

# 'Death Self' works celebrate life

BY WESLEY PULKKA  
For the Journal

## REVIEW

Painter Rini Price and poet V.B. Price have been married for 36 years. Their current exhibition at Artspace 116 is held in conjunction with the publication of "Death Self," a book of 17 paintings and 17 poems.

Artspace 116 is a new venue founded by Wingspread Guides of New Mexico, which also published "Death Self."

The artwork and the book were inspired by Rini Price's battle with cancer that resulted in multiple surgeries and V.B. Price's appendectomy. When V.B. Price had his 52nd birthday in 1993, he started reflecting on his own health and his family history. The results of that introspection are the 17 poems.

Rini Price decided that she would survive and prevail over her cancer only if she used her artistic skills. She had started making art in 1952 at the age of 11. Art had always given her strength while offering perspective on the world.

Rini had always been the first reader and editor of her husband's writing that includes fiction and nonfiction books and poetry.

"Death Self," however, is the first formal collaboration for the couple.

Painters and poets have worked together since Chinese poets wrote directly on the paintings that inspired their poetry. There is a big difference in this show. The exhibit of paintings and poems are presented separately. The paintings do not directly illustrate the poems and the poems do not directly describe the content of the paintings.

These works from the early 1990s complement each other and are the expression of each artist's views on death and dying.

We Americans have widely differing views of death as recent controversies illustrate but we all will die. When the late Carlos Castaneda wrote of his alleged experiences with Mexican sorcerer Don Juan, he admonished readers to accept death as an ally rather than as an enemy.

### If you go

**WHAT:** "Death Self," 17 paintings by Rini Price with 17 poems by V.B. Price

**WHEN:** Through May 13.  
Hours are 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Mondays-Fridays

**WHERE:** Artspace 116, 116 Central SW, Suite 201

**HOW MUCH:** Free

V.B. Price's poems are an honest embodiment of Castaneda's philosophy. With each poem Price takes a bite out of fear and points to a positive aspect of life affirmation.

Rini Price's acrylic paintings are based on freely expressed gesture drawings. In works like "The Great Temptation to Fear," "Stillness," "The Clumps," "With a Smile," "The Angel of Life Who is Always Present," "Leave Me Be" and "Angel Teaching a Dog the Rudiments of Flight," Price tightens the images into open but realistic forms.

In "With a Smile" Price creates a heroic-scale portrait reminiscent of Chuck Close's fingerprint drawings and grid paintings. "Leave Me Be" with its striped background and woman in a black dress could be interpreted as a portrait of the late Agnes Martin in her early years.

In contrast, "Man With Flies on His Fingers" is distorted and exaggerated into an outsider style expression.

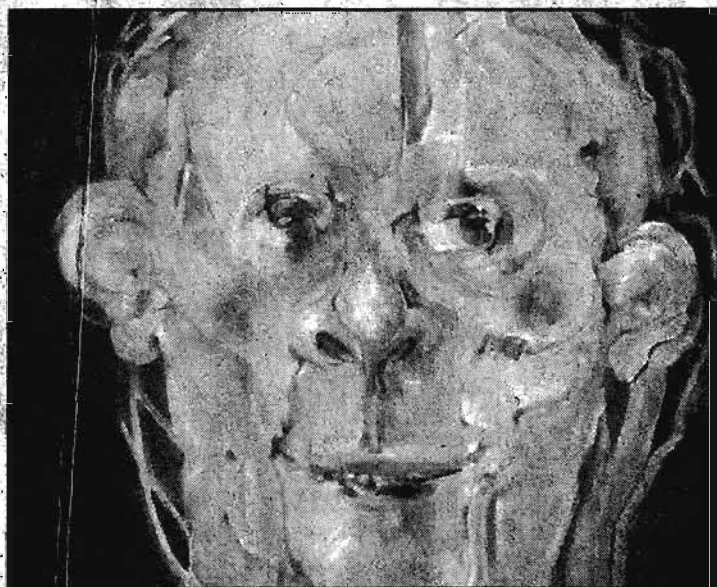
It's the play between tight and loose, light and dark that makes the overall show interesting. "Lifelong Flirtation" is the chromatically darkest painting in the show that is otherwise filled with fleshy pinks and warm grays.

The accompanying poem is called "Sympathetic Rapture." The poem describes the great owl of death that "seizes me by the breath, covers me with her wings, breaks my will with her kiss, devours me like an eclipse ... as a lover letting go, I am all hers, cradled, embracing, all unafraid."

This is far from a morbid show. It's a celebration of life.



"Leave Me Be," an acrylic by Rini Price at Artspace 116, could be interpreted as a portrait of the late Agnes Martin in her early years.



▲ "With a Smile" by Rini Price is a heroic-scale portrait reminiscent of works by Chuck Close.



▲ "Angel Teaching a Dog the Rudiments of Flight," an acrylic by Rini Price, is part of her "Death Self" collaborative show with her husband, poet and author V.B. Price.