

Wil Taylor:

# Creating a Modern Mythology

by Lorraine A. DarConte

As a young boy, Wil Taylor dreamed about a woman named Eden who was trapped in a fiery hell. For years, his sleeping, subconscious self found himself trying, futilely, to set her free. "I'd walk up a trail of fire and try to break her out of an embryo or egg that she couldn't get out of. I was never strong enough," says Taylor, "until I got older. Then I broke her out."

Since then, Eden has appeared in numerous incarnations in much of Taylor's work. She is warrior, savior, angel, goddess, nymph and other mythic figures. "I'm very inspired by nature, beauty, peace, love and mythology," notes Taylor, who says his paintings definitely have a mythological sensibility to them.

A "myth" (from the Greek *mythos*) is a spoken or written story, which is often used to explain the human experience. Most myths are neither real nor based on fact, because the story's message is more important than the event. All cultures have myths, which are typically tied to religion and passed down through generations. A collection of myths is called mythology. Taylor utilizes different aspects of world mythology to create his images, while at the same time creating today's mythology.

"A lot of mythological art, in its decorum, either refers to the past or defers to the future, like the film *Star Wars*. But there is a mythology happening today," says Taylor, "and it's real easy to find in comic books. Most people that read comic books understand the mythology that exists in our modern times. It's all the characters that have been around for thousands of years and are still here, but in a different forum."

"I'm interested in taking that same sense of modern mythology, not as a belief system, but as something people can relate to in everyday life, and creating a single story, moment, emotion or event. I like each piece to have a story like a comic book — a story that reveals itself with a little bit of guidance from the title."

## Wood and Gesso

Taylor has a degree in visual communications from Eastern Washington University, Spokane, Wash. He studied



*The Pearl of Eden*, by Wil Taylor, wood and gesso, 9" x 12," 2008

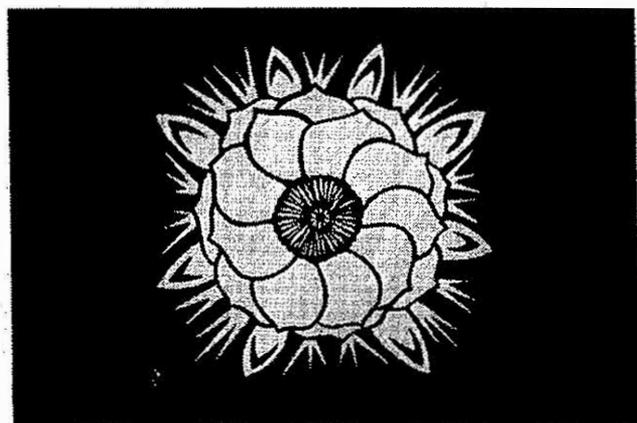
drafting and illustration long before computers ever arrived on college campuses. Taylor feels very fortunate that he learned to create and execute things by hand that computers can't emulate.

"People ask me, 'How do you create that edge or those lines?' etcetera. That's from going to school and studying drafting, painting

and printmaking," he says. Taylor also attended the University of Arizona and was an art teacher at Utterback Middle School for almost 14 years. There, he taught set design, clay, mural art and more.

Taylor says he's always worked in black and white and has always loved working with wood. "I've done screen-printing and woodblock printing, which led me to painting on wood," he explains.

Today, Taylor works mainly with gesso (a high pigment undercoating for paintings) on birch wood. "Typically," he



*The Seed of Eden*, by Wil Taylor, wood and gesso, 11" x 14," 2007