

# The Jim Morrison & T. E. Breitenbach Collaboration

References from Published Books, Letters, Film and More



The Morrison Triptych © T. E. Breitenbach 1971

## Contents:

- 1) "You Make Me Real"  
by Rui Silva, 2010, pages 305-318
- 2) "Jim Morrison; Life, Death, Legend"  
by Stephen Davis, 2004, page 390
- 3) "A Guide to the Labyrinth"  
by Genesis Publications, 2022, pages 187-189, limited to 2,000 signed editions
- 4) "Gone South; The long forgotten trip of Jim Morrison"  
An in progress documentary by Carles Prats from Spain
- 5) "Dance in the Ring of Fire"  
by Kirill Golianski
- 6) Lectures
- 7) Facebook Discussions 2007
- 8) Jim's Letters & Books sent to T. E. Breitenbach

# 1. “You Make Me Real” by Rui Pedro Silva

Following are the text and details of the chapter in Rui Silva's book regarding T. E. Breitenbach's painting collaboration with Jim Morrison of the Doors.

Published in 2010 (and 2008 in Portuguese):

Pages 305 through 318

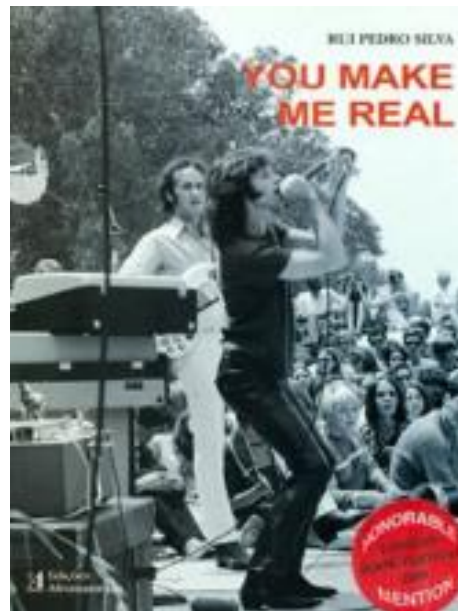
Page 305, Title Page: **Chapter 20 POETRY AND PAINTING 1970-1971**

Page 306: Illustrations of the covers of two private editions of poetry Jim sent to T. E., and a picture of Jim's autograph on one of the title pages.

Pages 307-308:

When we wonder about Jim Morrison's personal projects, we almost instinctively thought of his published poetry books and of the HWY film. Indeed these are his known projects, though the film Jim made with his friends has not yet been seen by many. From the moment he got interested in developing side projects parallel to The Doors' music, it is only natural that he had left drafts or unfinished works to pursue later on. Either alone or with some occasional companionship he was in different places in the US, went to Mexico on several occasions, was in England, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands and other European countries, he went to North Africa, stopped on Corsica and spent a few months in Paris. During these trips he met friends and made new acquaintances. He had the habit of taking notes and writing down impressions of his trips, so it is plausible that apart from the known portfolio there may be several drafts or even finished projects. However, it is unlikely that any incomplete idea left in a state of primary conceptualization or even any finished projects may soon be made public, because of copyright issues. Assuming a more optimistic perspective, maybe the near future will unveil an avalanche of possible unknown projects.

Throughout the more than 30 years that have elapsed since Jim's death, countless tributes have been paid to the man, the poet, the rock star. The most significant undoubtedly was the release of the poetry he recorded on his 27th birthday, the poetry to which the other doors added music and in 1978 transformed into the album *An American Prayer*.



