

John McCracken

(Berkeley, California, 1934 – New York, USA, 2011)

“I call on you to make a terrific leap into the future.

In a sense, earth life is a dream. It can be viewed and analyzed as one—that is, as an expression of living entities who have their primary existence in a larger scheme of reality. Now, the dream should become *lucid*.”

Written on a daily basis beginning in 1964, and often rewritten in subsequent years, John McCracken’s notes provide a primary key for accessing his art.. Visionary but absolutely coherent, McCracken is the author of a body of works in which the language of New York-style minimalism sparks the creation of an original idiom where a West Coast sensibility is translated into forms both futuristic and ancient, suspended, as the artist has stated, between the stones of Stonehenge, Egyptian sculptures, UFOs, surfboards, and the car bodies that speed past along the highways of Los Angeles, the city where he lived. After his early investigations, beginning in the mid-1960s McCracken found a primary form of expression in his characteristic planks, monolithic rectangular forms, for the most part monochrome, that rest directly on the floor and against the wall, constituting a new medium that links the physical, tangible world with the space of the imagination and pictorial representation, merging painting and sculpture. Dense, impenetrable, and perfectly shiny, as if human hand had never touched them, these and also works developed in subsequent years—including painted mandalas or blocks, slabs, and other geometric forms—seem to reiterate an aspiration to offer themselves as ideal bridges of a meditation that launches itself from earth toward the depths of the universe.

As in other works created during the same period, in *Cosmos*, 2008, the form of the planks thins into tall, narrow bars and multiplies, arrayed with the force of a light but strongly compact totality, its surfaces vibrating with color. Serial but unique and indivisible, the eight elements that make up the work are monochrome, each one appearing like a dense, precise form of red, brown, purple or cyclamen color. Their sequence, along with their precise arrangement at regular intervals, shapes the surrounding space and envelops the viewer, also charging with meaning both the spaces between the different elements and the triangular shadow formed between form, wall, and the back of the work—transforming the void into a solid that is transcendent, mysterious, and simultaneously material and immaterial. (MB)