



ENRIC MESTRE

modern shapes gallery



CATALOG

ENRIC MESTRE

“With his work, the artist has given us the opportunity to discover and recognize, through geometrical distributions, the structures and enigmatic nature of this world.”

- *Frank Nievergelt*

ARTISTIC APPROACH

Enric Mestre, born 1936 lives and works in Valencia Spain. Mestre is recognized worldwide and won many international awards and has participated in numerous individual and collective exhibitions around the world. His sculptural objects seem sober spatial constructions: boxlike, slab built architectural structures of austere colours dominated by right angles. But appearances are deceptive: these objects have a poetic charm which saves them from only being rational and cold. The eye of the beholder detects small projections, subtle displacements and slants which, together with the immediate effect of the material, counteract the angularity of the slabs which compose these quiet and well balanced constructions of strict geometrical order. Though these objects are often carefully planned and developed, Eric Mestre with his works insists on intuition – as if obeying a kind of constructive poetics restraining and controlling personal expressions without eliminating them.

ALEGY AND ENIGMA

“Enric Mestre is one of the most European of modern sculptors, one who is best understood in the context of international sculptural developments over the last sixty years. This distinguished Valencian artist has forged a confident and poetic voice within the language of Modernism. But I also think it is very Spanish in its expansive and elemental qualities, its particular approach to colour and surface, its sense of genius loci (in the original Roman meaning, that a place has a protective spirit). This is a contemplative sculpture of order, of geometric exactitude and purity, of clarity of volume and space which shows Mestre’s developed understanding of Classicism. His work (mainly free-standing, but he has also made plaques and reliefs for the wall, sometimes of a rather freer conception) is as much indebted to the principles of ancient classical form as to the vocabulary of modern architecture and sculpture. He is an artist who has a particularly sensitive feeling for massing, for the planar and spatial relationships of contemporary building, and how to size this down into pieces which possess their own particular intimacy. They are enhanced by the softly nuanced and controlled coloration of their clay fabric. Mestre is ambitious, but he deals with big themes on a smaller scale, precision-cut and altered slab-building worked up from a careful preparation of drawings, templates and maquettes. Concentrated and distilled these forms may be, but their ability to evoke is powerful. There is a sense of understated and muted theatre in this abstraction.

Mestre belongs to a tradition of artists who have created their own environments; in their different ways re-making the landscape. One thinks of a twentieth century lineage that goes back to Brancusi, and includes post-war sculptors such as Carl Andre, Donald Judd, Robert Morris, Tony Smith, Anthony Caro, and of course Eduardo Chillida. They are all artists who have a sweeping sense of scale, and a particularly architectural sensibility. There are the great desert bunkers created by the land artist Michael Heizer in California and Nevada, and in Britain, the strange Cold War concrete pagodas of the military testing ground at Orford Ness. These are structures of broad massing, sometimes Brutalist in shape and texture, but which make the most of their materials in exploring the volumes and proportional relationships in building. Closer to Mestre’s home, on the Valencia plain or ‘huerta’, there is the superb engineering of its medieval irrigation system of canals and channels. Devised by Moorish technology, it is part of a heritage that has influenced Mestre’s own aesthetic and sense of design. All this is work that alters and re-shapes our geography, and Mestre’s sculpture does this in its own very pared-down way. His treatment of clay is fascinating because it relates so richly to numerous other materials, such as concrete, cement, asphalt and granite, sometimes with a brick-like texture and porosity. At other times it can be more metallic. Clay he likes for its durability, its unpredictability when fired, and “the optimum

qualities it gives for creative art”, exploring patinas of great subtlety and variation that relate more to the fabric of building than traditional sculpture. His mottled, sometimes grittier and smoother surfaces temper and soften the austerity of many of his pieces. Similarly his paintings have explored softer colour-fields as well as more regulated grilles and geometries, many of the latter in surprisingly strong, sometimes primary hues. His sculpture generally uses more sober tones to distinguish different sections, surfaces and planes, but some areas may be accented by more vivid coloration.