(cont'd)

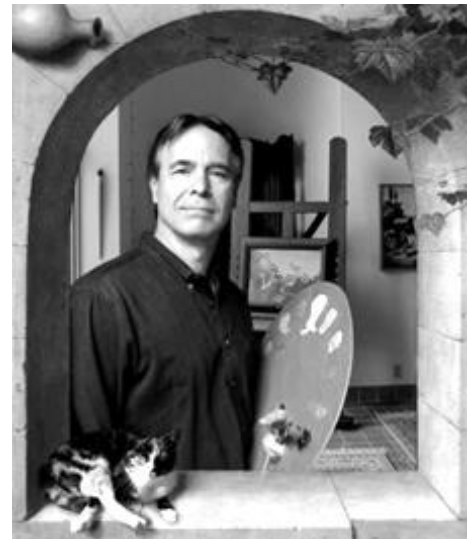
However, so many years after the launching of the poetic album, an unknown project of Jim's recently came to light which not even Ray, John and Robby knew about, a project having to do with written poetry, which Jim himself had been planning to include in that album he had wanted to produce for so long. It is related to a painting by the artist Thom Breitenbach, totally idealized by Jim. Breitenbach contacted him offering to illustrate any of The Doors' albums or any of Jim's projects, and Jim was receptive to that. Jim gave him the details of the subject he was thinking of and, after the artist put himself to work; he showed him the outcome, which met Jim's approval. So the Morrison Triptych was born. During that period, Jim sent Breitenbach his autographed poetry books, but they never had the chance to meet face to face. The whole process was conducted by letter, through The Doors' office. Kathy Lisciandro played the middleman when Jim wanted to get in touch with the artist. The first letter addressed to Breitenbach dates back to September 10th, 1970, and the last to March 23rd, 1971. In the last one, Kathy Lisciandro informs Breitenbach about Jim's departure for Paris and the resulting postponement of the process, meanwhile underlining Jim's interest in the painting and his intention to use it.

Nevertheless Jim's intention was never put to practice. The tragedy of death took everyone by surprise. It is not surprising that, between setbacks and priorities, the issue remained unresolved. Apart from Jim, Kathy was the only one in on this project, and she left the office soon after Jim's death. She had taken care of the printed poetry for the album but she naturally did not take part in the decision-making process for the cover of An American Prayer album, she would not know how to contact the artist after so many years. Even if she remembered the painting or had access to it, she would not know how Jim intended to make use of the Triptych: was it to be used on the outside of the record jacket or inside, would the cover open up like two doors revealing the painting inside?

Jim's intention to use the painting remained unknown, and the work remained anonymous. No one took care of the matter after Kathy's departure, supposing the documents were found. However, years later, Jerry Hopkins and Oliver Stone had a chance to see the work that had amazed Jim Morrison.

Maybe one day the beautiful painting will illustrate some of his relevant poetic work. But this is the moment to bring into the open the Morrison Triptych and the details involving this episode.

Page 309: Includes a surrealist photo of the artist in his studio and this description: "Artist T. E. Breitenbach studied architecture and fine arts at the University of Notre Dame. While there, he painted the Morrison Triptych based on Jim's suggestions. He left the University for Italy after becoming the youngest person to win the prestigious Prix de Rome Fellowship in painting. In 1975, Breitenbach completed his popular painting Proverbidioms, a collection of common proverbs and clichés, posters of which have been widely circulated. It has reached over 100 countries around the globe, appeared on television, been counterfeited several times, and is discussed in many scholarly works."



Next, pages 310-312 from "You Make Me Real", Mr. Breitenbach's side of the story:

## JIM MORRISON'S COLLABORATION WITH T.E. BREITENBACH: A Lost Painting from Jim's Last Project

Jim Morrison fans may be interested in hearing the story of a painting I did with him during the winter of 1970-71.

I will never forget the first time I heard a Doors song. I was in the deep woods on a moonlit night with a group of young entomologists. Our club was there to collect moths. People were smearing concoctions of mashed bananas and beer onto trees hoping to attract fine specimens. But we had little luck that evening with the moths, and the group soon gathered around a campfire. I remember being quite attracted to a young lady sitting there.

The sounds of the fire and the forest were pleasant and hypnotic, so I felt disturbed at first when someone turned on a radio. But then "Light My Fire" came on. I was instantly taken by it. Jim's voice echoed through the woods. It was such a haunting song, and it seemed to fit the evening perfectly.

