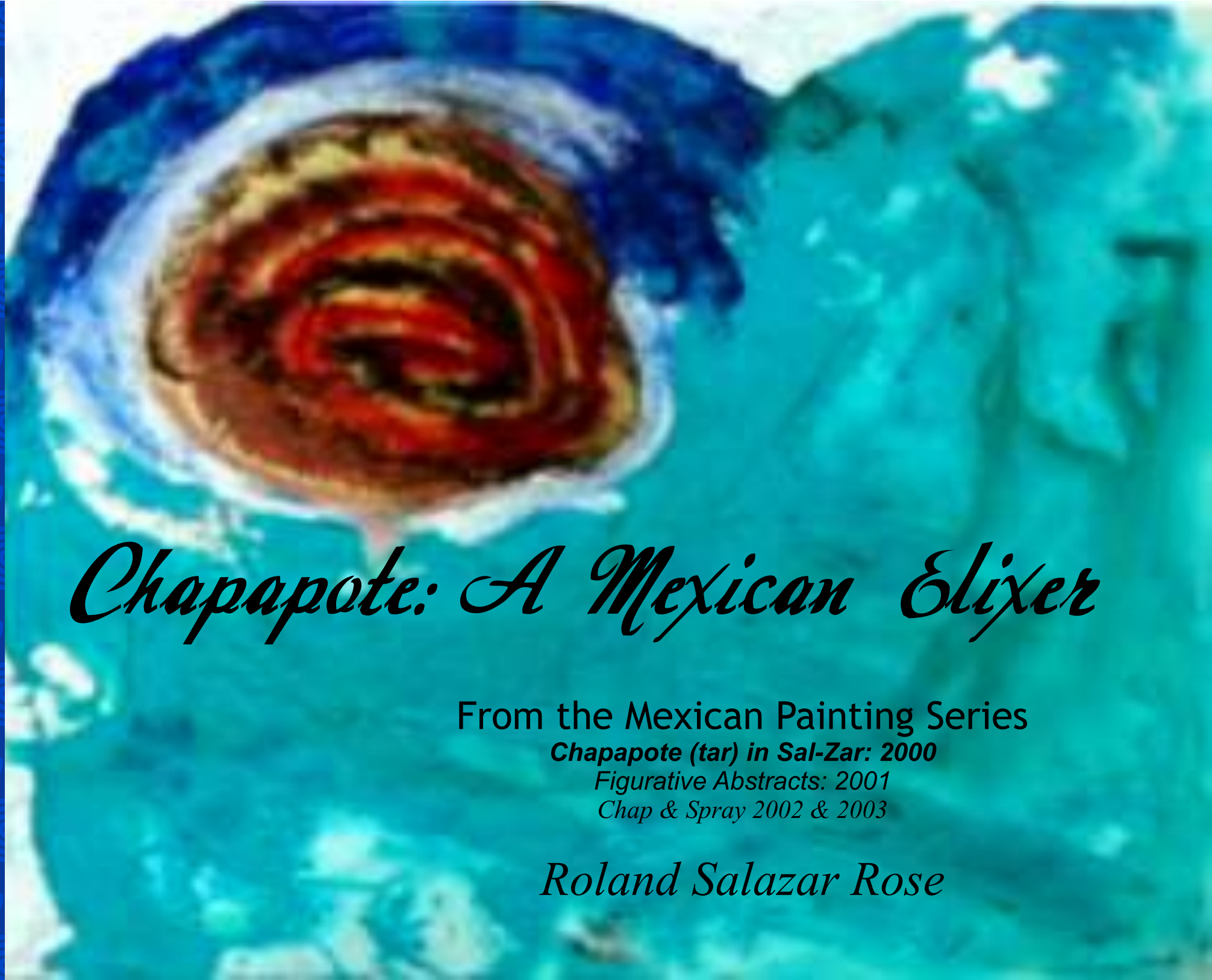

Chapapote: A Mexican Elixer

From the Mexican Painting Series

Chapapote (tar) in Sal-Zar: 2000

Figurative Abstracts: 2001

Chap & Spray 2002 & 2003

Roland Salazar Rose

Introduction to Chapapote

My decision to use chapapote (*tar* and I will call it *chap*) came in 2000: two forces were at play. First, the tile floors in many of the older houses (circa 20 years or so) here in San Miguel de Allende (and my own house tiles) have chapapote as the finish for the unglazed tiles. On floors, contractors apply *chap* to the unglazed tiles; they also use it on the pine beams. It gives the finish an antique look. It also protects the wood from termites. The problem with floors, I determined, is that after repeated washes, especially with strong detergent by the housekeeper, the finish is removed. I found that, since *chap* is a petrol-chemical I could add Sal-Zar (my Mixed Media Medium™) to the *chap* and it enabled it to withstand repeated washes. To create the *chap* mix for floors you add white gas, this can be heated with the chap pieces themselves, and some bees-wax and for color, some vermillion oil paint. Today, some contractors only use the white gas, no heating, no wax, and after the *chap* has dried in the tiles, say three days, they apply polyurethane on top. I'm not sure of the poly application: said to last five years but what happens then? Strip off the poly? Reapply the *chap*? I prefer to mix the varnish base of Sal-Zar™ with the *chap*. There are other commercial uses as well.

