

April 26, 2017

KING KONG

DOMENICO ZINDATO

THE SELF-TAUGHT ITALIAN ARTIST DOMENICO ZINDATO WAS BORN IN REGGIO CALABRIA, IN SOUTHERN ITALY. IN THE 1980S, HE STUDIED LAW AT A UNIVERSITY IN ROME. HOWEVER, HE CHANGED HIS FOCUS TO CINEMA AND THEATER STUDIES BEFORE ENDING HIS ACADEMIC CAREER. THEN HE BEGAN TRAVELING AND MAKING ART.



JUST BEFORE THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION, AT THE END OF THE COLD WAR ERA, ZINDATO MOVED TO BERLIN. DURING HIS EIGHT-YEAR-LONG STAY THERE, HE TRAVELED TO INDIA AND MOROCCO, AND AROUND EUROPE. HE BEGAN MAKING PAINTINGS WITH COLORED INKS ON WATERCOLOR PAPER, *WASHI* (TRADITIONAL JAPANESE PAPER) AND OTHER HANDMADE PAPERS.



ZINDATO'S ART IS QUIET AND MEDITATIVE. FROM A DISTANCE, HIS RHYTHMIC COMPOSITIONS RESEMBLE ORGANIC FORMS. VIEWED UP CLOSE, THEY REVEAL THAT THEY ARE MADE UP OF FINE, ELABORATE PATTERNS. THE ARTIST'S DRAWINGS BRING TO MIND VARIOUS OTHER ART FORMS, INCLUDING NORTH-INDIAN MINIATURES AND THE ANIMAL MOTIFS ON THE WALLS OF PREHISTORIC CAVES. ZINDATO SAYS THAT, WHEN HE IS MAKING HIS DRAWINGS, HE FEELS AS THOUGH HE IS IN A TRANCE.

When did you live and work in Berlin?

Zindato: I moved to Berlin from Italy at the end of 1988. After several years, I moved to Mexico in 1996. First I lived in Mexico City, then I moved to the city of Cuernavaca, south of the Mexican capital, where I live and work today.

What did you do during your time in Berlin?

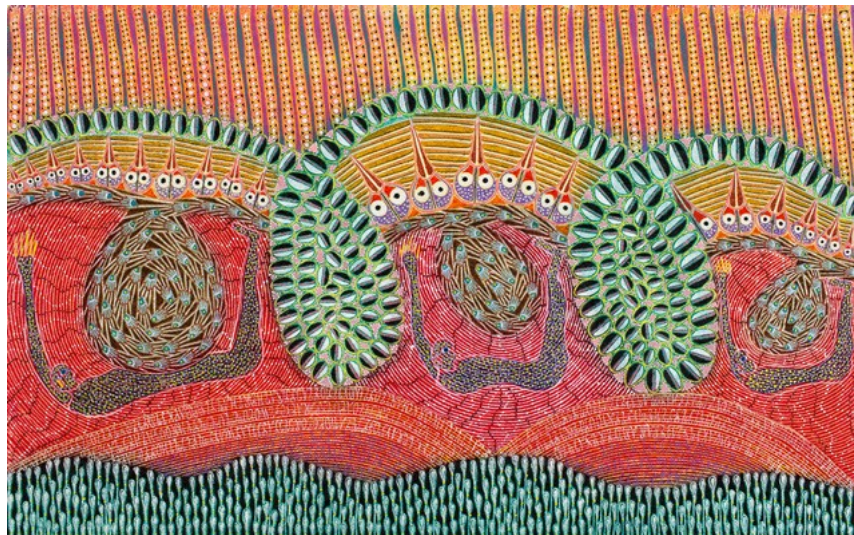
Zindato: At music clubs and other places, I organized parties and decorated the party spaces in special ways. I also participated in many performances that I created and that other artist friends created. These events were something between performance art and a kind of Dada-surrealist cabaret.

In Berlin, I also acted in underground-theater productions. However, my main artistic activity was making staged photographs, which included all of my previous creative activities blended together: I built the sets for the photographs, and people in those images acted, just as they would in a performance. These images were *tableaux vivants*.

At that time, what aspects of the atmosphere or cultural scene in Berlin inspired your art-making activities?

Zindato: I was interested in Berlin's subcultures, its underground, its independent scene, and anything that was considered to be weird, hidden, eccentric, wild, grotesque or excessive. I was not interested in the mainstream and I was not interested in old clichés about Berlin.

During that period, I was deeply involved with the city's underground art scene but I was also looking at large museum exhibitions. I liked going to see movies and to the theater. Music grabbed my attention, especially the new, then-emerging sounds of house-techno-electronic-rave music.



When did you start making the detailed patterns that have become the most familiar characteristic of your later, mature works?

Zindato: They began to emerge around 1998. However, in a much looser way, they already were present and visible in my drawings starting in the late 1980s. Around that time, they appeared in black ink and sometimes in red or gold.

