

Osamu Kobayashi – Evolutionary process of the form

The gaze can't stop itself, a continuous movement of the eye seeks circles, vertical cuts and sharp geometrical figures of pure and shaded colors.

The elements composing Osamu Kobayashi's work are founded by a vital symbiosis and harmony, bounded by a deep structure which has emerged only after an intense process, initially an inner one, strictly personal and dependent, then the outer one, given by forces and balances set by the artist.

Osamu Kobayashi's painting (1984, Columbia, South Carolina, USA) is based on games of strength and balance in continuous evolution, an evolutionary process, a transformation based on the importance of the form and of the expanse which is the amplitude that is diffused and transmitted.

Kobayashi has been able to get over the preconceptions and dogmas of painting, freeing itself and thus producing a symbiosis between brush and colors, between gesture and idea. Inside his works, the artist manages to give shape to the idea, unveiling and announcing in an always new and extraordinary manner the content of the substance that only after years of experimentation and research can now perfectly shape.

Through a slow and meditative brush stroke, Kobayashi concretizes two reading levels in his works: one internal, personal and intimate, where mysterious indications try to set the basis for a research on his own self, and one open to the outside, universal, where the reading of the canvases can be sharable and participatory but never concluded and defined.

In his most recent works the time expands, the brush stroke isn't breathless and agitated but becomes slower and sinuous, the color, from mellow, is able to unite and merge in order to create nuances that illude to be infinite.

The artist produces in a meditated and mediated way, choosing carefully the colors, often intense and bright; the spread color gains its own life, mixing and shading, the action on the canvas is comparable to an unequal fight, until when, almost always, the shape of the work comes clear and wins.

The shape must be understood as the eternal and immutable essence of all that is offered to our senses, as the principle which organizes the elements of the work in a unitary way but at the same time dynamic with his own autonomous development.

It's something that moves, that becomes and that transforms: something which can gain over time multiple features and configurations (J.W. Goethe, cit.) , but it's also the sensitive appearance of the idea; it is a matter of that manifestation of the content in matter that is configured in an always new and different way.

Kobayashi's poetics is based on the research of the importance of the form and of its becoming, where a neat and pure form starts to shade fighting and it blends with the background, with what is around it, creating automatically and mechanically conflicts and supremacy fights that the artist tries to pacify.

The fight begins with the original idea, a war that sets the premises for the battle in the field, on the canvas where Kobayashi, with long vibrant brush strokes, draws essential shapes, where the uniform colors pacify and find an ambiguous but stable and defined balance.

The image of the mind has to deal with the technique and with the real world, Kobayashi succeeds within his works to define spatial and content problems arriving at formal levels that allow to give life to the change of idea.

The action of painting is a real struggle between the artist and the canvas; where the artist has all the mental processes as premise of the pictorial action through a gesture that is always original, composed of balances and formalisms. And if the artist initially worked through a brush stroke dictated by predetermined and studied moves that could seem irrational, now over the years he has a more intuitive and fluid approach; the form on the canvas comes alive through a less violent fight, the relationship that is established is a dialogue, between artist, technique and support.

Now Kobayashi meditates with original images in an automatic and impulsive way about the inequity of contrasts and oppositions which fixes on the canvas.

There isn't a serial division of Kobayashi's works, but it is possible to find a formal path inside of them.

He uses the canvas to experiment with proportions, color combinations where organic and geometric shapes are in a tense stable balance which tends towards abstraction and simplification to the minimum terms, even the substance it involves so much the senses that in the spectator the inner struggle of Kobayashi returns, the surfaces vibrate, the eye can't stop at a single point, it wants to enjoy all the parts despite the minimal composition.

Osamu Kobayashi paints only the essential, he lets every single element on the canvas to be the protagonist,

every shape is crucial for the work.

Only through the use of time and memory we can understand the ultra abstract subjects of Kobayashi, a fight between present and past which, once again, comes clear in remaining images, justifying the peremptory titles.

After image that try, without succeeding, to outline a form, a subject and a clear thought but they let dynamics, even ironically, flow with our knowledge and consciousness, which can't reach a common agreement, establishing a universal image.

The titles can be helpful in the reading, but the canvases often allow a coexistent multiple interpretation. Important in Kobayashi's work is the relationship between earthly and metaphysical world; the composition are based on the balance and on the proportions, in them a feeling of sensorial fulfillment and satisfaction endure. The sensitivity for the color and the materiality of the pigment derive from the pop influence from his formation in American territory (Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MD). In parallel we find inevitably elements of oriental artistic culture, philosophical theories of Zen matrix that give meaning to the sign on the canvas left by the artist, where the sensibility, balance and suspension of time are significant elements.

It's as the relationships between light, tones and colors inside Osamu's works, want to establish inside the canvas a sort of perfect world.

It can rip from becoming what it assumes to be the infinite, beyond every contingency. The balance in Kobayashi's shapes is an attempt to fix the eternal becoming of things, giving a temporary order and, not necessary, listened and put in place.

Kobayashi doesn't like to identify in periods or artistic movements, but it's impossible not to notice experimental elements which recall and can associate him with abstract expressionism.

His works are concrete and abstract at the same time, the artist activates processes of stylization that comes to a complete dissolution of the real fact.

A concrete work can be abstract at the same time, as Max Bill¹ said addressing clearly the problem and giving us a clarifying example:

<<In an abstract work, a red point on a white surface could be, theoretically, the figurative residue of a “sun shining through the fog, in a winter landscape”, in a concurrent work a red point on a white surface isn't anything more than a figurative law, an expression of a particular visual harmony>>.

If for Rothko and Gottlieb, in 1943, the foundation of their expressive research was identified within the myth as main source for inspiration and reference, for Kobayashi it's the freedom of imagination of the space

and images already seen where it's expressed the fight between the emotivity and the interiority giving life to a two-dimensional and abstract version – it's painting for painting.

(Text by Federica Scolari)

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Max Bill, From abstract art to concrete art, 1947