Soon after some friends and I formed a rock band named PerSian Night (taken from the lyrics to "When the Music's Over"). I played lead guitar. We were huge Doors fans and played all of their tunes. We even had the opportunity to see The Doors perform at Saratoga, New York, during September of 1968.

Eventually our band split up as we each went off to college. I attended the University of Notre Dame to study architecture, though I had a rapidly-growing interest in art. I had recently discovered the paintings of medieval fantasy artist Hieronymus Bosch and surrealist Salvador Dali. I began teaching myself to paint and, after discovering some painting "secrets", advanced very quickly. I also purchased Jim's book of poetry *The Lords and The New Creatures*. His startling images and colorful fantasy worlds had a profound effect on me that would last for years.

I wrote to Jim (through Elektra Records) to tell him of my admiration for his lyrics and poetry. I sent along pictures of my surrealistic art, and offered at the same time to paint an album cover. To my amazement, Jim replied favorably and sent his ideas for the painting, along with two autographed, private-editions of his poetry, *The New Creatures* and *An American Prayer*:

10/9/70

*Dear Mr. Breitenbach,*

*Thank you for your interest. Maybe we can do something.*

*Try doing a triptych. The left panel depicting a radiant moon-lit beach and an endless stream of young naked couples running silently along the water's edge. On the beach, a tiny infant grins at the universe and around its crib stand several ancient, old people.*

*The center—a modern city or metropolis of the future at noon, insane with activity.*

*The last panel—a view through a car windshield at night on a long straight desert highway.*

*If you come up with something related to these themes within the next four or five months I'm sure I can use it.*

*Thanks again.*

*Sincerely,  
James Morrison*

I set to work immediately, painting in my college dorm room, and drawing on images from Jim's books for the center panel. It took almost two months to complete. Then I sent Jim a rather poor-quality black and white Polaroid of the finished painting.

Jim liked the painting. In a letter dated 1/11/71 he asked, "Would you be interested in allowing me to use the painting as a cover for an album of poetry?" And of course he asked for a better photo.

I had a 4 x 5 inch color transparency made, and sent that to him. A couple of months later I received a note (dated 3/23/71) from his secretary Katherine Lisciandro. She said, "Mr. Morrison has taken up residence in Paris for a while ... However, Mr. Morrison is really pleased with the triptych and is hoping to use it on an album of his poetry, which is in the planning stages."

Three months later, I heard the shocking news of Jim's death on July 3, 1971.

The album of poetry that Jim Morrison was working on was his *An American Prayer* album, released well after his death. Unfortunately, his intention to use the painting was not known by the record's producers.

I titled the painting, *The Morrison Triptych*, though I have since learned that there is another painting by the same name, painted by a Dutch master some 500 years ago!

Years later I sent a photo of *The Morrison Triptych* to Jann Wenner at Rolling Stone magazine, hoping he would do a story about this unknown painting that Jim Morrison had a hand in creating. Soon after, I received this interesting letter from Morrison biographer Jerry Hopkins, explaining the meaning of the picture:

*T. E. Breitenbach,*

*Your letter to Jann Wenner at Rolling Stone has come to me, as I have just completed a biography of Jim Morrison, No One Here Gets Out Alive, to be published next year by Simon & Schuster.*

*I like your work and can understand how Jim did. You might be interested to know that the beach scene he described is a variation on a dream he told several people he had. The center would be an extension of his interest in chaos and insanity, I suppose, and the final panel refers to a scene from his childhood when he and his father came upon an overturned truck, dead and injured Indians scattered "on dawn's highway, bleeding." (See the lyrics of "Peace Frog.")*

*Can you tell me how you and Jim started writing? Did you meet?*

*I'm trying to get Stone to do a story. I'll let you know.*

*Best, and thanks.*

*Jerry Hopkins*

In the meantime, I was obsessed with Jim's poem *The Lords*. "The Lords. Events take place beyond our knowledge or control. Our lives are lived for us ... But gradually, special perceptions are being developed. The idea of the 'Lords' is beginning to form in some minds ... The Lords have secret entrances, and they know disguises. But they give themselves away in minor ways. Too much glint of light in the eye. A wrong gesture. Too long and curious a glance."

