

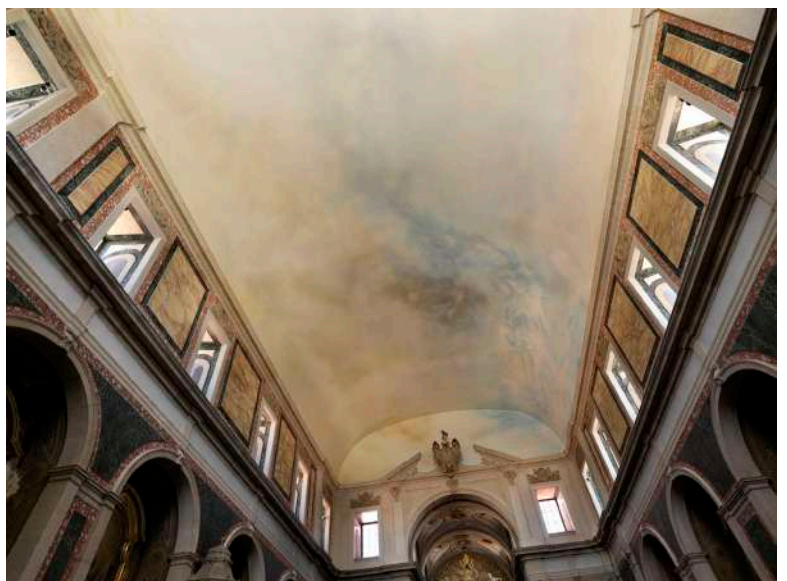
MICHAEL BIBERSTEIN

1948 - 2013



HH Accelerator, 2002
Acrylic on canvas, 190 x 480 cm
© Georges Poncet
Courtesy Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris-Lisbon

The work of Michael Biberstein, a Swiss-American artist who spent most of his life in Portugal, offers up a rare link between a conceptual language inherited from the analytical philosophy of the 70s at his début and a lengthy reflection on the “Landscape” from the 80s on. As a student of art history in Philadelphia, where he took classes with David Sylvester in the mid-1960s, Michael Biberstein, a self-taught artist, began his career with a process of the deconstruction of painting. Starting in the 1980s, while living in Portugal, first in Sintra and later in the Alentejo region, he found the ideal atmosphere for his painting practice, which evokes the landscapes in the Chinese pictorial tradition, which are, he said, “*the most advanced landscapes for attaining quietude and inner calm, whereas Western art rather excels in dynamism. It interests me to explore all these possibilities.*” The ethereal landscapes painting of Michael Biberstein, fascinated by astrophysics, resemble vibrations in space and resonances in silence. They recall landscapes by Vernet, Friedrich, Turner, Monet, Cézanne and Rothko as well as reminiscences of Eastern landscape paintings of the Song Dynasty. **His countless skies and meditative landscapes resulted in the urge to create a ceiling for the Santa Isabel Church (1742), in Lisbon, to which the artist dedicated four years of his life. Unfinished when the artist suddenly passed away in 2013, the decision to carry out the realisation of this major work was taken as well with the support of the gallery that presented an exhibition-fundraising. *Michael's Sky* was inaugurated in 2016 by the Cardinal of Lisbon. In 2020, the restoration of the Santa Isabel Church was honored with the Maria Tereza and Vasco Vilalva Award. The Royal Palace of Caserta (Campania, Italy) is organizing an important solo exhibition of Michael Biberstein's work, “*Beyond*,” in 2023. In the critical text accompanying the exhibition, the curator, Marina Guida, explains, “Michael Biberstein's creative process was based on the reduction of visual ornamentation, through the meticulous process of reducing things to the essential, whether iconic or mental. The artist chose to subtract rather than add.**



A Sky for Michael Biberstein, Santa Isabel Church, Lisbon, Portugal, view of the church's ceiling during the inauguration, 2016 © Georges Poncet, Courtesy Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris, Lisbon

In his works, he subtracted his exploration of shapes, crosshatching, contours; he subtracted the figure, the narrative. We find ourselves face to face with an uncompromising art with an analytical matrix that slowly reveals itself and conceals itself, recalling the mystical and meditative character of Sumi painting.”

Beyond invites us to cross a threshold, to imagine what might be there, briefly, after the colors are gradually lightened, reaching an invisible, spiritual dimension. The keys to understanding it are many; numerous pictorial layers are superimposed on the canvases, creating scenarios between meditation and imagination, scenarios that take shape within the gaze, then enter the mind and go beyond it. Majestic and eclectic, the exhibition space, where references to sapiential disciplines from different periods converge (alchemy, theosophy, astronomy, botany...), is at the center of this project, and invites visitors on an initiatory journey. **Beyond** is a tribute to the hidden soul of the Royal Palace of Caserta, an extraordinary symbol of beauty and wisdom, an incitement to travel into the landscapes of the spirit, to surpass the visible.

The artist's work is shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Lisbon in the exhibition *I II III IV V - five decades of ar.co* in 2023. In 2005, Michael Biberstein joined the gallery, which has dedicated four solo exhibitions to his work, which includes the last one in 2020, *SEEING*, following the major retrospective dedicated to Michael Biberstein at *Culturgest* in Lisbon in 2018.



Portrait of Michael Biberstein in his studio © All rights reserved, Courtesy Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris-Lisbon



Solo exhibition *SEEING*, Michael Biberstein, 2020, Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris, Marais © Hervé Abbadie, Courtesy Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris-Lisbon



Solo exhibition *Michael Biberstein*, 2018, *Culturgest*, Lisbon, Portugal © Culturgest

The same year, the gallery organized an exhibition staging a dialogue between the works on paper by **Mark Tobey** and **Michael Biberstein**, both profoundly marked by meditation, both passionate music lovers, initially finding the source of their art from Western cultural traditions, but later inspired by Eastern mysticism and obsessed with depicting a spiritual reality. Michael Biberstein, who was deeply interested in astrophysics, called his paintings “seeing machines.” He had a great knowledge of early Christian art and Baroque painting, especially of Giovanni Battista Tiepolo. He was fascinated by sacred architecture “that surpasses language across cultures and millennia,” which by its very nature, has a definite physiological effect on viewers, and throwing them into the heart of the metaphysical. *Contemplating a work of art can lead to the apotheosis of mind* used to say Michael Biberstein. **The exhibition *Paysage en apothéose* in 2016 at the gallery, with a selection of original drawings, rarely presented or previously unseen, as they were discovered in his studio after he passed away, and publishes a catalogue dedicated to his works on paper with the collaboration of Nicholas Turner, curator at the J. Paul Getty Museum in preparation for the publication of the artist's Catalogue Raisonné.** Since the 1970s, his works have been exhibited worldwide and are part of prestigious museum collections, including: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía - Madrid, Whitney Museum of American Art - New York, Calouste G Gulbenkian Foundation - Lisbon, the Serralves Foundation - Porto, Museu Coleção Berardo - Lisbon.