



# The landscape of the century at the limit of abstraction

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The game between the real and digital in the paintings and the drawings of Renata Pelegrini

The question of the sublime in contemporary landscape is not naturally marked by the conception that Burke and Kant had in the past nor by the numinous aspect raised by Rudolf Otto after them. Probably not even the post-modern approach of Lyotard could be seen as a reference when it comes to trying to redefine the sublime in contemporary art as he considers only partly considers how the new technologies are changing this concept. Renata Pelegrini, a painter who is opening her first individual exhibition this Friday (February 26, 2016), may be a great help to those who are disposed to discuss the sublime and the artistic representation of nature closely linked to the perception of the natural world brought together by digital means. Her exhibition at the Casa Contemporânea center brings together 20 of her works, including drawings and paintings. These works show how the contemporary artist, backed by the latest digital technology, reacts to the way contemporary society controls how it looks at things by forcefully presenting her subjective approach to the technique of painting.

These works of interiors to landscapes, recreated with the help of digitalized imaging, are inserted into a current of contemporary painting that swings between representation and abstraction. The American painter Claire Sherman, to mention only one name that appears to have some affinity with Renata Pelegrini's paintings, seems to share some philosophical and esthetic questions with her, particularly Rancière's theories on the game between the "visible presence" and invisibility. Rancière, whose interest in esthetic production originated in Hegelian theology, along with the critic Clement Greenberg (1909-1994) shares some ideas on abstraction and the illusionism of the three-dimensional space, but opens a breach for expressive signs within the formalistic concept.

Renata Pelegrini from São Paulo who is only now, at the age of 49, feeling sufficiently comfortable to show her works, makes use of expressive gestures to create her pictorial universe. Her fast irreversible movements are linked to her great experience with calligraphy, the area in which she began her artistic education. She is a teacher and was raised in a family of teachers. She has taken part in a number of salons in Brazil and Italy, where she lived for a time. Her interest in calligraphy led her to take part in courses in a number of countries (the US, Italy, Switzerland) and this experience is present in the canvases and drawings with the intervention of precise lines, subordinating the pictorial execution to the formal calligraphic planning.

"Calligraphy is a monastic work that demands discipline and my painting is fast with expressive gestures," said the painter who admits the "contradictions" resulting from her time that are marked by imprecision and uncertainty. "I think of Rancière but later on, after the painting is finished," said Renata who had lessons on art history from the art critic Rodrigo Naves and received guidance from the painter Paulo Pasta.

She was born in São Paulo and graduated in Language Teaching. She is also a translator and has a close link with the literary world. She quotes the book "Água Viva" ("Living Water") by Clarice Lispector to explain how she became a painter. In this last text by Lispector, published just before her death in 1973, the writer outlines an analogical relationship between writing and painting, deconstructing the first so that it can be reconstructed by the visual work. (It should not be forgotten that Lispector was also a painter, although an average one.) The theme of "Água Viva" is the instant, the present. That is also the theme of Renata Pelegrini's work and this explains the quickness of the expansive lines made with acrylic paint that dries at an industrial speed.

However, these paintings show her connection with the modernist tradition, according to Taisa Palhares, the exhibition curator. She singled out Matisse's benchmark painting, "Porte-Fenêtre a Collioure" (1914), which marked his first attempt to transfer black into the equivalent of light. The painting, which shows the door of his house in Collioure at the end of the summer of 1914, is a composition at the limit of abstraction, a register of the dark times marked by the First World War. This is also the color that predominates in Renata Pelegrini's paintings and interiors but, in her case, there is no metaphoric proposition nor the illusionary space created by the Matisse door.

Her drawings, in charcoal, red chalk, graphite and chalk are structured like an architectural composition in which the external environment is contaminated by the internal, an aspect that is more apparent in the paintings in which black has a luminous element similar, to some extent, to Goeldi, transforming recognizable places into abstractions with second hand images. "I usually take images from the Internet or photos of landscapes of places I have visited," she said. However, these are only pretexts for painting, she admits.