I wanted to expand Jim's story and expose the Lords. This led to the creation of an illustrated fantasy novel titled, *Grumparar's the New Creatures: An Adventure and Field Guide*. I spent nearly ten years (on and off) inventing some 2,000 creatures and putting the best of them into a book, revealing the secrets to seeing them—through belief and imagination. I never did look for a publisher (I tend to ignore the business end of things), but I did recently self-publish the novel as an eBook.

In 1990 my representative showed *The Morrison Triptych* to Oliver Stone, when his movie *The Doors* came out. After that, the painting went into storage and has remained unseen until a few

years ago when I started a website ([www.tebreitenbach.com](http://www.tebreitenbach.com)) in order to promote my art. I put up information about the *Morrison Triptych* and, since then, thousands of people have learned of the painting on a search of Jim's name. Through that I have received many interesting calls and e-mails from Jim Morrison fans and from people who were close to him.

Recently the painting has been published as a poster and the image is at last being circulated and enjoyed.

Pages 313-317:

*(Inserted here are 5 pages of illustrations: the 3 letters between T.E. and Jim, the letter to T. E. from biographer Jerry Hopkins, and a reproduction of the complete Morrison Triptych captioned: "The Morrison Triptych, by T. E. Breitenbach. Oil on wood panels 24 x 48 inches (61 x 122 centimeters). Copyright © by T. E. Breitenbach 1970, used by permission.")*

Page 322:

It was a terribly tragedy to lose this great artist, Jim Morrison, at such a young age. To think of all the poems and music he might created had he lived. Yet perhaps his intense way of living, which contributed to his early death, is also what made his art so powerful.

I regret never having had the chance to meet Jim in person—I'm sure I would have. Now my son is a huge fan. It proves that Jim will live on for a long time, through his poetry and through the music of The Doors.

T. E. Breitenbach *(under T. E. 's signature)*

\* \* \* \* \*

Rui wrote this note to T. E. Breitenbach at the front of the book he sent to T. E.

*To Mr. Thom Breitenbach,*

*Thank you so much for showing me the beautiful material that you shared with Jim and many thanks for letting me use it in this deep and honest book dedicated to the Doors Art. Hope you like the result.*

*Your painting also shows an almost unknown perspective of Jim's personality ... his generosity!!!!*

*My honor to highlight the triptych that Jim appreciated and I "Make It Real" on a book format!!!*

*With friendship:*

*R*



## 2. "Jim Morrison; Life, Death, Legend"

by Stephen Davis, dated 2004. Page 390

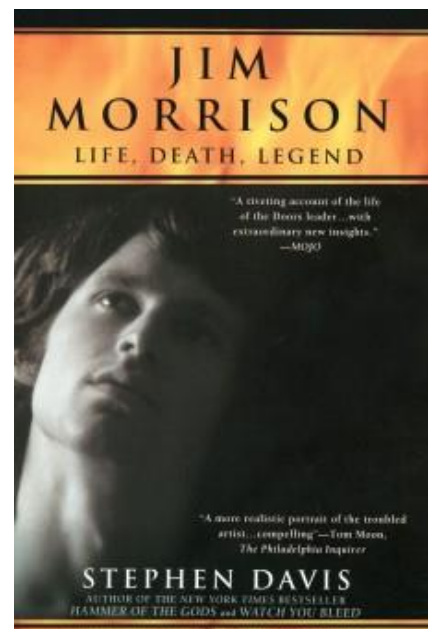
In addition, Jim had filled several recent notebooks with new poetry and images. Much of this new work was extremely troubled and disconsolate. The many references to impotence, cancer, and his penis in these poems, along with contemporary rumors that swirled around Jim and Pamela, have led to speculation that Jim had been diagnosed with penile or testicular cancer, or a debilitating venereal disease such as syphilis. While no proof of this has ever surfaced, and Jim's extant medical records remain sealed, it is hard to explain away poems like "Lament for the Death of My Cock" and other similar elegies.