In order to understand my chapapote (tar) paintings in Mexico, it is necessary initially to present some background on how I began to use it: the reasons for my choice of this unusual medium for my paintings. Most important, was my need to find some material natural to Mexico, since chapapote is only found in Mexico, the Antilles and Venezuela. That does mean that asphalt in Mexico is unique; it is common in many countries. It is to say, that in my use of *chap* with my medium and by additional use of oil paint and spray enamels, I have created a distinct body of work in Mexico. *"No other artist in Mexico, to my knowledge, has created a body of work using chapapote as impressive as Salazar or has established it as a medium worthy of consideration."***

I am an environmentalist. In 2002 an event in Spain occurred that reinforced my need to do my paintings with *chap*. This was the case when Spanish fishermen made *chapapote* a 'household word' after the sinking of the oil tanker *Prestige* off the Galician coast of Spain.

So from early 2000 I experimented with *chap*. The images on the following pages are on paper or hardboard and all use *chap*. Sometimes it is lightly applied other times poured on the wood. Oil pastels, oil paints and spray enamels are all used in my medium Sal-Zar, the Mixed Media Medium.

Figure 2 CV02-4

Figure 1 CV03-19

Chap & Spray
2003

Figure 2 CV03-17

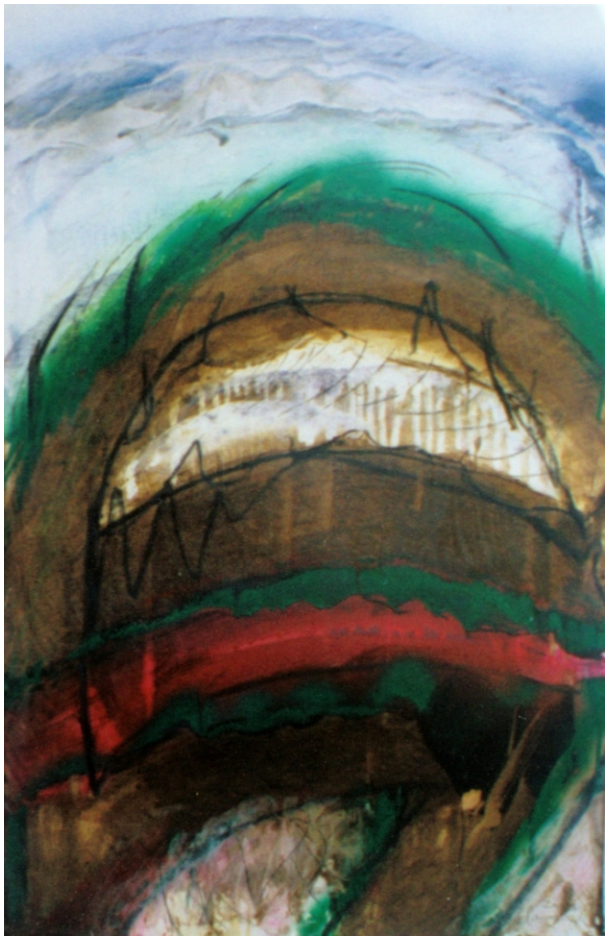

Figure 3 CV03-14