

CONNECTION

One of the major functions of art is to communicate, to connect the concepts, emotions, skills and stories which form the basis of the content with an audience, so each member of that audience can recognise and appreciate the expressive ideals behind the image. The content may be diverse and challenging, stretching the boundaries of our taste and knowledge, offering insights into the broader picture of the ideas and events which surround us. It may be confronting and even unpleasant, forcing us to see the negative dimensions of our society or culture, and the plethora of painful events which shape our environment; but it may also be rich in the concepts of life, the human qualities which enhance our experience and enrich the world around us. Perhaps it is this last type of art which offers the qualities we can most enjoy, for it contributes to our own betterment and enjoyment, showing us the pleasure of life and the potential joy which awaits us through art and through that which it communicates about our world. Further it offers values and ideals as models for a rewarding existence.

Connection is about communication; its meaning is derived from the Latin word 'necto' I bind and its meaning is to 'bind with', to establish a link between people, enabling them to share the same experience. This exhibition reflects the title 'Connection' providing a context for the sharing of experience. The works, their content and imagery offer vehicles for the transfer of ideas, experiences, feelings and imaginings beyond the world of the two artists involved, not just as an intellectual offering, but as a bond between creative people, between artist and viewer, so the power of the subject expressed in the work becomes the property also of those who appreciate it. There is no clear distinction between author and user, for the difference dissolves in the bondage between them and the ideas of the artist are enriched, extended, enhanced and enjoyed by those who care to look into their depths and make the effort to adapt them to their own experience.

The two artists who have collaborated in this exhibition are different in style, background, nationality and experience; their works are inspired by different perceptions of the world and their subject matter is at opposite ends of the spectrum. The paintings of Zahidah Zeytoun draw on the landscape around her home, the natural world transformed by her individual insights into the experience it offers; those of Cheryl Osborne, reflect the richness of her imagination in the swirling images of her own fantasy world. But despite their differences both artists unite in their wish, even need to connect with an audience and recount the purpose of their work, in part through content, the stories which have generated the image and its meaning, but especially through the emotions they express. It is the need to bind that unites the artists and their works and it is the bondage of feeling which their works offer that is at the core of their appreciation.

Zahidah Zeytoun has strong bonds with her native Syria, as her ceramic imagery demonstrates; her reference to Astarte, the ancient Syrian goddess of fertility, binds her to the products of the earth, the land and place and to her family facing the tragedy of the warravaging her homeland. But her paintings provide a different vision drawn from her experiences of the land in her new home in the Emirate States. For her the landscape is something sacred, a phenomenon of creation to be protected and preserved, respected and cared for; to destroy or damage it is sacrilege. The essence of her affinity is expressed most clearly in the mangrove paintings, their spontaneity, their vigour, the energy of the strokes explore the rhythm of the waters, the lapping of the waves over the roots and sandbars refreshing the sundrenched glades of a hidden world. It is a private place, a refuge for personal growth and creativity where the heart and mind blend with the needs to refresh the soul. But they are also her protest against the wasting and ravaging of the mangroves; a tribute to their beauty which preserves their virgin state, captured for us to enjoy.

It is the inner world of reflection and imagination which inspires Cheryl Osborne, with her personal mythology of figures sweeping, floating, soaring through the sky as if on a pilgrimage, searching for a place of peace and rest, above the chaos of existence. Her images trace out a vision of reality beyond our everyday perception; a world of transcendent joy untouched by the troubles of our daily destiny and unsullied by the suffering of life. Her vision transcends the enduring pain of an injury which has shaped her life; her art leaves her suffering behind eclipsing it with a light filled vision of heaven a world of spirits and angels free from the limitations of our normal experience. Joy is an enduring emotion in this work, an expression of the ability to transcend limitations, negate suffering and walk the halls of heaven. It is this which makes these paintings engaging and moving and a pleasure to enjoy.

Connection is a blending of visions of the world, each with its own character and integrity and each with the ability to draw out our emotions. As the exhibition theme asserts both artists invite us to see their world and bind us to the vision of their reality. It is through the infectious intensity of their feelings, their commitment to their art, that their images are able to rebuild that feeling in us as we appreciate the richness of their experience.

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