

EMOTIONS

Joanne Mizzi is a relatively new face in Malta's art scene. Her interest in drawing and painting started when she was a child but developed later in life. Her main passion is to express her imagination and sharpen her observation skills with strong, vibrant colours and intriguing themes. She is mostly inspired by humans and their relation to life but she does not try to reconstruct reality nor make a statement on it. She mostly looks deep within to visualize the emotions derived from nature and commit her own unique personality on canvas.

In 2007, Ms. Mizzi embarked on an artistic journey to further her studies and focus on the human figure and anatomy. She experiments with various media which gives her a sense of freedom of expression to allow her to paint and draw according to the mood. Stylistically her work is influenced by Pop Art and Figurative Art in general and in her compositions she obtains graphic statements and effects. We know that Pop Art is an art form that reflects a return to material realities of peoples' lives, a return to the visual activities and pleasures of people, namely from television, magazines and comics. But yet the artist successfully changes these visual graphical reflections into a more intimate expression of the 'self'.

Ms. Mizzi could sometimes be exceptionally good to create imagery which is very suitable to illustrate a story or to show movement in figures. In fact she attended courses in fantasy illustration workshop by the renowned Italian illustrator Lucio Parillo and an illustration workshop organised by British illustrator Zara Slattery where she completed her first graphic novel.

In this collection we find three works with the title *Flowing*, *Protecting* and *Connecting* related to Latin American and Spanish dancing. The artist effectively explored poses from various angles and captured the very delicate moment when the posture of the dancers is at its best. We usually find such poses in flamenco dancing, tango and other Latin American dancing styles. These styles of dancing are known for the beauty of the dancers' movements and their passionate expression of the creative act. Even when we look at the titles of these works we find the attributes and dimensions of empowering humans.

Interesting are three other works of semi-nude female figures shown from a back position. The figures possess a kind of earthy sensuousness contrasting with the coldness and warmth; contemplation and arousal, blandness and eroticism, dream and reality, veiling and revealing, concealing and uncovering. The painting with the standing figure entitled *Anticipation* expresses a relaxed seductive stance while the other two other figures *Harmony* and *Emotional* depict the models from behind in a seated and standing posture with the head slightly tilted one looking to the right and one to the left. I believe that the artist wanted to create bodily postures and gestures of self-presentation, a metaphor of isolation, as well as to depict various social and gendered connections. These works unconsciously reflect social hierarchies and women's social domination by men in a patriarchal culture.

Other works show fictitious portraits of women executed with different facial expressions and some of them are wearing a mask to hide their identity. Good examples are *Mystery*, *Identity* and *Depth*. Works like *Wondering* also provoke the viewers to question the perception of reality.

Personal myth is explored in other works like *End..Beginning* and *Meditation* where the artist focuses on symbolical imagery which transcend beyond the artist reality. It is the artist who develops this form of narrative which we often link with our own lives. This narrative consists in the things we believe in, the things we fear, the things we love. We formulate our personal myths from our heroes, our happiness, our angers, and all our other points of contact with the world.

Above all I find that Joanne Mizzi's works project an immediate presence of anxiety and pleasure. She mostly uses the human body symbolically in various narratives and settings, and her aesthetic intention is to impart viewers with a sense of her own perspective. In her works there is an emphasis on expressive colour and line, and the simple pleasure of seeing. In her first art show, the representational and portrayal of the human body is for the artist a vehicle to peep deeply into the unconscious and search for more emotional growth through painting.

Dr. Louis Laganà

Dr. Louis Laganà is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Malta. He is also an art historian and critic, practicing artist and specialises in Modern and Contemporary Art.