

Skip, jump, et grand plié

Konstanze Seifert

Ray Malone

Skip, jump, *and a deep bow*. As in ballet. The surging movement, its exhilaration and speed briefly interrupted, for a downward *sweep*—the forehead almost to the floor, followed by the arm, the hand elegantly outstretched, the forefinger slightly extended. A curving arabesque balanced over the floor. And then, *grand plié*! And on it goes. Ray Malone's paintings and drawings are also rather like a ballet, they dance.

They dance, for all their straight lines, because the severity of the composition, the logic of the underlying system, in short the idea that carries it all, is so fundamental that it can easily surrender, overcome itself to dissolve into movement. Then it quivers and trembles.

The quivering movement is provoked by the element of chance, the throw of the dice. This is where Ray Malone hands over the idea, the system, on which it is all based, to something outside itself; he breaks its power so as to surrender it and himself to something beyond his control. That is the moment when plan and chance, the system and the unforeseeable, ego and superego (greater than the ego) meet and invite us to dance. *Then* the picture dances. The impish ease, the twinkle of the eye, the gaiety with which the work challenges the viewer - these are the gentle witnesses to this encounter.

To see Malone's work as the meeting of two spheres is in itself to touch its limits, the point where the one blends into the other. The aim is to let the real and the possible come together. He deliberately invites chance and the indeterminate *into* the system, allowing the unknown to infiltrate it.

And what does this show us? It shows us that reality isn't nearly as fixed as it always pretends to be, the viewer has only to change the context, invite it to be different—and this has nothing to do with metaphysics, but rather with courage and consistency. One can go beyond the given—the dice shows us that. It shows us that the system isn't everything, that every picture has a space beside it and around it to which it directly refers, which it quietly addresses and of which it softly speaks.

Indeed, Malone's drawings and paintings display a great quiet. They draw back, roguishly, from all the straining, the harsh lights, the loud noise, the incessant, desperate struggle for a scrap of attention. They need none of this, because they have their own fundamental, supportive ideas. Ideas such as: What does a line do when set down regularly at varying distances and in different strengths on a sheet of white paper? What happens to a colour if, when it's spread over various intervals, three of its values begin to "converse" with each other? What does a picture "do" at its edge, and *with* its edge? How does it meet the wall on which it's displayed?

They're all only small questions, but they're important. It's important to think about the line, because it can be said to reflect a whole world.

Ray Malone's works don't come trumpeting to us about art, they don't try to push themselves forward. His art is a reference that springs from the question about the subject. The respect behind this question is entirely due to the issue itself, to what the material, finally the work of art itself, *can say* and *wants* to say. So, the works aren't shy, don't try to hide, on the contrary, they stand there, dignified, entirely true to their genre; they quiver, give expression and say, simply: Look here, listen—*hopp, hopp, et grand plié!*

Translated by Eileen Martin

Ray Malone