

A selection of Monica Dengo's latest work will be on display at "**Le geste suspendu. Calligraphie contemporaine**" - an international exhibition presented by Christine Macé - at Château de Vogüe (France) at the end of September 2009.

www.chateaudevogue.net

I HANDWRITE, therefore I AM.

A portrait of Monica Dengo – Artist and Calligrapher.

by Teresita Scalco

translated by Justin Fabris

Signs, gestures, sound, words, body, life, lines, movement, dance and rhythm: These are elements that characterise Monica Dengo's work. She starts with the precision and perspective of a graphic artist and then expresses herself in a completely unique, fresh and original way. She has enjoyed success and in many different parts of the world due to her innovative approach to calligraphy from Western culture.

As Jenny Holzer said, "I write, therefore I am. Dengo continues with, "I handwrite, therefore I am." Monica has clear ideas; "I believe that our handwriting is both a strong means of communication of our humanity and I see the act of writing as a way of showing our existence. An act that has profound significance per se and not only in what is written and the verbal message that it carries."

Free handwriting - the hand frees the writing and it becomes an act of pure emotion no longer simply connected to the rigid meaning of words. Like the project - "Body as dream" that was then photographed by Marco Ambrosi – where the simple Hebrew letters "aleph" e "beth" cover a nude and merge together into one complete form.

Monica Dengo has studied both traditional and contemporary handwriting and her understanding of the old and modern is what allows her to express her new form of art – one that is sadly not yet appreciated in the Western world as much as in the far East. Monica first studied and then worked closely with Thomas Ingmere. Primitive cave art, Greek and Roman letters, Gothic, Renaissance, XVII-XVIII century archives, letters written by Venetian women in the early 1900s, graffiti, calligraphy, sheet music and even shopping lists: these are many of the things in which Monica finds inspiration. Her absorbing contemporary styles like Yu-Ichi Inowe, Christian Dotremont, Sherin Neshat, Joan Mitchell e Franz Kline, together with her own work makes it highly original. Monica works to bridge the cultural gap between handwriting and art that we have in the West, towards respecting Western calligraphy as equally as Japanese and Arab calligraphy.

During her workshops she gently guides her students, allowing them through movement to let go of conventional rigidity and out of a silent calm begin to hear

the voices of pens, brushes, pencils that move on paper, the sound of thick ink that is absorbed softly into the very pores of the paper. The same simple exercises are repeated slowly while relaxing and experimenting with the use of space. The writer Italo Calvino said that he had included “imagination” in his list of things to save. He believed that we were running the risk of losing the human faculty of visualizing colours and forms from black lines of letters on white pages – using the mind's eye. The fluid movement of handwriting frees both our bodies and our minds and allow us to express our artistic individuality. Consciously searching for and finding the simple daily gesture of handwriting can become an exercise in Zen, a Koan.

“When writing is no longer legible is it still writing?” asks Dengo. In fact she distances herself from the conventional definition of calligraphy – the art of writing beautifully. She sustains that even illegible handwriting shows thoughts of who we are: “Remember to treasure our mistakes, they mirror us and our humanity.” The famous Eugenio Montale also once said that it was impossible to describe the human soul with mere words but that even simple words could help us explore the unknown and mysterious.

If every atom can contain a universe, every letter could contain a story, then every word could hold the essence of soul and every movement of the hand a part of the infinite.

International Workshops in 2009:

The art of writing by hand: “L’arte di scrivere a mano”, Museo Correr, Venice.
21-28 August 2009

For further information: www.museiciviviceneziani.it

“Books by hand”, Biblioteca di Arezzo, Italy. 10 - 17 October 2009

For further information: www.monicadengo.com