

## Being in Nuance

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For centuries, drawing hasn't been regarded as an art or an artistic discipline in its own right. Drawing was the foundation of all art: it was through its body that the arts found the world; it was in its line that the sensible found its intelligible foundation; it was in its movement that every artwork found the source of its making. Drawing was everywhere, in the body of every art, in painting as well as in sculpture, in architecture as well as in the minor arts, without being able to appear in its autonomy - as a hidden god, as a restless demon.

This transcendental nature was not only justified by an aesthetic basis. It had an anthropological foundation. "It may be," wrote Paul Valéry about Degas, "that drawing is the most haunting temptation of the mind. Should I even talk about the spirit? Things are watching us. The visible world is a perpetual excitement: everything awakens or nourishes the instinct to appropriate the shape or the model of the thing that the eye builds ". Drawing would be nothing more than an immanent obligation to live a sensible life. To be exposed to the world through the senses means to feel the temptation of reproducing the experience. Drawing would be nothing else than that effervescent bubbling which brings the experiment to be redoubled in its mimetic counterpart.

It is only today that drawing is freeing itself from the ancillary task of having to serve the other arts, to provide them with a structure, a meaning, a link to the world, and is now becoming an independent space of creation. The artistic work of Pedro A.H. Paixão is one of the most accomplished forms of drawing's aesthetic emancipation, from the state of subjection in which it had been reduced. This liberation does not start from a denial of the past, but from a radicalization. If all art is rooted in drawing, it's because we always must *draw* in order to see. Drawing is not a temptation, it is a physiological need. Because if drawing is what allows reality to reproduce itself, it does not come after the experience, it is, on the contrary, the immanent movement, the secret dynamism. We do not draw after having perceived the world, we draw the world in order to perceive it: the sensory organs are only internal organs of the corporal drawing. Drawing, for example in Denis Oppenheim's famous *2-Stage Transfer Drawing*, always coincides with the act of seeing, hearing, tasting. That is why, for Paixão, drawing will not and cannot be any longer mimetic: there is nothing more to imitate, to reproduce, because nothing else exists before drawing allows the real to become sensible. Conversely, seeing is not a passive activity, it is the active effort to 'make sensible' (*sensifier*) the world. And that is why for Paixão, drawing (that is, sight) is not and can no longer exist as a question of outline - line being the instrument of the abstraction of the sensible, the threshold that allowed the real to coincide with the intelligible. It is now more a question of doing the opposite, of making reality - always captured in cliché and prejudice - become a sensible fact. Drawing must bring out the world for the first time: because apart from drawing, the world only exists in the form of a series of words - stereotypes. On the paper sheet, reality does not have to purify itself: on the contrary, it has to take form. The subject of drawing is therefore the embryogenesis of the world.

If drawing is at the origin of any sensation, it is also because the origin is always a drawing. Going back - returning to the earth and to the world that gave birth to humanity - can only be achieved through drawing, because this land itself is only a drawing from which we have lost the key, a scribble whose line we no longer follow and whose traits we no longer recognize. Drawing our own origins can only mean, then, trying to bring out this bubbling of that chromatic mass.

This exhibition brings together the works that allowed Paixão to bring out - and thus to see - Africa, of which he is one of the diasporic children. The lesson he draws from it - the lesson we all draw from it - is more than astonishing. No judgment seems to come from it. No criticism. No jubilation in the face of a newfound origin. On the contrary, all recognition is literally impossible: if

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we must draw, it is because sight is always the opposite of recognition. This is why the choice of the monochrome is justified: in order to see, and to draw, it is necessary to replace and flatten everything, to deny the ontological differences or, more precisely, it is necessary to transform what seems to be an inequality in nuance, into a difference in intensity of color intensity. We then discover that reality is made of one and the same substance. That is why it can accommodate such contradictory and seemingly incompatible aspects: the toy for children can coincide with its erasure, the face of the two painters to be confused with the fence.

To replace and flatten everything, does not mean making everything equal. It means, on the contrary, to allow the force that animates reality, and therefore sight, to manifest itself and to be in tune with reality.

The world that these drawings make visible seems close to the one that, according to the legends of the Mediterranean, Adam, the first among us, must have seen the first day. A world where all things seem inextricably mixed, where thousand-year dreams are confused with clouds of emptiness, where beings share the same substance and the same color. It is, above all, a world where the distinction between right and wrong is much less clear than it must have appeared to the gods of morality. To have eaten the apple or to have left it on its branch is a question of nuance, of color intensity.

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