

C O I N C I D I N G F A B R I C S

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STRATA / SHAPES / COLORS. Marc Rebollo's artistic realm stems from a desire for color that emerges at the exact point of intersection between three requirements: a distanced appropriation of the pictorial practices of his time, a deliberate play on the equivocalness of words and letters as a purely pictorial element, and a conscious affirmation of the allusive, illusory and real status of painting.

Color takes precedence insofar as it serves at once as background, often in the guise of a monochrome upon which other pictorial strata are smeared, and as active elements that convey variations, often arranging lines into a grid upon which other motifs are applied, predominantly as single repeated shapes and words.

The connections between these strata are governed by a necessary precision, which was particularly the case when he painted with lacquers that could not be mixed directly on the canvas. The crux of the matter is not the struggle between pictorial forces represented by a color, but rather the struggle between partially overlapping strata of real-world thickness. That which brings about the overlapping of a stratum is also a stratum that must exist as much as the others. This paradox underlies the truth that Marc Rebollo seeks to express, i.e. the painting as "a world". In this visual mechanism, the shapes are often outlined, but they float upon and inside the colored spaces like elements of the same rank.

In consequence, yet without giving rise to a linear evolution, his works give us a glimpse of shapes that evoke life, the living, a heart for instance, crystals, letters, machines, tree trunks, or even the undecidable fabric of cloth. The relationship between these elements constitutes the painting's backbone, and each work strives to attain an equilibrium that is at once visual and mental.

LPS AND THEIR JACKETS. He has long been interested in records, in their square and often multicolor jackets, and in the black LP graced with haunting words and names. In addition to working for years as a record dealer, Marc Rebollo has experienced the image and sound as dimensions that are not merely congruent, but complementary.

These jackets – a visual world in constant mutation – have provided him with an immoderate penchant for blending words and images visually, acoustically, and meaningfully. Those huge black pupils that encompass infinitely diverse messages when placed on the turntable have left him with an immoderate penchant for the explosion of sound.

COLLECTION / CREATION. An aficionado of folk music is inevitably a collector. And in the activity of collecting, Jean-Pierre Changeux sees the very origin of art.

In his book *Raison et plaisir*, he asserts that “to classify is both to regroup different species in a single category and to separate categories from one another. The ‘joy of taxonomy’ thus results from the simultaneous perception of assonance and novelty.” (op cit, p.73)

Marc Rebollo’s artistic output is not a collection, yet it reaches us in the complex and rich form of rigorous reflection about what emerges from a collection. To paint, here, is to accompany the transformation of the collector’s act into a creator’s gesture.

“Out of the collection, a new totality emerges. This totality, through the stability of its images, through its evocative power, tears us away from daily heartbreaks, diverts us from the incessant clashing of the species, and retunes the multiple interlinked layers of our brain”, to cite Jean-Pierre Changeux again (op. cit., p.105)

Marc Rebollo has constructed his artistic output like a distanced survey, critical and contended with these cerebral layers deriving from emotional sources of his own, yet which many others have shared.

LABELS. In those bygone indeterminate times when man invented and constructed language, the name preceded the word; designation of the individual, chief or predator prevailed over the possibility of describing actions or objects. In recent times, at the scale of human history, the word and the image have maintained this tension between designation and apparition, between visual conspicuousness and precise designation. Peopled with ‘labels’ on which one can read names of more or less renowned musicians and bands, some of Marc Rebollo’s large-scale paintings function as inventories, correlations, associations, or direct echoes of the collection. This inevitably prompts the formation of subtler classes, giving rise to joys related to the recognition of increasingly selective ensembles promising even more intense sensations. The word here is a name, and the name is a sign. Everything is as if appended from the outside onto a surface that denotes and absorbs it, and at the same time seems to repel and reject it. Indeed, this label appended onto the painting’s surface gathers together the gnoseological and creative virtues of the gesture of projection.

PLASTICITY OF THE NAME / RESERVOIR OF FORMS. Such visual ambiguity of the name and subsequently of the word in painting has a long history, as long as that of painting itself. This history, here being that of the 20th century, functions for the painter Marc Rebollo as a reservoir; a reservoir of shapes, behaviors, attitudes, concerns, surges, journeys, and significations. He has turned it into the discreet and efficient medium of his oeuvre, by appropriating it in a way that is both playful and serious. By interweaving his collection of names with this shared collection of shapes and gestures, he has at once managed to grasp the layers of our brain, and after having analyzed and thereby deconstructed them, he has set about reconstructing them in his own fashion.

FABRICS. What does painting depend on? This question haunted the 1970s, because for some it was necessary to break away from painting, whereas for others the materiality of the medium had to be questioned, and the fabric of the canvas perceived as an object.

If fabric plays a major role in Marc Rebollo’s artwork, this is both metaphorically and visually, except that he gives the question a new pictorial rather than ideological twist.

