

Trilogy Of Where The Two Oceans Meet



Ahmed Moustafa strongly holds that the true artist in any objective tradition, should not shirk his responsibility to act as a persuasive tool of ethical and spiritual guidance. Such an artist helps us to bring back the dispersed elements of our souls to a point of unity. He points always to the Real, to the immutable essence behind the successive layers or veils of secondary phenomena. By displaying beautiful and harmonious forms, the artist awakens the heart, for, as Kashani writes, “Like an isthmus (barzakh), it [the Heart] became the intermediary between the sea of the spirit and the sea of the soul. It stood at their meeting place... Wherever the Heart sees beauty it clings to it, and wherever it finds loveliness it embraces it. It is never without an object of gaze, a beloved, a heart’s ease.”

The Trilogy Of Where The Two Oceans Meet expresses the Tao of Islam, the harmonious co-existence of complementary opposites and the creative tension between them. Not only does this composition symbolize the isthmus between the two oceans, that “meeting-place” of mutual respect, co-operation, consent, balance and complementarity, but it also acts as a bridging zone, awakening that “sense of something far more deeply interfused,” and pointing to the perfection of God in whose singularity all opposites are united. Looking through the veils of innumerable forms of teeming, exuberant life in the luminous ocean of this painting, we see the joy and the light coming from behind like a stained glass window, a hint of the unknowable Reality which was before the letter, when no letter was.

And all who see this tapestry, whether they understand the text or not, will receive this hint in some form which will move them and in some way which they can interpret for themselves, for all, in truth, are seeking the hidden treasure, and all, to some degree, are capable of contemplating in forms the trace of the formless. Here is not a stern, forceful pointing to a steep mountain which can never be climbed or a remote oceanic depth which can never be plumbed, but a gentle pointing to a nearness to God which can be gradually approached, nearer and nearer as veil after veil falls away to reveal ever more refined beauties. So inviting does Ahmed Moustafa make this ocean that many viewers remark that they would dearly love to “dive” into the composition. These lines of Rumi could have been written as a response to it:

In the ocean are many bright strands
and many dark strands like veins that are seen
when a wing is lifted up.
Your hidden self is blood in those, those veins
that are lute strings that make ocean music,
not the sad edge of surf, but the sound of no shore.

In the Trilogy Of Where The Two Oceans Meet, Ahmed Moustafa reveals in visual terms the central paradox of all mystical experience, that God is both absent and present, “utterly remote in His limitless glory” (Qur’an 59:23) and yet “closer to you than your jugular vein” (50:16). In Islam, this paradox is expressed in the contrast between *tanzih*, or incomparability, and *tashbih*, or similarity.

title: Trilogy of Where Two Oceans Meet
artist: Ahmed Moustafa,
size: 368 cm x 454cm (height x width)
medium: Tapestry
woven: 2011 by Les Ateliers Pinton in Felletin, Aubusson, France.
note: This tapestry is one of a kind (1/1) – there are no editions.