

## The Tao of Death

review by Karl P. Kaplan

### DEATH SELF: A COLLABORATION

Rini Price and V.B. Price

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Deceptively slim, *Death Self: A Collaboration* focuses on a profoundly weighty topic that affects us all. The approach that painter Rini Price and poet V.B. Price have both embraced for facing the eventual end of life is inspiring in its simplicity. The result is a collection of 17 painting and poems. As they explain in the introduction, the title refers to V.B. Price's belief that "What we were before we were born and what we are after we die are the same stuff as who we are when we're alive ..." The poems are wise, spare meditations on death, while the paintings are vibrant abstract figurative studies that celebrate life, warts and all.

In his poetry, V.B. Price seeks to make peace with death, exploring it from all angles. In "Sympathetic Rapture," he casts death as both hunter and lover, finding that his perceptions can change the tenor of their relationship. Price challenges himself to accept the deaths of loved ones, as he seeks to with his own, in "Letting Go." "Mother Death" is a tribute to life and death as the same entity,

whose attention in both regards is loving. Throughout the poems, Price's language is reassuring, soothing, casting a warm

light on a subject our culture tries to hide in the shadows and render powerless.

Rini Price's paintings are a quirky mix of darkness and mirth, which complement the poems without illustrating them. "Lifelong Flirtation" — which faces "Sympathetic Rapture" — is a dark image of a lovers' embrace, with one figure seemingly skeletal. Accompanying a poem about a woman advising how to trust, not fear, death is the painting "Pedestaled," which presents two figures, side by side, one standing and the other seemingly floating, as if on the trust spoken of in the poem.

The art and poems work in harmony to create a very real sense of the creators' certainty in the naturalness and unthreatening quality of death. The Prices' view of death suggests that by embracing it as an inevitable aspect of life, people can put aside petty concerns and focus on the importance of experiencing whatever time they have. As the poem "Death the Mentor" explains, "If I live like that /

then death becomes an action / not a subjugation ..." **CW**

The paintings and poems in *Death Self* are on exhibit at 116 Artspace, 116 Central SW, upstairs in suite 201, in Albuquerque, 245-4200. The exhibit opens with a reception, Saturday, March 26, from 5:30 to 7:30pm.

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RINI PRICE - V.B. PRICE

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