His large canvases often depict a play of curves that could evoke tree-wood, perforated paper, the stippled grain of posters, or the straight lines of an abstract geometry perhaps gone awry. The fact that there are also names, logos, phrases, slogans or word fragments like wandering letters that seem to be seeking refuge away from an inhospitable world, implies that the fabric is at once a medium and an expression. Exhumered, in the narrowest sense of the term, from the age-old background of painting, i.e. from the universe, Marc Rebollo’s fabric, it could be said, constantly looms up. The Punk gesture of destruction that dreams of one day being creation has transformed into an attempt to understand whatever is taking place. The surfacing of the fabric, the affirmation of its necessary presence, is a way of reconnecting with a visual force that is at once anonymous and profoundly individual. Here the fabric is the medium for dreaming, but as such, it also belongs to dreaming. For this reason it is pierced, most often divulging hazy shapes spawned by the limbo of thought and desire, as well as other strata, whether ancient or new, that have not yet succeeded in taking shape. Marc Rebollo’s oeuvre is a living palimpsest.

GESTURES. Painting is made up of gestures. Here, they are all markedly intentional and aware, and yet they also entail the deconstructive power of a doorway to impossibility, that of enabling painting’s voice to be heard, a voice that haunts painting as much as it haunts us. Our utmost wish is undoubtedly for a painting to talk to us. Marc Rebollo takes this desire almost at face value, although he does not try to make his canvases tell us stories. No, his achievement is to give voice to the echo of sounds, those of music, as well as the word’s brutal noises, through the organized silence of his paintings.

The names of musicians seem to enhance this viral anamnesis. However, it is the relationship between gestures, between strata of gestures and gestural intensities within each painting, that enables this to happen.

INTERSTELLAR. Thinking, dreaming and creating are more powerful vessels than all drugs combined. And even more intense are drawing, color and language, which are the only true flying carpets able to transform into interstellar rockets. When we confront Marc Rebollo’s cosmic paintings, the rhetoric of fabric and word, of color and gesture, fades away to make room for rays that traverse the stratosphere.

These works embed us in the heart of the cosmos, right where life began to invent its dream. The background of these paintings is no longer geometric, but rather tiny stains spurting out like wandering particles, comets or celestial specks from the center of the chaos where all is born, where all returns.

THE EYE OF HISTORY. In the repertoire of shapes that Marc Rebollo employs, there is the black circle. One could also call it a black hole, whereas in fact this gap enlarged to the size of the painting comes across as an incarnation of the black vinyl record that incessantly emits the bewitching sounds of revolt and of life. This seemingly blind eye distills the underlying aim of Marc Rebollo’s work.

Of course, first come words, which unflaggingly churn out the litany of inquiries and certainties common to all, names, expressions, slogans, hesitant gasps, stuttering letters, just before they begin to signify. Marc Rebollo has even devised large papers where words literally flow and spew their molten substance upon all that is visible, thus

turning it into an unknown landscape. However, in the complex interplay between fabric and shapes, between words laden with meaning and gestures fraught with destructivity, like the dream of an obliterating force that seeks to inscribe what is lacking in the visible world in order to answer the call of desire, these black circles often signal the presence of another kind of gesture. Like a groove in the visible world, they indicate its original incompleteness. These punctures in plenitude are at once 'eyes wide open' and 'eyes wide closed'. And all of a sudden, when a letter starts flickering in one or the other to transmit a message, they prove to be bearers of a new life.

STELES. Marc Rebollo also makes sculptures that he sometimes casts in bronze. The most recent of its kind, made to hang on the wall and not to stand on a pedestal, is singular in form. A supple line splits it into two, indicating the identity of both joined parts. A flash of attention reveals it to be a painter's palette displaying tiny mounds of paint, accumulated through work. There is a genuine whiff of irony. These clumps, now in bronze, are like palpable manifestations of the quest to seize a few of the time-clumps that haunt the perpetually shifting universe and galaxies. Other sculptures play with letters and words. But these letters do not line up like proud soldiers. They pile up like tired bodies. These works are steles of living memory in its tireless struggle against time.

PAINTING. The deliberate use of painting-tools enables Marc Rebollo to turn each of his paintings into a vehicle for approaching the right distance. The right distance is what makes it possible to coincide the mental fabric (that of names, words, letters, and thus of signification) with the fabric of lines (the necessary medium for appending life-bearing elements) and to affix them to the fabric of colored gestures. For color, in Marc Rebollo's work, is at once a trigger and a driving force, insofar as paint is fundamentally expressed. All of the other elements are necessary for a painting to occur, but none is as essential as the interplay of colors. And this must clearly be mastered, precisely in order for the finely tuned interplay between strata to access its maximal power of expression, albeit without preventing the colored gesture from conveying painting's immensity and color's expressive power.

By playing with the rules and strata of history, Marc Rebollo has invented his own artistic language while investing color with the central function, that of interconnecting and yet also keeping at bay the visual elements, which might otherwise devour the canvas.

It is for this reason that the mystery he discloses to us is essential, for it is the mystery of color's magic which, he divulges to us, is a process of overlapping as if here too the aim were at once to reveal, to enliven, and to retune the interlinked layers of our brain.

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