

Titre :

La Recherche de l'Absolu

gouache on paper
1964 55 x 36
rating 1567



Description: On a plain horizon of neutral colour, a sphere and a leafy tree stand out on flat ground. Between the giant objects, two tiny individuals are talking.

The problem lies in the presence of two gigantic objects, a well-polished sphere and a multi-branched leafy tree, at the foot of which two individuals are talking.

There are two visual shocks: on the one hand, the gigantism of the objects in relation to the smallness of the individuals, on the other hand, the collision of the shapes of the two objects.

Indeed, everything opposes them: the first is a sphere curled on itself, it is the shape or the defensive structure that offers the least possible surface of contact against an external aggression; the second object, a leaf with a thousand and one ribs offers a flat and almost transparent surface in the colours of the sky, this surface unfolds in the atmospheric space to enhance gas exchanges with its environment.

What about the title?

Let us now consider the only title The Search for the Absolute. The term "research" refers to a process that lasts over time. The term "absolute" defines "that which exists independently of any condition or relationship to something else". The Absolute would thus be a kind of first cause or principle about which one wonders.

The solution: the global shock is dissipated if one relates the image to the title. Then the table would show two individuals discussing root causes with two questions.

first: Who started it? The seed or the tree-leaf?

Here Magritte deepens Aristotle's paradox, that of the egg or the hen.

in second: What is the most suitable form for the world? The sphere or the fan?

A closing principle or an opening principle?

With this question, Magritte goes further than Aristotle.

In short, with this problem, Magritte becomes a philosopher. He deepens and goes further than Aristotle's famous paradox. Here we have proof of what Scutenaire said about his friend Magritte: "Magritte is a painter and Magritte is not a painter." Therefore, we can add that "Magritte is a philosopher."

In short, The Search for the Absolute captures the very idea of the philosophical debate on principles.

Translated with www.DeepL.com/Translator (free version)

Catalogue raisonné: Vol. IV, p.275, cat. 1567.

References: The first painting on this theme dates from 1940. The closest variant of the present gouache is the one in catalogue no. 483, next to catalogue raisonné vol. II nos. 481 and 482.

In Vol. III, one finds other gouaches n° cat.1284, 1479,1480, 1540, 1541, 1581.