

black on the white impassioned allegory

KIKI DIMOYLA, *Pipsaspis*¹

The series of large drawings under the title “Abandoned Codes”, which was started in 1990, demonstrates some constant elements in the overall approach and artistic personality of Pelagia Kyriazi.

At the core of her artistic career is her drawing with its idiosyncratic idiom, in its various guises and functions: as a primary, direct record of a sensory stimulus, as an intermediate/preparatory stage in the creation of a composition or as a final work, often on a large scale. To Kyriazi the drawing carries and conveys her quests on a conceptual, formal and purely technical level..For many years the artist has been successfully experimenting, both autonomously or in combinations, with many different materials, traditional or other, as well as with technology. In the course of the representational process and the emergence of the image, she explores and exploits the peculiarities and the potential of her various media and the physicality of materials to achieve different qualities and textures and their respective visual, painterly and conceptual effect. Layering and the synergy between pigment and substratum are key factors in her art.

Moreover, she is constantly concerned about the terms of her works’ visual perception as they are shaped by the work itself (morphology, materiality, dimensions) or by extraneous conditions such as the angle of viewing or the overall relation between viewer and work. We must note here the key importance of size. Talking about two large works, one of which creates an angle, the painter writes in her notes: “*The viewer must be able to walk around them, they must have room to breathe in the architecture of the venue. The viewer must get a natural impression, as when looking at murals*”. This is the top work in this series of drawings that hover between abstraction and representation,

¹ The poem by Kiki Dimoula, with illustrations by Pelagia Kyriazi, was included in the poetry volume *Παρά Δήμον Ονειρών*, Athens: Kastaniotis 1991.

processed in a gestural, fluid style and with the interaction of light and shade as a decisive element in structuring the image and the space and in giving meaning to the works.

Weird, unreal worlds/spaces infiltrated by figures and architectural forms from the depths of cultural memory. These spaces, these images with the strong tonal contrasts, their mobility and frenetic pace, the complex geometry, the spatial discontinuities and the fragmentation that draw the viewer's gaze into labyrinthine, inconclusive wanderings bring to mind Giovanni Battista Piranesi, the celebrated 18th-century Italian engraver and his majestic visionary imagination. Kyriazi seems to reference above all Piranesi's "Carceri d'Invenzione" – those mysterious spaces with the dramatic *chiaroscuro*, the illusionary architectural layout, the many uses and manipulations of perspective, the *baroque* illusory effects, the ambiguities and visual traps which challenge the mind and the imagination and "irrevocably involve the viewer in the creative process"². What Kyriazi learns from Piranesi is undoubtedly the visual power, the expressiveness of bright/dark, black/white but also of the tones in-between, the subtle gleams which create a poetics of space with metaphysical connotations.

The artist's drawings keep all possibilities and eventualities open. Her fluid worlds without boundaries and delineations, full of the dynamism of the ambiguous and the *non-finito*, in whose scattered energy fields the nude human bodies dance, seem to become a metaphor for the very adventure of artistic creation, for the transformations and reformations of the creative process in its unending quest for forms and figures.

There is nothing static, final or readily accessible. Kyriazi loves what has the potential for cocontinuing, the hovering (literal as well as symbolic), the passage from the inside to the outside, man's course from the interior to the exterior. She is fascinated by the fragmental, the hermetic, the familiar that turns enigmatic and forever elusive; by ambiguity and an artistic language at once revelatory and cryptic. "Ruins talk to me

² See John Wilton-Ely, *The Mind and Art of Giovanni Battista Piranesi*, London 1988, pp. 85-90.

about familiar codes I cannot break”, she writes somewhere, and elsewhere she speaks of “a mystical space with murals which mean something but I cannot interpret them; they are hermetic, and once I have read them they will mean nothing to me any longer”. These works are like screens ‘ready’ to receive any projections and readings on the part of the viewer —just like the open book with the blank pages at the end of the ‘course’ of the work which completes the “abandoned codes” .

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