

# GINNY SYKES: Selected Works

With essays by Nino D'Antonio, Gianni Nappa, and Daniela Pronesti



*Anima/Animus #2*, acrylic on canvas, 2017, 92 x 63 in.

## The Impassioned Exploration of Ginny Sykes A World of Ideas and Emotions Behind a Theory of Color by Nino D'Antonio

An incessant anxiety of searching. Which becomes more complex when the terrain of the investigation is the reality of our time. Or rather, everything that includes this term without boundaries: ideas, society, tradition, defeats, expectations, hopes. The whole thing from a feminine perspective, where the woman (her psyche and the exaltation of the body, counterposed against millennia of renunciation) occasionally becomes a spy for a reading of the works.

Not an easy approach, and anything but immediate, given that behind the magic of a color handled with rare understanding and laden with content, there is a long and difficult project carried out on extremely treacherous ground, a bridge between past and present, in a kind of illusory mixture. Inside of which – it must be said – an unexpected order prevails. It lives on two fronts: from one side, the control of sensitivities and emotional impulses (that “fluid” and uncertain force that we call subconscious), and from the other, their transference in the orgy of a color, skillful and precious, that manages to transform “thoughts” into art.

The result of this intricate process is nevertheless not easy to read. The chromatic strength of the works — and I would say the attraction that the most audacious combinations exert — can easily stop us at the edge of the work, in the sense that we believe that everything can be attached to color: that the beliefs, the anxieties, and the hopes of the artist can be exploded, by an obscure process, in that well-chosen coloration.

But instead, the paintings of Ginny Sykes demand discovery in a way that is anything but sensory in the sense that they require a precise code for reading, through which to try (there is never a sure road to reconstructing the process of a work) to put together the fragments of an extremely unusual life experience and art.

Thus emerge the years of artistic study in Chicago, where Ginny was born, experienced side by side with the allure and the practice of dance — two areas of interest continued during the long stay in Florence, where the discovery of our paintings, starting from the Renaissance, will not have been be a shocking experience for Ginny. Her beginnings in the States are tied to figuration, and in particular to that inspired by the female form.



*Anima/Animus Color Study #4*, pencil, ink and oil pastel on paper, 2017, no measurement

We are on a course that is gradually left behind. First, through a weak survival of the image, then via that great fading-out that will lead to its total disappearance. We are at the first sign of that process by which the Informal will flow into Abstraction. Then the contact with Italian art will be further enriched by the long season in Naples, living in the tracks of the Greco-Roman civilization.

Ginny is definitely a talented artist, with an extremely difficult quest. Because a bridge between the "inside" (all that is fed by the mind and heart, reason and fantasy) and the "outside" (our time, society, the class struggle, the role of women) — two worlds, complex and turbulent — is by no means easy to bring together in a single message.



*Diptych Spill/Naples*, acrylic and acrylic collage on canvas, 2017, 19.5 x 39.5 in.

And here broader recognition goes precisely to this extraordinary ability to manage such an uncertain and intricate jumble solely with color. And it has to do with a color that has no boundaries, because from the baroque magnificence of some works (and the reference to tapestries and oriental rugs comes spontaneously), one moves to the comparison between memory and the present, up to those clumps of color, where the thickness of the material almost seems to want to translate the force of the ideas and the will to affirm them.

Because it is still the values contained in the work that give us the dimension of Ginny Sykes's commitment and of her art, which does not translate into an ideological search and a protest picture, but into a testament, careful and arduous, on our society, especially on female society.

This is, in fact, the lynchpin for a non-superficial reading of her paintings, which, beyond every firm conviction, live by their own autonomous magic, thanks to the use of those hues that succeed in transforming the force of an idea into poetry. And it is a result that has few points of comparison.



*Anima/Animus #3*, acrylic on canvas, 2017, 86.5 x 61.5 in.

