

JUAN KITI'S STRONG POINTS

by Marcel van Jole

« Freshness is the touchstone of modern art. »

Harold Rosenberg

Juan Kiti's strong points are his gestures, his emotions, his unbridled explosions of colour with lively reds and exuberant yellows, his volcanic references to threatening and dramatic situations.

Kiti rejects every form of art that is programmed with formulas or systems. Indeed, his art is best labelled informal, his art shows his longing for liberty and for dissidence..

Juan Kiti was born in Brussels in 1956, he was touched by the grace of painting. He paints compositions with a strong dynamism, as if moved by an urge he cannot resist ; they are wild signs with intense colour contrasts, white-hot and liquid, bold colour stripes with abruptly defined forms.

Essentially he depends on a purely individual view of the aesthetic idea. From there he creates his own graphic vocabulary and discovers forms that allow him to give free rein to his emotions and fantasies. Then he tries to record them in his paintings.

Originally Kiti did not want to become a painter ; just putting colours on the canvas amused him. It seemed to him that by mixing colours, something was bound to happen. Most remarkable is that the great painter and theoretician of colour, Josef Albers (1888-1976), recommended this recipe to his students of the Bauhaus and, after Hitler had risen to power and after Albers had emigrated to the United States, to the students of Yale University. He made them mix colours for hours at a stretch and then reflect on them and finally compare the results. Albers knew that things learned by experimentation sink in more profoundly than things taught. Though Juan Kiti is self-taught, he is far from naïve. He admires Karel Appel, Pierre Alechinsky, Corneille, Asger Jorn, Jackson Pollock, Georges Matthieu, Sam Francis, Alfred Manessier, Vieira da Silva, Franz Kline, Hans Hartung, Mark Tobey and so many others. But feverishly he seeks his own way to express himself.

His graphic impulse leads to a series that is impenetrably dense, harmonious and homogeneous ; its theme is a mask or an always changing face, reflecting all changes of a physiognomic identity. This series was presented in the framework of ART GALA for the benefit of "Doctors without Borders".

Kiti lets his lines run together ; he collects and presents, as if using a source of alternation, arousing exuberant forms, a rich palette and wild colours. He places his stylistic power in the service of an inner agitation, illustrating his manner of applying « action painting ».

Juan Kiti knows that painting means life – a difficult life, a never-ending struggle. His permanent doubts, his continuous questions about art, his evolution from meditation to reflection transform his art into a screen that displays which emotion as a major part of the event.

Layers of paint sparkle from the canvas and testify to a joyful fight with the substance, to an emotional message, giving evidence that sensuality and tragedy are an integrating part of one and the same pictorial space.

Far from all fashions and trends, from all academicisms, from all avant-garde tendencies, Juan Kiti radiates his joy for his liberty of painting. His palette, rich as the colours of spring or of an Indian summer, does not yield to touches of colour with a dangerous reputation : golden yellow, sapphire blue and incarnadine find a perfect harmony between the most subtle and most contrary tones. He expresses a vital, pantheistic feeling in a festival of colour ; the voluptuousness of painting is exhibited in a firework of radiantly beautiful, exuberant colours reminiscent of a passionate pastoral.

Juan Kiti succeeds by a combination of his gestural and chromatic means in realizing a synthesis between visual naturalism and lyrical improvisation.

Reproduction of reality certainly does not belong to his priorities, although vague shapes of human faces or animal forms can be distinguished in his works. I really wonder if Kiti does not often start from figurative art

and then expresses his inner life through an intense process and an impulse of creativity. An innocent way can penetrate truth deeper than the so-called « serious » art.

Kiti has misled the public for a certain time, as if possessed by the horror of emptiness. But very soon the background claims what belongs to it and thus his work gets the air and the light to breathe freely.

This liberation from form can also lead to a simple cry as to a real explosion or to a paroxysm of pictorial power of 'expression. Thus Kiti arrives in the world of the irrational, of the feverish passion reflecting the dramatic resignation of his pictorial urge.

Yet, one feels that Kiti makes efforts to order his emotions and that he wants to make them more intense, and more accessible too. This does not blunt the emotional element in his work, but on the contrary, it widens and deepens it. It grants him a stronger vitality.

In his best works, Kiti reaches the standard he imposes himself. Life and its mysteries are ubiquitous.

It would be a mistake to see merely pure instinct in Kiti's work. His sense for colour is the coat of an internal intellectual reflection. He is not just an artist, sensing colour sensually and organically ; he manipulates his feelings powerfully and audaciously and thus tries to master the drama. He possesses the gift of mysterious communication, the intuition of the supernatural but sometimes he must try to bring some order in the chaos.

The art of painting is for Kiti what is realized, not what is alleged. He considers the painting finished only when it is an independent creation that follows its own laws and leads its own life. He could easily subscribe to the philosophy of the English painter Edward Wadsworth : « *A painting means most of all bringing to life an even, plain, inert surface by a spatial rhythm of shapes and colours* ».

I wish Juan Kiti the power for his sustained work, much perseverance and quite a degree of self-criticism, something every young artist should develop.

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