

Anima Forma Corporis

Joost de Jonge is an extraordinary individual. He is an artist who I have come to know over the years as highly ideologically motivated. The hope of a better, more ideal world lies at the basis of his evocative creations. Joost studied painting at the University of the Arts in Utrecht, and graduated *cum laude* in 2002. The colours that are so characteristic of his work are for him a gateway to spirituality, a quest for beauty through colour.

In his catalogue for *Zielespiegel* ('Soul Mirror': an exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, 1997-1998) Harry Mulisch beautifully expresses how people can best answer the question of what art is. What one must do is to go through all the answers since Plato, and choose the best of them. According to Mulisch it is self-evident that the best is also the truest. Hegel speaks in terms of "the sensory appearance of the Idea". Schelling replies: "The finite representation of the Infinite". Mulisch's preference is for Schelling's answer. Mulisch argues that both answers arise from the Platonic tradition, which posits that there is another world than the one we find ourselves in. In a general sense, that world is made visible in the artwork: the artwork as creative epiphany of the Other. Does that Idea or this Other have an objective existence, and does the artwork show a glimpse of it? Or does the artwork create this Other for the viewer?

This philosophical ideology, and German Idealism in particular, has occupied Joost since his teens. Mulisch, a literary-philosophical world in himself, was one of his great, undisputed heroes, but the philosophy of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer also played a key role in his thinking: think of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*, and especially the connection with Hinduism. The church fathers, such as Abbot Suger and Thomas Aquinas, also did not leave him unmoved. Thomas Aquinas identifies three primary characteristics of beauty: *Integritas*, *Consonantia* and *Claritas*; wholeness, proportionality and clarity.

These reflections bring us to Joost's work. The formats of his work sometimes reflect aspects of theological thought. To give an example: with the dimensions of one to three (such as a work of 210 x 70 cm) he refers to the Holy Trinity. Above all, Joost's inspiration has a literary and intuitive character. Through its forms his work tells its own expressive story. Coincidence plays a major role in his compositions. It can self-evidently gain a place through the intuitive search for forms, which is also a search for emptiness; creating a space for a clear pictorial game, in which the Apollonian and the Dionysian go hand in hand. Although the struggle for the dominance of clarity of thought (Apollonian) or passion (Dionysian) remains visible, this nevertheless seems to reach towards a harmony, but an active harmony, whereby this struggle can continually be seen: is constantly in flux, as it were.

The cloud of God's glory (shekhinah), somewhere between heaven and earth, is a symbol of God's presence. Joost regards artistic creations as almost prophetic, and constantly searches for the presence of a divine spark: for him the painting is an energetic field, in which space is given for the Other, that is to say for spirituality.

Throughout this, for Joost the work must be interesting to look at, with its decorative value predominant. In this way painting, in an abstract sense, becomes admissible to all, and this art – beyond the forms and colours themselves – can be experienced as sensation per se. Individual

expression then becomes a universal manifestation that is able to connect people, whatever their origins.

Prof. Jan Peter Balkenende

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