# Ginny Sykes: Anima/Animus

## This Way/That Way: Toward a Gradual Rapport

by Gianni Nappa

Art has its function in the social and in knowing how to direct perception into the channels of the imaginary. This is the only place in which the visionary ability of the artist can direct the senses and the intellect — in the realms of new understanding beyond the real. Ginny Sykes is distinguished by having always voiced in all expressive languages her role as a woman, which, outside convention, she articulates both instinctively and by means of the diverse formulas of artistic action. In her painted works, as in her performances, she feels strongly the job of expressing the feminine condition, representing all the conditions of those who are the weakest in a society.

In presenting the pictorial language of the artist I can't help but draw a parallel with writing. Where the representational fabric in writing evokes images, so in the works in acrylic dedicated to the spirit, thought transforms itself into color and sign, in an abstraction that is not only formal, but that represents the possibility of intellectual expression. This isn't important in its compositional aspect, but in the instinctual ability of the artist to "write" with colors.



*Study #2 for Anima/Animus #6*, ink and oil pastel on paper,  
2017, 17 x 6 in.



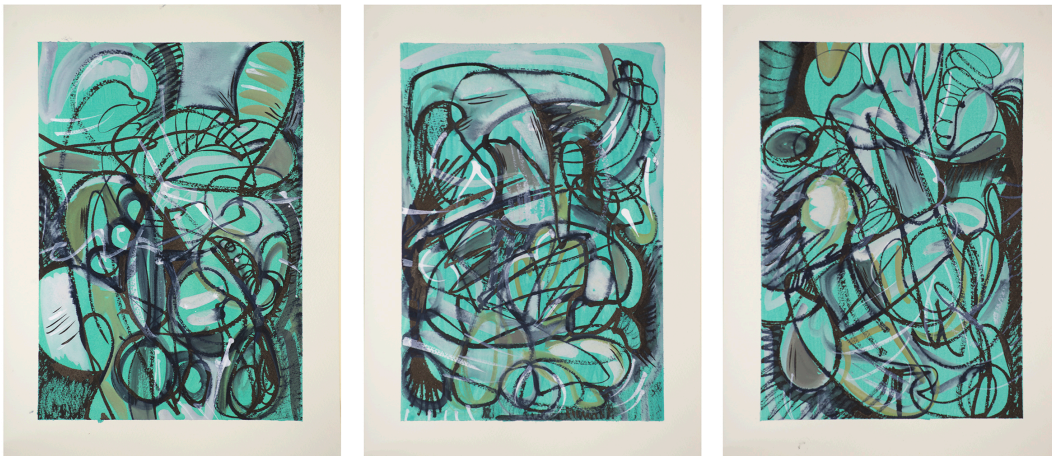
*Anima/Animus #6*, acrylic on canvas,  
2017, 87.5 x 37 in.

In the works presented in the exhibition, the construction of a symbolic space brings to mind the great period of Cubism, in which the construction of a new ideal of the representation of the real led to a change in painting from the mere ability to interpret the real technically to that of representing its sensory dimension. In the works in the series "Anima/Animus," it is in the fragmentation of space, which determines the infinity in which souls float, that responds in its colors and forms to a search for light and heat, Mediterranean wind and the flavor of ideas without bounds. The artist, in her life between Chicago and Italy, including Florence and Naples, has always traced out sketches of her dual life, with images and sensations, emotions and new horizons, both in cognitive and in expressive terms.

In the series "Spill/Naples" the thinning out of forms strikes you immediately, with respect to the energy, the light and the dynamics of thrust that are sketched out, almost in a creative pathos in which the artist expresses love, and the over-structuring of experiential life that leaves lived trails marking an indelible groove in the artist's life. To represent sentiment isn't easy, but Ginny succeeds in marrying the atmospheres and the dynamics of a strong relationship between life and its representation with continuous work on the condition of women in the world: discrimination against women is one of the negative phenomena that affects the whole world, even today in 2018.

