SOPHIE TAPPEINER

Anna Schachinger
Céu Limpo

25.10. -
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Madonna and Child against a bright blue sky, a motif countlessly reproduced in the history of Renaissance painting. She: an enraptured figure whose care immediately touches the viewer. Staged in rigorously calculated compositions, this connection between mother and child transfigures earthly experience into the sacred. And centuries later, the images still work remarkably well, even with secular hindsight.

The ensemble of works Anna Schachinger brought together under the title *Céu Limpo* lacks a comparable superstructure, and yet one almost feels that deep understanding of traditional iconography simmering beneath the surface—especially when these women return our gaze unflinching as they hold their children up to shade their eyes. The gesture is surreal, but one that's been practiced to the point of a nonchalant casualness, evoking pictorial typologies yet to be known. The children look happy, though the women don't exactly seem maternal, more like pragmatic figures going about the mundane work of care. Still, the everyday realities of these caregivers all but exposes the Madonna-like idealization of maternity to be a kind of ideological delusion. They are profane, almost proletarian figures, young and old, some friendly, some grim. The monochrome blue of the sky, framing this configuration in variations of an abstract color field opens up a speculative space of possibility beyond concrete representation: whatever seemed to verge on representation is snatched back into the realm of painterly discourse, transformed into an ambiguous metaphor between awakening and reckoning. Bodies connect on and with the canvas, forming a unity before separating again.

Anna Schachinger's paintings have a latent transparency that imbues every brushstroke with a lasting presence, without the painterly gesture having to outshine the motif. Just as abstract and figurative images coexist in her artistic practice, the material facts of the paint create a parallel playing field for narrative structures that comment on what's seemingly evident, offering a productive complication. The oddly flat figures are embedded within this plane, so that their space of agency is constrained and our view of them restricted to the surface. But the almost ornamental rotation of the brush, its curves and choreographies, unfold variations within the bodies and clothing. Neither contour nor boundary, these volume-creating lines assert their own formal value, one that points back to their own genesis and temporality.

A completely blue painting, which might otherwise seem abstract when viewed apart from the whole installation, operates as a reference to the sky in the other paintings. And like the sky itself, it transcends all coordinates of time and space.

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Meanwhile, the non-representational, wide-format ornamental painting similarly defies any specific localization, but also supplements the series of shade-giving children like some kind of frieze. It's almost an abstract vision of da Vinci's *sfumato*—landscape as a hazy background vibe that suggests a realistic localizability in the absence of any geographic evidence. What seems to have eluded the blue color fields now reappears here in concentrated form, but with a suggestive charge that allows surface to become horizon—a demarcation in both the spatial and temporal senses, which points to that which is not yet real but can already be sensed without it having a concrete form.

The pictorial object made of black velvet fabric with a pattern of stars, which Schachinger minimally accentuates with blue paint, looks comparatively concrete in its applied ornament. It is a piece of fabric from Quito, where her grandmother lives, which inserts itself between the supposed narrative of the other works as a textile image and once again inhabits the tension between appropriation and repurposing in a different way.

By reformatting the gestures of traditional role models, by bringing once idealized propaganda down to earth and transferring the imagined real into the autonomous realm of painting where it literally become liquid, Anna Schachinger's *Céu Limpo* presents us with ambiguous pictorial worlds between critique and possibility: images that reflect on the reality-constituting potential of images without getting lost in endless chains of reference.

Vanessa Joan Müller

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