

# C. MICHAEL NORTON

*“From the comedy of America to the ceremony of life”*

C. Michael NORTON’s painting is a reflection of his native America: excessive, paradoxical, singularly superficial and ironically essential, as if he had to mask the comedy of the world, of man and woman, behind the successive screens of paint, color and explosive vitality.



**God Has This New Girlfriend That Sings**  
1989, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 78 inches

There are no highs or lows in NORTON’s paintings, the figures entangling, coiling up, and extricating themselves in a terrifying fusion-confusion. Irony, despair, anguish? Images of a nation of violence, sex, and psychoanalysis? A brighter future after the war?

But NORTON is not just American, and, even if he recognizes being directly affiliated with De Kooning, there is more than a strict and parodical vision of America and of the self behind the women, wolf-men, dogs, bears and the rest of the bestiary perched on high heels and on the look-out for sex.

The fact that NORTON spent his childhood in North Dakota, and was drawn to the last Indian tribes, their signs, their traces, their animal-gods, should be kept in mind.

In these personages, the black wolves, yellow masks, blue women with red fingernails, can also be seen several emblematic figures, those from Egypt and Africa that continue to loom up before us.

Looking at these drippings, the excess of liquid, blood, sperm... generously spread across the canvas, one should also reflect upon the essential liquids, carriers of energy, testimony of the life and circulation of mankind.

Because it is a question here of life, or rather of existence, a deep-rooted life so evident it becomes obscene, a life of chaos before the beginning – or of eternal beginnings; the creative gesture of love, bearer of meaning.

The same is the case in Tantric art, with the amorous act elevated to the level of spiritual experience and sacred practice.

Human beings become guardians of a supreme, dense, universal energy. They perform the eternal ceremony of life.

Isabelle COERA  
*(trad. Jérôme Reese)*