

The dreams of Elaine M. Goodwin:
The start of an investigation

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The light of Byzantium meets Paris, the 'Ville Lumière' – the City of Light.

In May 2013 Elaine M. Goodwin chose the Left Bank as the final venue of her exhibition, 'Homage to Byzantium' (following exhibitions in Luxembourg and Ravenna).

From the very first, Elaine M. Goodwin's mosaics reveal themselves to be absolutely striking.

Whoever wishes to enter this artist's world, and whoever is inspired to interpret it, needs to follow several themes to do so, as meanings alternately reveal and conceal themselves.

In order to investigate, let us contemplate her already impressive body of work, such as can be seen on her website,

From the very first glance one is struck by the way in which the colours confront each other.

One of the first feelings which one has is quite unequivocal because thanks to this artist you are present at the Creation of the World.

The earth trembles, and from the bowels of Mother Earth shoot out unstoppable flows of burning lava. Our eyes, dazzled but deceived, see ochres, yellows, and shades of sienna, not the vermilion and blackness of volcanic reality.

As we continue our reading of the mosaics. The intensity subsides. The lava turns to rock and the violence of the volcanoes abates. The eyes, soothed and finally relaxed, can get even closer, as close to the works as possible, and see there their true colours.

Something else can also be perceived.

This something refers again to the mother - no longer to the original mother, '*Ur-Mutter*', but the Female.

In most of Elaine M. Goodwin's works, and at times in repetitive and obvious ways, the symbol of the female can be seen - triangles, lips, curves of the thighs and buttocks, and, perhaps, breasts.

Are symbols of emotional states also to be perceived among the beauty of the colours? *Des jouissances*? Occasionally one is unsure which lips are depicted. Are they those of a knowing and ambiguous smile? One shifts between the lioness and the cat, between the wild savannah and comfortable domesticity.

Is it going too far to use the word 'dream' in this review without getting into the complexities of pseudo psychological analysis?

It is known that artists are often caught up in the paradoxical situation of needing to reveal themselves, but fearing to do so, where narcissism and boldness, as well as fear of solitude, thus become intermingled and compete.

One observes all this in just looking at these mosaics. However, when one gets closer to read the titles, do these affirm one's intuitions?

Will you say that I as a critic have misinterpreted my perceptions? No way! Just look at the titles - *In the Beginning, Sospiri*.

Is not the sexual act itself hinted at - *Above Each Other*?

Is not a body offering itself completely - *Kisses Apart*? Offering beyond the acknowledged? Might not several bodies be distinguished? And, besides which, whose bodies are alluded to in the commingling?

Whatever the case, we find ourselves in the presence of an Artist – confident and female – who is firmly of her time, and who, quite simply and naturally, affirms a self-assuredly free artistic and personal life.

Light and lights

One must now come to the subject of light. Not the light which is the usual partner of the mosaic artist - an elusive difficult partner? - which plays with the work, giving it an appearance which changes with the angle of each ray of light and with the sun at each time of day.

No, on the contrary, what is going to interest us here is light as a subject.

- I1 Light and the day. This refers to the light of creation, which is a point of departure common among Elaine M. Goodwin's contemporaries – a classical approach.

The second aspect is more original.

- I1 Light and the night. The light of the night which introduces shadow to the medium where shadow and light play integral parts on the surface of the mosaic. That which was hidden and in solitude can now play its role.

Byzantium and its attributes

Another section, or rather another aspect, of Elaine M. Goodwin's talent makes reference to the Orient, and specifically to Byzantium. The Byzantium of dreams and imagination – another open door, an oriental one, into the themes of secrecy, intimacy, and alchemy.

The two principal themes of looking and teasing are found again here in Byzantium – implicit in its colours, its luxury, its desire, and its titles. Thus the titles given to the mosaics are sometimes cryptic, sometimes explicit, and sometimes seemingly ambiguous.

Byzantium - a female world?