

THE TATTOOED CANVAS

The exhibition entitled *The Grey Suit* is the most recent work of Daniel Solomons, consisting of large sized paintings on canvas and paper.

Inheritor of geometric art and as a consequence of historic abstract art, this work is brought to a point where we can situate it within contemporary art. Lets remember that contemporary art emerged round about 1910 and whose multiple consequences has made it one of the most significant manifestations of the 20th century. This artistic style omits the need of figurative representation, the mimesis, and tends to substitute it for autonomous visual language, providing its own meaning. Based on fauvist and expressionist experiences the strength of colour and flow into the so called lyrical abstract or informalism is enhanced, or from the cubist structure that leads to different geometric and constructive abstractions.

This latter line is the work that Daniel Solomons offers. With a reduced palette of colours that goes from white to black, passing through a multitude of shades the artist, in this way, constructs a world of its own that is not altogether detached from historical citations. For the layout, the square is used as an element of balance that strengthens the work.

Looking at the principal European and American movements after the Second World War, it can be said that mixing a series of similar factors leads to: a discouraging situation after living a war, destruction, economic crisis, surrealism influences, automatism and the first abstraction. From this mixture the European and North American movements are born. In the U.S. only two movements are established: Action Painting and Colour-Field Painting. Hence, two situations, thousand of miles apart:: European Informalism and American Abstract Expressionism. An era related to ours, where there also exists a lack of inspiring ideas of philosophy and a certain degree of dehumanisation.

Amongst the historical references reflected in Daniel Solomons' work, we can quote Piert Mondrian, who elaborated his work from the cubist reticule, which he gradually reduced to horizontal and vertical lines that close pure colour surfaces. In France, Fernand Léger and Picabia used cubist forms without renouncing the chromatic intensity. Also, Alexandre Rodchenko and El Lissitzky are included in the proposal of Daniel Solomons.

After the post-war period and with the emergence of abstract expressionism, we reach 1960, with the arrival of minimalism art which marked the beginning of a new period of interest for geometry and structure, which are also present in Daniel Solomons' work. The neo-expressionism and neo-geometric tendencies both appeared during the 1980's and brought about a new interest for the abstract, adopted by many artists inspired by the multiple motivations, as is the case at hand.

As the prime link of Solomons' work we can see Malevitch, confining to black and white only, although our artist uses a wider range of shades that contain these two as the extremes and the simple square and rectangular forms. Considering the maximum autonomy of the painting reduced to its fundamental geometric elements, although Solomons adds lines by including tiny incisions in some of the paintings and in others expands the geometric form, as if expanding the original thin form.

In this work there is nothing superfluous so that only the elemental prevails, and the use of neutral colours contributes to this effect. There is also a strong sense of equilibrium obtained by the compensation of the shapes and colours. On the other hand, there exists a communication with the space that surrounds and penetrates, and whose invisible structure materialises within.

The elaboration of the work, as well as its elements, is easily and visually controlled, excluding all symbolism. In this way the pure plastic elements are used: planes and colours, therefore having no other significance but itself.

Solomons states that in the elaboration of his work there lays the memory to map the past. This elaboration stems from learning, based on experience and memory, from the perspective that is the fruit of life itself, a process that goes from the memory to the learning in an act of close association. Autonomous boxes, but accessible, from which the background is extracted to paint the work. This is how Solomons acts, doing and undoing from the memory to mould a palimpsest in his work. Palimpsest that is connected with his own vital and plastic experiences.

The artist feeds on his own experiences, learning from them to store them in the memory, those watertight compartments piled up in the mind, to be used in benefit of subjectiveness.

Subjectiveness that originates from sensations and stimuli. Memory as a tool of apprenticeship, that flows into the knowledge applicable to the work. The main propeller of the series *The Grey Suit* is, therefore, the memory as a resource for the creation of the paintings.

Solomon's canvases, with their meticulous execution, have been achieved with a pictorial weft which fills all the space. From the microscopic to the macroscopic, the work beats with a vibration that surrounds us. They reveal to perhaps indicate our smallness in the world. The painting captures us, perhaps to tell us that we are not the centre of the world, that there is another reality, one that could well be ourselves.

One can also appreciate the link of normative abstract and frottage but, with a modern revision, in which the superficial treatment of the canvas is vital. The skin of the canvas as a metaphor of life itself, including the rules of the subjective memory. These are the traces of the daily walks of life that make us all resemble a man in a grey suit but, if we look close enough, we can see the subtle differences that distinguish each of us. The canvas, being a test laboratory, where the geometric weft translates our existential context and the tracks of doubt, the pain and pleasure that makes us different.

Tracks, that are like tattoos on the canvas, due to the wefts, as well as the incisions. The Japanese word used for tattoo "irezumi", means the incision of ink, and the Samoan word "tátau", means mark or blow twice. On these canvases these two meanings can be contemplated since the visual result are slight blows or incisions. The end result is a meticulous or expanded weft that gives a special character to this work. On paper however, although the weft persists there are blank spaces that are as if they were large tattoos that help and strengthen the composition.

We can also relate the work with some North American abstract expressionism, especially the colour fields. Engrossed colours that reduce the scale of greys but that gain an unusual strength when spread all over the canvas and, by making incisions as if they were stitches, leading to the daily life of man. The use of stitches and incisions on the canvas makes us wonder about the personal situation of the artist who elaborates his proposal on his personal experiences.

The canvas becomes a tattooed skin, where the different states of mind are developed and remain indelible in our memory. When observing the work of Solomons, there is something telluric that entraps us. It is like an ancestral memory that comes to mind when observed. It entraps us and possesses us in order to initiate meditation about man and the circumstances that surround him, as the apparent uniformity of the proposal is only a mirage that returns our own complex reflection, leading to consider the human being, his appetites and desires.

But it can also indicate closure. A prison in which we see ourselves trapped and from which it is difficult to escape. Where it is difficult to appreciate our individuality. The current society tends to standardise us even though deep down we are individuals. This exhibition makes us wonder about the individual's relationship with their environment and the relationships with ourselves from another's point of view.

Prison, closure, tattoo, all lead to pain. Not a physical pain but one adhered to the flesh, to the being, to our essence. Pain that can be felt on the canvas through the incisions, prison reflected through the weft of the painting. All as a tattoo wrapped around us that conceals us perhaps from the look of others.

Pedro Pizarro