

CASSANDRA LAING

A spectral blush

Luminous, opaque and inviting a quiet surreality which transfixes the eye, Laing's images offer testimony to the unseen patterns of life. These enigmatic and beautiful paintings are rich with the hidden potency of dissemblance. Smudges of wispy bands and tendrils of light drift in the cosmic dark. Galaxies measured in light years and colour burst as laughter across a face to disintegrate and reform like islands in the immensity of space. Spinning, contracting, exploding stars cluster into galaxies of shapes that resemble rings, butterflies and spirals. Andromeda is a spiral galaxy two million light years from earth. Beyond, lies the realm of the nebulae eight billion light-years from Earth - halfway to the edge of the known universe. Enter a world of drift and tide, supernovae and flickering black holes. Here the visible and distant collude with the tangible and sensible.

Between the corporeal and constellation there is a lingering sense of shared origins – of a vast galaxial scape unfolding – of substance in metamorphosis and identity in flux and transformation. Nebulas are the birthplace of stars and planets and body.

Paint applied in speckles and drips denotes stars and interstellar dust at the edge of experience and knowledge. The painted glance, like the open stare of a child, is a mirror without memory – a timeless moment reflected in an opaque white gleam. Like eyes, this material acts as a gesture of looks sent out like traces from the depths of our imagination. A ceaseless disincarnation. We imagine they return our look... this light that will have no existence outside the eye.

In the intergalactic world space is virtually starved of substance. Black envelopes of silence create an accidental heterogeneous space of parts, fractions and voids. We leave the familiar ground of what is known - heard and half-heard - suspended in an infinite reflection of space that holds no center. Between the waves, between one thought and the next, are moments without duration. Blackness signifies darkness and illumination - the mysteries of spiritual intuition at the limits of vision. Embedded in space-time we recognise the material of spectacularity. Enlightenment. That which lies beyond ordinary human understanding. Wonder.

Painting offers an illusion – a reflective boundary to boundless space, a mimesis that reveals the apparent fixity and solidity of the 'real' as seeming and contingent and fluid. Laing's photographic approach to source imagery gathers the specific and universal - the child's snapshot with colour images compiled by the Hubble telescope – to move beyond the level of vision. Images dialogue with the instant, fixed in time and space, and a fluid state to offer a distant vantage that allows the self to merge with what connects us. The anticipated imagined, the ancient remembered... In this shifting universe the paths of others and the singularity of events become one.

Confusing the glance, Laing's forms are neither discovered nor revealed, just attended. The pleasures and terrors inherent in manipulations of scale dissimulate sight. Cataclysmic and dissolving, expanding and growing - the chimera-like illusion of substantial form signals impermanence. Samskara. An imperceptible bundled movement that appears as a stillness.

A spiritual rhythm and a space for contemplation - it is a movement which cannot be described as passage from beginning to end – an oscillation in which what may arise also grants its own disappearance. Quantum theory understands subatomic particles in terms of dynamism and interaction - as possibility patterns interconnecting in an inseparable cosmic web. Energy enfolds matter and meaning. Never quiescent, matter is in a state of constant motion.¹

Stars throw off dust and colours that signify stages of transformation and change. Blue stars are hot and young, yellow and red are dying and small white or black stars are in the final throes of death.² The colours are those of your primordial mind – your own projection. All substances are your own mind – radiantly displayed.³ Each image, a portrait likeness of the self.

After falling asleep, when dreams begin.

Martina Copley 2002

¹ Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, Boston, 1991, p. 203.

² Carl Sagan, *Cosmos*, Los Angeles, 1980, p.23.

³ Sogal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, London, 2002, p.301.