



SOPHIA VARI

Forms and Colors

**Book signing and
Opening Reception:**

Tuesday, October 18th from 6 - 8 p.m.

October 19 – November 19, 2016

SOPHIA VARI: FORMS AND COLORS will be on view at Nohra Haime Gallery from October 19th to November 19th and will include sculpture, collages, bas-reliefs and paintings. FORMS AND COLORS, a new publication on the artist with text by Carter Ratcliff, will be available during

the exhibition and the artist and writer will be signing the book on October 18th from 6 to 8 p.m.

“Vari’s work in bronze and in marble is stark and it is involuted; it is massive and it is delicate; it is imposing and it is elusive. Reconciling these opposites with sure-handed inspiration, she charges each of her works with the aura of aesthetic purity that abstract art is uniquely able to generate.

Though theories of aesthetic purity try to prevent it, we inevitably associate abstract forms with emotional qualities. If we say that a lake is serene, that a mountain is majestic, we can hardly avoid attributing comparable feeling to Vari’s works—especially when there is reason to believe that she invites interpretations of this sort.

No matter how intricately refined their structures, Vari’s three-dimensional works have the stability—and the substantiality—of monuments. When she moves into two dimensions, the artist undergoes a change of mood. The precise considerations that shape her sculptures give way, in her collages, to a spirit of improvisation.

As a collagist, she displays certain affinities with an architect: a feeling for the principle of beam and balance, of foundation and superstructure. Unlike an architect, she is unconstrained by gravity. The freedom granted by this medium affects her palette as well as her compositions. Vari understands collage as a realm of possibility, not necessity. No rigid logic dictates the placement of form in this medium; nor do recalcitrant materials impose any restraints. Overlapping on a flat surface, the constituents of her collages create imaginary spaces and inflect them with endless nuance, drawing us into labyrinths not baffling but self-illuminating.

Between Vari's sculptures and her collages we find bas-reliefs cast from epoxy. As in her collages, forms are layered; yet they originate in the three-dimensions of her bronzes. Columnar shapes in the bas-reliefs are partially flattened, as are some but not all of the circular ones; so these works offer an interplay of the spherical and the disc-like. Flat planes are more plentiful in the bas-reliefs, which we approach from a single point of view, than in the bronze sculptures, which invite us to see them in the round. The comparative flatness of the bas-reliefs can be understood as the compression caused by a distant viewpoint, for shapes lose much of their dimensionality when they are seen from far away. Of course, distance here is imaginary, not actual. Infusing these works with metaphors of space, Vari nonetheless preserves the clarity of plane and edge. Consequently, we can see the bas-reliefs not only as distant but also as very near—as if, in their minutely balanced precision, they were miniatures. Either way, these sculptures maintain their crystalline focus.

The shapes in Vari's works on canvas have a cousinly relationship to those of the bas-reliefs, though their painted surfaces are completely flat. Shadows, as a result, are not actual but depicted. Vari also transposes collage into painting. Yet her paintings never simply represent her collages, which occupy a distinctive place in her oeuvre by virtue of their improvisatory air and the rough edges of some of their pasted papers. In fact, she stakes out a separate terrain for each of her mediums: collage, mixed-media, painting, bas-relief, and sculpture. Moving with ease from one to another, she adapts her harmonies to the visual environment of whichever medium she happens to be employing. Versatile and yet always recognizable, her repertory of shapes gives her entire oeuvre a unity that echoes on a grand scale the harmonies she achieves in individual works."

- Carter Ratcliff

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FOR MORE INFORMATION: Leslie Garrett at galler@nohrahaimegallery.com or 212-888-3550