

they're special limited-edition Halloween cans—and pauses to pose in front of a massive 22-foot, floor-to-ceiling painting of his mythical world of Abarat, comprised of 25 islands, each representing a different hour in the day. It's no wonder the nonstop creative has dreamed up a world with extra time on the clock; the prolific author-painter-filmmaker clearly puts each waking minute to use.

"If you go to this red island," he says, pointing to the top of the piece, "it's midnight there. Everything that the human psyche ever conceived of which is midnight-esque—black masses, witches, things that go bump in the night—is completely concentrated on that island." This particular spot on the map is the setting for his forthcoming novel, *Absolute Midnight* (due out later this year), the third in a series of five Abarat books. Several feet across the canvas, it's three in the afternoon on the island of "the Nunce"—"everything that is sleepy and lovely, basking in the sun in hammocks and reading a boring French novel that you fall asleep halfway through" takes place there.

The mural is, in essence, a playground of possibilities of the human experience throughout any given day. "We are different human beings at eight in the morning and at eight at night. We aren't even recognizable to ourselves: very often there are things we'd do at midnight that we'd never do at noon... many fun things!" he says, a mischievous sparkle in his eyes. "The point is we change, and that's to be celebrated. We are not fixed beings."



Barker is living proof of that. The celebrated horror-fantasy writer and filmmaker has consistently genre-hopped between media and methods while disseminating his ideas on the human condition. He's made horror films and acclaimed indie dramas like *Gods and Monsters*; he's written best-selling sci-fi tomes and children's books; and now, he's sharing photographic explorations of the pains and pleasures of the naked, physical form. That he works in spitting distance of the high-gloss Hollywood machinery is just another delicious contradiction for the Liverpool-born artist who has called L.A. home for 18 years now.

"The things created in this town are antithetical to what I'm doing," he says. "They are corporate, glossy, made and judged by committees, and approved by group reviewers who are snatched off the streets of Westwood."

Art is happening all around Barker: in one corner of his work studio, a trove of artfully shot male nude photos, which will eventually find their way into a coffee table book, spill out across a bench. Outside in his driveway in the dusky L.A. night, a young Iraqi war veteran, whom Barker is mentoring through a film program at UCLA, shoots an independent film. Scanning the walls of his creative oasis—just doors down from Tyra Banks, who lives around the bend—he says, "This is my fuck-you to the world that I spent a lot of time making money in, no question. I have three houses on the property, I'm very happy about that, and the money for that all came from movies. But I didn't get freedom there. Look at this picture of this man I shot 10 days ago," he says, pulling a nude from the files scattered before him. "This has as much power and theater and beauty as I can ever want, plus nudity, thank God." Barker thinks of it as akin to a still from a movie that would never get green-lit in this town.

Barker's still making movies, but doing it his way (much like he did while serving as executive producer on 1998's Oscar-winning *Gods and Monsters*): by staying true to his vision and getting it done on the cheap, calling in favors when necessary. "I've sat in a lot of rooms watching my ideas diluted by people throwing their own visions into the pie. Now, I have to go and do my own thing. I have a William Blake quote on the door of my office: 'Make your own laws or be a slave to another man's.' That's what I see every day before I do my creative work."

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# BARON VON GOOLO'S™ EVIL HUT OF HORROR & WAFFLES

HORROR MOVIE REVIEWS & RANDOM CYNICISM FOR TASTES BOTH DISCERNING & OTHERWISE.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 2008

## CLIVE From New York

Today, Sloan Fine Art in New York is opening an exhibit of recent works by horror renaissance man - nay, horror Zeus (kaaaaaa-BOOM!) - Clive Barker, doubtless as a highbrow tie-in to the opening of Barker's newest story-to-film, MIDNIGHT MEAT TRAIN, next month.

If you like, please take a moment and work through all your giggling at that title before you go on.

MIDNIGHT.

MEAT.

TRAIN.

Five dollars says Barker was sporting a wry smile at the very least when he wrote that one.

