

**“spring, summer, fall,
...and spring again”**

Chryssa Verghi is one of the most dynamic female presences in contemporary Greek painting. Following a purely personal idiom, with great ease of composition and a distinctive aesthetic style, she gives her own stamp to the exploration of landscape and more specifically of nature, which also forms the focus of her study and subject matter. Dry foliage, ground plans, lakes and rivers with their depth sometimes clearly visible and sometimes suggested, reflections of the sky and trees, and, occasionally, figures, in the water element, compose vignettes with liquid transparencies that lean towards the decorative. The artist expresses herself artistically in oils and acrylics in turn, she colours her landscapes in new tones and emotion, and transfers the expressive power of colour to the canvas, combining realistic, impressionistic and expressionistic elements at the same time.

For Chryssa Verghi the act of painting is an investigation – an exploration of the physical essence of colour, the visual rhymes that echo across the whole canvas, the dialogue of colour tones. She believes in the sanctity of the Earth and in art that serves the natural environment and creates a world of finesse and aesthetic perception, with water and the reflections of nature within the water element as a dominant feature. This cosmogony of rhythm, movement, changes, the spectacle of light, a sense of paradise, is the life-giving elixir of nature, the energy which she tries to capture in her work.

She very quickly manages to avoid the heavy shadow of her teachers, assimilating what she took from them, externalising it with the stamp of a personal accent through the furnace of her own temperament. She broadens the horizon of her enquiry, exercises her vision and thinking, fruitfully enriches her visual arsenal and moves in a direction where the richness of her fluent language and the quality of its expression impress.

Freed from the formal representation we were used to in her earlier work, this time she appears more robust and solidly composed than in any of her previous expressions. At this stage, the atmosphere is enriched and diversified - the surfaces are filled with abstract decorative patterns, mainly consisting of gold leaf in the background, following the Byzantine-Renaissance tradition as well as well-known motifs from Klimt.

With an almost abstract style, she uses a kind of dripping technique to build the surface of her painting, sometimes with earthy and sometimes with cool colours. This process takes place gradually, as she works on her paintings by sometimes adding to them and at other times subtracting from them, redefining the image through its disappearance and reappearance. She paints almost with her whole body, almost as if she were dancing, and brings to the surface of the canvas an indirect sense of agitation, full of movement and rhythm. The lines, weight and volume of the objects in this sensual wrapping of the gaze with the earth, lose their solidity, becoming spots of coloured matter that ferment together in a volcanic game of the earthy, low harmonies of an energetic expressionist temperament.

Fascinated by Japanese prints, and more specifically by the well-known Ukiyo-e genre of Japanese landscape that developed in the 16th century and became widely known through the work of Hokusai and Hiroshige at the end of the 18th century, the artist, in contrast to the Western tradition, relies more on imagination, composition and atmosphere than on the strict transcription of nature. She avoids geometric perspective and widens the field of view, often adopting a bird's eye view. The exploration of the visual field, different angles within the same painting, the accentuation, photographic framing and refusal to limit the frame, the elements of her images that are often cropped, the relatively little space given to the sky and the low viewpoint observed in the Flemish landscape painting of the 15th century, are enlisted in Chryssa Verghi's whole conception of the pictorial interpretation of the landscape and the visual perception-reception of the image. After all, Japanese art and especially Ukiyo-e prints have influenced Western art since the time of the Impressionists.

Chryssa Verghi picks up on the messages of the brighter and more spontaneous style of Impressionism popularized in Germany by Max Liebermann and Fritz von Uhde, and renders nature in joyous, rhythmic works where light strongly dominates, giving the composition a free-spirited feel. She disregards outlines and frees the image which is reproduced from only a distant perspective. She rejects the Renaissance ideal of painting and develops her own stylistic grammar with formal compositions and sumptuous decoration redolent of the English Pre-Raphaelites. The artist has managed to journey from bursts of colour and the observation of the still landscape image, to an apprehension of the fluidity of atmosphere, generally in mutable and momentary

qualities, giving us a balance of the most elegant; between tangible hints of matter and the poetic magic of the landscape.

The artist concentrates her attention not so much on details as on the general form and tone of her subjects, creating an alluring landscape in the tradition of Claude Lorrain, with a delicate sensibility and without sinking into the heavy atmosphere of the naturalists, in a *plein air* style of her own. It is the landscape as an autonomous artistic reality. The artist believes deeply in the autonomy of the painted world and endeavours to place herself between reality and that which she sees, to render this void, her place in the imaginary space wherein she finds herself. With her adoration of light, lyricism, calm softness, clarity and the absence of any striking effects, she leads us into a lyrical art by activating our senses with musical harmonies that the eye perceives in nature.

With her gifted artistic virtues, Chryssa Verghi's painting creates a skilful orchestration, a perfect colour harmony that is born and develops under clear skies and Mediterranean suns, coming together as paeans to existence. And all together, these compose a world bathed in light and rhythm, with every painting a new beginning.

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