

Decantation of light, Municipal Gallery Nova Gorica, Nova Gorica,

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Art is born where there exists the timeless and unrelieved longing for a spiritual ideal. It is this longing that draws out the creation of art. Variations in the number and paths that artists have taken through the history of creation and the related study of the natural world depends only on the individual artist's relationship to the specific place that seizes him at a specific time. The painter, Uršula Berlot, has chosen her place and her expressive method. Her paintings reveal the transitory in the eternal and the eternal in the transitory. On the basis of what is perhaps the most subjective and the most romantic poetics of the twentieth century, a kind of lyrical abstraction, she challenges us with her transparent and graphic works and draws us out with motifs that possess a poetic rapture we cannot resist.

Berlot is characterized by a great sensibility that her mastery of technique elevates to the point of the sublime. As a whole, her art exists on a high aesthetic plane, but is expressed in a visual language that also allows for the expression of emotional experience. Her work is an aesthetic formation, as gentle and fragile as breath, and it is finally impossible to describe individual pieces with words. With her piercing poetical gaze, her work approaches what is most illusive and mysterious and each scene seems to possess above all a philosophical significance that has become important in her current artistic creation. With each new painting what is most crucial is the characteristic traits of metaphysical immobility emerging from a silence that both allures and excites. The painter's individuality lies in her creation of visually purified objects that are projected on transparent backgrounds and represent a record of controlled gestures. She accomplishes this with a compound this is like transparent paste, a substance that symbolizes her sensitive relationship to the world.

The most essential image in the painter's response to the physical world emerges from her method of presentation, a method that forces the viewers to notice the entire painting, to actually stroll through the condensed space. This is accomplished by the unconventional placement of the paintings on the floor and their deliberate removal from the walls. Sometimes they are leaned up against the wall or simply standing in the space. She uses a background of plexiglass to achieve the transparent and seemingly substanceless background. On this background, she introduces her faintly pigmented paste, allowing it to organically change form so that it resembles shadows and reflections of color flowing through the space of the painting. Color is achieved by adding a precise quantity of pigment to the otherwise totally transparent substance and this method emphasizes structure and shadow. The less color there is the greater the reflected light and the greater the importance of the background. Her procedure also involves taking advantage of gravitational forces. Sometimes she simply allows the paint to drip through the membrane – she often uses two simultaneous layers. The paintings are always completed (coagulated) very quickly as the crystallization and polymerization of the compounds takes place in only a few hours. Because of her use of these special compounds which dry very quickly, she must have a systematic plan before she begins working, though she also allows for accident and chance. For this reason, the individual shapes created in the transparent membrane are ceaselessly emerging and the artist allows the transparent compounds to run into the colored compounds as they flow over the plexiglass surface where they become part of the whole.

The current artistic approach of the painter – who creates an atmosphere that allows her to confront herself above all – demands a different kind of design that has an utterly personal and innovative non-classical method and deliberately reveals a pattern imbued with content. Basically she strives to communicate, transpose and confirm the transitory quality of the natural condition and passing events using industrial artistic materials. For this reason, she uses a dematerialized background of plexiglass and a sort of artificial transparent paste which functions as an analog for the primordial, fluid, colorless substance of the world. Her approach is based on the natural physical-chemical processes of gravitation, crystallization and coagulation. The individual components of her work which are drawn from nature multiply into endless cycles which spread themselves across her transparent backgrounds in various shapes and sizes. But all formats express the same concept which is renewed in each new ambient installation. The works are exhibited and strung along in such a way that shadows and reflections seem to move in a mute rhythm across an inner landscape and the creative space becomes a place to pause and contemplate: do the droplets flow from the alien slow-motion waters of who knows where into our own stream of conscious. The poetics of her visual concepts are redolent of

content, though of course not in the classical narrative sense. Instead the unity of her idiosyncratic technical approach allows the images to gradually grow quiet and flow into a pattern of meaningful forms with multiple meanings.

The nature that interests Berlot – such as the space of physical phenomena, the elementary condition of light and substances – is therefore, as presented on the plexiglass backgrounds, artificial and as such offers escape from everyday experience. At the same time, as a result of the creative ideas and the unusual horizontal presentation, it follows the logic of arranged landscape. Using her fragile cast forms, the painter broadens the otherwise purely ascetic scheme of metaphorical narrative. She broadens and also deepens the relationship between natural and cultural life, while at the same time elevating it in order to comprehensibly challenge the relationship with the viewer. These images that unite both nature and culture, the transitory and the eternal, reveal their essence through their simplicity, a simplicity that permits the actual decantation of light. This view onto artistic and creative nature gives birth to the feeling that we are becoming a part of her work and merging with the individual forms, each of which live their own life. We impulsively follow the concepts that originate from the work's extraordinary beauty and simplicity.

Many things exert an influence on how we experience and recall Berlot's artistic works. Above all, it is the space in which we view them. If each time we see them they occupy a different space, are exhibited in a different position in a different gallery, the art works themselves seem entirely different. A new environment offers a different context for the visual presentation. Therefore, the wealth of Berlot's expression lies also in the broad expanse of the various spatial possibilities that permits imaginative construction and installation. The light which flows through her paintings/objects becomes the event, draws the attention. In a closed gallery space, the influence of light can be planned; in an open space, it changes throughout each day and each day – sunny or cloudy – is not the same as the day before or the day after. With her lyrical exposition, in the primordial nature of her grounded creativity, Berlot has achieved a sort of neutrality and, as a result, her paintings permit a number of different readings, dependent upon the perspective of each viewer. The basic motifs (even on video) that interweave formal and psychological elements open a new field of investigation that has yet to be thoroughly explored.

Uršula Berlot reveals nature with a very physical approach, with projects that deal with the natural, physical, chemical processes of crystallization and coagulation. The light pours through the transparent surface of the painting and mysteriously breathes and sensually flows through the veil of experience. The earthly world, which through this decantation of light, is articulated in these paintings/objects is ascetic in its narrative, but beautiful in its relief structure and the refined and textured surfaces on which the transparent palimpsest glimmers. It is as if the artist – the human being who is herself only nature, herself a small piece of nature in a natural space – wants, through her transparent paintings, to merge with silence and leave a barely discernable trace after she is gone.