

# the painting shirt

due to my deep admiration for stefan george and gustav klimt, as well as to my conviction that the practice of art must be viewed as equivalent to the offices of a priest, i was moved, as early as 1960, to wear a simple white habit-like smock during my painting actions. the wearing of the shirt gained in importance in the course of my subsequent dealings with the relics of the o.m. theater.

the actor who has descended into a state of ecstatic excess stains and besmirches the canvas as spontaneously as possible, driven by his intensity and excitement. often, this intensity is transferred to the **SHIRT** with more immediacy than to the mere canvas. the garment is automatically spotted, soiled, dirtied, spotted, smeared, splattered, sprayed with blood (red paint), with all the colors of the rainbow, of the spectrum of hues, and because no part is played by a compulsively ordering idea, the record of the process is all the more seismographic. invoked as part of the concept, coincidence rules alone, merely the intensity of the process is traced with unerring accuracy.

the shirt is dampened by the “blood and sweat” of the paint. wet, colorful bloodstains of colorful blood are formed and stick to the painter’s naked body. fast-evaporating turpentine becomes blood-water. the paint becomes colorful green, blue, purple, violet, black blood. the painter’s descent towards the zones of the unsavory, the perverse, of death, of murder, of the victim, of being murdered, being sacrificed. the blood-colored deposits on the garment show his descent toward the orgiastic, toward frenzied sexuality, his descent into the abyss, the perilous experiencing the basic forces by which we are conditioned.

it is as if during the act of painting the painter who throws open our own abysses comes into the proximity of sweating blood, of drinking dry the cup of sorrow, of castigation and flagellation, of crucifixion, of the rending of dionysus, of the blinding of oedipus. his priestly robe, his sacrificial shirt, bears the wet stamp of release.

**I AM THE PAINTER WHO PRESSES FOR YOU THIS GLORIOUS WINE. MY GARMENT IS MARKED AND BEARS WET TRACES OF MASH, CRUSHED PURPLE, THE BLOODY FLESH OF THE GRAPE, OF THE FERMENTING,** evaporating, steaming **MOST.** it is sprayed with the over-ripe, numbing, must-fresh wine that intoxicates to the point of insanity.

**I AM THE PAINTER WHO HUNTS DOWN AND SLAUGHTERS THE ANIMAL** (beast, god-animal, bull of mithras - dragon - totem animal) **FOR YOU.** my two **HANDS** rummage **IN THE BLOOD-MOIST FLESH OF THE INTESTINES AND STAIN MYSHIRT WITH EXCREMENT, BLOOD AND CULPABILITY.**

i often hang the shirt on a painting as highest decoration and trophy that will enrich the chromatic structure. there are paintings that need no shirt, others that cry out for one. painting and shirt alike can exist on their own. should i find a shirt that is not to my satisfaction i paint over it with gestural rigor.