

Caetano de Almeida Recent Work

Opening Thursday 28th August 2014, 6-8 p.m.
Exhibition 29th August - 25th October 2014

The large-scale canvases by Brazilian artist Caetano de Almeida owe their vibrancy as much to their structures as to their luminous colours. In Beugler, 2013 thread-like lines weave a potentially endless colourful grid. The carefully controlled order is disrupted, however, by tangles of filaments erring about three rectangular spaces. If, in a hierarchical system, irritation is caused by infringements of the norm, that is precisely the effect the artist aims for.

He uses no instruments – not even a ruler, relying only on some pencil sketches. His painstaking, highly precise technique required him many months ago already to begin work for the exhibition at Galerie Andres Thalmann, which features colourful works in acrylic on canvas or paper. de Almeida's combinations of different patterns and ornaments draw inspiration from the pattern-mixing styles of fashion worn by the self-confident women of India or the Brazilian state of Bahia.

de Almeida's works feature any number of patterns, some of which verge on the banal and superficial, while others are highly complex, not to say chaotic. In Fiapos, 2014 the painted filaments rush from the canvas margins toward the centre, where they converge in dense "cables" before expanding into oval-shaped areas where they criss-cross more systematically. There is a degree of visual irony in this balancing act between stability and fragility. In an interview with Ana Paula Cohen, the artist declared, "I'm deconstructing stability, but by still maintaining something structural."

On the other hand, de Almeida's geometrical, blue-green on white design in Flores do deserto, 2013 would appear to be the result of a mathematically precise construction that reveals a more scientific approach. One year on, in Flores do deserto, 2014, the lines emerge from a plaid-like pattern to form several random "convergences" in the shape of cyclic rosettes, another demonstration of the artist's astounding technical skill.

While the line rather than the plane dominates de Almeida's works, there is no doubting their kinship with Constructivism, perhaps he is reviving a European influence from a more highly charged and pulsating Latin American perspective. At the very least, these works reflect a Brazilian attitude to life and "lightness of being", the seductive beauty, inimitable light and colourful vibrancy of Brazil, in a distinctive, highly recognisable style.

Caetano de Almeida lives and works in São Paulo. Born in Campinas, Brazil, in 1964, he studied art at Fundação Armando Álvares Penteado in São José dos Campos (1983-1988). In 2005 his thesis on Visual Poetics led to a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of São Paulo. However, de Almeida has had his works exhibited since well before that time. Numerous prestigious Latin American galleries and museums have shown his creations since the 1990s. Recognition of his work has increased since the early years of the 21st century. He was honoured in two large retrospectives at São Paulo's Museu de Arte Moderna (2003), and at Rio de Janeiro's Museu de Arte Moderna (2007). He has also had numerous solo shows in the U.S. and in Europe, and regularly presents his most recent works at Art Basel in Miami or Basel.

Marie-Louise Teichmann