

CLEOPATRA-ARIADNE IDENTITY AND TRASFORMATION

‘Kleopatra blir Ariadne. Identitet och förvandling’

Curated by Hans Henrik Brummer

Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde,

Stockholm, 11th October 2003 - 8th February 2004

Jole de Sanna

In connection with the exhibition dedicated to de Chirico's Ariadne, which was held at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Estorick in London, this exhibition in Stockholm deals with a wider context, although it does adhere to the artist's deep-rooted attitude towards the ancients. The relationship between the classicism found in de Chirico's early work takes us to the Roman Renaissance of the Vatican collections and through it, to some works which Brummer defines as "icons of history": the *Laocoon*, the *Apollo Belvedere*, the *Belvedere Torso*, *Ariadne* or *Cleopatra*. The replica of the latter, which adorns the gardens at Versailles, inspired de Chirico's painting entitled *Malinconia* (Melancholy), at the Estorick collection. Partly owing to the exhibition curator's personal ties with Rome where Hans Henrik Brummer (ex-director of the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm) once researched, the classicism of the Vatican statues acts as the show's backdrop. Brummer gets underway with the widespread opinion of the time when the work was added to Pope Julius II's collections in 1512, and the statue was believed to depict Cleopatra in the act of dying. In one case (as Cleopatra) or the other (as Ariadne), she is always an emblem of eroticism. Cleopatra is placed within her historical frame between Egypt and her Roman lovers, Julius Caesar and Marc Antony, iconographically investigated in Hellenistic style (the era in which she was created), and therefore disembarks at Renaissance Rome. The great building site of the Belvedere, which was erected by Julius II and supervised by Bramante (Raphael's successor), is philologically retraced within the catalogue itself. Cleopatra-as-Ariadne, through her faculty to mimic the erotic dialogue and reason-dream metamorphosis, ultimately forms an ideogram: the figure of an unclaimed woman who waits, or plays out in her mind, the meeting with a male. Viewed as such, the exhibition follows Ariadne throughout all Post-Renaissance art, starting with Albert

Dürer and Lucas Cranach (*The Spring Nymph*, 1537, on exhibit) to Titian (as to be expected), Hans Mackart etc., right up until the 19th Century Neoclassicism of Angelica Kauffmann and the Pre-Raphaelitism of Evelyn de Morgan, as well as the very attractive *Ariadne* by Henri Fanti-Latour (both exhibited).

The central part of the exhibition is dedicated to de Chirico, who is seen as a bridge between the classicists and modern day, as testified by Andy Warhol (*Italian piazza squares with Ariadne* after de Chirico, 1982) and the Swedish artist Ulrik Samuelson. Samuelson is the artist behind *Sleeping Partners*, an installation that was specially commissioned for the Main Gallery which encircles the gesso copy of the bronze original executed in 1540 (Nationalmuseum collection, Stockholm). De Chirico is correctly identified as the material executor of the Ariadne ideogram for the benefit of 20th Century culture. The outline of the “Italian piazza squares” declares a linguistic structure around the Eros-ratio subject, but at the same time signifies a passage between two different levels, the consciousness and the unconscious. In the exhibition catalogue, this offers Jole de Sanna the opportunity to explore Ariadne in correlation with the unconscious, as the labyrinth. The whole piazza square seems like a capsule of the modern conscience, beyond every limit prearranged by previous epistemology: Ariadne or the unconscious as infinite systems.

Translated by Victoria Noel-Johnson