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Underneath each colour

In ***Underneath each colour***, the pictorial work of Pedro Calapez is rediscovered. We perceive the painting through an intense vibration. In a strong expression of broad brushstrokes and stains, the gesture gives the visitor the dimension of pure colour. With Calapez, we resume the pleasure of colour contemplation. We feel matter by the overlap of the colour stains. Brushstroke upon brushstroke, gesture upon gesture, the artist communicates movement and energy, experimenting sensations, in which working forces contradict each other through pressure, inertia, weight, attraction and gravitation. These forces originate in the spatiality of movement. Colour oscillates in pure opposition between sensation and strength. Visible and invisible meet under this painting borderline. And it is through this dimension that we revisit sensation in Deleuze (2003, p. 56):

The task of painting is defined as the attempt to render visible forces that are not themselves visible. Likewise, music attempts to render sonorous forces that are not themselves sonorous. That much is clear. Force is closely related to sensation: for sensation to exist, a force must be exerted on body, on a point of the wave.¹

As in music, colour tell us about the time/space experience. The line appears as a counterpoint to the junction of the colour stains, the colour covers one on top of the other, making a subtly reappearance in the space. In painting, movement is born, and energy reflects; establish rhythm, emphasizing transparency, as if it transforms in "matter". A kind of pictorial system is thus created.

Pedro Calapez adopts a palette of strong and intense colours. Simultaneously, it diverges into hot or cold colours, light or dark, presenting the process of painting through the inductive action of colour-space reminiscent of Clement Greenberg's "colour-field painting"². Although Greenberg wanted to present a new reading to the emerging North American artists of the 1950s, it almost became connoted by a merely decorative perception, which led Gombrich (2006) to argue:

But it would be wrong to present the contemporary art-scene as if it were entirely dominated by experimenting with paint, texture, or shapes, and nothing else.³

Underneath each colour gave way to the traction forces of physics. A real contrast that reflects the action of the gesture in the transparency. In an almost scientific experience of

what is meant by colour, the artist enables the disharmony of the chromatic system. It produces a language and meaning, forcing the observer to go beyond the perception of “under the colour”. The colour evokes the physical and mathematical dimension as if a diagram of bodily and natural responses of a “system energy specific”. We recall the words of Ball and Ruben (2004, p. 4843) about 20th century painters: “There was a strong feeling that colour composition could be pursued in an objective, “scientific” way”.⁴

In yellows, oranges, greens, blues, as well as blacks and browns, the painting assumes, in time and space, a grammatical language, thus opening to movement. Calapez applies colour in layers, in such a way that you can see transparency and luminosity. Layers are applied in a light way, intensifying the expression of the artist's gesture. Referring to the quote by Alda Galsterer (2021):

*The works in this exhibition all take on a more abstract register, despite an initial path that seems wanting to reveal more: that which is “underneath each colour.”*⁵

In some of his works, the painter creates tension through contrast. In others, he emphasizes colour with almost monochromatic patinas, not employing a homogeneous register, but a pure impression of a vibrating movement. From it emerges the light, which propagates invisibly, and which its physical properties are crucial for the painting creation. From discord and disharmony, perception is born. The colour as a pure language of matter. It is therefore material, not immaterial.

It could ultimately be referred, through other assumptions, as the maximum existential potentiality, in which the great surfaces were “embedded with pure subjectivity.

Going further, Mark Rothko (1957) would say:

*I'm interested only in expressing basic human emotions: tragedy, ecstasy, doom, and so on.*⁶

Pedro Calapez moves away from this existential aesthetic past, whose expression seeks emotion, although these artists wanted to overtake it. Paintings by Calapez, express themselves through electromagnetic waves of pure energy, whose speed, rhythm, and vibration manifest in two-dimensional space, producing a tension in the gesture, reflecting the physical strength of the artist.

With Calapez, we revive the great surfaces of colour through a look of “pure objectivity,” if it is possible to conceive this in contemporary painting. Colours are apprehended as materials bodies, adopting the ink-material concept. Through the gestural application of the pigments the observer frees himself from the illusion of representation, although, in the space, we continued to imagine more than subtleties revealed through the chromatic experience.

In pure sensations. Colour vibrates, flickers, repeats itself, apparently moves from one contrast to another. Unbalances accentuates the gesture in strong movements of colour/light.

The observer retakes his consciousness of spatiality. When looking at colour, we perceive scale, a physical reality that Pedro Calapez exposes through the visual displacement between the various paintings.

Although these works are only two-dimensional, capable of being aesthetically perceived in a more traditional way, we do contemplate them. We feel the presence of the spatial volumes of Calapez previous works. The light exacerbates the painting, the colour moves beyond the surface of the canvas.

Colour and matter meet in the plasticity of gesture.

A dynamic between matter and colour.
Action merges in gesture, in vibration and rhythm.

We enjoy the chromatic beauty.
We experience pure colour in painting.

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¹ Deleuze, G. (2003). *Francis Bacon. the logic of sensation*. London, New York: Continuum.

² Anfam, David; Armstrong, Richard & Greenberg, Clement (2010). *Color Fields*. New York: Guggenheim Foundation.

³ Gombrich, E. H. (2006). *The Story of Art*. London: Phaidon.

⁴ Ball, Philip & Ruben, Mario. (2004). "Color Theory in Science and Art: Ostwald and the Bauhaus". In *Angew. Chem. Int. Ed.*, 43, pp. 4842 –4846. www.angewandte.org.

⁵ Galsterer, Alda. (2021). *Pedro Calapez: Underneath Each Colour*, (Statement Flier). Lisbon: Belo-Galsterer Gallery.

⁶ Rothko, Mark (1957). *Conversations with artists Selden Rodman*. New York: Devin-Adair.