

Gerda Ritzmann

EMPHASIS

Critical Text by **Raffaella Turatti**

Delicate, elaborate, evocative and aesthetically seductive. The works of Gerda Ritzmann (Austria 1946) explore the creative force of paper, this fragile and yet durable material adds an emotional and intellectual appeal to the aesthetic visual appearance, derived from the very foundations on which it itself is based: the vulnerability of existence as well as its remarkable resilience. The artist evokes many ideas of reflective emotions, contemplation induces to give a new image and renewed sense to the material even when it appears to us useless now and destined for the waste.

Years of research, through which Ritzmann acquired a great craftsmanship and therefore perfectly knows working on the material which undergoes radical transformation from time to time, becoming something else, detached itself from its function as a mere writing material to become an autonomous artwork, meaningful, embedded into the ambiance. Ritzmann explores the sculptural potential of the paper by reinventing it and taking it out of its everyday use to create abstract works that address evocative universal themes, emphasising the concept of transformation and mutation.

As an exponent of Paper Art, Gerda Ritzmann chose a very contemporary artistic medium to emphasise and underline her poetic creative quest, which she pursued with rigor and devotion. Paper and cardboard are transformed into many objects that stimulate visual sense through the contrasting game of paint, colour and cut-off materials to create a new form with powerful, fascinating visual expression. By transforming the paper with her hands into objects and installations we are amazed by changing morphology, more over it pushes us to acknowledge the creation of each single work and every single folded sheet.

In this technical procedure we recognize the echo of the avant-garde art of the twentieth century, especially, the revolutionary Papier Collés of the cubists Pablo Picasso, George Braque and Juan Gris; works composed by printed material – music scores, newspapers – altering the idea of previous traditional figurative presentation, works made with materials extracted from the reality of what they are and mean. Papier Collés are not only considered as a technique, but as a new compositional method. And it is the Collage again, based on the bold and visionary experiments in the post war period, from the Neo-Dada movement to Pop Art, which starting from two-dimensional supports, are transformed into three-dimensional works, identified as one of the characteristics that define self-referential modernity, as *Clement Greenberg* suggested in his “*Collage*” (1958-1959) essay.

Ritzmann, as well, makes abundant use of printed, decongested and recreated pages – but even in the material change phase, it appears with seductive allusive force. Therefore, the viewer becomes the protagonist of the work; intrigued and attracted of it, observes the work more closely to explore the words were once pages of books, a text, a newspaper, and which have now become more. The works of Gerda Ritzmann enclose themselves with energy and movement in space, with twisting, wrapping in spirals, twisting in knots, transmitting to the spectator the desire and will to penetrate into them to be wrapped by those same spirals, dissolve those same knots, to be fooled by the optical games of the geometric shapes, graphic signs, interlaces, moving shapes. Thereby the artist comes to two possible typologies: on the one hand, plastic, volumetric, three-dimensional works; sculptures that converse with the space in which they are placed, and on the other hand the two-dimensional compositions, true approach panels of the forms

organized according to the principals of *Gestalt* , more precisely; the doubling, the modular reiteration, the dialectic between symmetries and alignments.

In the exhibition *Emphasis*, Gerda Ritzmann presents a body of sculptural and two dimensional works that investigate the mutation's morphology, and unveil the universe of the artist who became an advocate of a way of creating art that assigns a new statute to the forms, to achieve aesthetic incentives that arouse marvels, while at the same time, invites the viewer to go beyond the mere facts of the material overcoming a stereotypical view of things as they manifest themselves. In Ritzmann, undoubtedly, impresses the experimental relationship built with this everyday material; the paper, but perhaps even more impresses the thought, the lightness of the vision and the novelty of the artistic interpretation that re-reads our ways of life.