

The work of the sculptor Kostas Pagomenos

The second half of the 20th century, witnessed the emergence of a number of nature-related art works which are today generally found under category of *Environmental Art*. In their variety *Land art*, *Earth art*, *Eco art*, *Green art* etc., finding their formal origins in movements such as *Art Nouveau* or *Organic art*, draw upon the ideological background, as set between others by the need for a return to Nature, the expressed resentment to the machine, the machine-age, industrialization, urbanization, the culture of consumption or the aesthetics of plastic, etc.

Seeking in its various unities to uncover the vital powers of existence, the resistances of life's energy and the mechanisms of survival, the recent work of Kostas Pagomenos, belongs in many ways to this 'family' of *Environmental art*.

Thus, a central unity of his work deals with the representation of living beings from the world of plants and the sea world. These beings, are shown in a multiplicity of possible or imaginary transformations, whilst a repeated point of reference in this sculptural microcosm of the biosphere, remains the *Seed* (unity *Germes*) in other words, the symbolic and at the same time real, life-emanating nucleus with its concentrated powers of regeneration, the safe-keeper of continuity of every existence.

In works such as the "Political Landscapes", Pagomenos comments on the aspect of human intervention on Nature, by questioning the ability of the natural life-generating nucleus of every being and its intricate daedalic genetic code to resist and react against the linear, grey, self-destructive logic which Man imposes upon it.

Pagomenos's references on the issue of man's ecological conscience does not exclude his chosen technique. The materials he works with are mainly the friendly papier-mache, recycled and natural matter, metals, as also parts of plants, or pieces of wood. However, in a number of his works insisting on the issue of man-made versus nature's materials, he also chooses to use the unfriendly resins, or synthetic glass, occasionally also employing electric energy. These 'unfriendly' materials and tricks, ultimately alter the form and the texture of his works, expressly pointing to their alienating, unnatural state.

Dominant, in his recent work, remains nevertheless, his interest in plastic values, the feel of the materials he uses, the harmony or dissonance in the disposition of masses and volumes in space, the way light, changes forms, which it illuminates or which it hides. Thus, the rhythm of shapes and the sensitive interrelationships of volumes, or the structural resistances are sought in works such as "Balance" or "Invasion", two poetical sculpture pieces, and equally, two excellent examples of technique, form and content coinciding. This coincidence is central in Pagomenos's other group of works, the "Musical Instruments", where he explores the ways in which shape, form and structure succumbs to the function of the object, i.e. the need of producing sound.

The subject of sound, as a vital characteristic of life per se and in the sense of communication, as a distinctive aspect of existence, is a theme he often returns to in his work. We discern it as energy pulsating on the surfaces of his vibrant forms, on the liquid movements of his beings as they engage in couplings, or in their insistent resonant stances as they resist an attack, or whilst on precarious edges balancing on a cord. We discover it, in the elongated stems of plants, which we seem to hear as they grow, or as an underwater strange whisper that we suspect is transmitted from one sea-organism to another.

Recognizable familiar objects, abstract meanings which acquire shape and form, reformulations of existing inhabitants of the biosphere in possible or imaginary transformations, symbolic compositions, are all aspects of the sculptural world created by Kostas Pagomenos in his artistic exploration on the relationship between Man-Art and Nature, ultimately calling out for our awakening, alerting us to the urgent necessity for the protection of the life-giving core of our very natural existence.

Denise-Chloe Alevizou
Dr. art historian