Around this time, Jim decided to record another solo poetry session. If the work sounded good, he told his friends, he could release a spoken word album. He spoke with movie composer Lalo Schifrin about providing orchestral settings for some of these poems. He even had the album jacket in mind when he replied to a letter from a college art student, T. E. Breitenbach, who had sent Jim samples of his work—clearly showing that Jim was actively and creatively engaged in the preproduction of the album.

The letter was typed, probably by Jim's secretary, Kathy Lisciandro, dated October 9, 1970. In it he asked Breitenbach to do a triptych, the left panel depicting "a radiant moonlit beach and an endless stream of naked young couples running silently along the water's edge," where "a tiny infant grins at the universe, and around his crib stand several ancient, old people." In the center panel would be "a modern city or metropolis of the future at noon, insane with activity," and the right panel "a view through a car windshield at night on a long straight desert highway." These vivid scenes of death and rebirth were reflective of the new beginning Jim himself was seeking.

Jim closed the letter by assuring Breitenbach that if he could create "something related to these themes" in the next five months, Jim would use it.

Included with Jim's letter were signed first editions of *The New Creatures* and *An American Prayer*. In this letter, Jim seems to have two recent poems in mind, "Vast Radiant Beach" and "Come, They Crooned, the Ancient Ones." T. E. Breitenbach finished the triptych a few months later, in 1971, but was informed by Kathy that James Morrison had moved to France for a while.



### 3. “A Guide to the Labyrinth”

by Genesis Publications, 2022, pages 187-189,  
limited to 2,000 signed editions



The primary book, from this extensive collection of Jim’s poetry, and reproductions of his notebooks, has a brief comment by Jim’s friend about the painting collaboration, then it displays the Morrison Triptych and the three letters from Jim on the next two pages:

**FRANK LISCIANDRO:** As far as I know, Jim didn't want music on his poetry album. He was either going to do it without music at all, or he was going to do it like the beatniks did - with a bongo drum in the background.

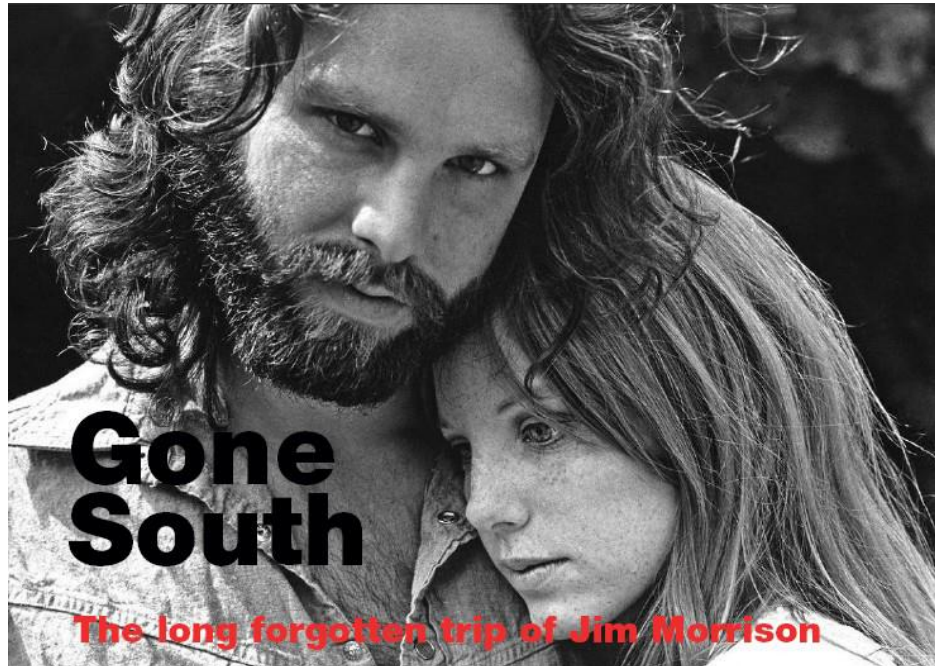
I do remember Jim saying that he had found an artist called T.E. Breitenbach who was doing a triptych for him. Jim wanted to use it inside the gatefold or maybe as the cover of the album.

