

Transparent Souls

The work of Mascha Mioni and Lawrence McLaughlin explores the transparent or translucent soul. The notion of the soul or psyche refers to a human being's inner realm of experiences, feelings, ideas, memories and adventures. The transparent soul unveils those elements of innermost human existence. Mascha Mioni and Lawrence McLaughlin's works are about these inner worlds. Art benefits the refining of the soul. It is the language that speaks to it. Art and psyche stand in a mutually effective relationship.

Mascha Mioni relies on large flat areas of colour applied side by side to stir immediate feeling. Red, for example, may warm and draw one closer. Lemon yellow may repel the eye. Beyond the superficial effect, which soon disappears, a second stimulus emerges that may severely effect and arouse the soul. This psychic dimension of colour has such power that it can cause the soul to vibrate. Colour is the pathway to the soul.

I quote Wassily Kandinsky:

"Colour is the keyboard. The eye is the hammer.
The soul is a piano with many strings.
The artist is the hand who effectively, with one key or another,
Brings the human soul to vibrate."

Through colour alone, Mascha Mioni reveals the path to the human soul. Her art addresses basic human feelings such as emotion or enthusiasm. Through immersion in colour, the viewer discovers the secret glow of the soul.

Mascha Mioni's oil paintings are colour fields made of numerous colour layers. Black stands for night, destruction, death and the kingdom of the dead. Mourning in black is mourning without hope, mourning in white is something full of hope. Grey, made up of black and white, refers to the resurrection of the dead. In medieval representations, Christ, as Judge, carries a grey cloak. Blue is the deepest and least material of all colours. It is the medium of truth, the transparency of the condensed void.

Red in the painting „Rot-h-ko“ is a very lively and restless colour. Orange with its active power is achieved by mixing red with the expanding nature of yellow. The energy of red rests in itself, that of yellow radiates outwards. Green is made of yellow and blue. Yellow moves inherently eccentrically, blue concentrically. When one draws two similarly big circles and fills the first with yellow and the second with blue, one notices that yellow develops out of its center and moves closer to the viewer. Blue on the contrary develops in concentric movements and distances itself from the viewer. In green both movements offset each other and come to peace.

For the soul, colour acts directly on the eye and the act of seeing. In the process, the viewer has the chance to summon and examine his/her soul and make it transparent.

Form is a key component of Mioni's work. The shape of a cross is a common element. The cross is an ancient symbol, older than the square and characterised by the number four. Through its twofold connection of diametrically opposing points it stands as symbol of the unity of extremes (heaven-earth). We must visualise the four arms of the cross as joining in the centre. Here, space, time and eternity are connected to one another. Time and space unite at this point. The cross was already the most universal symbol of mediation, long before Christianity used it in its symbolic language. The viewer may see a window. The two-armed vertical bar in the middle of the picture divides the colour window, and once more creates the image of a cross.

Intention and action remain mostly unconscious. The act of painting deals with symbols, which, so to speak, think by themselves. The artist, who surrenders to them, does not know exactly what he creates. One moment it is Charon's ship of the dead, the next a boat stopping in the middle of the river, an image of spiritual peace. These are only some aspects among others that escape control. To find out more about them, the artist must continue to paint and search.

Round volumes possessed of extensive spatial sensuality, Lawrence McLaughlin's sculptures are mainly of concrete, but also aluminium and bronze. The cement is combined with wire and is also often patinated. In his most recent works, Bullseye glass is incorporated into the concrete. McLaughlin is interested in the multiplicity of the human figure, and how the form influences the inner being. He is fascinated by modern human beings, but also draws on archaic influences. Creating out of this, but with his own spiritual, creative and artistic media, he has developed a very personal formal voice. McLaughlin's sculptures alternate between movement and stillness, expressiveness and lyricism, wit and seriousness, and between the archaic and the innovative. Joie de vivre, spontaneity, humour, as well as the courage to experiment, characterise his artistic expression.

The inner world of Lawrence McLaughlin's sculpture is made apparent through the interplay of the senses. They carry the eye, the instrument of optical awareness, on their chest and it draws us to look towards the middle, to the heart. In the deepest and most comprehensive sense, the eye is the medium of vision, symbol of all clear knowledge. The head becomes superfluous and, as with the „Little Prince“, the figure appears to remind us that we can only see properly with the heart. McLaughlin's sculptures have a soul. They show us their innermost being. They are transparent.

The eyes are made of glass and glass is the symbol of light, of transparency.

In some sculptures the coloured eye is missing. The chest is open and allows the viewer to look freely into its inner core. Uncut by the coloured glass, but bathed in light, a fascinating play of shadows emerges. Lawrence McLaughlin's sculptures appear filled with life.

The body is always strongly emphasised. The head becomes less important, although it may be hinted at in the shape of a circle or a spiral. These shapes express the „Becoming“. One may however wonder whether the head has not simply become dizzy from the energy of the inner life.

One always encounters wit and humour in Lawrence McLaughlin's work - a charming balance between seriousness and light-heartedness.

Mascha Mioni and Lawrence McLaughlin's work is not only about mental interiors, but also deals with ancient themes. This is particularly obvious in their collaborative work „Resurrection“.

Resurrection implies recurrence.

It presupposes death followed by life - the eternal circle of birth, life and death. Lawrence McLaughlin's powerful sculpture carries the rusty red eye on the right side of the chest. This is associated to the resurrection of Christ. As in Byzantine art the stigma is emphasised and the identification with the crucified is highlighted. To verify the death of Jesus, the Roman soldier Longinius of Caesarea opened the right side of his chest with the tip of a spear. With her painting, Mascha Mioni created a rainbow of colour.

The rainbow represents the soul of the universe that guarantees the natural succession of seasons, the eternal circle. The canvas unites, in the shape of an arch, the under and the above, death and life. The connecting bridge in between spaces symbolises the recurrence, the end and the renewal.

I have tried to provide a starting point for the interpretation of the work on view here. Access to art is at first emotional. The creative process does not stop with the artwork. It is continued by and with the viewer and thus awareness becomes a creative act. I am certain you will create many more ways of seeing.

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