

Appreciative Critique/Interview with Artist Cristina Iorga for the "Traveling Inward Series" Exhibition

Story by Candice Russell

Works on paper, abstract with representational elements, comprise a one-woman show called the "Traveling Inward Series" by Cristina Iorga is currently on view at the Ellen Charapko Gallery in Wilton Manors, Florida through April 12. Beautiful, mysterious and subtly detailed, they require careful, close-up consideration of their formal and spontaneous aspects. Deceptively decorative in some respects, such as the juxtaposition of strong colors, yet raw in others like the unfinished vertical edges of the paper, these works collectively reveal the artist's interest in diverse cultures at a time when globalization is a worldwide mantra.

Repeated in work after work are circles, both perfect and imperfect, along with circles, stars and triangles within circles. Other graphic touches include the layering of paint and paper bits and the use of various techniques including foil stamping. These untitled, same-sized works on paper, hung in the gallery with tiny silver clips, appear to be thoughtfully composed for the most part, while drips and splatters here and there suggest the randomness of nature and the cosmos in forming new life. This seems especially true for number fourteen, with a red explosion acting as a reference to the sacred moment that an egg is fertilized, the beginning of all life, is thus acknowledged by the artist in this suggestive image, bearing witness to a little miracle and a big mystery about creation.

The dreamy purple tones in number seventeen, punctuated with golden yellow and deep kelly green on a black ground, are a potent lure to the viewer. Numbers fourteen, sixteen and eighteen, visible from the sidewalk on a wall facing the street, form an unintentional triptych by virtue of the artist's use of a similar palette including dark fuchsia, red, purple, blue and yellow. Number nineteen, a work closest to the gallery's front door, features interlocking circles and the word "Om" in a way that underscores Iorga's precision and appreciation for life's interconnectedness, an impression confirmed in an interview. The bottom two circles on this work of circles inside a circle resemble a fried egg, indicating the artist's playfulness.

Born in Moldova in 1981, Iorga spent part of her childhood in Romania. She came to the U.S. three years ago, earning a master's degree in printmaking from the University of Iowa. The move to this country prompted a change in her artwork to the abstract. "My art has changed a lot from dark, black-and-white angst expressionism toward a more vibrant color palette," said this California resident in an interview with this writer, adding that the colors she uses express her mood at the time of creation.

Foreign influences and words like "Om" pop up consistently in her work. "In my art pieces, I use different patterns from cultures located on opposite corners of the world," she says "My inspiration for these patterns comes from Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Romanian folk

motifs, and African art, as well as art from Papua New Guinea. Also I love inventing my own alphabet that looks mostly Japanese because I love the fluidity of Japanese calligraphy. All these patterns overlap the sphere, the golden shape, which is a symbol for me of the innate divine core in every human."

Much like Frida Kahlo, the Mexican painter known for her self-portraits of admirable endurance in the face of physical pain, Iorga uses her artwork as a means of delving into who she is and what she values. Her interests include the common qualities of major religions, primarily their belief in the concept of unconditional love shown to every person. Using symbolism from ancient cultures in her work is "an attempt to enrich my universal knowledge," the artist explains.

"My art has always been a mirror of myself, of my thoughts and emotional patterns as well as my intellectual interest of that moment. What I do is let those emotions and thoughts flow freely onto the work surface."

Dates of show: March 19 - April 12, 2010

Where: Ellen Charapko Gallery
2374 Wilton Drive
Wilton Manors, Florida 33305
Contact: 954/547-9014 - telephone

www.ellencharapkogallery.com

<<http://www.ellencharapkogallery.com/>> - website