The folks at Lionsgate are themselves sporting some new gray hairs because audiences have been laughing at the trailer for a film that should be, by all rights, one of the goriest and most harrowing produced this century. Vinny Jones, a modern shade of Rondo Hatton, starring as a serial killer that hunts subway riders to feed his subterranean mutant masters - what is not to love, I ask you? But come on. The trailer could show Hitler sodomizing a baby fur seal with a white-hot post-hole digger and if it ended with a deep, serious voiceover saying "MIDNIGHT MEAT TRAIN," someone would still snort out a chuckle. A movie with that title should be starring Big Dick Blacque, not the guy from KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL.

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TREMBLE BEFORE MY RAVENOUS

## COVEN OF LAWYERS!

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Brooke Shields, though - meh, gray area.

I read Barker's collections, **THE BOOKS OF BLOOD**, about two decades ago and while I only recall the story's ending, it's certainly possible that **MIDNIGHT MEAT TRAIN** had a veiled sexual punchline in there somewhere. Barker has never been one to shy away from the horror of sex, especially in his earlier work. Have you read **THE AGE OF DESIRE**? It's basically Dr. Jekyll and Mister Hyde if Hyde were an enormous, raging erection. Terrifying? Oh sweet crispy deep-fried jeezus, yes. I've only read the **TORTURED SOULS** novelette since Barker came out with **CABAL** in 1988 so I can't speak to works like **THE GREAT AND SECRET SHOW** and **THE THIEF OF ALWAYS**, but Barker's auteurism births horror with two earmarks; that mayhem and violation of one's body is a primal horror that shivers us all the way down to our caveman genes; and that the only thing more horrifying than witnessing said mutilated body, helpless and bloody in a whimpering heap, would be to find it arousing.

Um, eeyew.

The exhibit at Sloan is in two piles. There's a miscellaneous group of relatively tame, surreal images, about half of which are architectural and make me think that Barker really got a kick out of the panoramas in **THE LORD OF THE RINGS** trilogy. His work is very cinematic, which is either somewhat ironic or perfectly logical for a novelist that paints. In the hands of a less visionary man, images like **THE LIGHTNING TREE** could easily be dismissed as the stuff of van paintings. But somehow, when Barker does them, there's life in them. You can see them in your mind's eye as if you were viewing them on a big screen. They're beautiful. If those talented boys at WETA were to bring **THE LIGHTNING TREE** or **THE PALACE OF RAIN LANTERN** to cinematic life, every dungeonmaster in Berkeley would die of priapism.



The other pile are Barker's concept paintings for MIDNIGHT MEAT TRAIN. *Now we're talkin'*. The mutilated beings depicted are the result of some demonic four-way between Frankenstein's monster, a Morlock, Jeffrey Dahmer and, of course, Pinhead. They are unclean. Barker's style is unclean. In this context, that's decidedly a compliment.

His brushstrokes are furious and primal, imbuing his creations with movement and savagery as if they were caged animals, trapped on a piece of paper not quite two feet square. There is little or no finesse apparent in his technique, almost as if he were trying to kill the paper by stabbing it with his paintbrush. But liked a crazed killer from one of his own stories, each stab meets the paper with purpose. Horror is not pretty.



One of my favorites of the bunch, MIDNIGHT MEAT RAIN 6, vibrates on a web of black lines with an expressionistic style reminiscent of Willem de Kooning's figural studies. Have you ever seen de Kooning's "people"? They're just...horribly wrong. Similarly, the abattoir in MIDNIGHT MEAT TRAIN 7 immediately recalled Francis Bacon's HEAD SURROUNDED BY SIDES OF BEEF for me. For my nickel, this is fine company for a painter to find himself in. In an industry where the average pre-production sketch ends up in a landfill or on ebay, the fact that Barker's warrant wall space in a New York gallery is a testament to the man's talent and vision. Whether a director can accurately translate that vision to the screen is irrelevant: the painting themselves are sexy, sexy nightmares.



(What? Just because I spend all my time talking about Dario Argento and George Romero, you think I don't know from de Kooning and Bacon? Baron gots mad skillz, fanboy. Now get thee to a museum.)

The Barker exhibit is open at Sloan Fine Art through May 10. If you happen to be in New York proper, pop in and tell them Baron Von Goolo sent you. It will confuse the staff and I will find that amusing.

