



Night Flower
1987
Oil on canvas
32" x 24"

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Cicero is bringing back into the contemporary arena of art the very things which have been so severely overshadowed to the point of being practically left out. Feeling and passion. Feeling for life. Passion for imaginative concerns and visual values. In his work, we are put in touch with art in its most compelling of roles, as a vehicle of humanist enlightenment, nonpareil.

While maintaining his roots in Abstract Expressionism, Cicero has taken an independent journey of mind and spirit that has led him away from the prevailing present-day "issues".

Since the early 1970s, the period marking the deepening of his commitment to figurative representation, Cicero is continuing to address the family of experiences and emotions that are the crux of the human condition. His personal and provocative treatment of such subjects as love, sex, violence and evil ally him in sensibility to a younger generation of painters, though his efforts predate the Neo-Expressionism of the early 1980s which still remains relevant today.

Cicero's latest body of work offers an impressive display of the power and originality of his vision, revealing some of his most sophisticated statements to date.

In his paintings and watercolors, Cicero touches the heart, the sentient essence of man's relationship to

nature. His personal imagery—poetic crescent moons, strange flowers, dark city skylines—has an enormous emblematic power. In a fascinating display of how energy begets energy, the pictorial vitality of these works of art stimulates our own outpouring of ideas and feelings; we are encouraged to the deepest contemplation and speculative wonder.

Thoughts about the universal and mythic dimensions attending the relationship between man and woman, their dreams, memories, and myths are aroused in Cicero's flower paintings and watercolors. In the painting *Night Flower*, 1987, the sky is home to a mysterious romantic mood. The crescent moon with its halo seems the source of an irresistible force that holds in its spell a flower with luscious purple and black petals, a bright yellow center, and radiant blue stalk with graceful curves. In *Flower With Red Sunset*, 1987, the scene is one that is bathed in an intriguing aura of mystery. The exotic shapes of the buildings recall the pleasure palaces of the Arabian Nights. And something magical seems to be in the air as well. The flowers are a celebration of nature and are at the same time symbols that touch within us a myriad of associations and feelings.

Cicero's enthusiasm for the city as the place of adventure and danger can be appreciated in two works. In the painting *February*, 1987, the city is presented as the crossroads of life where anything can and usually does happen in this scene of a car stopping on a deserted street by the waterfront whose sinister overtones immediately pique our curiosity. We're ready to write our own script. In *Street Dancer*, 1987, the brilliant clarity of this watercolor with its collage-like composition catches the dynamic way such a performer invariably bursts into sight, attracting all eyes with his syncopated movements and steps that are the very symbolic embodiment of the rhythms of the city.

A resplendent picture of the shining city by the sea, the painting *Gold Cityscape*, 1988, radiates a dream-like atmosphere of loneliness and alienation that is familiar to those who live among the ubiquitous, faceless buildings in our urban landscape.

In the painting *The Stranger*, 1985-1988, yet another aspect of the city is considered. It is again shown by the sea and far-off in the distance the blocks of skyscrapers, stark brooding symbols of urban life, are being dwarfed by the towering figure of a man in a turban. Who is this man? A stranger from a distant land, a magician perhaps, or the welcome bearer of exotic dreams and fantasies sorely needed to raise the human spirit from the daily demands of our urban society?

Let's think of him as Carmen Cicero.

Ronny Cohen, 1988

Top Right:
Street Dancer, 1987, Watercolor, 20" x 29¾"

Right:
Leisure, 1987, Watercolor, 22½" x 30"