

The ancient art of mosaic has found new expression in the work of the great English artist, Elaine M. Goodwin, whose luminous colours and pure slender forms verge on the sublime. Produced by small glittering fragments of light-concentrating tesserae, their countless sparkling shades of colour create an abstract art which seems to capture the very essence of life. Gold from Venice, glass from Ravenna, and marble from Carrara - so many wonderful materials whose lyrical harmony delights and inspires.

Even the exhibition's title of 'Homage to Byzantium' brings to mind the mosaics of Ravenna - of the basilicas of San Vitale and Sant'Apollinaire Nuovo. What is more, the artist will soon be present at the famous exhibition of mosaic artists which takes place from 21 September in Ravenna, the recognised centre of this form of artistic expression. Let us go on a sublime journey where past and present converge.

The 'Sailing to Byzantium' mosaic with its minimalist purity - golden sails on a purple background - brings to mind the ancient sailing ships which used to sail across the Mediterranean. The progressive displacing of the curved shape which evokes the 'sail' in the four successive panels conveys a feeling of movement to the viewer. The light radiates in countless shades and subtly diffused intensities. In the 'Scintilla' series, gold glitters, and light and shade play with each other in harmonious inclines. Shine and matt softness - the richness of gold is as essential here as the wonderful freshness of silver. Reflected beauty and positive artistic tension with allusions to W.B. Yeats and Dylan Thomas let one glimpse an abstract vision which poetically combines balance and life force. The metal sometimes expresses an undulating movement, and the underlying symbolism touches the viewer with its spiritual approach.

### **Evocation of the absolute**

'Flow of Light II', flowing light, opens out like a golden river between banks of very pale green and soft mauve, while a fantasy-tale atmosphere emanates from 'Life in a Love' - a sharp-edged sword amongst golden sparkles. The horizontal line of 'The Kiss' evokes an absolute, and in 'He/She' masculine and feminine face each other like precious doors which would keep a secret.

The colours are exceptionally beautiful, and the shades and half-tones refined. Each tone has its own luminosity. The tesserae can be tilted in various ways so that the light, which embraces these projecting pieces, creates continuous and changing shimmers. The tones then merge into an overall vision of a finely-shaded richness, and thus 'In the Beginning', which brings together the sun and an aquatic element, delights us with its colourful magnificence.

The artist constantly captures light. 'Song of Light', 'Between Two Eternities', and 'Now and Then' seem to sing of the continuity of life, whilst 'Looking Backwards/Looking Forwards', which is very pure - white and bluish silver - expresses more of a contemplative distance.

'Touching Paradise' is a real hymn to light, and must be admired from a distance so as to be able to discover the incredible impact of the glints of gold, which seem to invalidate spatial boundaries.

Byzantine mosaic is rooted in a transcendent reality. The art of Elaine M. Goodwin is close to this by virtue of her visionary search for the effects of light and the harmonious balance of chromatic values. The philosopher, Plotinus, attributed beauty to the presence of an incorporeal

light mastering the obscurity of matter.

It is doubtless this search, where the sovereignty of light appears in a modern perception, that makes the art of Elaine M. Goodwin so fascinating.