

Mouna Rebeiz or the Celebration of Life

Enchanted with art and culture since childhood, Mouna Rebeiz has devoted the last ten years to painting, throwing herself into it with a passion. Initiated into the mysteries of the techniques of the great masters, she explores the human soul in all its complexity. Her paintings, as generous as they are exacting, slip between Eros and Thanatos. An encounter with an artist for whom art is the most vibrant celebration of life.

By Noelle Buge

Mouna, what is striking when one contemplates your work is the perfect consonance and the technical precision you possess. What has been your artistic journey?

From a very early age I had the chance to develop what I suppose to be my artistic nature. My grandmother was a composer, my uncle a poet. At home, art was omnipresent. However, my interest in painting came very late. You know, I believe very strongly in the magic of meetings and it was in just a meeting that revealed my artistic vocation to me.

Can you tell us more?

Yes, of course. In 1995 I signed up at CEPIADE and there, by a happy coincidence, I met Alix de la Source, a lecturer at the Louvre and a specialist in the techniques of the 18th century masters. It was she who initiated me in their methods and their high standards!

How much time do you spend on a work?

Time is of no consequence once I cross the threshold of my studio. I can spend up to three months on a canvas for up to 10 hours a day. It is only the result that matters.

Your paintings have a great erotic force, a tenderness that never descends into vulgarity. In describing them, the philosopher and psychoanalyst, Elie Godard, spoke of a counter-realist. One could also say the opposite of reality.

Yes, adapting urges to aesthetic constraints. You are right. For me, art is everything but an outlet. In painting, you completely expose yourself; it is a total expression of one's being.

Like a liberation?

Absolutely. I would even go as far as to say that for me it is a transcendental phenomenon. When I paint, the words of Kierkegaard 'Man is an anxious tension towards transcendence' come to me. This is exactly what I feel.

So counter-realist would be a form of mysticism?

Yes, it is a divine realism. All that cannot be drawn on the retina of the eye belongs to the realm of painting. As a result, a large part of my work is devoted to the aspirations of the soul. Most of my compositions are open and give off light. I cannot conceive of art without the metaphysical dimension.

I gather you are not a fan of contemporary art...

I feel like an extra-terrestrial when faced with contemporary art which, too often, exploits the ugly as Daniel Sibony put it so well in his Essay on Contemporary Art. A great many stars of contemporary art are still stuck at Duchamp's ready-mades or the Happenings of the 70s. In 2008 it's frightening to realize that these people, who see themselves as «ready» are several decades behind the times! It is now that we are living the absurd! For my part, the search for beauty is primordial, because it is transcendence, because it is close to God. To shock and provoke, that doesn't interest me.

Mouna, as a Lebanese, how do you see the Middle East?

The area is ruled by the law of "divide and control". There is one more population than there are countries, and Lebanon is paying the price. It is not for nothing that almost all my paintings have a dramatic content.

To conclude, how do you see your work?

I never ask myself that kind of a question. All I can say is that I try to get to the essence. Time will be my judge.



Chinese Portraits

If you were a book
A red lacquer vase

If you were a painting
A butterfly

If you were a creature
A butterfly

If you were a book
The Unknown Masterpieces by Balzac

If you were a piece of music
Paganini's Sicilist Mass