

## WAX, GOLD AND SMOKE

The authentic journey does not exist outside of ourselves. The one that reasserts us is that other journey, devoid of external means of conveyance, that which is both made and “carried”, being the expansion of one’s self somewhere else, the re – encounter with one’s self in a remote and yet predistinguished, recognised, rediscovered place. A place where one can “be” again or, if possible, where one can communicate more delightfully with depth, while simultaneously enjoy the lightness of having left behind the bonds, the setbacks, the tight vicious circles ordinarily threatening us.

Travelling in order to learn how to “be” brushing that best experiences of life in order to extend one’s self, reaching the epicentre of the values that afford meaning to life. Such has been Pamen Pereira’s intense six – month journey through Japan, a journey intense in its experience of inter – communication with the few men in the temple – habitats embedded in Nature who are preparing to receive one of the most perdurable of ancient philosophies, and a journey programmed in the arduous, painning, yet voluntarily joyful process of adaptation till achieving maximum stabilisation between body and mind.

There more than a physical move the artist has ventured on a journey to the origins of certain age – old behaviours surrounding man’s fusion with Nature, with the intention of obtaining self – reconciliation and of revitalising notions previously rooted inside herself, such as unbounded time, the symbolic reduction of intermediate lives, unifying light and the powerful awareness of the insignificance of the “self”.

*The deep low drum throbbed with the rhythm of life itself, with the ordinary and deeply felt beat of the human body. Other instruments with all the sounds of the body were gradually introduced. The continuous feeble trace of blood flowing through veins and arteries, the muted whisper of inspired air in the lungs the gurgling of bodily fluids in action, and the various “creaks” and “cracks” and sounds that form the music of life itself. All the faint noises of mankind.*

T.Lobsang Rampa, *The Third Eye*

The incandescent piano drawn in candle smoke in one of Pamen

Pereira's most beautiful papers immolates itself, no longer offering music but offering light, becoming an oneiric image of renewed strength and singular magnetism, as if its own extinction were to have redoubled its musical potential. The "sound" is reborn among the ruins of the instrumental object, while the "case" becomes a powerful coffin a death that liberates life, a life that can no longer succumb. Liberation is prostrated; it is not a burial mound, it is unquestionably a bed of birth. In the same way as the small dish filled with beautiful disarranged brown skulls, meticulously built by the artist and placed on a pedestal/altar made of clay, is an apparent *vanitas* in which death becomes tender and musical, it turns into a chimerical cradle following a definite path towards deity - not a superior ultra - natural deity by one which is neighbouring, close, and identified with mankind - no doubt "the path towards the house without shadows" which the artist has referred to in a recent text - the collective house, positively diaphanous, devoid of identity conflicts, reconciliatory, floating in space with its own interior sun.

Both are visions of peace, of liberation, contrary to the prostration into which mortality plunges us. For the artist, "the death that terrifies us is that of the "self". The drama of death appears when there is an intricate awareness of the self, from which we have to depart (...) nevertheless, death has a certain trace of happiness, of gentleness (...) living is more tiring". With her oeuvre, the artist attempts to draw us towards real visions, those which unite us all, liberated from the "selfish confiscation" that deforms the world; visions present in our mutual understanding of others, characterised by the sacred spiritual aspect of the substance of being; visions that stem from a total communication with nothingness, and therefore possess an infinite experience of time, and - in her own words - appear in the understanding of "the void as action".

Perhaps this is why we are able to encounter anticipatory images of the artist herself "placed inside of time", in that photograph she had taken in an empty coffin - totally "befitting" her - at the monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla, as in the twenty - two meters of natural fibre she plaited and then slid into, in the manner of a chrysalis, before untwisting them in a geminated photographic image. Exemplary acts in which she proved to be partner of - or better still, an active substance of - an open regenerative death.

In this way, death is contiguous to life and *vice versa*, both inter - connecting as soon as the "self" reduces its importance. Incombustible life taking the place of passing - such is the symbolism of these flames,

of this persistent incandescence in her work. Light, gold and fire recall omnipresent energies in Nature. From that it follows that the Pirandello - like labyrinth of stairs, also drawn in smoke, be transformed by an effect of light into a beneficent talisman, or that the golden wax honeycomb should erect an emblematic castle shaped as an enclosure, a radiating inner void. Images beneath which lies another reality, just as important. The seemingly elusive immaterial substances, or the numerous efforts made by microorganisms, are exceptional bearers of symbologies we may relate to the indestructible. Hence these mysterious reversible images showing the honeycomb to be a fortress, or the plait as a shroud.