Mestre’s work is redolent too of the deserted squares and alleys of early twentieth century Italian Metaphysical painting. He possesses a similar geometric (and occasionally curvilinear) definition of contour; there is that same interplay of light and dark and long cast shadows, underlining an enigmatic other-worldly quality. He too creates architectural scenarios in which no action takes place, but where much is suggested, and where a sense of melancholy hangs in the stilled air. This crisp use of analysing light and shade is also a characteristic of the acutely observed still-life paintings of the Spanish Baroque period, particularly artists like Juan Sánchez Cotán. Sánchez Cotán’s deep stone sills and very resonant Spanish blacks and greys relate to Mestre’s work. Mestre’s variously conceived blocks, sometimes relatively simple, sometimes more complex, are not

inert. They are charged with their own atmosphere, a sculpture of the hidden, the concealed and enclosed, as well as more open spaces. They are conundrum objects to puzzle over. There are often steps, openings and corridor-like intervals, but to where do they lead? What is encased? The finished pieces often look like models for bigger projects, blue-prints for larger constructions. Some forms have a defensive appearance, with slits, channels and apertures as one might find in some kind of fortification or citadel. We may think of concrete guard posts from World War Two, of silos and bunkers and other rationalist and utilitarian structures. Some of these sculptures could be the building blocks or fragments of larger edifices perhaps, ideas in progress or remnants of something unfinished. Mestre’s work echoes the sculptural beauty of expressive functionalist building. It has the same spare starkness, the same asceticism.

What his art broadly shares is a strong sense of memorial, of elegy, and it is difficult not to look at it without sensing the weight and difficulties of European and Spanish experience in the last one hundred years. These deeply contemplative objects are far more than exercises in harmony, chromatics and proportion. They go beyond formalism. Their quietude is as much about a profound sense of *momento mori*, after all a significant theme in Spanish art from the sixteenth century onwards. They are full of the echoes of history, and it is as if Mestre’s sculpture is about

a greater collective work, a greater project, not simply a series of individual artworks with common themes. As I have written elsewhere, there is a sepulchre-like quality about much of it, repositories of memory perhaps, sentinels of some unspecified commemoration, where one's imagination is allowed to roam in a disquieting world of urban arenas and industrial-like structures. Their cenotaph-like solemnity creates a sense of isolation and loneliness, and we are left to make our own narratives, our own stories. They are anonymous, as if marking some more general act of requiem, like those tombs to unknown warriors. In this sense they are also affirming sculptures. If there is something monumental about them, it is because of their spirituality too, as well as their ambition and concept. The gravity and mystery of Mestre's art, as well as its great inventiveness, is what gives it such authority."

David Whiting - Art critic and curator. He is a member of the Association Internationale des Critiques d'Art.

Untitled

stoneware

19 x 41 x 25 cm

7.48 x 16.14 x 9.84 inch

€ 6.000,-



Untitled

stoneware

14 x 37 x 21 cm

5.51 x 14.57 x 8.27 inch

€ 4.000,-



Untitled, 1993

stoneware

50 x 60 x 17 cm

19.68 x 23.62 x 6.69 inch

€ 7.000,-



Untitled

stoneware

29 x 26 x 20 cm

11.42 x 10.24 x 7.87 inch

€ 5.500,-





Untitled

stoneware

18 x 38 x 22 cm

7.09 x 14.96 x 8.66 inch

€ 5.000,-



Untitled, 1996

stoneware

44 x 27 x 33 cm

17.32 x 10.63 x 12.99 inch

€ 6.550,-



Untitled

stoneware

28 x 34 x 23 cm

11.02 x 13.38 x 9.05 inch

€ 7.000,-



Untitled

stoneware

25 x 31 x 20 cm

9.84 x 12.20 x 7.87 inch

€ 6.000,-



Untitled, 1993

stoneware

23 x 38 x 19 cm

9.05 x 14.96 x 7.48 inch

€ 5.000,-



Untitled

stoneware

50 x 67 x 27 cm

19.68 x 26.38 x 10.63 inch

€ 18.000,-



Untitled, 1991

stoneware

32 x 83 x 11 cm

12.60 x 32.68 x 4.33 inch

€ 8.000,-



Untitled

stoneware

41 x 21 x 21 cm

16.14 x 8.27 x 8.27 inch

€ 7.000,-





Untitled

stoneware

48 x 23 x 32 cm

18.90 x 9.05 x 12.60 inch

€ 8.000,-



Untitled

stoneware

22 x 42 x 21 cm

8.22 x 16.54 x 8.27 inch

€ 6.500,-







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