

Maria Veronica The gold rush

Contemporary art is rediscovering gold, this exceptional material, fascinating in its lustre and splendour, which brought glory to Ravenna and was restored to use in art by Gustave Klimt.

In the 21st century, Louise Bourgeois, Anish Kapoor, James Lee Byars and many other artists boldly revive the tradition of the time of the pharaohs, an imperturbably enduring tradition: “gold is immortality” is the Brahmins’ constant refrain.

“Gold has no part to play in the mythologies of *Homo faber*.” The historian of religion, Mircea Eliade, spent his lifetime studying this question: “Gold is a creation of *Homo Religiosus*.” It was the first metal used by man, even though he could not use it to make tools or weapons. “Throughout History and technological innovations, from the use of stone to working bronze, then iron, and finally steel, gold has never played a part.”

Alchemists wanted to turn other metals into gold in order to cure their imperfections. Through this noble material, art touches on the sacred: “The essential symbolic value of gold has never been tainted despite the progressive desacralisation of Nature and human existence.”

There is red, black and lots of gold in Maria Veronica Léon’s work, the enigmas of her symbolic world exploding from their fiery fusion.

Yellows, greens and blue fuse in a variety of shapes, including squares, circles, trapeziums and pentagons; they splutter into triangles and even more elastic geometric shapes. Her line unfurls such an extraordinary tangle, what can you say?

Maria Veronica Leon’s work is disconcerting in its originality.

A willing secessionist, she eludes the golden nets she inherits from the Austrian painter who could easily have been her ancestor, but there are others before him, anonymous pre-Colombian artists from whom she gains this inheritance that binds her to the sun.

Her lyricism, freedom and courage make her different; a female artist whose attitude reminiscent of the mythical Penelope weaves her intrigues in the name of civilisation and peace.

Like the Homeric woman, she diverts her craft and directs it towards her own vital experience, thus transforming reality into legend and legend into a wonderful dream.

From the portraiture she has practised for years, she is moving towards her phantasmatic memory and from the likeness of the model to the probability of her adventure.

Like Munch, she emphasises the voluptuous language of lines, like Beardsley she loves luxury. Her lines meet, forming her abstract geometric shapes, and this is how she conceives cities, articulating their volumes by organised agglomerations of shapes. Civilisation has a horror of the void, but the black hole is lying in wait for it. If souls petrify in a world of stars, and numbers rule the world, humanity would have to start from zero.

When her palette darkens in a dramatic movement, incandescent colors evokes the Dantesque movement of the lava, deep, dark blue tries to calm the catastrophe, a draped silhouette stands out like a pyramid, and instead of the face, a star.

Ileana Cornea