The smallest and most intangible growths or natural developments, the most insignificant of the world's links place us before the powerful doors of the inner void, as a total work, an absolute expression of the cosmos.

*Yet if I adopt no particular attitude, thousands of attitudes exist inside me in a potential or latent state. Therefore, in the unique void, all the potentialities you may conceive, all those which will be carried out, and even all those which will not be carried out, everything is contained in a latent state. (...) Each speck of dust is at once unique and infinite.*

### **Arnauld Desjardins, *Zen et Vedanta***

And inside this void, light; outside, calm. The enclosure points to the centre of energy as the Buddhist *mudra* position of the hand. At other times it assumes the image of an eye – the eye, for Christianity, being “the light of the body”, while designating vigilance in Zen Buddhism.

In many of Pamen Pereira's sculptures the void is objectified. The Golden nest made of branches becomes a heart, perhaps because “to comprehend” means “to include”, “to overcome narrowness”, “to be more immense each day, until comprising the entire universe in one's heart”. A crater/cave with an embracing identity. All things transcendental would thus, again, be within man's reach.

The great step forward the artista has taken, in comparison with previous periods in which she was dominated by the fear of being earth, by the chimera of being burdened by earth, consists in her having become aware of the fact that transcendence and immanence are one and the same thing, that there is no dividing line between Heaven and

Earth, just as there is none between gravity and weightlessness, and of realising how reversible the matter of body and of mind can be.

*Everything becomes both great and stable when fantasy unites cosmos and substance. (...) And if we have sweet and perfumed dough under our fingers we being to knead the substance of the world.*

### **Gaston Bechelard . *The Poetics of Fantasy***

Harmonious and welcoming vegetal spines arranging the inner framework of leaves, together with infinite entwinements, are often traced by her hand like imperishable furrows of life, continuous networks in which the intermediate stages between polarisations are not only useless but non – existent – from which it follows that frontiers become imprecise and exiguous, turning into an impetuous flow, exchanging attributes between however many confluent parts should exist. As a result, the majestic earthenware presence of that suspended snowcapped mountain, with simple roots growing out of its inferior – or perhaps its “ interior” – is incredibly lightweight in appearance.

Heart and peaks are united in the celestial área, Earth and Cosmos become one. Just as descent and ascent join their opposed dynamics in an inseparable vital flux.

In the numerous and disturbing scenes of black forest, the trees also a certain anthropomorphism, like goblins walking stealthily so as not to damage the ground, in an unsteady verticality such as characterises beings still unaware of the scope of their motive power. Driving wind, nascent man, vegetal phantasmagoria and darkness of the void, all share the same breath of life. The forces, beings and “states” of Nature assemble their attributes under a common, cosmic, brilliant and above all, promising fantasy.

*The priest's assistant took a coconut out of a bag, she broke it in two, added basil to the milk it contained, and gave it to the priest, who sounded a bell to inform God before throwing the coconut into water. Then the woman entered the swimming – pool and, up to her waist in water, stooped down to search blindly for the kernel. (...) Sooner or later, she would obtain her kernel and would return home with it to face up to life with renewed faith.*

**Norman Lewis, *where stones are Gods. Travels Through Forbidden Areas of India***

In her well – spent stays in Sapporo, in Hokkaido ( the island in the north of Japan ), and then in the south where she met a Zen Master, followed by her visits to three different spots located near the mountaineous region of Kyoto, which included the Zen temples at Ei Hei – Ji and Ho Kio – Ji , Pamen Pereira has reasserted herself in the securing of complete images.

One of the most surprising of these is the ring of circular fire the image of an aura, of an essential, outstanding absence. Emotion of man, metaphor for that mystical awareness similar to a mirror that neither receives nor rejects anything, which lies at the base of all Buddhist philosophy. An illustrious image of nothingness transformed into essential man, visage without a face, igneous void as the activation of all possible visions. Large lit ring, where man is perpetuated in his role as living conveyor, inner witness of himself.

We cannot avoid recalling here *las ruinas circulares* ( Circular Ruins), the beautiful tale by Jorge Luis Borges on the labyrinth of fire, paradigmatic circle of inescapable verification of the fact that man was forever an image “conceived” by another man. Evidence of an absolute absence, of an abysmal void which is no doubt full of love. Such fine digressions between thought and light, such complex passages between image and reality, and essentially, such intense communicational dispossitions arre revealed to us by Pamen Pereira in her beautiful works.

Wax, gold and smoke are the fragile threads weaving the metaphors for a marvellous inner presence.

**Teresa Blanch**

