

Giuseppe Panza di Biumo

In Sonia Costantini - Percorsi del colore 02, edizioni Nicolodi, Rovereto, novembre 2005

(Translated by Howard Rodger MacLean)

Sonia Costantini belongs to the group of artists who in the last twenty-five years has developed a work of research treating the expressive possibilities of colour. A research created in solitude in so far as it is extraneous to postmodern attitudes and positions which are admired by a society lacking the willpower to look for and understand new possibilities of the human condition.

The art of the 1960's and 1970's was characterized by a prevalent research into the expression of thought.

The consideration regarding this fundamental ability of our intellect which brings us close to supreme power produced Minimal sculpture and painting, Conceptual Art and Environmental Art which examines the central point of the beginning of our knowledge/awareness and of our terrestrial presence.

In these artistic activities colour was a complementary and not a fundamental element, even if in some artists - such as Flavin and Judd - it took on an important value although always in relation to an idea that preceded its existence.

When one thinks of what "the painting" consists in one thinks of its colours. It is the first thing one sees. The "what does it mean" comes afterwards. Strangely enough, one has always thought about what comes afterwards and not of what one sees first. We do not consider the so-called "grisailles" as paintings but larger drawings, done with oils in the place of graphite.

This lack of interest for colour was a vacuum in the history of art, even if over the past centuries the story or the representation of an idea prevailed.

The artists who used light in the 1960's and the beginning of the 1970's created the conditions so that a new research work could be launched.

Light and colour are two aspects of the same thing.

Colour is a luminous vibration reflected by an object which absorbs the other vibrations.

Doing art with colour does not consist in painting a canvas with a brush - in this way one only obtains samples for a Company that produces paints. Rather, the aim consists in finding the way to make the luminous radiation vibrate, transforming the colour into light, into coloured light: separating the materiality of the matter from an idea, therefore, in order to make it become art.

This is the research which Sonia Costantini manages to achieve (together with few others). Every artist has to find the appropriate technique in order to reach this aim. A technique which has to be individuated and different from that used by others. Only in this way does the artist create a work with the 'trademark' of his or her own personality.

The technique used by Costantini consists in superimposing an opaque surface with a mesh of small spots of colour with a reflecting surface. In this way one achieves an equilibrium between reflection and absorption of the luminous vibration which is particularly interesting and alluring.

The dosage between the neutral spaces of the ground and the luminous points on the surface is the difficult equilibrium which the artist has to achieve. It is for this reason that her paintings are 'sensitive' to how they are illuminated: it is necessary to avoid that the one or the other element of the painting prevails.

It is a characteristic of this art to be sensitive to the way in which it is illuminated and

from what point of the incidence of light one looks at it. The varying of the luminous intensity transforms the painting, it expresses different emotions, unforeseen and unexpected states of mind. In penetrating it makes us discover an inner nature, a spirituality we didn't know.

Costantini obtains the objectives which this art wants to achieve, establishing her in a foremost position within an international context.

Contemporary society prefers the understandable at first sight, the easy or the sensational, the 'punch in the belly' for a culture that has lost the sublime pleasure of reflection and contemplation.

For how long?

## APPENDIX

The paintings by Sonia Costantini are not reproducible. This is a situation common to all works of art in which colour is the ultimate and exclusive theme.

Photography cannot reproduce a reality which is at the limit of perception. They are works made with light, reflection or its absorption. A quality hardly visible on the surface of the painting which only an attentive eye is able to see. It is an art that makes our ability to understand evolve. Every evolution is a new experience. It demands an effort. The person who is used to the punch in the belly of the sensational has lost the ability to live this art - and everything else which is the intellectual and civil evolution of mankind.

His or her maximum dignity. His or her only justification for existing.