Genesis Publications sent this in a letter to T. E.: Dear Thom, We are writing to thank you on behalf of Genesis and the Jim Morrison Estate for contributing your artwork to the Genesis Limited Edition, A Guide to the Labyrinth. We are delighted to enclose your signed copy. We really hope you enjoy it. Yours sincerely, Nick and Catherine.



The main book was signed by Robby Krieger, John Densmore, Andy Morrison, and Ann Morrison.





#### 4. “Gone South; The long forgotten trip of Jim Morrison”

An in progress documentary by Carles Prats from Spain

Taken from the film's promotional Dossier:

While still a student in Florida in the early sixties, Jim had written a paper on the visionary, hallucinatory triptych *The Garden of Earthly Delights* by Hieronymus Bosch. Thus seeing the painting at ElPrado museum would have been one of the goals of the trip.

The stop in Madrid should help us deepen into the broad knowledge that Jim had of classic psychedelic masters, mainly Hieronymus Bosch and William Blake, who's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* would both inspire his first poetry writings *The Lords and the New Creatures* and the name of his future band: The Doors.

(inserted here is a picture of Breitenbach's triptych,  
and Jim's first letter to him, describing the images)

But there's still more to it.

We want to stop for a while on the idea of a triptych.

To clearly state the importance and influence of *The Garden of Earthly Delights* on Morrison, we will devote some time to the triptych that painter T. E. Breitenbach was personally commissioned by Jim Morrison to paint for the cover of his unachieved first solo album, *An American prayer*.

We will also draw parallelism between the original triptych and Jim's notes for An American prayer. If Bosch's painting is a dialogue between heaven and hell, and Jim knew this... Why would a child on the beach at night be his image of heaven? Why driving through a desert, which is the central motif of his film HWY, would be his interpretation of hell? In the triptych that our film is (Madrid/Granada/Morocco) the third part will also take us to the desert.

## 5. "A Dance in a Ring of Fire" by Kirill Golianski

The most extensive collection of Jim's poetry, interpreted into Russian, but also including the original English version

This soon-to-be-published book will feature the Morrison Triptych as a full-color foldout along with the story and photos of Jim's Letters on pages 220-225.



The Foldout



The Cover

## 6. Lectures

A young friend, who performed in a musical by T. E. Breitenbach, contacted him in the Spring of 2022 to say she was in Prague, Czechoslovakia attending an academic conference, and that his *Morrison Triptych* just flashed up on screen as Milos Zatkalik (a composer and theoretician from Serbia) was giving a lecture on it, explaining the meaning of the painting's details to Jim. She shared Milos' email and he and the artist talked. Milos had even watched Breitenbach's musical about Hieronymus Bosch on PBS (available on demand under the title *Hieronymus, A Musical Fantasy*).



