

Night Journey 49: Abstürzender/The Twilight of Idolatry

On the left is an image of Max Beckmann's painting *Abstürzender* (Falling Man). At the time of the 911 World Trade Center attacks, when I learned that the victims were jumping from the towers, my mind recalled *Abstürzender*.

In this painting, I combine the burning buildings of the World Trade Center on the right with the burning buildings of the Beckmann painting on the left, by means of smoke traveling through the deconstructed space that separates the painting's window from the reproduction of the Beckmann painting. The view through the window on the right of the painting establishes the historical time and place, while the Beckmann painting provides the emotional climate.

To these symbiotic images I add the cause of 911, and similar tragedies, in the form of a false gold idol. The idol is the love of money, represented by the Washington dollar head on the body of Venus, the love goddess. The dragonfly is a symbol of power, and the golden idol standing atop the dragonfly pedestal establishes the relationship between wealth and power. The light, borrowed from Picasso's *Guernica*, illuminates the world of destruction we have created.

The U.S. flag has become an idol, complete with mythological and chameleon leaders who disguise special and self-interested greed as patriotic, national interest. The theme does not revolve around the depicted events, but rather around the architects who construct the policies of division and destruction. The masks they wear cannot disguise their lies, and the torch they carry for liberty and freedom is not real.