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21 November 2012

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PATRICIA PEREZ EUSTAQUIO

show dates:

30 Nov 2012 - 13 Jan 2013

opening reception:

30 Nov, Fri, 7-9pm

PATRICIA PEREZ EUSTAQUIO



Untitled (Butcher's Blossoms) I, 2012 by Patricia Perez Eustaquio

Adeline Ooi in conversation with Patricia Perez Eustaquio

In her solo exhibition *Death to the Major Viva Minor* at Slab in 2008, Patricia Eustaquio presented a series of paintings and objects that were inspired by Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*. This exhibition addressed her interest in the inherent narratives and character found in materials or "materiality", as she worked with lace, wood, leather and ceramics - craft-based materials that are associated with the decorative arts, fashioning them into stand alone objects and sculptures. One of the most striking aspects of this exhibition was a series of irregularly shaped paintings depicting imagery derived from Classical Dutch paintings. They were fragmented paintings, deliberately suspended in its incomplete state, like flashes of memory: fast, bright, complete in its own way and yet never quite whole.

From this point onwards, one might say that the artist had embarked on a slow leisurely journey ahead as she would unveil a small number of shaped paintings from time to time. In my conversation with Ms. Eustaquio, exchanged over the Internet, she explains that they are a continuation of a thread that she has been exploring for the past few years:

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“the language of material and form, straddling straddle art, craft and design. They are thematic of our relationship with material culture, the ‘furniture’ that make up our visual culture that is littered with objects that have been technically designed for specific purposes or produced aesthetically with ‘pleasure’ as their specific purpose. The Classical age of painting harks back to this themed lifestyle, as we have now in our modern-inspired lifestyle, but boundaries have changed, or have been blurred.”

We also discussed the development of this series, as well as some of the ongoing interests that have informed her practice over the past 10 years which is the theme of our conversation below.

Adeline Ooi (AO): In your recent artist statement you mentioned “deliberately shaving off its parts” (of highly decorative objects), painting on irregularly shaped canvases to emphasize painting as an object - highlight its materiality, its inevitable role as a decorative object. I understand your motivation, as the blurring of boundaries between art, craft and design is an area that I am deeply fascinated with. However, I wondered if you can tell me more about your technical process; how do you go about arriving at these shapes? Why not geometrical forms which are also historically associated with ornamentation and decorative forms?

Patricia Perez Eustaquio (PE): When I first thought of doing shaped canvas paintings, it was an attempt to address the fragmented narratives in my work and the craft and design aspect simultaneously in a single work. I wanted it to be a painting, as well as an object that could be related to some form of wall decor. It was early 2008 and I had spent a few months in Europe, going around their museums, and the entire design phenomenon was so actively unfurling in the Dutch scene then. Instead of drawing the decorative motifs so commonly found in wallpaper on a regular canvas, I decided that I would take those motifs and use them as the shape of the canvas itself. The leaf and floral patterns most commonly found in wallpaper, when isolated reveals how similar they are to other biomorphic shapes so I started with the outline of a pheasant, a very common motif in Classical Dutch painting. And so I began giving myself the task of choosing a detail from Dutch paintings that I would transfer as a shape (canvas). That's how it started out, and of course it has evolved along the way, with different degrees of success and failure in exploring the primary impetus. For the motif to continue, I realize that repetition is key, which is why I've decided to paint four shaped canvas of the same size for this exhibition.

AO: The irregularly shaped paintings made their debut at your solo exhibition, *Death To The Major Viva Minor* in 2008 and have since developed into a small but focused ongoing series. Depending on how you look at it, some would say that four years is quite a long (ish) time to stay with one body of work and it looks to me that you are not done with it. I assume over the four years or so, your ideas, intent and approach have taken different turns? What have you learnt and what are the developments, the potentials (to further develop) the works?

PE: I do feel I am not done exploring these shaped paintings. My first shaped canvas works were a pair - *Reprise I* and *II* (2008) were meant to be viewed as distorted mirror

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image of each other, not only in their shape but also in the subject matter. When I made *Reprise III* and *IV* (2012), I had also intended them to be presented as a diptych. The series that I am working on now are pairs showing abstracted images from photographs of flowers and game, both of which were popular classical subjects of still life. I say abstracted because the images are magnified many times and transferred onto a large shaped canvas roughly two meters in diameter, and so may not immediately be connected to the actual subject of flowers and game. As we magnify images further and further, we look deeper and deeper into the subject matter as well as the image, like a scientist looking through a microscope. Everything becomes abstract at certain viewing distances, and becomes whole or clear once more at another distance.

I have been toying with the idea of making them into puzzle pieces, or more 3-dimensional, to include a host of other references and other ideas that interest me, like why are we still so obsessed with modernism, and in this age of anthropoceny, will design kill us all?

AO: The images depicted in this series differ from the earlier shaped paintings. Your earlier paintings were more figurative as one is able to pick out a hand holding an apple or the wings of a pheasant. While the subject matter or themes remain consistent i.e. still life, flowers, there is a certain aura of mystery in these new paintings as the imagery are more abstract, more ambiguous. For example, *Untitled (Butcher's Blossom) I* and *Untitled (Butcher's Blossom) II*, they are simultaneously figurative yet abstract, deep yet flat...

PE: The tension between figuration and abstraction has always been an important part of my work. My earliest paintings were of blown up details; over the years the images may have varied - some are more abstract than others when finished, but the images have always been derived from reality. It is the push and pull that I am interested in. I think about these works a lot. The consequence of such occupation is boredom so often I decide to work on something that I will love and hate over the course of making it: something that I can converse with, ask me questions, problem-solve and that sort of thing. I find that this kind of work is more interesting, especially for viewers who will see it at one point as something they don't like and find it interesting at another time. This happens a lot: they forget they've seen it before - as they have ignored it - and then something else happens when they see it again, with "different eyes", and again and again. This process of perception, (different way of) seeing and memory is a core interest of my art practice; I feel like I'm on the right track when I can draw such responses from the viewer. A certain level of uncertainty in the love-hate/dislike-like is far more preferable than unwantonly embrace.

AO: Would you say that the palette has changed also?

PE: Not so. Although I have been thinking of *Swine* at Green Papaya Art Projects (2004) a lot lately, and how like Alfonso Cuarón or Peter Greenaway, I wanted to and still want to reference color themed tableau vivants. *Swine* was a red and white show.

AO: The images depicted in your shaped paintings are highly evocative and sensual, yet they read as disjointed vignettes. To me, the images feel so certain - so bold and pronounced, and yet, this time the narrative feels

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barely audible, like whispers or murmurs, like the experience of hearing something but not enough to hold onto anything...and yet there is a lingering emotion, like an unfinished sentence that you turn and turn in your head and the nuances change with each turn...

PE: Yes, I suppose that's the uncertainty I mentioned earlier. The abstraction and fragmented nature of the works allow them to morph into these different things for different people. Perhaps that's why I'm moving along that direction.

PATRICIA PEREZ EUSTAQUIO runs from 30 November 2012- 13 January 2013 at Silverlens Singapore at 47 Malan Road, #01-25 Gillman Barracks, Singapore. Opening reception for the artist will be from 7-9pm on 30 November, Friday. The artist will be present.

For inquiries please contact Neli Go, +65.9782.3013 or neli@silverlensgalleries.com.

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