

El color del fuego

Fire leaves a trace and forms a palette of color in the works of Keka Ruiz-Tagle. This action of capture and embrace connects the work to the earth from where these figures are born and transforms them to a permanent existence, the analogy to life is all too clear. The age of the figures is ambiguous, intentional perhaps, belonging to near or far histories or perhaps both or neither, existing instead in a timeless history of authentication. This pre-historic and contemporary juxtaposition imbues these figurative sculptures with a sense of knowing and confidence, a gesture confirmed in the creative and technical skills of the artist. We are reminded at this moment that these figures connect to us through their gaze, we want to know their mind, abstract symbolic components erupting from their heads impart clues and develop narrative, yet they still remain mysterious. The various head-ware is suggestive of traditional costume and confirms a connection to far history, whilst the open heads render the sculptures as vessel and this develops the narrative and obvious connections that can be made between body and vessel. Whilst the headaddresses are not rendered as facsimile, they enhance the symbolic essence contained within the work an element that is explored further by the artist in other works.

The horse within Keka's work is both stylized and also proffers a mythical status. One is reminded of the power of the Trojan Horse in the legend of the city of Troy and this is contextualized in the artists use of proportional scale as rendered between the large horses and much smaller figures. The horses are strong both visually and in construction, yet at the same time are softened by glaze pattern and marks created by the flames of the kiln. Here, the artist experiments with materials and processes and in combination with the playful figures atop of the horses, suggests a harmonious relationship between man and animal. This playful, even humorous element is contained within many of Keka's sculptures where many of the figurative heads appear to be smiling, one asks whether they are happy or do they hold knowing secrets?

Keka is an artist who works across many platforms and has expressed her ideas through several mediums. Her work in clay continues an exploration of the connectedness between reality and dreams an area that has appeared throughout art history and perhaps can be exemplified by the Surrealists and within the work of Marc Chagall. The use of clay to explore this arena is pertinent as the material connects us to the earth and thus reality – and its formlessness allows the artist to explore the notion of dreams through sculptural application. Keka's sculptures are accomplished considering the artist has no formal training in ceramics they capture elements of primal pottery yet the works are also grounded in the here and now. They have a feminine quality yet are also bold in approach and execution. This multifarious layering within the work invites multiple readings created by several points of departure no doubt this is with intention and adds to the mystery within the work.

In reference to the title of this text, the colors of fire are numerous, they are also bold and vivid, they leave a trace, an imprint in your eye that leads to the mind all of these things and more can be found in the ceramic work of Keka Ruiz-Tagle.

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