The artist is multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary. She offers herself totally to her role in art but above all to helping overcome the injustices that women suffer in a world that globally effects only finances, but that still delineates a puzzle in that it doesn't find agreement between countries and backward societies still tied to archaic conditions and submissive women without rights or voices. Sykes comments on all of these things, and outlines women's great expressive and creative capacity, in the search not only for freedom, but above all for hard-won autonomy and a fair weight in society.

That is why the internal dynamic of her works is strength and energy, not only of gesture, but above all of thought. The title of the show is a manifesto of her fight for the rights of feminism, in which she is involved, bringing her own contribution in small steps with questions that invite everyone to question.



*L'Energia Triptych*, watercolor and black and white ink on aqua ground, 2018, 10 x 8 in. (each)

Ginny Sykes

## Masculine and Feminine: From Conflict to Harmony

by Daniela Pronestì

According to an ancient legend handed down by Pliny the Elder in the *Naturalis Historia*, painting was born from the desire of a young woman to fix on the wall the contour of the shadow of her beloved, who was about to leave her. At the origin of this noble art, therefore, is an act of love expressed in terms of the complementarity of masculine and feminine reunited in the creative act and in the body of the work. In other words, the Plinian myth restores for us an idea of artistic creation as an attempt to repair the natural "incompleteness" of human beings, at the same time fixing in the painted image the essence of the person chosen to complete us. This is a concept that also belongs in a broader sense to the language of painting, where the relationship between the various formal and expressive elements takes place under the sign of complementarity: color with drawing, shadow with light, line with form. Like life, painting is based, therefore, on the union of complementary forces, each of which tends toward the other, reciprocally compensating one for the other.



*Anima/Animus #5*, acrylic on canvas, 2017, 93.25 x 63 in.

This premise inspires the artistic investigations of Ginny Sykes. For Sykes, painting is tantamount to an awareness of the intrinsic duality of human beings, a condition that the American artist expounds with reference to the Jungian archetypes of *animus* and *anima*, meaning the masculine and the feminine as elements constitutive of individual identity. To the schematism of a fixed identity (man/woman), on which the roles dictated by social and cultural conventions also depend, one therefore counterposes an idea of the masculine and the feminine as energies that are both necessary for the internal equilibrium of the individual. This is an awareness profoundly rooted in the pictures of Ginny Sykes, where drawing and color, precisely because they are opposite and complementary qualities, form an inseparable whole. While the line keeps the gaze on the plane of reality, generating details that recall the human figure or the natural landscape, the color expresses a vigorous energy, exuberant, liberated from every constraint of objectivity. From the "conflict" between these elements, and therefore from their duality, arises the harmonious unity of forces no longer distinguishable from one another, not even when, employing the composite form of the diptych, the pictorial project unfolds on various supports, while maintaining the features of an evident continuity. The choice of a vertical format suggests the sense of a progressive interior and spiritual elevation, almost recalling the oriental practice of calligraphy on strips of paper or silk.

Through painting, Ginny Sykes upends the age-old fallacy of the irreconcilability of masculine and feminine, showing how man and woman are not distinct universes but complementary poles of a single unity. It is a perspective that the artist applies as much to relationships among individuals as to the capacity of a single person to develop a complex and articulated vision of his or her own being.

This last aspect traverses a path of self-awareness, an interior re-awakening that arouses the spirit from the torpor of stereotypes that are difficult to eradicate. This is what happens, for example, in the performance *Her Awakening*, where the fairy tale character of the "sleeping beauty" becomes a metaphor for a reborn vision of the feminine, no longer subject to masculine will and desires, but the free creator of herself. In the original story it is the prince who awakens the "beauty" from the rigor of a deadly sleep. In Ginny Sykes' interpretation, it is the woman who breaks the terrible spell, but not before having discovered the many truths hidden within herself.

There is no true liberty without self-awareness, just as there cannot be a constructive encounter with another without having first known oneself. The work of Ginny Sykes guides us to these reflections with the passion and the courage of an artist going against the current.





*Life and Grief*, black and white ink and watercolor on taupe paper, 2018, 27.75 x 19.75 in.