Grace Bakst Wapner at Lockwood Gallery

A Response

By Fred Duignan

The experience of being drawn into the work of Ms. Wapner’s five silk fabric wall hangings, executed in 2021, was more a gratifying manifestation, a secretive glimpse then a simple disclosure. Each piece’s conscious material layering, delicate color manipulation, personal laborious needle work and cutout application, as well as profound moments of aesthetic abandon left this viewer with a feeling that I was somewhere I had no right to be. Vulnerable, yet powerful and assured, their roentgenogram-like insight invited an explorative journey through each surface where four of the works’ fluttering openings read as surgical incisions, identify themselves as self-inflicted welcoming wounds. I proceeded inward, in a pedestrian straight line that quickly caught me in a quiet storm of vibrational complexity.

The work titled Blue, Gray Split revealed an inner light that I identified as possible spiritual enlightenment. The echo within the space of the outer cutting as a delicate line reinforced the risk and reward I sensed when entering. The work titled Gray, Pink, Orange Passage presented a more difficult space beyond the cut. Almost threatening in its deeply spotted sanguine interior, Ms Wapner mitigated the danger with appliques of natural shapes at the entryway, offering safe crossing with these talismans as protection for any who dare enter. What I believe to be the most personal work Pink, Black Rose featured a deeply embedded red presence inside the layers sitting atop the almost closed laceration of entre identifiable as the stem of the flower. Vibrating within the interior of what had now become a recognizable matrix, it communicated as soft petals while pulsing like a beating heart in memorial to profound love.

More than inspiration, these mature artworks’ power derived from a sense of self with no fear of harm through their masterful insistence of being.