POSTED BY BARON VON GOOLO AT 10:58 PM

LABELS: CLIVE BARKER, HORROR MOVIE NEWS, HORROR MOVIE REVIEW, MIDNIGHT MEAT TRAIN, SLOAN FINE ART

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GALLERY

# Angel and demon at either hand

■ Clive Barker's companions frolic in paint as well as words.

By Mike Boehm, Times Staff Writer

Clive Barker wants to illustrate a point about the varied and unfettered nature of his painterly imagination, which at this moment has him surrounded as he sits in the Beverly Hills house he's turned into a do-it-yourself gallery.

"Well, let's look. Here we go," says Barker, as he rises from the long wooden dining room table that appears to be the only surface — kitchen counters included — that isn't covered with paintings. The walls' upper reaches are hung with some of the smaller and medium-sized artworks made during an almost daily painting spree that stands at eight years' duration and 540 pictures produced, give or take. The lower walls are lean-tos for double-stacked layers of Barker's biggest canvases.

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The writer of graphically violent horror stories (and, more recently, of gentler fantasy novels) grabs one of the big ones with both hands and moves it aside. It shows a corpse reduced nearly to bones, a smorgasbord for perching crows — one of which has a stringy morsel of flesh in its beak. This is more or less what you'd expect from the author who arrived as a commercial force in 1984 with "The

Books of Blood," then clinched brand-name recognition with the "Hellraiser" and "Candyman" slasher-film series. But wait a minute. Out from under the gory scavengers appears a hidden canvas, and a



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revelation: a bright vision of wonder, in which a garden of lavish, green growth springs from a beatific woman at the picture's center.

"There's heaven and hell, I guess you would say," Barker says before picking up his cigar for another puff. "They're both parts of my imagination, and they come at various times, fairly unbidden and beyond my control."

"Visions of Heaven and Hell" is the title of Barker's new coffee-table book, which collects 342 of his ink drawings and oil paintings with a brief essay by the artist for each of its 10 chapters — "Devils and Demons" and "Memento Mori" on the horrific side, "Lovers" and "Perversities" giving occasional rein to Barker's sexually explicit interests, and "Seas and Lands" and "Beasts and Forests" glimpsing less tortured and carnal imaginary realms, including paintings compiled in "Abarat," Barker's half-finished series of four books of fantasy for young readers.

At age 53, the scruffy-bearded transplanted Liverpudlian sees painting as the compulsion-cum-discipline that orders his evenings after he has spent a chunk of his days writing. (He says he is almost done with "The Scarlet Gospels," a return to horror in which he promises to drop the final curtain on Pinhead, the monster of "Hellraiser.")

He works in a high-ceilinged downstairs studio in one of the three adjoining houses he owns on a narrow hillside street. The middle one, "the Big House" between the studio and the gallery, is where he and photographer David Armstrong, Barker's spouse of 10 years, live with their teenage daughter and many pets. It contains a Matisse drawing, a gift from Armstrong, that Barker says is the only work he's collected rather than created himself.

Painting has held rewards beyond self-expression for the self-taught Barker, who cites William Blake, Francisco Goya and Belgian James Ensor as influences he admires as "fantastical painters, painters who used paint to express extremes of emotion."

He has a particular affinity for Blake, the reverent but highly unorthodox Christian pre-Romantic poet and painter whose "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" (1790) imagined Satan as a force with creative as well as destructive potential, and derided the traditional Judeo-Christian paternalistic God as a false deity, "Nobodaddy," who suppresses human freedom.

Five years ago, the Walt Disney Co. looked at Barker's first series of illustrations for the "Abarat" books and paid him \$8 million for the rights to base movies and merchandise on his fantasy world — before he had even turned the images into accompanying stories. Now he has a gallery show, a selection of 57 works at Bert Green Fine Art in downtown L.A. The pictures flit across Barker's range, starting with 14 sexual works, cordoned off by black curtains in a room for adults only. But there's also room for "A Zethek," a big-eyed, snaggletoothed feline with a suspicious expression who looks as if he might be on loan from Dr. Seuss (in fact, Barker has his own line of fantastical stuffed toys for kids, the Jump Tribe).

