

To paint is to paint again
Jean-Luc Nancy

Pedro Calapez is one of the most successful painters in the current national art scene. It would be easy to keep his course without modifying his work. However, Calapez inhabits painting with a sense of crisis, constantly destabilizes his own practice introducing new challenges, new ways of painting, new media.

On one of my first visits to his atelier, I noticed a couple of painted bricks on the wall. When questioning him about those works, Calapez answered they were mere experiments. Shortly after, they were bouncing from the atelier's walls to those of an exhibition (*Ácido*, 2011). And now, the bricks regain a new body as the central piece at this exhibition.

In “Transferência”, painting expands itself again, appropriating the concept Rosalind Krauss dedicates to sculpture in her 1979 seminal text “Sculpture in the expanded Field”. According to this thinker, at the end of the 70s a whole set of objects/installations that would never before be considered as sculpture began being included in that discipline. The concept of sculpture became elastic. Such has been Calapez’ practice: transforming painting into something malleable. Canvases are abandoned in favour of tiles, glass and steel plates that are cut, folded and twisted. He also explores different forms of presentation, the most radical to date being *Half-Pipe* (2011) presented at the Fundação PLMJ, which consisted of four concave aluminium plates resembling a skateboard track (in nearly the real-size).

In the current exhibition, we feel once again the will of the artist to transcend himself. Painting becomes an event and the performative dimension, already imperceptibly present in his work, achieves here a new meaning. Outside the Ermida we are confronted with a mural that entirely covers the wall. Its simplicity is disarming. Black stripes carefreely painted fill the whole façade turning it into an enormous railing. Lengthy considerations could be made on the (guarded) entrance of an exhibition space as something that has to be transcended, and that metaphor is strongly present in this work. But is perhaps most impressive is seeing painting transformed into architecture. Having entered the space, we find inside the church, at the centre of where the altar would have stood, a wall made of black and white painted bricks. Painting transfigured into sculpture with which our body physically interacts. We are unable to see the entire installation, we are forced to walk along a wall to satisfy our desire to reveal the rear of the painting.

A work of art is always a wall we have to transcend, one we have to pierce in order to reach its meaning. A wall that at once protects us, and that at the same time keeps us away. A membrane wall originating a set of polarities: “interior and exterior, present and absent, visible and invisible, seeing and being seen, accessible and inaccessible, hollowness and opacity, public and private”¹. The choice of white and black also promotes another polarity: the presence of absence.

¹ Paulo Pires do Vale, “Muros de Abrigo”, in Ana Vieira, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2010.

If both painting and the wall itself seem to be at first sight unsurpassable obstacles, their transcendence (physical and metaphorical) opens this work to a new revelation, a new reading.

The third moment of this exhibition is the invite. The iconoclastic image of the moment the artist destroys its work, creates, around the installation, the expectation of a permanent collapse, a sense of fragility in what previously seemed unbreakable.

Pedro Calapez desacralizes his own painting. He takes away the aura of distant object, making it close, fragile. And simultaneously builds it as a place of resistance for the persistence of painting.

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