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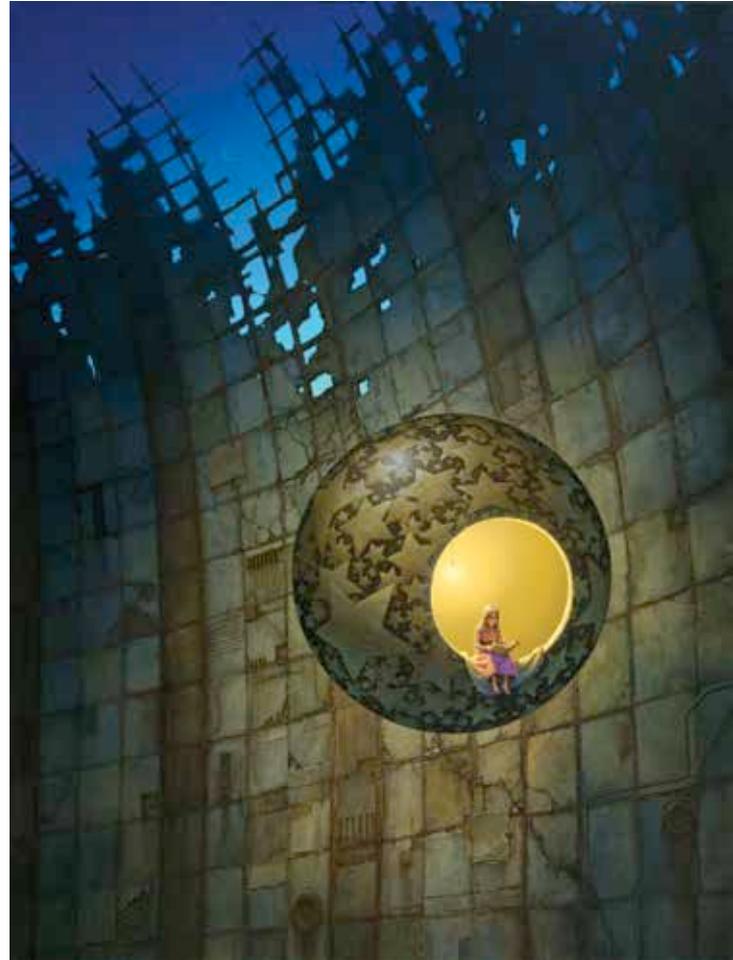


MICHAEL JOHN MARIANO & MICHAEL WHELAN

# Artistic souls



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Stanley Kubrick, in a 1968 interview with *Playboy* magazine, said, “However vast the darkness, we must supply our own light.”

Michael Whelan, considered one of the world’s top illustrators of speculative fiction for two decades, has turned to the quote for inspiration and subject matter. At the root of his work, Whelan says he hopes to evoke and explore a sense of wonder.

Similarly, fellow artist Michael J. Mariano prefers to convey a bigger picture in his works, expressing his thoughts directly and keeping his compositions simple “without so much to look at as to

think about,” the artist remarks.

A special collaboration between Whelan and Mariano will be a highlight of a new exhibition, *Kindred Spirits, Artistic Souls*, at The Gallery at Tree’s Place in Orleans, Massachusetts. The painters, who also are longtime friends, will work together on each other’s compositions and complete the original pieces in a public demonstration at the gallery August 13, kicking off their two-week show.

Whelan, a self-described imaginative realist, has completed more than 350 cover illustrations for major science-fiction

works, gallery owner Mike Donovan notes. “In this field, his hundreds of outstanding paintings have been the subject of four books, and have won him an unprecedented 15 Hugo awards,” Donovan adds.

One of Whelan’s show pieces, *If Six Was Nine*, is the second in a limited series of small works that are an exercise in creating textural effects. All of the works bear titles that make sideways references to rock songs—in this case, Jimi Hendrix’s *If 6 Was 9*—and are based on signs the artist came across in his travels and walks around Connecticut.



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**1**  
Michael Whelan,  
*If Six Was Nine*, acrylic  
on panel, 14 x 11"

**2**  
Michael Whelan,  
*A World of Her Own*,  
acrylic on canvas,  
48 x 36"

**3**  
Michael J. Mariano,  
*As the Crow Flies*, oil on  
linen, 39 x 58"

**4**  
Michael J. Mariano,  
*On the Line (Study)*,  
oil on linen, 12 x 20"

"Often I would encounter a sign that seemed to have a message relevant to something I had just been pondering," Whelan comments, "so they remained in my mind and eventually became subjects of small paintings."

Mariano's more classical approach to painting is palpable in the multiple layers of oil glazes and applied light. Adds Donovan, "Other objects of the artist's fascination are the architectural details of

early coastal structures; most particular windows, from where one may observe the ever-changing mood of the sea."

Mariano's pieces are unadorned, each beckoning the viewer to deliberate a deeper meaning that is unequivocally personal. Says the artist, "It is my hope that the viewer will use the pictures as a point of departure for their own thoughts; the titles are to direct those thoughts, but not to define what someone should think."

In Mariano's *As The Crow Flies*, two of the black birds hover, perhaps curiously, over a paper airplane lying in the street. Mariano notes the birds, often considered wise, seem to be discussing the technology they have encountered, as faulty as it is. "The picture was inspired by two crows I observed tearing at a piece of discarded paper," he says, "so it wasn't too much a stretch to give them a paper plane to think about." ●