

Carmen Cologan: Primeval water

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“And the animals couldn’t speak and only emitted sounds, grunts, cries, they cackled and made noises that said, voh, voh, as if rain were falling.”

Popol Vuh xxxviii

The recent work of Carmen Cologan, that the artist has gathered under the significant title of *The Fall* (La Caída), shows us the initial stage of a project, that beginning with the relationship between memory and water, has as its aim an ambitious investigation of those elements that deform and edify, destroy and compose the image of life, particularly that of terrestrial man.

Cologan dwells on the waters of celestial descent, on that benevolent yet implacable meteorite that lies hidden under the surface of one of the most ingrained memories of human kind.

These works, where matter and visual feel define the whole of expression, hold a mutant communion with light, allowing us to see archaic, sonorous calligraphies, to hear the subtle rumour of ancient tongues apparently lost, buried in the vague contours of books covered by the dust of centuries.

As if they were baked clay tablets, the artefacts of Carmen Cologan contain ancient literatures and their multiple references to the eras of the great floods, to the damp and primitive genesis of man reborn, after his mysterious fall from grace.

That lukewarm polychrome lime that she spreads over her works must have an appearance similar to that other, “which all human kind had become”, when the waters retreated and Ut-Napish-tum, Gilgamesh’s ancestor, opened the hatch of its ship ran aground in the rocks of Mount Nisir. Carmen Cologan is unravelling the history of man through her own truth, the flesh of the universe. The clay of akkadic scripture that resembles birds’ feet on wet sand conserved as a fragile, though frequently long-lived document, in the ruins of sumerian palaces.

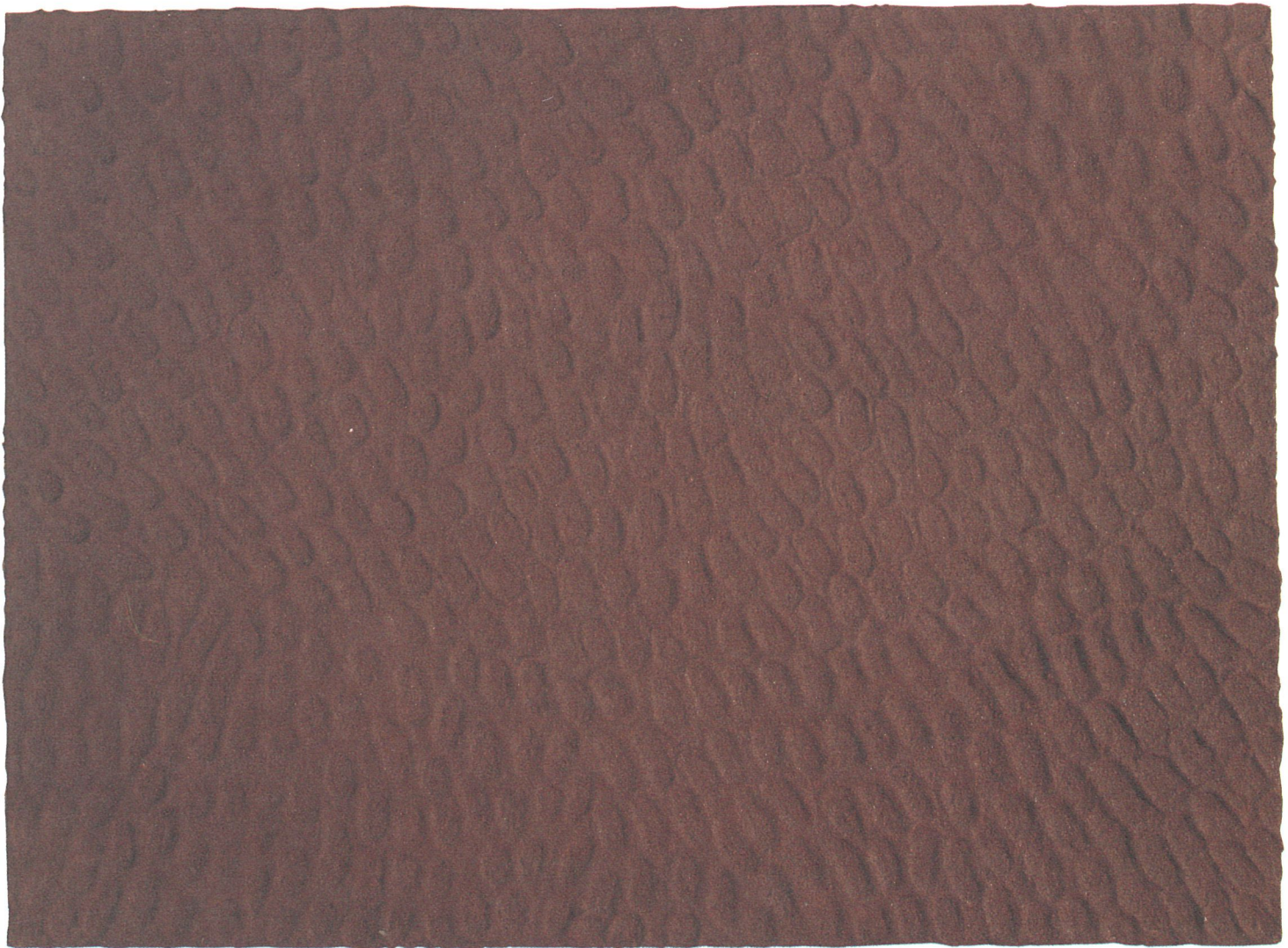
Intelligent clay covered with lime, roofed over with lime. “The countryside seemed like a huge roof” says the epic poem of Gilgamesh. And in the long run, a territory that longs for a name, to be recreated, that seeks, like the babylonian hero, the divine privilege of survival.

