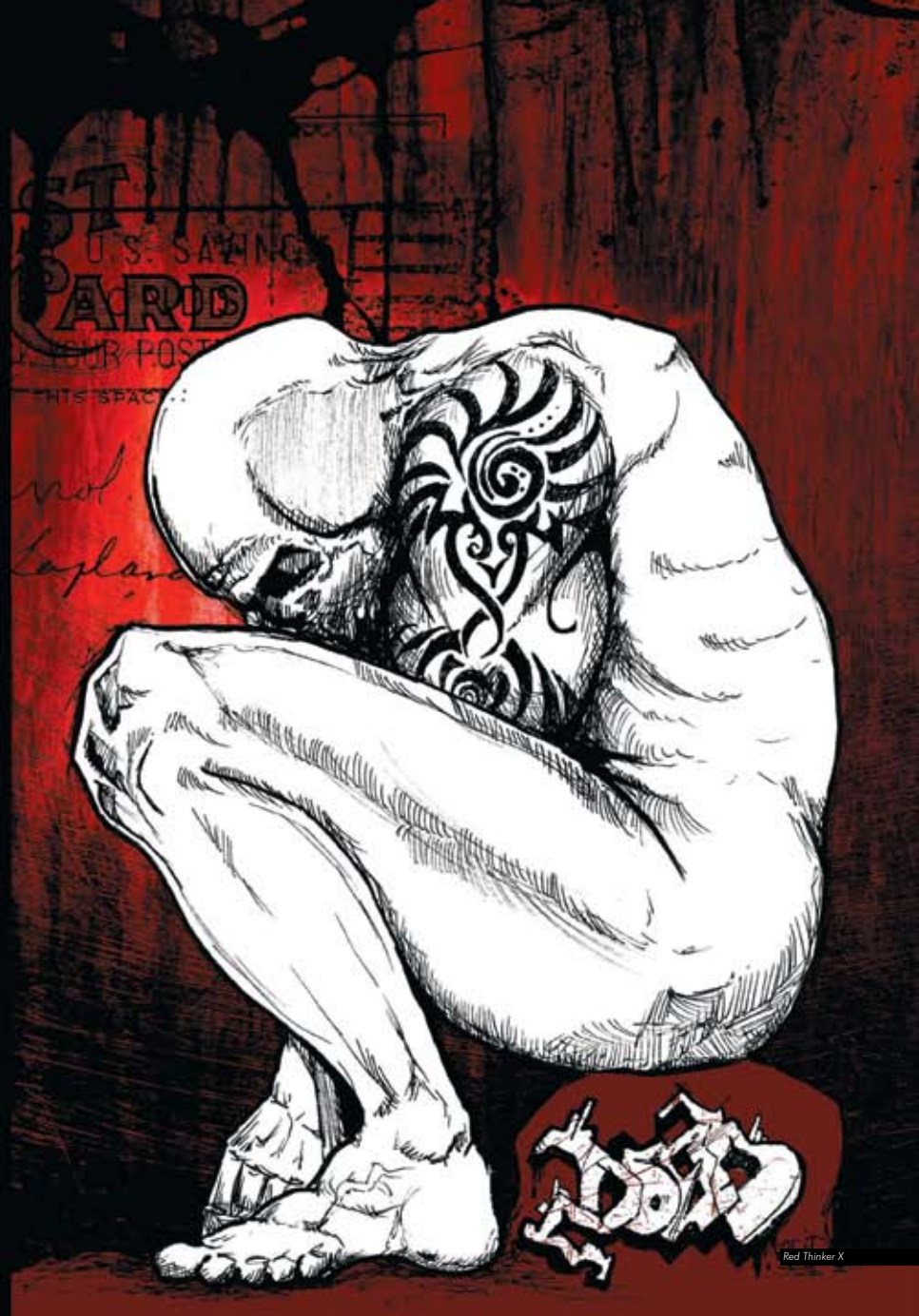


Sasan

COMPASSION IN A DARK REALM

Sasan is a man intrigued by the darker side of the human mind. His artworks exist in a realm of palpable fear and tension; and yet he takes no sadistic pleasure in them, only a profound contemplation in the possibility of their existence. Although his portfolio includes a variety of formats, his mixed media works are the most intriguing. They combine his work's finest aspects, creating pieces that captivate the mind and invoke the most primal of emotions.

WORDS: jessica manim





The Capetonian artist's world is a stark one, created primarily in black and white, the linework swims in heavy layers of crimson. He positions his subjects centrally before slowly building up their surroundings. His figures are always alone, lost within an oppressively dim realm without a companion. A sense of rejection surrounds them, a feeling that they are social outcasts due to some form of deformity. Which makes sense when one learns that one of his major sources of inspiration is Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. The novella famously tells the story of Gregor Samsa, a pressurised salesman who transforms into an insect overnight, only to be rejected by those who once loved him. Sasan explains the connection to this seminal modernist work: "I'm trying to tap into the dark and melancholic parts of the mind. As humans we are visual creatures and love beauty. We don't like ugliness."

Areas of intricate detail are sharply contrasted with achingly open spaces in most of Sasan's mixed media works. Vacant spaces draw you into the surrounding areas, heavily populated by intense crosshatching. "The very simple linework can be followed like a road until you get to the busy area," says Sasan. "I choose my shading and light source in a way that allows me to have a lot of dark areas as the focus point." Whether he draws your attention to the foreground figure or the background scenery, the effect is powerful, forcing one aspect of an image to pop out while others recede.

Several symbols recur throughout Sasan's portfolio of personal work. Two that predominate are masks and insects. The masks reference the medieval *Schandmasken* (Shameful Masks) that were used to publicly discipline and ridicule those who had committed minor offences. Metal masks in the shape of animal heads were strapped to the head before the offender was forced into public to be mocked by his community. It's no surprise then that they have become such a strong feature in the work of a man who explores the twisted ways in which humans interact with one another. However, his work doesn't enter into the ridicule; instead it pulsates with a powerful feeling of compassion. The use of insects prevails as, for Sasan, they straddle the delicate line between the grotesque and the magnificent. While most humans react with automatic repulsion towards insects, Sasan spent many years drawing them professionally and finds them intensely alluring.

Obsessed with the darker side of humans yet beating with a gentle sense of compassion, Sasan's works delve the depths of the hidden territory of the heart. While one may be shocked or even revolted by his subjects' suffering, it's impossible to withdraw from them. Instead, his works provoke a prolonged contemplation, a silent analysis not only of the subject's situation but an exploration of one's own murkier acts and intentions.



