



Metamorphosis
Journeys Through
Transformation of Form
by Gertraud Goodwin
Temple Lodge, 2016
Shoestring Press 2016.
ISBN: 9781-906999933
Pb. 160pp £22.50

From *New View* magazine 2016

It is a joy to encounter a book so original in conception

and so polished in its execution as this one. Sculpture, which can tend to be regarded as static — kings and generals on horseback, frozen in a moment of time, or Queen Victoria being unamused — is here shown as the truly dynamic art of movement and transformation that it can also be. It is an important work. I am reliably informed that there are other such studies on the theme of metamorphosis in the German language, but I believe it to be unique in English. One could well imagine Henry Moore or Barbara Hepworth, were they alive today, being engrossed in this sumptuously illustrated text.

It is a substantial book, economically priced at £22.50, in which sequences of intricately photographed sculptural forms are shown in processes of transformation. The initial form metamorphoses into the next which is then reformed in a natural synthesis and the process is continued until a final resolution, often containing five to eight beautifully photographed forms, usually in a double-paged spread. The artists themselves comment in depth, taking the reader through the pictorial sequences.

Other sections include interesting discussions of sequential works by Mondrian (trees), Matisse (backs), Picasso (a bull) and Marino Marini (horse and rider). There is also a highly informative series of chapters on the metamorphosis of form in the two Goetheanum buildings, with explanations by Gertraud Goodwin and Christian Thal-Jantzen. In all there are twenty two artists who contribute to the book, so clearly space prohibits one from doing justice to all their contributions. This is unfortunate as no chapters are uninteresting. I have listed the contributors at the end of this review.

Gertraud Goodwin, who says, 'Metamorphosis has accompanied me and been the source of inspiration and life all through my artistic career, now lasting 35 years', is the editor and lion's share contributor; the book is a collaboration between her and Inge Tombs who also contributes chapters on 'Plant Metamorphosis' and 'Evolutionary Metamorphosis' (the process of change through the different epochs named by Rudolph Steiner in 'Esoteric Science').

The idea that sculpture embodies a purely static moment in time, as was true of heroic public sculptures, has been challenged throughout the twentieth century and our own, with mobiles, vitrines, installations and the social sculpture of Joseph Beuys which encompassed conversation and discussions.

The method here, of showing how plants, elements, geometrical forms, stages of earth evolution, etc. develop by juxtaposing sculptures of each stage, allows for fruitful and contemplative examination of the succeeding movements through time. This is, of course, a mobile Goethean approach and it is noticeable that the materials included are those of nature. Ecological thought is here finding its highest forms of artistic expression.

The question as to who this book is for — or the more vulgarly expressed one of who is going to buy it, is an interesting one. I believe it belongs on the library of every institution of the English speaking world where sculpture is taught. It is certainly a work of interest

to 'Goetheans' and 'Steinerians'. One hopes that the publishers and contributors will ensure that it gets adequately 'plugged' beyond purely anthroposophical circles.

For those sympathetic to anthroposophy, the discussion of the forms of the main motif, the bases and capitals of the columns and the architraves of the Goetheanum building are of special interest. The articles are so well illustrated and the descriptions and explanations so painstakingly clear that the complexity of the ideas contained in these forms can truly be studied with pleasure.

Metamorphosis is a book that one happily flicks through for the enjoyment of the illustrations. It is, however not one for reading like a novel. Each of the forty four chapters, although taking up only between two and eight pages gives considerable food, indeed nourishment, for thought. It is an illustrated text that can repay hours of constant referral — a recommended read for those interested in the visual arts and/or Goethean ideas.

The contributors are: Gertraud Goodwin (editor), Nicholas Bertoux, Reimar von Bonin, Jonathan Chequers, Margaret Colquhoun, Jorge Jimenez Deredia, Axel Ewald, Ursula Gruber, Christian Hitsch, Dr. Philip Kilner, Wilhelm Mohr, Philip Nelson, Lothar Nickel, Wilfried Ogilvie, Don Ratcliffe, John Salter, Justina Schachenmann Teichert, Inge Tombs, Christian Thal-Jantzen, Manfred Welzel, John Wilkes And Dr. Peter Wolf.

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