

Artistry Laid Bare



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Today, I walked in Florence with Paula Dominici. She is, in my opinion, truly an exceptional guide and I recommend her to all visitors to Florence. Her knowledge, culture, experience and enthusiasm for her service to visitors is without equal.

Lately, in conversation with Lanzarote-based journalist Norman Warwick, I recalled that visit to Florence where I viewed, on the Uffizi Gallery's crowded pavement, the replica of the original *David* – by Michelangelo. Thanks to my guide, I had learned something momentous, provocative and mind-altering about the beauty in the naked human form.

Put simply, Michelangelo's *David* mocks the arrogance, deceptions, political intrigues, cheating, truth distortions and deliberately motivated hostilities between the principal Florentine ruling families of the time. Stripped of every conceivable adornment, every vestige of mystery, *David* is Michelangelo's: not *what you see* – *but what you get*. but rather *here is nothing to hide*. This representation of the human form is unadulterated, inescapable Truth. John Keats was later to qualify Michelangelo's *David* statement "*Beauty is truth, truth beauty. That is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.*"

Norman suggested that we make a date to visit a local exhibition on the naked form by Adriyanna Hodge, displayed by the owner of Julio's Tap Room Bar in Costa Teguisse.

I am not an expert on Art in its widest scope. I have no university degree, nor am I professionally qualified to ventilate even modest opinions on the highly sensitive subject of nudity in any art form. More by luck than design, Norman gave me time to think on what I was about to view, by taking me on a brief tour of the interior of Julio's and we were thus less concerned – for the moment – about looking at the pictures displayed, per se. This gave me time to merely glance at various examples he pointed out as he referred to the architectural aspects of the building. We paused briefly while Norman suggested a particular example displayed – **Drago Protector** – could be complemented by positioning a poem alongside it.

Adriyana's latest original work depicts the naked, mainly female, form set in the volcanic landscapes, beaches, caves and rock settings of the Canaries. I was soon very aware of the obvious contradictory elements in the photographs: the immutable softness of the female form, laid against the hardness of the volcanic rock, provoked tender sensibilities towards the models. Whatever the angles and positions of the poses, their faces were rarely obscured, so the whole effect that the artist achieves is admirable: all elements are visually complimentary. Thus is Adriyana's skill and vision made manifest.

Another distinctive revelation is the blending of the naked forms with the natural curvatures of their backgrounds: no concessions are made in altering them to fit the models. Two examples come to mind. I am recalling – **Cocoon** – and another – **Angel**. The model, in the first example, sits in an ovoid cleft so appropriately that her nakedness seems to be totally absorbed: seemingly insignificant in what is so natural a rock shape, thus defying it being considered a composition. No less striking is the second example: a back view spine of a naked male, poised between two upright man-height standing stones. One upright stone would have suggested a phallic reaction. Two are perfect for the wings of an angel.

Pornography is privately indulged in its contemporary context, largely through the filmic moving image medium. Its sexual energy, basic aim, drives it to male orgiastic conclusion. Its power to command and control a stimulated sensual experience speedily wanes. Physical beauty is incidental. Women are commodified.

Eroticism derives its energy from a controlled intensity that feeds the public viewer's imagination. Long after it has stimulated concentration on sensual representations of nakedness – in artistic forms say – it maintains capacity to recall the attractive image continually without experiencing sexual gratification. Physical beauty is its own reward.

The Secret Places of Lanzarote is a work that succeeds in its intent: it satisfies because it has been executed erotically, with subtlety and sympathy to natural surroundings. I think Adriyana, together with her participating models, combined to show the naked body as a form to be lauded: something to

take pleasure in, to celebrate, to exalt, to glorify.

This is not pornography; it did not in any way appeal exclusively as a sexual stimulant to my senses or provoke carnal appetites. Above all, it invoked my aesthetic appreciation. It confirmed my judgment about how this or that figure illustrates an ideal of human beauty.

Finally, the models portrayed are real, fully complicit participants. What ultimately determines the work's eroticism is how the artist herself approaches her subject.

I conclude with granting the last words to Norman Warwick:

“Adriana brings a full skill-set to her work, creating not only photographic images but also even posing questions with their titles.”

Tony Brady is a long-standing member of Fermanagh Writers. who considers himself “more a versifier than a poet.” After living in Fermanagh for more than twenty years, he has now retired to Blaisdon, Gloucestershire.

For, as a fox whom hound and horse pursue,
flees to the place from whence at first it flew,
I still fond hopes hold, my long travails past,
to return, recline, to die in Blaisdon home at last.