

Charlotte Culot

For collagist Charlotte Culot, color is both sustenance and expression. Non-objective in form, geometric in its organization of shape and space, the work maintains an attachment to the world—her world—through experience, feeling, and memory. Each painting is richly colored scaffolding for the spirit.

"Before, I was working instinctually with color, with no consciousness of its purpose. I realized that the color that comes to me, what I feel, is where I am standing with my soul. My body, my spirit, my soul needs this color. I need to be filled with the energy of the color itself. It's 'energetical,' the vibrations of the color in me. It's not intellectual."

Culot's internal order rests on the ancient system of the

chakras, the seven basic energy centers in the body. The chakras also correlate to levels of consciousness, archetypal elements, developmental stages of life, and colors. Wherever she is in her life, her instincts know perfectly what her spirit needs to see, and that color appears in her work. "When my body is finished with a color, the body of work is finished," she says. The artwork is an outward manifestation of the inner journey, the soul work.

Speaking of her influences, Culot refers to her kinship with American abstract expressionist Mark Rothko, known for his color field paintings, through which he sought, not to represent spiritual experience, but to create it. Rothko was

working unconsciously over the chakras, Culot explains. "To build a house, a body of work, one needs a system, a way to organize unconscious experience, inside first, then outside. At the end, when he was finished with all the color, he was left with only black. He was blocked and had nowhere to go."

Culot was born in Belgium and works in Provence, in the mountains. "Nature is my necessity," she says. "I am dying without nature. I need to be related to the elements." She alternates between traveling and painting. "Travel fills me with energy, then I return home and paint. Like maternity. What I have seen and experienced, I then deliver."

Viewing the recent exhibition of Culot's work at Art Cabinet Nantucket, under the direction of Doerte Neudert, collector and salon owner, one observes the painter's internal cycling through the paradigm of inner balance. The balance comes from the warmth of reds, corals, oranges, and pinks connected to

Back from Islands—courtesy Charlotte Culot



P.H. GRAND



Suite rose—courtesy Charlotte Culot

the physical plane in *Soy Como Soy*—inspired by her journey to Chile—through the deep blues of higher awareness in the Oceanic series. “The sea is where I go for a more spiritual level of being. I melt through the blue in the ocean.”

Culot’s art education began under the guidance of her father, a renowned sculptor in Belgium, and her mother, a book illustrator. She studied archeology, art history, and anthropology at the University of Louvain in Belgium, writing on African vernacular architecture for her thesis. She was first involved in experimental photography, but in time found that watching was not enough. She had to act, to express what she was feeling and what she was receiving. Culot searched for a way to *enter* the material. Like Rothko, she sought to be surrounded by and immersed in the work, and began painting in 1990.

Her paintings are developed through layer upon layer of shapes torn from strong brown Kraft paper and painted with water-based gouache and powder pigments. Sometimes she incorporates sand, ashes from the stove, or other organic materials. The matte base gives more depth, more relief, and a rich texture. It unifies the story under every color. In her art-making, Culot practices an archaeology of the mystery of body and spirit through shape, texture, space, and—most intensely—color.

“My identity is to try to be a better person everyday, live artistically, and send a message through painting. I try to follow the invisible

string of the heart that connects me to everything. Your heart knows. I try to develop my soul more and more. I could let everything go but that. I don’t consider myself as an artist. We can swim in many different ponds.”—Rena Lindstrom

Charlotte Culot’s work can be seen at the Art Cabinet Nantucket, 2 Union Street, 508-325-7202, www.artcabinet.com.

Passage—courtesy Charlotte Culot

