

Luigi Meneghelli, Geometries  
Exhibition catalogue  
Studio Rossi Arte Contemporanea, Verona, February 1992  
(Translated by Howard Rodger MacLean)

The surface as the place of events regulated by internal laws. The surface as essentially syntactical structure. And the surface as the "entity to construct and not only to cover" of painting. It is regarding these problems of a purely theoretical nature that Sonia Costantini's most recent research is being elaborated. In having abandoned the use of emotive, matteric colour, "inscribed within a sort of chemistry of depth", her work has moved towards an approach - and attitude - which is entirely concentrated on the formative procedures of the work. Eliminated whatever narrative temptation, in its place attention paid to the basic elements of the language (the space, the chromatic value and the composition relationship). Eliminated whatever residue of subjectivity, in its place a working which is controlled if not even regulated by a severe constructive discipline.

All of this does not involve a retrieval of the radicalism of the 1970's, however, when carrying out painting meant studying painting tout court, tautologically flaunting the instruments of work (the canvas, the brush and colour). It involves using painting as the element that organizes the painting, that produces seeing (even if understood in its most essential and mental meaning). The artist's Discussion is not about method: if anything it is a method about "discussing", a series of rules on which to graft the rite of painting. And the constants are easily listed: schematic relationships, cold tones, geometrical rigidity, the juxtapositions of chromatic planes in open equilibriums...

And yet what counts is not the fundamental method but the system of relations and forces which the method establishes in the painting: never delimited spaces but a mesh (or embeddings) of areas; never passive geometries but geometries in tension beyond the pure and simple confines of formality; and never clear-cut contrasts of colour but discardings of intensity, subtle plays of tonal scales.

In this way the work also becomes a perceptive problem involving a whole series of questions of a "gestalt" nature, a continuous investigation treating what is the transformation of the form that acquires reality under our eyes - a little like what happens in the "squares" by Albers which produce an idea of space in expansion, of dilated bidimensionality. Although Costantini is far from any discussion of visual pedagogy (instead to be found in Albers), as she is far from the tectonic severity of Mondrian or from the ascetic rigour of Malevich. Her geometry shows greater reference to the iridescences by Balla, with the paused rhythms of Rothko, if not even with the dynamic filters by Lo Savio. In fact, while remaining in its self-sufficient concreteness it is a work which also seems to suggest a sort of luministic concreteness, a superficial moiré effect, an investigation regarding what can be the value of light (understood as one of the modalities of the painting's being). However, all of this does not lead to an adventurous, vitalistic and rough language, to a bizarre and anomalous composition but to a concept of geometry which affirms a space that is not yet defined (or an undefinable space). In whatever case, further perspectives or metaphors are not referred to and everything is resolved in the treatment of the surface (even if the modulations of the colour and the various geometrical patterns allow one to think of the image of the painting within the painting, of the symbol of the double and of the mirror).

Costantini presents many possibilities of form and many painting events, almost as if wanting to reflect as long as possible about the experience of art. And it is in this context that the constructive 'hinging' - geometry - is no longer merely taken up in its etymological value of "measurement of the earth" but also as the measurement of dream, no longer as the serial nature of primary signs but also as the animation of the structure. Visual gymnastics.