

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE EUGENE MARTIN EXHIBITION, MICHEL ROORYCK GALLERY,
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Tonight I have the honor to introduce this exhibition of recent and earlier works of Eugene Martin.

About the person Eugene Martin I will be very brief. Eugene Martin was born in Washington D.C., he is American and received his artistic training at the Corcoran School of Arts in Washington, the city where he lives.

As you can see tonight, Eugene Martin does exhibit. However this happens rather sporadically. I point this fact out because it is directly connected to his views regarding artistry, to his views regarding the creative moment and the artistic act. Eugene Martin does not feel the need to lead a public life. This does not mean that exhibitions would not be important. To paraphrase his words: "it is my choice to work as an artist outside of the mainstream". As an artist he creates beside currents or fashions which define artistic life, artistic entertainment. Also, during certain periods, as in the '60 and part of the '70, when the artistic activity was primarily executed in the public domain and it was necessary for most artists to manifest themselves in groups and currents and to engage in points of view, Eugene Martin kept distance from the artistic and social reality. In this sense it is for him totally irrelevant to know whether his art is called avant-garde or simply traditional. Eugene Martin's artistic thinking takes namely place beside and outside such categorizations.

With Eugene Martin it truly goes about artistic thinking whose images are the visual carriers. You see some examples surrounding you. Some works are pronouncedly figurative; others in turn seem abstract. Some are very gracious, refined; others rather brutal, aggressive, as well at the level of line, color and imagery. Yet these works are the result of a same demarche, a same creative thinking.

Most works are clearly constructed, structured, even though they are different in character, sometimes being lyrical, sometimes restrained. The works are truly constructed, but not premeditated. They originate in a dialogue with the carrier, paper or canvas, fundamentally concerning spatial relationships. These form-and color relationships then lead to imagery with a figurative meaning. This imagery then becomes human figure, plant, animal, or machine. In the first place it concerns architectural proportions and rythms which then become connotated elements around which the spectator builds his own story.

This method whereby the image seemingly is spontaneously created is based on two premises:

- an openness of mind, which permits to sufficiently exclude calculation and control (yet without losing creative control)
- a technical ability, which in turn permits to express with sufficient ease impulses into images.

The openness of mind, of which I spoke, reminds us of the automatism of the surrealists. Yet, there is an essential difference. Indeed, in the works of Eugene Martin it concerns in the first place the emergent proportions and not only for expressing latent contents. The worlds which reveal themselves in his works are as of as many states of the human condition.

Thus, these works are no abstractions of the reality but expressions of archetypical experiences, visualizations in approaching the world in a certain manner, expressed in forms which did not become codified and did not become reduced to a single meaning.

"The painting as expression of a certain approach in viewing the world". A great part of the creative thinking of Eugene Martin boils down to this. A consideration of the world before it became word, before the world became explainable, interpretable. In these works aggression is present, but also much harmony and tranquility; often there is a form of relativity, of humor.

Is it necessary that I add that for Eugene Martin painting is a moral act.

Michel Rooryck Gallery

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EUGENE J. MARTIN

works on paper
paintings

13.1.90 - 12.2.90