

1986

ARISTOMENIS TSOLAKIS

at the Warwick Arts Fair, December 5-7
(Private View, Friday December 5 3p.m. to 8p.m.)
see enclosed leaflet for details

Six watercolours and two oil paintings by ARISTOMENIS TSOLAKIS will be on view at the Warwick Arts Trust Fair early next month. It is the first time the painter's work is available to the public in Britain and an opportunity to see and buy his work and to meet him personally.

Tsolakis, who lives in Athens, was born on the East Aegean island of Samos. His first training was icon-making, a skill which instilled values into him still to be found in his work. The present selection of work dates from 1985-1986. In it, the artist reveals his skill at creating and defining form. Much of his earlier work is based on the depiction of human figures closely connected with his Surrealist inspiration, but the present selection is more concerned with the exploration of form as a thing in itself.

The particular aspects of form depicted by the artist have a strong connection with early Christian and Byzantine painting, which dominated art in Greece for centuries after the decline of the Classical period.* Tsolakis resurrects the complex and expressive patterns of Byzantine drapery and its intensity of feeling. The icon painter exploited these forms in order to infuse the strictly defined limits of the icon with his own artistic feelings and innovations. Tsolakis' work retains much of the hermetic quality of Byzantium.

But its sealed-in, inward-looking features have come under the influence of 20th century abstraction as well as the heightened visual clarity and imagination of Daliesque Surrealism. Tsolakis has a quality of deliberation, an accuracy and precision of form unusual in contemporary painting: it is deeply satisfying to discover that here is a painter who does not rely on the casual and instantaneous or superficial for his effects. He combines an 'old fashioned' respect for refined technique and craftsmanship, for painstakingly-made texture and pattern with a central concern for form.

The theme of the six watercolours may be summed up as movement and change, form and structure emerging out of the unformed and unstructured, one form in the moment of its transformation into another. In this metamorphosis, the artist shows a process of 'crystallisation', which combines natural form with the man-made and the mechanical. He has a clarity of line and colour, ranging from light tracery to a depth of intensity rarely achieved in watercolours.

'Just Before Formation' (No.2) shows how dramatic this can be. A deeply coloured purple iridescent sphere with an almost infinite infrastructure, like that of a highly complex pomengranate or nucleus spills out another pearl-like opalescent shape.

The dense concentration of form within a sphere is an artistic evocation of the qualities of infinite matter.

'Nature Intervening' (No.1) gives a more specific context to a similar idea. The abstract cornucopia of fruit-like shapes intermingles with a reclining-floating woman, her luxuriant hair floating upwards, in a metaphor of birth, erotic experience, creativity.

The play is between the human form and nature -- organic and inorganic -- a recurrent contrast in the artist's work. 'Elements Unfolding' (No.3) shows delicately-structured gaseous bubbles condensing into more solid masses, or rather vice-versa as the cool green tissue of 'cells' evaporates into the warm oranges and purples of air-borne material. In 'Actor' (No.6), 'Juggler' (No.4) and 'Magician' (No.5) the human form or human-like shapes struggle to break loose from the confines of enclosing form.

* The Byzantine Empire was established after the deposition of the last Emperor in Rome (476AD) It lasted until the fall of Constantinople, its capital, in 1453AD.

The artist's address in Athens is: 14-20 Korizi Street
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He will be in London before and during the Fair c/o

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