**Aleksandar Kontić**

Висока школа ликовних и примењених уметности, Belgrade, Serbia

**Miloš Zatkalik**

Универзитет уметности у Београду, Belgrade, Serbia

### **Jim Morrison or the triptych of music, poetry and art**

#### **Abstract**

By the age of 27, James Douglas Morrison, a charismatic songwriter and singer, had already recorded about 100 songs, and with his band, released seven platinum certified albums. At the same time, a great deal of his music reflects his private, largely traumatic personal experience, and deep existential anxiety. What is important, though, is that through his creative gift, he elevated them to the level of universal symbols. Rebellious against his own celebrity public image, Morrison slowly shifted from music to other forms of arts as a means of expression: four editions of poetry books, three films and several scenarios followed. In this paper we will demonstrate how Morrison used music and artistic creation in general to work through his own anxieties, in a way that clearly shows a symbolical stamp in his creative work, regardless of the media of expression (musical, verbal or visual). The main focus of our presentation will be on a specific phase in Morrison's life: after the notorious scandal at the Miami concert, he tried to reinvent himself, shifting his expression from music to poetry and visual arts. We will examine Morrison's collaboration with the artist T. E. Breitenbach, who is known to have "admired the colourful, surrealistic lyrics of Jim Morrison." Of special interest will be Breitenbach's – today relatively forgotten – *The Jim Morrison Triptych*. A psychoanalytic perspective will be offered on the alleged connection between the painting and Morrison's recurring dream, and more broadly, ideas and images permeating his songs both musically and verbally. While musical connections will prove to be more elusive, they can still be arguably grounded in the activities of musical parameters and harmonic progressions in particular.



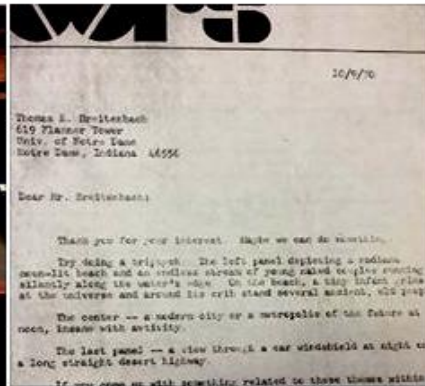
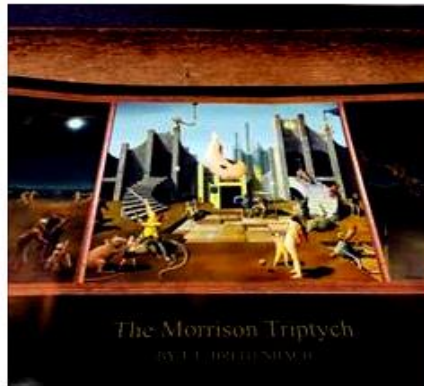
# 6. Discussions about the Triptych

## From a Doors Facebook Page for Fans



**Byron Gordon** ▶ MildEquator.com

June 17 at 5:25pm ·



You, Logan Janzen and 6 others



**David del Toro** Fascinating stuff. It's a shame it was never used for An American Prayer. Although it probably would seem out of place with that album.



**Byron Gordon** I think this triptych would have made for a great cover for Jim's poetry album. I love it

Like · Reply · 1 · June 17 at 10:08pm



**Logan Janzen** I've always thought that if they ever release any of the poetry tapes, they should use the triptych for the album artwork. It seems like a no brainer really.



**Genna Kerrin Revell** I thought they should release An American Prayer without the music for Record Store Day and use that as the cover.

Like · Reply · 1 · June 18 at 5:38pm



**Tarn Stephanos** I hope there can be An American Prayer volume 2



**Henrik Henriksen** Where did you find this?



**Logan Janzen** Here... <http://mildequator.com/showcase/breitenbach.html>



### The Doors - T.E. Breitenbach's Triptych

In October 1970, Jim Morrison responds to a letter from artist T.E. Breitenbach requesting a potential triptych...

MILDEQUATOR.COM



**Tarn Stephanos** I've seen this and indeed a shame this art was not used as the cover. That original letter must be worth a fortune. You can get that proposed art as a poster



**Logan Janzen** The artist Thom Breitenbach is here with us, and I would definitely recommend grabbing a poster from him. I have one framed up in my house, and it looks fantastic.



**Tarn Stephanos** I have a hunch Jim would have hated that his face covered the entire front of the album



**Logan Janzen** Didn't help that a Young Lion photo was on the back. This was definitely a money making thing. Too bad.

## 7. Jim's Letters and Books Sent to T. E. Breitenbach

# THE doors

10/9/70

Thomas E. Breitenbach  
619 Flanner Tower  
Univ. of Notre Dame  
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

Dear Mr. Breitenbach:

Thank you for your interest. Maybe we can do something.

