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Return to rough terrain; this is what the work of sculptor Alexandros Yiorkadjis advocates. In these years of the hegemony of materialism and high speeds, Yiorkadjis retraces the silent, absolutely internal and painful processes of communication between the person and the deepest field of their being: the struggle to expand the meaning of existence, the temptations and hurdles that undermine the route towards the sublime, the path to self-knowledge.

The artist delivers his work unwaveringly focused on bringing forward such timeless issues. His consistency could be thought of as groundless romanticism in a setting where such topics are either disdained or deemed resolved. Therefore, the very fact of their review imbues his work with a philosophical dimension and a pronounced faith in the hunt for the ideal. In this manner, the artist refreshes various approaches to man's spiritual adventure, whilst at the same time remaining nonchalant towards the version of a different function of Art.

Milton's and Blake's *Paradise Lost* takes root in Yiorkadjis' work, far from any religious association, with entirely – as would be expected – personal means of configuration. And, of course, it seems utopic that art, amidst the prevalent materiality of the matter and its realistic tangibility, would attempt to represent intangible visions – and not just by depicting the Soul and the Spirit in the idyllic manner of Yiorkadjis' predecessors, the Classicists Canova and Vrutos. There is, instead, an interpretative attempt to register conditions by employing expressive codes pulsating with clear symbolisms and tensions, borrowing from Expressionism for the retracing of the ailing being, to Buddhist Zen for the serenity of self-fulfilment.

The Cypriot artist Alexandros Yiorkadjis studied Sculpture at the Academies of Fine Arts of Perugia and Bologna, and the *École Supérieure des Beaux-Arts* in Marseille. Italy, the par excellence country of the Renaissance and majestic sculpture, has been his Alma Mater. This is the first time his work is shown in Athens. Having garnered awards and distinctions abroad (2008) and staged several exhibitions, he now presents a cluster of 6 works infused with conspicuous affinity between form and content. Their titles – “Between the being and the higher self”, “Logos”, “Dreamcatcher”, “Unity”, “Balance”, “Collective consciousness” – are energized by the power of their signification to render the artist's aims more accessible.

A distinct feature is the double-sided manifestation of the works which serves the robust juxtaposition of either completely opposing situations or potently inter-complimenting symbols.

His distinctive iconography does not engage with pretentious aestheticism. Without a doubt, the acrylic resin he chose to be his primary resource, albeit lacking the gleaming of the ancient material, comprises with its neutral and toned-down dyed whiteness, the ideal tool for the fruition of the plastic gesture.

This exhibition features four of his six sculptures in the version of cast bronze and aluminium through the lost-wax method – replicas of the initial works crafted in acrylic resin.

The alchemy of the materials, the various phases of a painstaking process, the moulding technique, the stages and development of the creative act which alternates between materials and technical means depending on the requirements of each artwork – having, of course, at the tip of the spear, the rendering of emotions and crystallization of the symbols through the expressions of the form – preserve the inextricable relation between the maître and the visual artist. Yiorkadjis subjects his plastic formations to scrutiny, avoiding anything redundant. Dedication to the use of the torsos, relief and faces, moves precisely within the framework of choosing the essential. Besides, it is inside the head that man's ideas, knowledge, thoughts and thymos, the spirited part of the soul, coexist: a specific identity, in effect a homeland that defines their life. The feeling of monumental minimalism is pronounced by the absence of bodies.

The forms-symbols, sometimes in swirling Vorticism, and other times along horizontal axes, paradoxical, high-relief busts from a non-space, are carriers of concepts and emotions. Manifestations of pain, agony, despair, euphoria, self-knowledge, perfection, the eternal struggle of the perishable-spiritual bipolarity, are the protagonists in the composition entitled “Between the being and the higher self”.

In the “Dreamcatcher”, Yorkadjis' fertile eclecticism utilizes the skull, an evidence of *Vanitas*, encountered en masse in 17th c. European painting, as well as representations from the religion of the ancient Egyptians – the scarab and god Anubis, equivalent to Hermes Psychopomp – incised into the bosom of the forms. Here, the

scale measures the heart of the dead against the weight of a fine feather.

The range of the artist's concerns includes the renowned harmony of coexistence between humans, regardless of their race, religion, gender or education. In "Collective Consciousness", for instance, a small universe of forms with different features takes shape from a purely abstractive process, with an emphatic affirmative for mutual acceptance and peace. The appeal that Eastern religious have exerted on the artist is made obvious here.

Gender relations could not have been absent from this allegorical anthropography. In the unsteady "Balance", the familiar double-sided arrangement places man and woman facing opposite directions, underlying the impasses, rivalry and lack of communication. By contrast, "Unity", a solid egg-shaped configuration, shows masculine and feminine merging hermetically, swirling into a single whole, where the curves and cavities of the human body are insinuated. The archetypal oval form encloses the power of creating and perpetuating life. This is the only work of advanced abstraction, where the representational vocabulary is almost abandoned. The also double-sided "Logos", finally, is the inventive configuration of the word's ambivalence. Both the Logos-intellect and the Logos-noise bear their eloquent symbols: halo for the contemplating being, incoherent blabber for its antipode.

It is quite evident that the artist's position negates multiple readings. Ambiguity and the spectator's personal interpretation do not make part of his intentions. Conceptual self-efficiency connects the works on display, works claiming an understanding of expressive tools and achieving direct communication with their receiver, as vehicles of a humanistic view of Art.

The whole endeavour is yielded from long contemplation and private introspection. This is precisely why the lived experience stands far from any tedious didacticism.

In spite of the careful economy of means, the sensitivity with which Yiorkadjis treats his topic is pervasive, alongside the soft poeticality and refined emotion his sculptures emit.

Nelly Kyriazi
Art Historian

Translated from Greek by Despina Pirketti

