to my side. On the wall to my right hanging above the green sofa I have just moved off of to dodge the cigar smoke, is Gnosis<sup>2</sup>; years before there had hung a painting that would have been behind me titled The Lord of Peace Returns and the War God Folds His Wings. But my uncle sold that one, begrudgingly since all of his paintings are in same way alive to my uncle, part of him, his children even. I look back behind me and a framed photo of that painting hangs there instead with Proto Adam<sup>3</sup> to its right. I frown; I am mad still at my uncle for letting that one go and now it is gone forever lost in a house fire. I let out a loud and obvious sigh but my uncle is in his own world. I look left over the table I am wedged between - the table my uncle dragged in one day off the street and painted all the colors he said represented Tibet.

I can see Millennium<sup>4</sup> my uncle's grand masterpiece in the distance. I smile, whenever anyone comes to see my uncle, they pose there with him, in front of Millennium, and record it for posterity on film. As I gaze at it, I feel it consuming me, pulling my consciousness towards it and for a while I forget where I even am. I come back, the song has changed and so I wonder if the other paintings get jealous when this happens not just to me, but to all those who come to pay homage to my uncle.

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<sup>1</sup> The album Star Children was conceived and produced by Ingo and Steven Halpern to be the soundtrack of the movie based on Ingo Swann's best-seller, Star Fire. It was originally described as "a space-rock-disco-opera" guaranteed to get your body in motion as it stimulates your mind and soul. Ingo writes: "Hear the beat from the heart / of the universe...help you thrive."

<sup>2</sup> Included in A Remote View

<sup>3</sup> Included in A Remote View

<sup>4</sup> Collection of the American Visionary Art Museum

So in my mind at that moment, I re-assure the paintings, his children hanging all around the room that I love them all, but they know I am lying, they know my favorite, the lost child, and I can't hide it from them even though I try.

Still, I apologize for whatever it is worth and turn back onto my stomach and look up. My uncle is there, a new cigar now in hand, not far from the elevator door at the bottom of the stairs in front of a small wooden stand, with several stretched canvases atop it, and I question how that poor shaky stand manages to survive since I am absolutely sure that in no way it meets any possible code whatsoever.

There is dresser to his left full of paints and brushes, jars and rulers rest along its top and tons of empty cigar boxes are scattered about his feet having escaped their prison beneath the stairs. A large fan sits just beyond the elevator door circulating the cigar smoke around the room. It is plugged into a large extension cord; I am convinced there is really only one actual outlet in the whole place and everything runs to it from one extension cord or another.

He had been working on a painting, the background of which has now changed for the third time, the second of which seem utterly sublime to me, but not sublime enough I guess. But for the moment Uncle Ingo has moved back from the painting, still singing along to the words he himself wrote, paint brush in hand, grooving away. It is 1995, and disco seems like a hangover from the night before.

I watched my uncle paint two paintings that year, neither of which he completes in that year, but he worked on both and went back and forth between the two. One is now with Leslie Lohman and the other with the American Visionary Art Museum.

Uncle Ingo and I never discussed his art or the paintings themselves and if I ever tried to ask him about any of the truly mesmerizing pieces scattered about the wall, the reply was always and frustratingly so, the same, what do you think?

For things that required precision, my uncle had a number of drafting tools and rulers, for circles it was the lips of his Miracle Whip jars that doubled as tea mugs, for points of light or stars it was a cluster of small paint brushes bound together with a rubber band, everything else he slowly and meticulously built up. First there would be darkness and then light; the background paving the way for what would come and more often than not simply disappear altogether. I never saw a sketch or draft or anything. He never told me what he was painting; he just painted and I just watched. I would offer my suggestions but as the song Blue on Black goes, that was just tears in a river: utterly pointless. My uncle was never without an opinion or the desire to impart that opinion upon you, with a full assault of cigar smoke blown in your direction to make sure you got his point. The only difference between me and the countless others that experienced the very same thing; I made sure to turn the fan back in his direction.

After he passed away we found these paintings stuffed under the stairs or rolled up in plastic bags just outside of the boiler room in the sub-basement. Except for a very few, most of these paintings I had never seen. I was blown away as we unfolded canvases we were sure had not seen light in decades;

each and every one shows his journey to me: from young idealist to conceptualist to visionary. I was surprised to see that he had outlined his work, shown us glimpses of what he intended but never finished and in some what only his mind's eye could see. As he wrote in his book Purple Fables:

“But the Sayer of Tales said: ‘I can’t stay. There are places to go and things to see. But your own minds’ eyes can see their own tales if you let them – and see more than tales if you let them also.’”

We worked together on a number of projects. I witnessed extra-ordinary amazing things and met the most incredible people, but through it all my uncle was always just Uncle Ingo to me, a man with an intensely creative nature who found beauty in the most hidden and mysterious of things and brought the invisible to life. For as he says, for every energy and force we see, there are ten more we don't. Art was a doorway for him and I wonder if he stood back, waited, watching from his vantage point looking intensely for what others would see.