The rain and the footprint of its naked feet. Rain drops and their diverse imprint, pores, furrows, scars, grooves in the soft stone of the skin. The puddle and the diminutive yet torrential line. Arms and armour washed up by the waters after the fight, appear, once chaos has been set aside, exceptionally ordered in the fields of the absurd battle. Bodies dissolved in the long river beds, in muddy pools and in the minute tributaries of the river of existence’s new body.

The stigmata that characterize the fall of man and rain, are manipulated by Cologan in order to immobilise landscape, that now still and fragmented in time, is observed with minute ritual love by the artist.

The ochre clay gives way in other works to black, white, grey-blue, colours of organic combustion. The man made out of earth by the Creator-Form Giver dissolved upon contact with water. He hadn’t been fired by the warm breath of the gods, says the Popol Vuh. He was inexpressive and he lacked movement. He thus couldn’t praise his maker, and specularly, christen himself. For that reason he was destroyed. The Maker then fashioned man out of tzité wood and carved him a mouth so he could praise him. He spoke but his mouth was dry, he was depressed, heavy of hand and foot, pale in the cheeks. However he was able to multiply on earth. But they forgot their creator. Then a great flood of burning pitch, tar and resin flared up and annihilated them, turning them into dry tinder and they became the ancestors of the corn man.

The earthy wheat of bread and its equal the white meat of maize. The mesoasiatic and indian eucharists. The liturgy of day break that transmutes the crude act of swallowing into a slow amarous activity.



Carmen Cóloman.

Wells, pitch bogs, quintaessence of decomposed life, that protects the dampness of the Mesopotamian libraries. The circular cycle closes in on itself. A nuclear drop. A liquid precipice that drowns the placid daydreams of the first historical man.

Carmen Cóloman's work is imbued with that mystico-religious concern that Robert Rosenblum traces back to Blake and Friedrich, among other peers of nordic romanticism, and continues with Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko.

If Newman uses the bysection of a colour field by means of an incandescent and vertical beam of light, suggesting an atmosphere of primeval creation that expresses the advent of order over chaos with an "overwhelming symmetry", in order to express something uncanny, definitive and irreducible

about nature, Cóloman penetrates the essence of mystery. She doesn't suggest the occult, she feels it, she swallows it. What is represented in Newman's work is here presented. The secret delicacies aren't described through visual experience, they are laid down on the table or on the altar.

It would seem as if the pristine evocation of the aesthetic sacrifice, devouring flesh as the last means of possessing oneself and the other, of final enlightenment, had to be washed clean with the living waters of forgiveness. The artist, who during her childhood shared with other curious beings the need to ingest the substance which, in mythical memory, composed her body, didn't want to or wasn't able to abandon the cannibalistic land of the banquet. The painting is served.

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