

"Primal Painting" By Felipe Scovino

This set of works by Bruno Dunley shown in this exhibit outline a noise-laden, dense scenario. There is a sort of crud encrusted in the making of these paintings. I say this for two reasons: the first is that the painting is dynamic; the line, far from being absent-minded, is the result of a clash with the world, for it mirrors the very speed and noise of the times we live in. We witness imperfections that range from the occasional tear on a paper sheet to the incongruity, at first glance, of the set of figures, gesturalities and symbols concentrated on the canvas, linen or paper sheets. What grabs my attention is the urge to fill the space of that material with a discourse that makes itself evident not exactly through what we see as the end result on the canvas or the paper, but substantially in the construction process. In this sense, gesturalities, such an important element of Dunley's work, is to a degree connected with the expressionistic painting process. We realize, whatever the material, that there is a power, a feeling, a will, albeit primal, that is being invested. These artworks are more broadly comprehended when close to one another. They form a narrative that renders explicit this less solar atmosphere that hovers about his work. This is not to say that they bring melancholy or sadness, but they seem to reflect the very discomfort and insecurity that contemporaneity entails. The idea of narrative is quite explicit in his selection of paper, since it helps create a path or succession of visual and poetic possibilities, connected with this set of works. The artist uses the rectangle as the key geometric figure in his more recent work, its "body" or insides invested as an object of experience and transformation. In articulating, filling, sequencing, and superimposing lines and gestures, such procedures feed a light-filled quasi-corpus (and, to quote from Gullar on the Neo-Concrete Manifesto, is a "being that can be deconstructed into parts for analysis but can only be fully understood through a direct, phenomenological approach").

The rectangle is featured in two canvases, and they too show a tendency to erase, demystify, and somehow reroute it to a new experience. It is interesting to be faced with this investigation that breeds modulations and uncertainties and may be welcome in art! Between what is color and what is light in painting. Note that the connections with the history of painting are very frequent in these works. Here, one finds the grid, the glaze, the light-and-shadow play, the trompe l'oeil, the sfumato. The superimposition of layers and textures helps reveal these meshes, and on the other hand endows the pieces with an air of mystery, particularly the paintings. They appear to reveal themselves little by little as if they were unraveling, exhibiting themselves slowly and gradually. They don't clarify anything; on the contrary, they make our interpretation of them doubtful, multiple. They hide more than they show themselves. This at once dubious and fugacious relationship is conducive to what one might call an "error-filled" painting. Note that by going back to the crud-like quality I described in the beginning, coupled with the imperfection of the forms, the fragmented, inconclusive figures and the successive layers and glazes that recomposed the narrative process of these paintings at every minute, Dunley's work creates a sense of suffocation, i.e. the plane does not seem to account for the number of relationships and images that are evoked. At this point, the artworks turn into fragments of stories, for they seem to occur and run their course before and after these forms appear. Several stories proliferate at once in that plane and it is up to us, the spectators, to make these connections or understand them as individual events. In short, it all seems open to our own musings. Do not mistake this particularity of the piece for something easy or which detracts from the piece. It takes the highest of competences to establish contact points or ties between fragments and references that gain consistency when together. The artist gathers disperse elements that take on relevance and pertinence as a group, especially when interpreted in light of the history of painting. In this sense, therefore, there is a referent to these works. In many ways, Dunley exposes the symbols/elements of the painting: he brings them together to relativize them, and in dispersing them, he ultimately puts them in evidence. The density and strength of his lines denote a certain tension that these elements conjure. Everything happens at a fast pace as if the painting itself were also dissatisfied with its condition of flatness. The painting travels the very movement of the world, of the overwhelming chain of information we sink under each day and, of course, of the discordances and unconformities of daily life.

This set of works speaks of an atmosphere, a convergence that brings them close. I reckon it is more reasonable for us to articulate this condition than to analyze them separately. And this ambiance is deeply rooted in a sort of zeitgeist of our times. Turbulent, chaotic, tumultuous, shared, and to an extent violent, they cause us to realize the idiosyncrasies, contradictions and the dilacerating time of now. Like a symptom of the world or a simulacrum of the perceptions we experience, these artworks approach, and their qualities combine, a lived possibility of our being faced with the very condition of the world we live in: intolerant, dispersive, irresolute, severe, and to a degree incomprehensible.