

John Milder: The Elegant Simplicity of the Profound

There is a dynamism in the sculptures of John Milder that recalls the work of the Italian Futurist Umberto Boccioni. Captured in bronze or stainless steel, the viewer responds to Milder's works through their flow and movement, aided by the play of light on beautifully patinated surfaces. The vitality of these forms derives as much from their fluidity as their blend of figuration and abstraction, leading to a paradox that extends the boundaries of their intent. He flirts with verisimilitude to catch the viewer's eye and lead the mind on a sensuous kind of chase. In two such bronzes as *Embrace* and *Bodylanguage*, it is not so much the repetition or succession of enclosed forms that enthralls, rather, the way in which they interlock - a gesture repeated, an echo responding so that one becomes the other.

A youthful interest in archaeology led to sculpture, as did an intuitive sense of the physical substance, refined through the inheritance of skilled craftsmanship from his jeweller father. His love of music and a mind mathematically inclined provided a wider empathy. A rhythmic harmony pulsates through the forms as sanguine surfaces, the blood red of life, gives way to the green sap of *Tree of Life*, the hue of germination and fruitfulness. The genesis of Milder's forms is found in aspects of nature - the leaf, the eye, the flame - followed by the metamorphosis of the familiar into something new, the very act of creation touching on creation. The tree and the female form are ancient and ever-present symbols of fruitfulness; so they are conceived in creative likeness, of swelling shapes and passages of procreation.

Part of the beauty of abstract art and the mystery of the symbol is that their meanings cannot be contained. The branches of the tree become like angels' wings; or in *Songbird* the forms take flight, in the thrill of sound and fecund green. *Flight*, is in stainless steel, a medium more given to modern usages, and touches different ideas. The ever-present theme of motion through fluidity is embraced by a newly found calligraphic quality, as letters contained within the piece speak of swiftness. Metaphors of the mind soar beyond the terrestrial. *Wind-Spirit* finds its freedom and explores the mystical, as lettered meanings interchange. In *Enigma*, the riddle is held within the abstract forms, which mutate to figuration and change again. Like the traveller, the pleasure is in the journey, which leads to that elusive intoxicant of life called joy. Milder's bronze of this name again employs the stylised human form, yet more feminine, in a movement suggestive of dance. As in prayer, the body and soul unite in the expression and experience that goes beyond the individual, the one complete in the whole. Milder's sculptures offer a sophistication of surfaces and forms to beguile the eyes. Although they seem to be clad in a seductive simplicity, this is their key to the riddle of the complexity of being and what stretches beyond. It is the elegant simplicity of the profound.

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Melbourne
May 2005