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EXHIBITIONS

November 20 - December 19, 2009

Ferdinando Ambrosino: The Memory of Time



Heavenly Jerusalem (2001) Oil on Canvas, cm.130x170

The Chelsea Art Museum – Home of the Miotte Foundation – is pleased to present Ferdinando Ambrosino: The Sacred Profane: Paintings and Sculptures by Ferdinando Ambrosino.

Ferdinando Ambrosino is an Italian Artist, born in 1938, who began painting in the early 1950's. The diverse styles he achieved between the 1950's and 70's resemble and transcend impressionism, cubism and neo-realism. During this time his work developed, addressing subjects and themes of his native land and of the reality of Man as laborer. The Sacred Profane represents his more recent work. This

contemporary series, which encompasses the maturity of his artistic voice, has been referred to as an iconographic style that fuses the abstraction and spirituality of the genre with the vivid realism of still lives and landscapes.

The genius of Ambrosino lies in his ability to speak, at once, to the "mundane" and "sacred" in us. His figures seem both, liberated yet oppressed. The colors are simultaneously joyful yet austere. An artistic dichotomy exists in terms of semantic and style, the likes of which are very rare to come by. There is a power within his canvases and sculptures, which lures the viewer away from the comfort zone of periods and genres and ushers them into a meditative realm that can only be experienced when enshrined in a place of worship. The iconography is startling. His holy figures are ethereal in their movement and lightness, yet something about their subtle complexions speaks of a world less traveled within the repertoire of iconic traditions. Historically speaking, the gaze of an icon's eyes is supposed to transport the pious worshipper into a spiritual dimension where flesh and the habits of this world are discarded along the way towards achieving immortal bliss. Yet, the earthliness of Ambrosino's "Saints" seems to constantly remind the viewer of the inevitable corruption of human nature. Through suggested acts of desire, inflections towards the carnal and playful depictions of profanity, we are confronted with an almost ascetic statement: Salvation is not attainable through a thin veneer of piety and a glazed baroque-like manifestation of gestures and rituals. This is a canon that reverberates not only across the gamut of the artist's later works, but also in the journey of stylistic explorations and phases that the artist has undergone from early beginnings until the present.

Ferdinando Ambrosino is an artist whose particular place in contemporary art practices will be the subject of interest and inspiration for many decades to come. The uniqueness of his work stems from his ability to borrow from the major predominantly modernistic genres surrounding him and then to confidently move forward. In the process, he has managed to discard the dead weight of all that which is exhausted and redundant. He has then successfully managed to assemble a metaphorical language that is only his. This language is both, relevant to a profound epistemological discourse with the past and an ongoing dialogue with the future of artistic expression.

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556 West 22nd Street, New York, NY 10011

tel 212.255.0719 e-mail contact@chelseaartmuseum.org

fax 212.255.2368

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