Try doing a triptych. The left panel depicting a radiant moon-lit beach and an endless stream of young naked couples running silently along the water's edge. On the beach, a tiny infant grins at the universe and around its crib stand several ancient, old people.

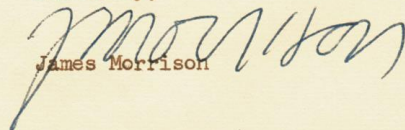
The center -- a modern city or a metropolis of the future at noon, insane with activity.

The last panel -- a view through a car windshield at night on a long straight desert highway.

If you come up with something related to these themes within the next four or five months I'm sure I could use it.

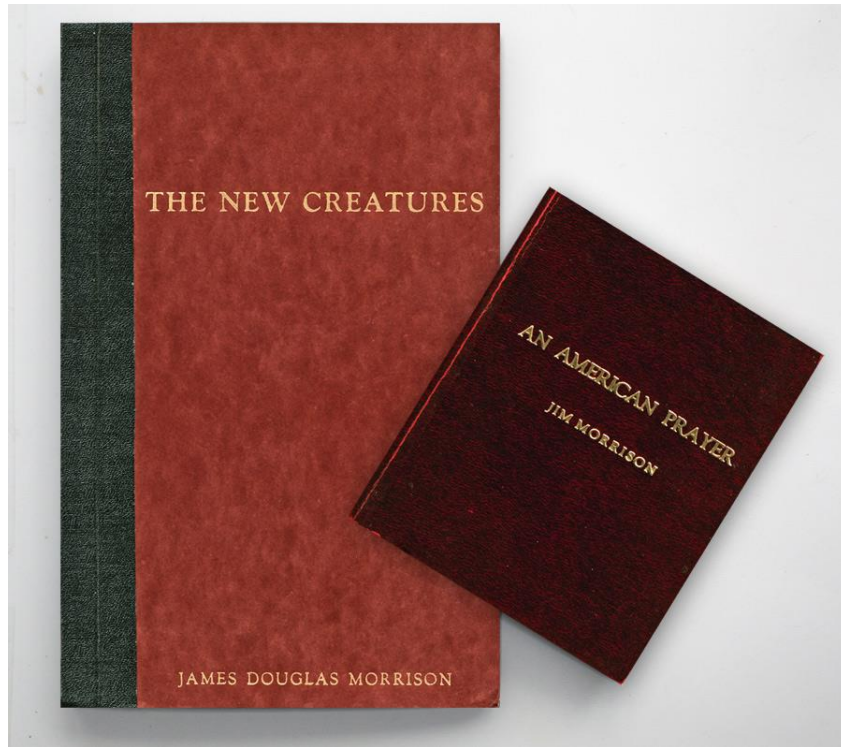
Thanks again.

Sincerely,

  
James Morrison

JM/kl





8512 Santa Monica Blvd. LA 90409 · 659 1667

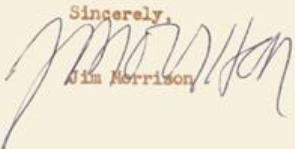
1/11/71

Dear Mr. Breitenbach:

Thanks very much for sending me the photo of the triptych.


Would you be interested in allowing me to use the painting as a cover for an album of poetry? This is not a definite offer, but please think about it. Also, if you could send us a color slide of the completed painting it would help me decide if I could use the work or not.

Thank you very much for your interest and work.

Sincerely,  
  
 Jim Morrison

JM/kl

the



8512 Santa Monica Blvd. LA 90409 · 659 1667


3/23/71

Dear Mr. Breitenbach:

Mr. Morrison has taken up residence in Paris for a while, and plans for the new Doors album have taken on a new direction.

However, Mr. Morrison is really pleased with the triptych and is hoping to use it on an album of his poetry, which is in the planning stages.

When we have more definite information we will contact you. Thank you very much for your interest, time and the pleasure of your paintings.

Sincerely,  
  
 Katherine Lisciandro  
 Secretary

the

