

CONTEMPLATING THE SPIRITUAL IN CONTEMPORARY ART



Shuster + Moseley

MARK ALEXANDER
ROBERTO ALMAGNO
TEODORA AXENTE
ZSOLT BODONI
LU CHAO
SHEN CHEN
NDIDI EMEFIELE
RICCARDO GUARNERI
MATTEO MONTANI
SHUSTER + MOSELEY
LUIS GONZÁLEZ PALMA
BONGSU PARK
BENITHA PERCIYAL
HIROSHI SUGIMOTO
LEVI VAN VELUW
RUOZHE XUE

Contemplating the Spiritual in Contemporary Art

7 June – 13 July 2019

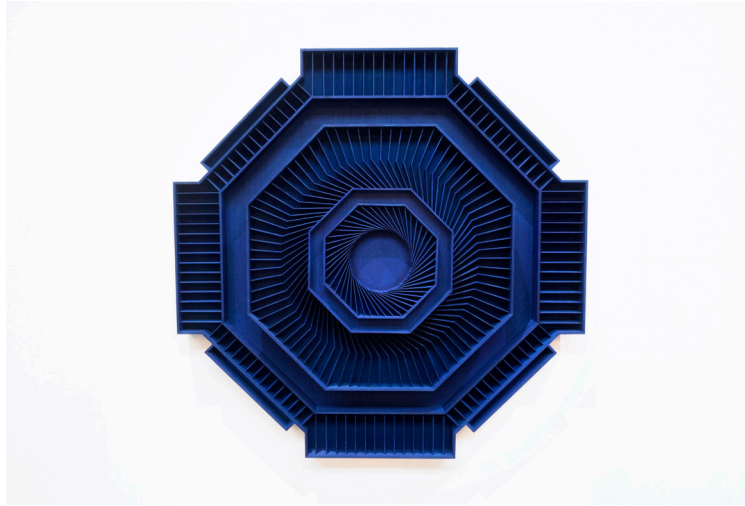
Private View: Thursday 6 June 2019 | 6.30–8.30 pm

Although progressive Western thought appears to view religion as an outdated superstition rendered irrelevant by scientific progress, this does seem to be an erroneous idea if one casts one's net wider and takes a look at the power that the Pope still wields for a multitude of Christians world-wide, the enormous pull of the Muslim religion on its many proselytes and the importance of the Jewish religion not just in Israel but also in the various diasporas around the world. The attendees may be dwindling particularly in Churches, in many western countries but there appears to be no dwindling at all in the search for a spiritual meaning to existence. Where, in some places, the state religion is falling away there has been a marked increase in interest in oriental religions and the mystical in general. Buddhism in particular has increased greatly in many Western societies. Most alternative medical disciplines are steeped in an essentially spiritual, holistic understanding of the world.

rosenfeld porcini is delighted to present 'Contemplating the Spiritual in Contemporary Art' which was born out of wishing to look at the distinction between Western and Oriental approaches to spirituality and what it can tell us about the different ways we try to find meaning in our lives.

The gallery will be divided into three separate sections. The first room will examine the responses of a group of artists to the stories in the Old and New testaments and their roots in human drama.

Benitha Perciyal's two figures staring at each other both express a purity in their faces which make them feel Christ-like. Moreover they are made from materials like myrrh, frankincense, cloves, cinnamon, lemongrass, bark and cedar wood, all either related to the specific story of Christ or timeless, natural elements that would have existed at the same time as when Christ was alive. The Romanian artist **Teodora Axente's** jewel like Christ with its strange elongated body has echoes of the Sixteenth century Florentine mannerists. In her general practice she has often found ways to include key elements from the life of Christ. 'Pieta' the other work by the artist finds a completely new way of looking at the traditional image of dead Christ being cradled lovingly by the Virgin Mary.



Levi van Veluw

Mark Alexander's 'Red Mannheim' with its deep red tones resembles a stained glass window in a church. Shown previously in St Paul's Cathedral in London, it's a work which whilst clearly created today fits seamlessly into a Cathedral setting. The Guatemalan **Luis González Palma** has taken some of the most famous 'Crucifixion' scenes from Old Master paintings and recreated the 'cloth' covering Christ's intimacy as an installation which he then photographed. Four of the series will be in the exhibition. **Zsolt Bodoni's** mysterious and vividly painted composition explores the contradiction and doubts that inevitably clash with belief. How can our carnal desires exist alongside the quest for religious purity and abnegation? In **Ruozhe Xue's** 'Ecce Homo' a single finger substitutes the image of Christ's head covered with the crown of thorns to represent, with great simplicity, a vision of Christ's love. **Ndidi Emefiele's** extravagant version of the last supper showcases all of the artist's talents, both in her narrative invention and her use of painting and collage, as she reinvents one of the most iconographically important images of the New Testament.

The second room will feature artists who use light rather than figuration to display the 'divine'. The Chinese artist **Lu Chao** has painted a Cathedral where rather than the religious paintings which adorn the walls there are human faces looking out at us and the altar is replaced by a monumental, mysterious, black sphere. This will be counterpointed with a painting where human beings are perilously suspended in space, attempting to negotiate the cosmos. He will also have a drawing in the show where a multitude of tiny figures gather around a huge god like head. **Hiroshi Sugimoto's** photograph of 'Notre Dame de Haut', the church built by Le Corbusier in France is suffused by light, whilst the English artistic duo **Shuster and Moseley** will be exhibiting a cascading installation of white light which will descend mysteriously from the ceiling of the gallery. The work captures in a very contemporary way the mystery of the divine interventions in the scriptures. **Roberto Almagno's** works on paper are made using soot and ash: The shapes appear as if emerging from the darkness, while the slither of light surrounding them suggests the infinite space of the universe.

The two downstairs rooms will focus on artists working within pure abstraction to convey a spiritual significance. Works by the Chinese artist **Shen Chen**, the Italians **Matteo Montani** and **Riccardo Guarneri** and the Dutch artist **Levi van Veluw** all deal with an idea of abstraction which also encapsulates a sense of infinity. The Chinese artist **Shen Chen** painstakingly completes his work, brush stroke by brush stroke, as if in a meditative trance. **Matteo Montani**, painting on a surface of abrasive paper conjures hallucinatory landscapes which suck us into their interior where we get a glimpse of a world suffused by light. **Riccardo Guarneri's** refined and poetic abstractions point to a place where time is imperceptibly stretched outwards until we disappear inside, hypnotised by the way colours dissolve into light or melt into yet another colour. The Dutch artist **Levi van Veluw's** wall sculpture, 'Sanctum' conjures up images of Romanic churches. Once again the heart of the work beguiles us into its mysterious interior where infinity seems to continually recede away from us. There will be another light installation by **Shuster and Moseley** but now featuring a wall projection, where the complexity of light leads us into some unknown and mystical place. Continually mutating and evolving, we find ourselves looking into a space where our notions of time melt away.

The final piece will be a video by the Korean artist **Bongsu Park** which focuses on a vision of creation. A woman is curled up in a foetal position under a partially transparent sheet similar to the cocoon of an animal. As she slowly emerges into life, the act of birth becomes a metaphor for the act of creation itself. This work, although clearly figurative, is heavily influenced by the artist's Korean culture as it marries the figure to a very transcendental and metaphysical perspective of the beginning of life.

Apart from 'Spirituality' the works in the exhibition will also evoke ideas around infinity, time, space and the eternal question of why we are on this planet and how are we to make sense of our being here.