

Orpheus by Armando Bergallo, Le Petit Cluzeau, Lalandusse, Aquitaine

It always is a pleasure to close the door at home and drive the 1000 km to Aquitaine, especially when there is art to be lived.

The last dive downhill Le Petit Cluzeau, we were filled with expectation for Orpheus - the most recent theme of Armando Bergallo.

Eight layered paintings on the myth of Orpheus create an octagon, theme of ancient roman-byzantine churches, in a dimly lit white barn.

The mild heat of early summer in Aquitaine mingled with enchantment as the scene of the vernissage showed a vibraphone.

"How could that warm-voiced instrument underscore the tragic of Orpheus tragic love?"

I wondered.

My mind dwelled elsewhere as we were warmly welcomed by Armando & Freek, friends and acquaintances entering the scenery.

Soon that warm atmosphere changed and voices dimmed as the vibraphone (played by Elia Moretti) filled space with cold tones in the minor, sonority that prepared us for a more grim exploration of the theme. Then, Anastasia entered from between the transparent painted layers. She wore twingled white robes and with a face, pale as a death mask, she decidedly walked the performance to its peak with just the clicking sound of silicate stone, slow silent strides and dead-cold eyes piercing us - innocent bystanders.

As she criss-crossed the audience dancing and dropping, she silently lead us right to the centre theme of Orpheus: the immeasurable tragedy of a lost loved one and the intense longing to bring a lost loved one back to life. But something did not fall in place I felt: 'Does she evoke Orpheus, Eurydice or does she embody a female Orpheus, or both?'. As the dance progressed I concluded it really did not matter: symmetry can be perfect in infinite love.

Strides and dance then substantiated Armando's lyric, which was powerfully proclaimed, part as poem and part as a song underscored by sad humming and again, by the vibraphone in minor and some electronic scores by Elia. As the ballet & poetry visited the large paintings one by one, Armando's visual allegory opened up but only partially materialised in my mind.

Silence filled the room for a while as Anastasia left the barn and vibraphone until applause thundered.

'A seed well planted for my next visit to the Orpheus cycle' I reflected, but then in silence and solitude, for just my own reflections on loss in love...

... we all are sooner or later confronted by loss, mortality and the infinity of love.

Night soon went warm again over Bergerac wines and local or distant dishes brought by an international audience.

Seldom one experiences the intensity of an exhibition & vernissage as this time for Orpheus in Le Petit Cluzeau.

Congrats and warm regards to artists and support - also video and book look excellent - a great support to fading memories and perhaps solace when tides turn.

Johan Geysen, Friend