

EXHIBITION NEWSLETTER

The Dialogue of Difference

Recent drawings by Filomena Coppola

Wednesday 10 September to Saturday 4 October 2003

c o p p o l a



Pulsate
Ink and Acrylic on paper
80h x 120w cm
2003

Rapprochement

A large 1997 pastel drawing [titled Duet] by Filomena Coppola hangs in my bedroom. From time to time it hangs in the hall, or the living room. Wherever it is, it succeeds in creating its own quiet, breathing space, content to adorn, but always rewarding a closer look at its simultaneously sumptuous and subtle colours and allusive semi-figurative shapes.

The works in this show continue Coppola's central interest in rapprochement, in the reconciliation of oppositions in harmonious dialogue. Breathe in, breathe out. Systole, diastole. Male, female. Nature, culture: the movement of waves, warp and weft. Light, shadow. Black, white (the snowy landscapes of a Pennsylvanian winter). Closeness, distance.

Luxuriance and minimalism meet in these works. While they read as sparse from a distance, their highly worked surfaces contain depths of fine detail. Coppola acknowledges the influence of the American sculptor Richard Serra, who in Robert Hughes' words 'wanted to find a way past Minimalist purity by invoking the human body and its anxieties in weight, mass and hard work with heavy materials.' Coppola, in her own take, invokes the human body and its pleasures in these minimalist yet sensuous drawings, which invite both visual and tactile exploration. Richly embellished layers of colour resonate, and black and white meet in soft sinuous strokes.

Op art elements also enhance the viewer's pleasure and engagement. The eight sections in 'Pulsate' push together and apart, their folds ripple in and out, while those hairy Caravaggio-red platelets? amoebas? beans? jump and hum. The eight sections remain separate, but dance together in a playful expression of Coppola's core theme, the dialogue of difference. This show demonstrates Coppola's increasingly deft and beautiful weaving of variations on this theme.

Helen Verity Hewitt 2003