

The Personal Vision of Maurice Clapisson

by Dennis Wepman



Maurice Clapisson, *Night Step—3*, ink on paper, 26" x 20"

Maurice Clapisson brings to his sensuous abstractions a complex and richly diverse background, but ultimately his work is the expression of a vision entirely personal to himself and reflects little of his varied background and experience. Born in France and educated at the Sorbonne, for many years a resident of North and Western Africa, now living and working with the United Nations in New York, Clapisson is a writer with publications in numerous French periodicals. He came to art almost by chance, beginning with illustrations of his own texts and gradually discovering, as he states, that "the drawings had developed their own identity, making a statement of their own."

Clapisson the artist employs the same tools as Clapisson the writer—pen and ink and paper—as well as the same lyrical spirit and personal vocabulary. His fluid abstractions convey shadowy suggestions of meaning without ever becoming explicit, as their interlocking biomorphic forms contain a

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ghost of reality but always stop short of overt expression. Clapisson's work is not an intellectual exercise; it is a visceral expression, an effusion of emotion, a release of creative energy controlled by a highly refined chromatic sensibility.

Clapisson's compositions contain discrete elements which flow together in luminous, subtly modulated colors very much of his own compounding. The artist identifies some of his imagery with the African landscapes and sunsets he came to know during the decade he spent on that continent, but his golds and cobalts and lavenders are not the shades of nature; it is clear that his primary source is not the African countryside but rather a personal inner vision. The artist has described his compositions as "shapes not taken directly from nature [but] rather in the manner of a dream."

These dream-like mindscapes are created with pen and ink, even the large solid planes of color which would normally call for a brush. The artist mixes his colors directly on the paper, working rapidly because paper and ink are an unforgiving medium and allow no correction. His inks cannot be used with conventional water-color paper, and he experimented with many alternatives, judging their relative porosity and resistance, before finding papers he considered suitable. His drawings have been harmonious and pleasing to the eye from the first, but as his technique has evolved it has progressed from the decorative to the painterly, and his compositions from a free, aqueous flow to a more structured form.

Clapisson has exhibited in New York and Paris and his work has earned certificates of excellence in several international competitions. It is in private collections in Germany, France, Japan, and the U.S. An exhibition of Clapisson's work is scheduled for January 20-February 10, 1990, at the *Ariel Gallery*, 470 Broome Street, in New York City.

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