

Carmel Said Critical Analysis

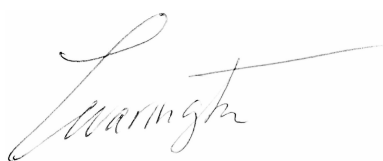
Profound intellectual refinement combined with a sharp emotive dimension unquestionably constitute the artistic core of Carmel Said; an exquisitely talented artist, his complex creative conceptions allow us to embark on synaesthetic journeys towards deeper awareness of humanity and the world in which we reside. The masterful instinctive understanding and analytical manipulation of diverse materials transform shape and colour to create visually as well as academically captivating artistic output that possesses the rare and intangible quality to inspire intense yet unique visual involvement and a natural provocation for deeper thought.

The Titan Series is unequivocally a sculptural masterpiece of the 21st century. Selected for the London Art Biennale in 2021 and exhibited in the centre of the main pavillon, the emergence of the impressive artwork and the prominent curatorial choice emphasised its artistic stature and aim at challenging the boundaries of art. It not only turned the spotlight on Carmel Said's ability to give shape to his most vivid visions, but also on the power of art to audaciously critique and question established authority. Composed of three allegorical scenes, *The Titan Series* is directly inspired by the scandal that erupted due to corruption and racketeering in Maltese politics and society. Eloquent shapes reveal the multiple substrates of the narrative, which condemn the fleeting actualities of contemporary life but also highlight timeless human characteristics that underline and underpin our deep roots as imperfect beings. Said does not simply mirror the consequences of a reckless governance but also explores the core of the bestial therefore insatiable thirst for the power that fosters it. In *Levitating Autocrat*, bronze statuettes whose facial expressions are indefinable and physical dimensions negligible, desperately pull the ropes intended to raise the burlier ruler. The oppressor pretends to

levitate while his rise is, in fact, dependent on someone else's strength. When his potency appears unconstrained and ascent imminent, he is more reliant on his subjects than the subjects on him. As in a sort of Hegelian Dialectic, this tension manifests the possibility of an alternative; when the ruler is not in control of the play anymore, the chance of a change becomes possible. A change that is implicitly suggested in the sculpture, and fully acknowledged by the viewer during his transformative interaction with it.

The Titan Series stood out as particularly appraised by critics and the public. The epitome of Said's introspective and artistic qualities manifests itself in the complex interplay between the instinctive characters and bodies of the protagonists, their mythical settings and containment within glass bells that transport the viewer to ideas rooted in Early Modern still life; their extensive presence in European paintings and cabinets was related to the aesthetic and functional enshrinement of flowers or fruits of the earth. In this case, the glass bells crystallise their contents as social and political misconduct always impedes progression and catalyses the perpetuation of waste. *The Autocrat* is holding a weight scale, and even though he is in absolute control of justice he is disinterested in absolute justice. While the shapes and colours of the bright neoclassical temple, reminiscent of Malta's architecture, would suggest ideals of equality and balance, his heavier curves in dark bronze tones prove his self-centeredness and remoteness from such contrasting and pure ideals.

To know whether and how the significance of an artist's production will endure is typically an arduous undertaking. Undoubtedly, Carmel Said's evocative works have an ongoing influence in contemporary thought and will continue to touch and confront future viewers with intense momentum that only the greatest art possesses. Camel Said's artistic vision and refined execution has the striking ability to halt time and unveil the deepest of truths.



Timothy Warrington

International Confederation of Art Critics