Several images are Tolkien-esque landscapes adorned with anthropomorphic trees and mountains. "Ghost Tree" offers a bit of humorous, homespun philosophy: As a playful female genie emanates from one side of the golden-leafed tree, a grumpy little man faces in the opposite direction, too self-involved to look around and see the wonder at hand.

Gallery owner Green expects half the paintings to be sold by New Year's, making Barker one of the three fastest-selling artists in his gallery's six years. He estimates that half the people buying

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or looking are fans of Barker's books and films; the other half are Green's regular clientele.

Barker planned to go to the same art school that John Lennon attended, until his mother, Joan, who still lives in Liverpool near his younger brother, implored him to attend a university. He studied English literature and philosophy, and spent his 20s and early 30s as a semi-starving playwright with his own small theater company before making it big with macabre fiction.

He began painting seriously in the early 1990s, as a less complicated creative substitute for the film directing and producing that had begun to wear on him. Barker's first gallery show was in New York City in 1993. He says he was still feeling his way as a painter in 1995 when the Laguna Art Museum organized his only museum exhibition to date, "The Imagination of Clive Barker," at its then-satellite gallery in the South Coast Plaza mall in Costa Mesa. Times reviewer David Pagel administered an impaling worthy of Candyman: "If this exhibition is any indication, the imagination of Clive Barker is a claustrophobic space jampacked with creeps and clichés ... [looking] like a pricey extension of a souvenir shop."

Barker says he learned long ago to follow Kingsley Amis' advice that it's OK to let a bad review spoil one's breakfast, so long as it doesn't carry over into lunch. "There are people who will come after me for these paintings, I'm sure, and will slash me every which way they know," he says amiably in a raspy voice made scratchier by the remnants of a cold. "And I will be back at work that night in my studio, making more pictures."

The blank canvases nearly always take form without planning or preliminary sketching, Barker says. Sometimes what emerges hits close to home. A stark image of a man sitting on an egg-shaped rock, his head buried in his hands, was an outpouring of grief over the death of his father, Len Barker, from leukemia four years ago. Barker had suppressed his emotions at the time so he could fulfill a scheduled book tour — carrying with him a portion of his dockworker dad's ashes during the book-signing trek through Britain.

On another night, several months ago, Barker felt overcome with a rapture of thanksgiving, squeezed black paint onto one of the white paper plates he uses in lieu of palettes, and adorned the white wall of his studio with words: "Art is my addiction love is what keeps me in this dimension. My husband has healed the past, made sense of the present, and is laughing the future alive."

But has Barker ever felt spooked by one of his own creations? That elicits a slow, sideways shake of the head and a stage-whispered answer: "No, never in a thousand years."

"These are my beasts," he adds, "and it's hard to imagine being frightened by the beast, because the beast is part of me."

\*

Clive Barker: 'Visions of Heaven and Hell (and Then Some)'

**Where:** Bert Green Fine Art, 102 W. 5th St., L.A.

**When:** Noon to 6 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays. Closed Dec. 29 to Jan. 3. Ends Jan. 28.

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## CLIVE BARKER VISIONS OF HEAVEN AND HELL (AND THEN SOME)

January 12–28  
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Though perhaps best known for his horror movies and fiction, hellraiser Clive Barker has long pursued a prolific career as a painter and illustrator as well. In *Visions of Heaven and Hell*, a show inspired by Barker's new book, the painter reveals a series of manifestations of our worst nightmares and our most unchained fantasies. With his typical bravado, Barker kicked off this

exhibition with a live painting session and photo shoot called *Zoomen*, in which he painted the nude bodies of five men and then photographed his work. In the show's inanimate subjects, visions of dementia are plentiful, as Barker expertly weaves his way through the shady domain of wild-eyed, tortured souls in paintings like *In the Madhouse* and *Insane*. He also devotes much of the work to breaking down sexual taboos, venturing into aggrandized erotic terrain that leaves little to the imagination. Barker's confrontational portraits capture phantoms, often neither human nor animal, living nor dead, as they alternately engage the viewer directly with penetrating gazes or ignore us completely as they go about their own hedonistic indulgences. Often, though, darkness and light, depravity and sanctity are conflated as Barker deifies the unlikely fringe-dwellers who have no place in the rhetoric of the Christian Right. After all, Barker is a man who believes deeply in extremes, not only as evidenced by the classic dichotomy his exhibition references, but also because the his work draws its strength and longevity from the intensity of our responses to it. It thus behooves him to turn to the shadowy places and the forces on high alike to stir the pot in which our insecurities, hopes, and memories all mingle in a frenzied concoction that verges on boiling over when we are confronted with charged imagery like Barker's.

