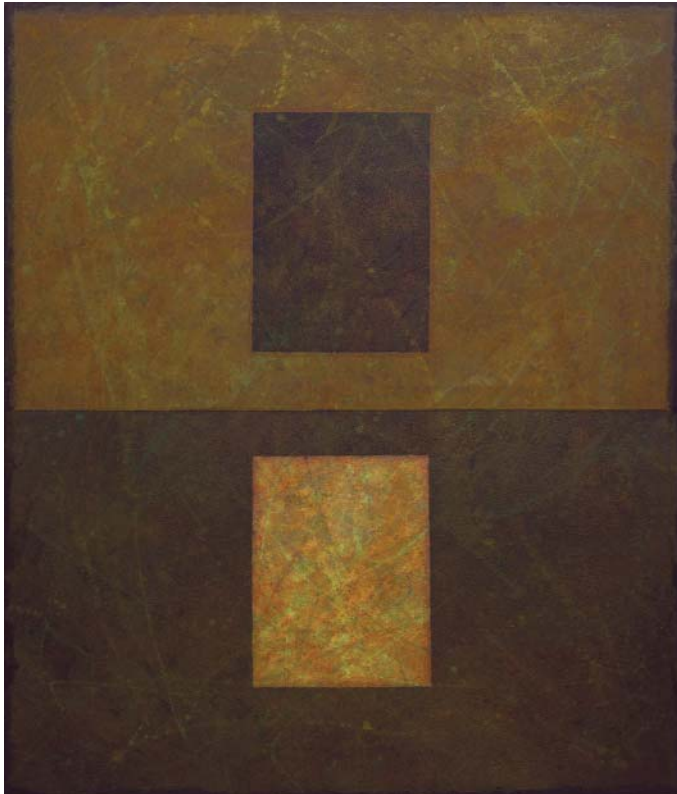


**Burton Marinkovich** Fine Art



Washington, DC. 1-28-05 / 2-25-05

**Vicente Pascual** Cantus Absconditus

## Vicente Pascual **Cantus Absconditus**

"I grow old ... I grow old ...  
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.  
Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?  
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.  
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each."  
*T.S. Eliot*

Many years ago, during the late 1980s, as the art world was in its heyday presenting work inspired by Baudrillard's simulationist theories, I wandered the New York galleries with artist, friend and critic J.W. Mahoney. An especially bleak afternoon filled with exhibitions of unrelenting ironic posturing provoked him to turn to me, pull at his hair, and cry out, "Can't artists hear any more what a sweet music there is playing?"

To hear this inner music and stand by its plaintive melody, its internal rhythm and its crafted structure is a resolute act of artistic defiance in a contemporary art world that is increasingly molded by global markets and fashion world dynamics. It may be an unhappy disease of our postmodern era that we anesthetized ourselves to those once cherished poetic ideals. Indeed it could be argued that universally accepted eternal truths are now the dissected remains, or sinister sacrificial offerings, on the operating tables of academic philosophy departments. Artist Vicente Pascual is one of those lingering iconoclasts who disdains the novelty of temporal culture and its insistence on constant contextualizing, with its attendant navel-gazing and bag of aesthetic tricks. The era that sprung from the post-Industrial age and then morphed into the post-Information age over the past century may be noted for its singular obsession with embracing whatever is new. And yet, in the long run, art is not a race. Even if it were, just remember the story of the tortoise and the hare.

Pascual's abstract geometric paintings steadfastly examine universal truths through a lean though subtle visual language formed of essentialized symbolic forms. Their monastic presence references Platonic archetypes, although Pascual has brought them outside of the cave into the arena of an art object. He imposes an ascetic set of formal parameters on himself that nonetheless contain a logic and grace as spare yet moving as Gregorian chant. Part of the strength of these works is that

they can signify, like a maddening mirror, everything and nothing - each with its own unique lyricism. Deeply versed in metaphysical inquiries, Pascual consciously negotiates the slippery dance between form and content, the power of giving visual form to an ineffable concept. From one bias, these shimmering rectangles on their layered earthen grounds mediate a Neo-platonic realm

between an earthly and an atemporal existence, owing their theosophist lineage to medieval icon paintings. Another viewpoint could regard his carefully limned circles as decodable semaphores for an intellectual concept of the godhead, a nod to Russian constructivist principles. A formal approach may eschew all humanist meaning, choosing rather to indulge in symmetry's commanding perceptual gestalt.

Pascual has spent many years of his life investigating the aesthetic motifs of nomadic people, the roots of sacred and mystical traditions, and the divergent philosophical arguments about the relationship between man and the divine. For him, these vast influences have fueled an artistic research resulting in a pictorial expression that marries physical perception to non-physical transcendence. Pascual filters the baking earth of Spanish plains, the somber purity of Romanesque structures, the mesmerizing tracery of Islamic patterns, and the linear pictographs of tribal cultures through an alchemical sensibility, reducing and essentializing this rich brew into art objects of potent simplicity. One could call these artworks philosopher's stones. And just as philosophers' stones contain hidden secrets available to those with pure and open hearts, these paintings contain hidden music available to all who open themselves to hear the dark song within.

*Andrea Pollan, Washington DC, 2005*



Consonantia et Adequatio XXXI, 2004. Mixed media, 12" by 36"

## **Burton Marinkovich Fine Art**

1629 21<sup>st</sup> Street NW

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Opening Reception

Friday, January 28<sup>th</sup>, 7-9 pm

Gallery hours: Tuesday-Saturday 11-6

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Front: Lapis Exilii XIV, 2004.  
Mixed media on canvas, dyptich 56" by 48"