

# Kontra-pogled *Contro-sguardo*

Critical text by Antônio Frederico Lasalvia

Other than the surnames and the fact that both have studied architecture, the Ruclis share an interest in the manuality of painting, a theme that has been marginalized in contemporary art practices ever since the *ready-made* displaced skill and the hand from artistic discourse. However, the way Renzo and Elena relate to the medium of paint and what they seek to achieve through it differs radically.

Renzo Rucli is after absolute abstraction, in a dialectical opposition to the mimetic drive that characterized European painting since the renaissance. This is hinted by his predilection for the perfect square, a platonic abstraction which is absent from nature. The only representational element to be found in the canvas – a curious originary exception – is the form of the egg. However, even in this figurative residue, the author is more interested in its geometrical construction and historical allusion to Piero della Francesca than in its organic meaning.

The self-imposed imperative of not contradicting the bidimensionality of painting finds expression even in Renzo Rucli's choice of support. By moving away from the traditional framed canvas, he embraces a metallic surface which reduces the physicality of painting to a single plane. This artifice is the concrete instance where his life-long experience as an architect finds expression in his recent artistic practice.

Other two tectonic aspects are to be found on the way Renzo Rucli builds his paintings: one comes from the almost project-like character of some works, which display the disintegration of geometrical shapes into seemingly chaotic patterns. However, this process follows strictly rational rules derived from operations based on the golden section, which transforms the artwork into a notation which communicates to the viewer how it was composed. The idea of construction

also becomes explicit when attention is drawn to the joining of squares. This tension is often emphasized by a playful chromatic contrast and, in another instance of an exception which confirms the rule, by a freely drawn stroke right at the line where two squares meet.

Elena Rucli has her visual research situated in the context where she dwells. Her interest does not lie in the study of intangible forms, but gravitates around the concrete things she can see with her own eyes. From the framing of close details to the evocation of atmospheric mountain horizons, her compositions exist somewhere in the middle between representation and abstraction.

Within the investigation of her immediate environment, Elena Rucli avoids the unattainability of an objective account. By depicting the fleeting traces in forest paths, scattered compositions of light and shadow or the crooked arrangements of mineral strata and vegetal entwinements, her subjective point of view suspends the different time scales behind these actual formations and transfigures them into imagined shapes and colors.

In other work, Elena Rucli displays painstakingly detailed illustrations in black and white. Lately, however, she has been drawn to the medium of painting because of the freedom it affords. From a technical point of view, her paintings avoid the

precision of the straight line and mobilize the pleasure of free brush strokes over different layers of color. The only right corners to be found in the work lie on the square frames, but even these are not an unconditional commitment: she is also eager to experiment with the compositional and thematic implications of a round support. When it comes to pigment, her chromatic choice is intuitive and varies from ton on ton to high contrast compositions.

Chance and order, nature and artifice, intuition and deliberation, *naïveté* and discipline are juxtaposed in *contro-sguardo*. Within this exchange, the spectator finds themselves in the middle of a multifaceted dialogue which results from the confrontation of the visual worlds familiar to Renzo Rucli and Elena Rucli.