

Architecture from a different perspective



All Architecture is Frozen Music of a Nation



Louis Laganà finds a collection that reflects the elegant principles of architecture in Rita Lemesre's latest exhibition, All Architecture is Frozen Music of a Nation.

In her latest collection of works Rita Lemesre presents a series of paintings related to architecture as a symbol of identity and of a social and spiritual empowerment.

With works like Balancing Colour and Space, Colonial Homes, Engineered Architecture and Balance and many others, she presents a mixture of arched and rectangular doors and windows, blocks of concrete and textured stonework, which contrast deeply with the abstract space of the painting. Stress is mostly laid on the colour aspect of the composition. In these works the artist wants to achieve and convey the symbolical significance of colour.

Studying how we perceive the world around us has long been an area of interest for artists. In the 1920s, gestalt psychology emerged and the study of perception was explored by Frank Koffka, Max Wertheimer and Wolfgang Köhler. These sought to explain perception as an innate and primary function where objects are perceived as a whole or global constructs within an environment.

The German word gestalt means shape or form. There are ways how we organise our perception experiences and gestalt explains how. Such experiences and principles help us to create designs in a more meaningful way.

Among others, the gestalt principles of perception involve aspects related to colour, form, size and brightness, the principle of continuity, such as objects along a line or curve and the law of symmetry. Great modernist artists who worked on colour field painting and gestalt include Paul Klee, Piet Mondrian, Adolph Gottlieb, Frank Stella, Mark Rothko and many others.

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which brings us to Lemesre, who also worked for some time on the gestalt principles. In her painting entitled *All Architecture is Frozen Music of a Nation*, we find the symbol of the lizard, which dominates the composition painted with zigzag rectangles forming a striped pattern.

On the sides of this composition we find also a mixture of architecture from various epochs and marigold flowers on a bed of multicoloured mosaic. The combinations of these motifs seem strange.

We know that the symbolic meaning of lizards is different in many cultures. For example, in the Latin culture, the lizard represents death and resurrection. For the Greeks and Egyptians, it represented divine wisdom and good fortune. In Egyptian hieroglyphics, the lizard is used to depict something that is plentiful. In some parts of Africa it is also considered as a potent fertility symbol.

In Christian ideology, the lizard is a more ambivalent symbol because it suggests the same meaning as that of the snake or serpent. On the other hand, St Gregory the Great observed that the lizard might symbolise “the soul that humbly seeks enlightenment”.

Lemesre is fascinated by ancient symbolical images. In another work entitled *From Cave Art to Present*, the artist used prehistoric and contemporary symbols, which still convey a message to the viewers. This work, which is of a more spiritual nature, conveys a spiritual message that is not easily apprehended.

In his work *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (1953), Jung wrote: “Heaven has become for us the cosmic space of the physicists... But the heart glows and a secret unrest gnaws at the roots of our being.”

The universal use of ancient symbols we once used to decode life's changes has been replaced by a science – psychology – that was never designed to understand the soul. Unfortunately, ancient symbols in religion and mythology have lost their meaning and today we are confronted with other symbols which replace old ones.

The minimalist approach to work on abstract motifs is found in some of the paintings of this series. Works like Serenity, Sunset, Blissful, Stillness, Sheer Beauty of Creation and others focus mostly on the landscape of the non urban environment. In these paintings, it is the beauty of the colour of space and the rhythm of forms which catches the eyes.

In this collection, Lemesre considers architecture with a different perspective. She uses architecture as a symbolic power to express our yearnings and our fears. It is an expression in built form of a collective will and also a symbol of self-identity.

All Architecture is Frozen Music of a Nation will run from December 12 to January 9 at the Cavalieri Hotel, St Julian's.

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