How do you begin to make a new drawing? Do you begin with a particular composition in mind or do you let a composition develop naturally and organically?

Zindato: With my fingers, I start by rubbing different patches of color with soft pastels onto a sheet of paper. Then I preserve that color with a fixative spray and begin drawing with a metal nib pen or with very fine brushes using colored inks or acrylic. The colorful backgrounds of my drawings emerge intuitively and rarely as a result of a prior vision or dream of a particular composition. The painting-drawing that follows the preparation of a colorful background generates itself, each square centimeter by each square centimeter.

In recent years, you have spoken about the spiritual aspects of your art. Is the spiritual aspect of making art important to you?

Zindato: I feel that a “spiritual” or “mystical” aspect has always been part of my art. In recent years, I have noticed that both the source of my creative process and the resulting form of my artistic expression have reached a more dynamic level. I feel such a continuum of creative energy as I am working that, in effect, as I am making a work of art, at the same time I am that work of art. The art-making process and myself become one. In turn, viewers who examine my works activate them with their own energy. Through the art, together we share in a kind of blissful communication, a dynamic circulation of energy.

Some of your drawings have been large, and your series of thirty-one drawings collected in one book (“31”) is also a large work of art. Do you like working in large formats?

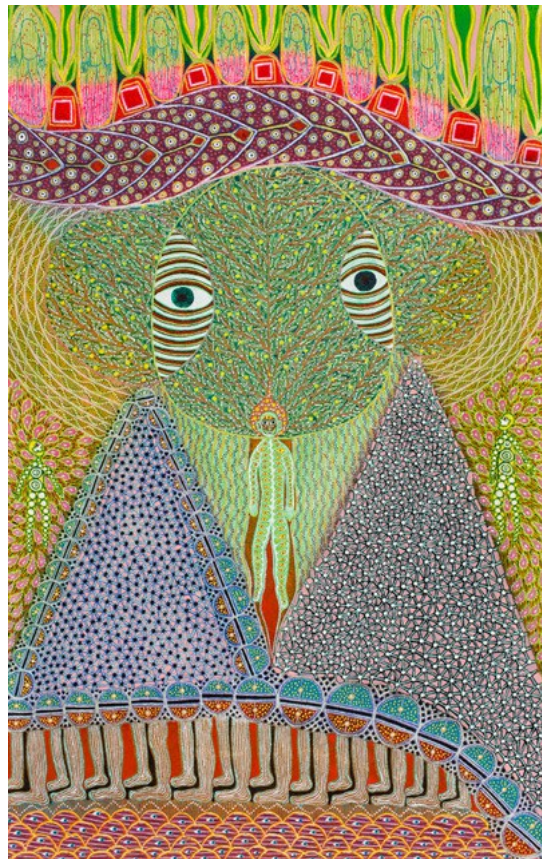
Zindato: For many years, I worked in small formats. I found that smaller surfaces allowed me to better maintain my focus. As in the learning of a martial art, I believe that as my training has progressed, I have learned how to keep that focus on larger surfaces or, as in my project “31,” I learned how to keep my focus across several different pictorial surfaces. All of the images in that series are connected by the same energy flow.

In the past, you traveled to India and Haiti. You have lived in Mexico since the late 1990s. How have your travels inspired or influenced your art?

Zindato: Traveling always opens up new dimensions in my work. As soon as I set foot in a new place that I have not visited before, my senses are stimulated in so many ways that somehow it is difficult to discern which experiences might influence my work the most. During my travels, I always respond strongly to the art and customs of indigenous cultures, and to how they manifest themselves in places where they are visible. Also, I always respond very much to the dynamics of personal relationships, to meeting new people in new places.

What would you like to communicate to the viewer with your art?

Zindato: As a viewer of my own works, I sense that, in them, there is a great flow of empathetic energy with regard to how the figures, spaces, colors and all the other elements of my drawings relate to each other. I think this energy flow is communicated to viewers as a kind of circulation system, and that viewers of my drawings return their own empathetic energy to my art. In this way, they contribute to a constantly circulating flow of positive energy.



You are a self-taught artist but you know about the history of art and you have seen works of art by many different artists, including well-known artists from the past and many self-taught artists. Do you feel that your art takes part in a dialog with the art of other artists?

Zindato: I have never felt the need to make my own art refer to any other historical works of art. However, I have noticed an intense dialog developing between what I have made and certain other works of art that I might have seen in the past or even that I have never seen before. If there are affinities between my art and other forms of art, some of which are certainly visible, they exist on a subtle level of shared energy and emotion.

Do you have any comments about what the role of the artist in society can be or should be?

Zindato: To help bring forth empathy in any form of relationship.

Looking ahead, what is the next direction for your art?

Zindato: I – and we – will see as I continue making it.

Interview by Edward M. Gómez.

DOMENICO ZINDATO: 31
EXHIBITION APRIL 26TH - JUNE 5TH @ ANDREW EDLIN GALLERY

