

AFTER – IMAGES OF REALITY

Observation of the images of reality causes constant changes in its appearance. The moment in time, the tones of light and shadow, the shifts in colour according to the angle at which the particular features of the subject are perceived, and to the inclinations or mental impulses of the viewer – all these things play a greater part than the images themselves in imprinting the after-images which their transition leaves on the eye. Memory then conducts its own elaboration and makes its own choices. Images, desires and feelings become interwoven, and over time their chemistry alters. When the artist retrieves moments from the past in order to combine them with images of a present, a third process intervenes: the expressive language through which colours, forms and gestures are substantiated. The language of art does not reconstruct reality, and has no reason to imitate it. It re-creates a new reality in which transformations and associations function in such a way as to give life and duration to everything that time corrupts. It is usually the objective of artists to use the process of making form to subvert the conventions of paralysing logic, transforming the significances left behind by impressions and suspending the action of time, which contaminates their dawning meanings. In the process of creation, the forms can acquire persuasiveness and verisimilitude – but even more importantly, they gain a transcendental life which neither borders nor deceit can impede.

After acquiring numerous experiences and spending many years on the elaboration of what life has brought her, Maria Kombatsiari has now embarked on an attempt to design a visual journey of her own into the hiding-places of the mind and the imagination. She observes and retains images and impressions from gazes and meetings, memories and adventures from the people she has encountered, landscapes through which she has walked and others she knows intuitively, sounds, scents and colours which have run their course and died away – like the shooting stars of August. In her desire to record pain and joy, the brilliance that has gone blind and seeks the light, and the hopes which are always there with the expectation that life images can be redeemed from the darkness of forgetfulness and their obliteration, she paints in order to exorcise time and the evils it brings.

Through the immediacy of her gesture and with various coloured inks (which retain their oleaginous texture) as her material, Maria Kombatsiari makes use of the monotype technique in quite a number of her works, creating visual interventions on surfaces that have already taken shape.

The selection of this specific technique presents selective affinities to, but also deviations from, the aquarelle. The affinities consist principally of the preclusion of error and of the scope for covering it up, presupposing a lengthy period of previous service in drawing. The vividness and directness of the colours are another feature shared by the two techniques, though in the

technique which the artist uses the colour retains all its brilliance, depth and sensuality and the tones do not decline as a result of their absorption by the pores in the paper.

References to technique are generally intended to determine the versions of reality – and of the imagination – which the artist wishes to express, and this is particularly true in a case such as this, when Maria Kombatsiari's purpose is to convey, in her works, internalised situations which revitalise the vision.

Reality has a thousand faces – as many as there are human eyes to see it. This painter is interested in the microcosm of the everyday environment, by the details that usually escape our attention as the seasons, the light and the atmosphere change. The interaction of tints and the reflections or combinations of fluidity as one colour blends into another or separates out from it create a stratigraphy of style and shade in the various topological vicissitudes of form. The patterns of form, sometimes becoming specific in recognisable shapes but usually remaining abstractive, manifest themselves in an Expressionist manner, as the script of the internalised gesture itself.

Seaside landscapes, plants which have put down roots on reefs or rocky hillsides, streams and seasonal rivers, paths through woods or in clearings – these are some of the itineraries which the eye follows in an almost narrative manner. Yet nothing becomes specific: everything is reminiscent of forms and everything leads the mind astray into a kingdom of the instinctive imagination in which one form interweaves with another in the painter's inner world of pulsating and vibrant life.

Space and light are identified with the capacity to create mass of colour and of the painter's automatic gesture, calling to mind the modes of an inner dialogue in search of listeners. The listeners and viewers of Maria Kombatsiari are the sensual gazes of those who strive to trace out the varieties and qualities of life's rhythms and significances in the unseen complexity hidden behind superficial simplicity.

This painter records the after-images of things through the transmutations involved in the negotiation of her materials. The time occupied by the reflection of a moment which has elapsed returns in her works charged with scores of experiences which have intervened and are simultaneously transformed. Scale changes: the small is magnified, and the macrocosm takes on the pricelessness of a neglected detail in these insightful landscapes set down with poetry and nostalgia, with lyricism and dynamism, outlining on the horizon of a visual experience the

secrets and enigmas of a world which disappears and reappears just as the phenomena of life recycle themselves.

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