

*Why hold onto all that?*

*And I said, Where can I put it down?*

– Anne Carson, *The Glass Essay*

In her series *Ctoniographie*, Renata Boero puts her works underground. In steps steeped in ritual, the artist uses materials like turmeric, rhatany or ash in an elaborate process of boiling and burial. The resulting works don't attempt to represent nature's alchemy, they simply perform it. Stewing her canvases in a series of concoctions, she folds the cloth and offers it up, allowing the marks of time and the traces of its environment to move the transmutation forward. The sudden unearthing of the canvas interrupts the material's decomposition. From that moment on, the works continue to develop, they keep materializing.

The process is distinct from representation as these forms and shapes emerge from within, rather than via application. It is the invisible that produces the result. The artist tracks and indexes the stages of germination, written notes find their way onto the canvas, adding a level of commentary to the abstract imagery. The compositions harken back to the structural logic of modernist grid systems while also alluding to the craft of quilt making.

Renata Boero could have inherited her squares from Agnes Martin, with whom she also shares a connection to the land and an insistence on a kind of automatism. Boero lends nature's active part an authorial role in her process, likening the impact of the forest floor to a signature on her works. Martin's fastidious line and controlled colors constructed the conditions for an experience of totality, an enveloping present. While less perceptible at first, Boero's work is the result of a meticulous process of testing, timing and transforming materials.

Renata Boero's work bears a kind of organic resonance with Hanne Darboven's oeuvre, as Darboven made use of the grid, of the structure of the calendar or the shape of handwriting, to grasp a neutral experience of time, an order all-embracing and always in flux. Similarly, Boero's work bears a history that continues to transform it into the condition of its presentness, it hangs open to its continued evolution for the eye of the viewer.

This reminded us of the “today” in which Ingeborg Bachmann's *Malina* opens, where the prospect of continuous immediacy, of a true “today” is fundamentally overbearing: «too gripping, too boundless... In fact, “today” is a word that only suicides ought to be allowed to use, it has no meaning for other people.»

Indeed absolute presence is daunting, it requires the embrace of everything that comes up. The works of Renata Boero move us to participate in their simultaneity, their enveloping presentness is deeply veracious. Everything is right there with us.

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