

The Primitive Forms of Mary Harman

Dr. Panagiotis Kambanis - Archaeologist-historian, Museum of Byzantine Culture - Postdoctoral researcher at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece



“A man who works with his hands is a laborer; a man who works with his hands and his brain is a craftsman; but a man who works with his hands and his brain and his heart is an artist.”

If someone were actually able to witness the early appearance in history of a piece of hand-carved stone or a ceramic object, he would see that at least at this early stage these artifacts did not exhibit properties which were intended to make things usable for everyday life. Instead, they were "creations" with decorative and religious features. It seems that the products of each such new ‘invention’ - a result of the discovery and use of a new material or of the radically new use of a known material - were so impressive because they did not express something casual, nor were they motivated by utilitarian aims.

The brittleness of the rock and its impurities are products of the trapped and long processes whereby nature shapes and constantly transforms matter into energy within the unexpected scenarios it encounters. This multiple forming process that occurs in the earth’s core hints to the artist's more spontaneous parallel informal "stories" as an expression of her own unconscious.



A key element in the sculpture of Mary Harman, which is repeatedly compared to the art of early civilizations, is the simplicity and search for a basic form in which the content and the subtraction of details contribute to an essential purity and concentration.

What is essential in Mary Harman's quest are the elements of a fertile vocabulary in the sense of form and emotion in plastic expression, elements which are composed from various sources. The "abstract" values of form and design -values very crucial to the artist as in primitive art – are not conceived by her as a neutral expression of the term" abstract" but rather as the prerequisite for understanding the "emotional significance of forms."

The features of primitive art which the artist admires and considers necessary conditions for her own work are their simplicity, their return to what is basic, their inventiveness and sensitivity, the smooth surfaces and clear contours, the consistency and harmony with the material used and its direct shaping, emotion and vitality, prominent fullness and freedom.



The more you look at an object, the more it becomes abstract and, paradoxically, the more real. The strength and vigor of the forms do not exclude an emerging tenderness and affection that these figures suggest. Expressing in an archetypal breath the forces of nature and of life, which reveal truths that constitute only a small part of what we know, the rest remaining inconspicuous and inconceivable. By means of allusion the artist frees the imagination and disposition of the

viewer, who is then willing to search beyond and behind his or her established beliefs into a world known but insecure, familiar yet paradoxically foreign at the same time. A world which contains us and at the same time is contained within our own very essence, with all the magic of its mystery and abysmal darkness which is reflected from the depths of the heart of each one of us.

“... because such is the human soul. When one does not expect anything, one waits for everything. Without illusions no man can survive. How many times does one sit with closed eyes, as if gazing at paradises extended beyond the reality of unhappy landscapes?” - Maro Douka *A Purple Cap*



The artist often uses images from her own memories and the attempt to reduce these to sculptural symbols can resemble inexplicable contortions of the mind. Behind each work of hers are hidden pieces of others in the infinity, fuelling a conflict between the artist and audience.

The holograms of her objects transport us into a three dimensional space, offering us the opportunity to visualize and experience something from her own personal sensibility. What fascinates is the perpetual movement of the tableau within its own frame - nothing wants to go outside of it.



*Up to now they were formed to the waist and the loins, then the artistic process stopped...
.....after all, artworks which appear incomplete will finish themselves on their own, over time.*



*.....the stance of established figures,
harmonious silence, calm immobility,
imposing, supportive and inwardly consoling, as we too become.
It is our own presence that has been transformed.*

.....

*Throughout the entire liturgy, the expression of
this beautiful body is almost arrogant,
and the noble appearance, looking
elsewhere, contemplates....*

- Zoe Karellis 'The Icons'



Holographic art is the magic mirror
reflecting our invisible dreams in visible images.