For more information, contact Bert Green Fine Art, 213 624 6212 or [bgfa.us](http://bgfa.us).







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## BEAUTIFUL MONSTERS

*Horror Master Clive Barker Finds a New Audience With a Downtown Exhibit of His Paintings*

by Kristin Friedrich

It's not the monsters in Clive Barker's head that are the most shocking. It's that they share space with so many other interests.

Barker is a lesson in dimensionality: The horror impresario has built a fiction and film empire on bloodlust and demons, but he also pens fantasy stories for young readers that sell millions. Since the early '90s, he has also been painting. Though when discussing the madness, unearthly creatures and erotic elements in his canvas work, he could just as easily be talking about the weather.

This is not to imply that Barker, whose name is a veritable horror franchise, is fearless. In fact, he cops to trepidation - about having his paintings go up at the Downtown Los Angeles gallery Bert Green Fine Art.

"I was nervous as hell," Barker admitted the morning after the show's December opening. "I think when you make something, and you make something from some deep place in yourself, and you put it in front of people, [only] a fool wouldn't be."

The Fifth Street show, titled *Visions of Heaven and Hell (and Then Some)*, is



Entries from Barker's *Visions of Heaven and Hell* show are on display at Bert Green Fine Art through Jan. 28.



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filled with beautiful monsters - paintings and drawings of humans and not-at-all humans, tortured and calm, kind and sadistic. There's a roped-off section of erotic art, which Green said was Barker's idea: The inherent appeal of forbidden subject matter is a Barker specialty (and includes a participatory element this week). Many of the pieces appear in a book of his art called *Visions of Heaven and Hell*. A few are character studies for his multi-novel youth saga *Abarat*.



It was *Abarat*, in fact, that inspired much of the work. When Barker initially pitched the idea for a series of novels for young readers, his publisher turned him down.

"I was doing very well with books for adults with lots of sex and violence," he said. "They weren't interested in going in a different direction. My response was, without any conscious intention on my part at all, to go into the studio and paint pictures. Gradually, it occurred to me - though it might very well be that this is simply 20/20, after the fact knowledge and it may well be that this is not true at all - that when I was told I couldn't write, maybe my imagination took all those ideas and made them into paintings."

Barker was born in Liverpool and today lives in Beverly Hills with his partner, photographer David Armstrong, their teenage daughter, and an assortment of dogs, fish, geckos and parrots. To stay busy in the face of a bustling household, or perhaps to combat the swirling images and ideas in his head, Barker keeps a rigid schedule and compartmentalizes his creative spaces. His property includes three separate homes: one for living, an office for writing (where he sits under a huge crucifix), and a studio.

By day, he writes and attends to the business of his film company. He's handwriting *The Scarlet Gospels* now, a book that will purportedly end the shenanigans of Pinhead, the wisecracking centerpiece of Barker's *Hellraiser* franchise. "I'll be on page 3,345 by 6 p.m. tonight," he said. "I finish 20 pages a day, and I don't leave until I do."

After a change of clothes, he heads to his studio to paint, and on a good night, works until 11 p.m. He attends to several canvases at a time, and is prolific, except when - in moments perhaps dominated by his monsters - he slashes canvas.

Most people would call that frustration. Barker terms it "vengeance."

### The Pain of Paint

**Barker says painting brings an intense immediacy, and consequent vulnerability, that he doesn't find in other mediums. "When you write a script, the process to get that on the screen has so many other people involved. So even though *Hellraiser* may be my movie, it's got all kinds of other wonderful people working on it.**

**"When I write a novel, it's going to take 18 months of my life and in that time, I change, because 18 months of my life pass, and you discharge energies into the book which are no longer part of you. You deliver the book to the publisher, and a year later, it comes out into the marketplace, people buy it and reviewers comment on it. So though it came out of a very deep place, that place is by that time very remote. In the case of a painting, six of them didn't exist last week. If you touched**



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them at the opening, you would have smeared the paint."

Barker began painting about 15 years ago, but does not show often. (Los Feliz's La Luz de Jesus hosted an exhibit a few years ago, and in 1995, he appeared at the Laguna Art Museum.) Gallerist Green had been pursuing Barker for several years. After he moved his space from Los Feliz to Downtown, Barker came to have a look, and agreed to display his work.

Foot traffic for art spaces is typically slow in December, but Barker's name has kept things busy, and diverse. "We get Clive Barker fans, looky-loos, my regular collectors, Latino families shopping," Green said. "They're intrigued to see that, in fact, he's a fine artist."

Green said that as of last week, half of the 57 pieces had sold, and he expects that by the time the show ends, it will likely be the most successful exhibit of his gallery career. Barker said he was pleased by the reception, but admitted it hurt to let the pieces go.

On Jan. 12, Barker will appear at Green's space for a live body painting session and photo shoot, in which he'll work on five nude men and place them against a backdrop. The public is invited to take pictures of the result. "My take," Green said, "is that he likes the idea of public access to the things he experiences privately. It's cathartic."

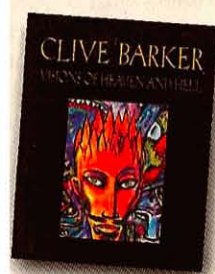
*Visions of Heaven and Hell (and Then Some) is at Bert Green Fine Art through Jan. 28, 102 W. Fifth St., (213) 624-6212 or bgfa.us. The live body painting is Jan. 12, 5-9 p.m.*

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# Scary as hell

Horror superstar Clive Barker's first published collection of paintings is a perverse stained-glass window into his fractured soul By Michael Rowe



“I started out wanting to be a painter,” says Clive Barker, “but my parents dissuaded me, saying, ‘No one makes money as a painter.’” They urged him to go to university instead. “I studied philosophy out of sheer perversity, because no one makes money as a philosopher either.”

The rest of the story is history. Barker's third career choice, writing, earned him a fortune, won him Stephen King's papal blessing as “the future of horror fiction,” and made him the genre's first out superstar. Dozens of books, plays, films, comics, action figures, and related projects later, Barker says his work and life have finally come together in the pages of his first major art book, *Visions of Heaven and Hell* (Rizzoli, \$50). “It's been a long time coming,” he says.

As a painter and a writer, Barker points to influences as diverse as William Blake and Dante. “Part of my education in understanding the paradoxical heavenly and hellish visions came from Blake, who gave us a devil who was terribly smart and full of wise perversities,” he says. “That's something I hope I've been able to give to the villains in my books over the years: [an understanding] of their own conditions and their own evil.”

Barker also references the homoerotic work of the 19th-century French artist M.G. Darré. “They're sort of like 19th-century S/M illustrations, full of beautiful naked bodies writhing and suffering,” he says gleeful-

ly, “and it's very obvious the artist had a fun time drawing them. Whenever you are offered a more complex vision of religion than the simple ‘good and bad,’ something sexual is allowed to emerge.”

A glorious stained-glass window into the depths of his psyche, *Visions of Heaven and Hell* also serves as a visual memoir, Barker says. “The paintings, much more so than the writing, are statements of how I feel at a given time. Writing obligates you to get up on Monday morning and go to a place in the narrative where you left off Sunday night, and it may not be what you're feeling.”

Like a diary, he adds, “I hope that this is a book of pleasures and perversities side by side. There are pictures that are there to entertain and others that were painted on some very dark days that declared exactly how I felt at that moment.”

If all human beings are made up of multitudinous solitudes, the artist is ideally gifted to give them each a voice. It's a particularly fitting task for Barker, who writes sexually explicit horror, children's books, and sprawling novels that explore the very nature of faith. “This may be the first book in which the extremes have been allowed to coexist,” he says.

“And they coexist because each page is a different part of my mind.” ■

*Rowe is the editor of the Queer Fear short-fiction anthologies and author of Looking for Brothers, a collection of nonfiction.*



■ “A more complex vision of religion”; art from *Visions of Heaven and Hell*



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