

KISSING SQUARES

ESTHER STOCKER (IT, 1974)

13 November 2021

29 January 2022



OPENING: Saturday, 13 NOVEMBER, from 12 to 8pm

RSVP to martina@albertapane.com or calling 0039 041 5648481

Alberta Pane Gallery is pleased to present *Kissing Squares*, a solo exhibition by **Esther Stocker** in its Venetian venue. In conversation with the gallerist, the artist talks about her work and its evolution, she reflects on the concept of artistic responsibility and provides comments on the works in the exhibition: paintings and sculptures of different sizes, white, black and grey, linear and square elements are the ingredients through which Esther Stocker will turn the gallery space into an enveloping, "anarchic" and perceptively stimulating environment.

Alberta Pane: *Dear Esther, we first met in Vienna in 2010 thanks to Paola Valenti, a dear friend and art historian, who introduced us. I still remember the first time I saw your studio and your work: a white, black and grey universe of lines; however, you told me that at the beginning you used to do figurative paintings. Can you tell me more about it?*

Esther Stocker: Yes, that is true! The painting practice I am developing now stems, on the one hand, from expressive painting and, on the other, from portraits of people I used to do at the beginning of my career. This is an element that I still find important, in particular I am interested in the act of looking carefully at the other, and understanding myself through him. The topics I explore, these formal paradoxes, are very much related to the identity issue. The subject of the portrait is connected to that of figure-background, which is also related to the use of black and white; these elements constitute a "perceptive group", not only from a formal point of view. The development of my work into abstraction is linked to an existential theme. To me it is important to make the audience understand that this is not a 'form for form's sake': form has a social and existential dimension within it.

AP: *The first solo exhibition you presented at the Paris gallery, entitled 'Dirty Geometry', was ten years ago, in 2011: an installation of broken lines filled almost the entire gallery space. How has your work evolved since then?*

ES: My work is still linked to the concept of “dirty geometry” that is at the core of my practice, which is made up of irrational systems in an almost rational system. These paradoxes and contradictions are therefore always at the heart of my work. A development has occurred; in fact, it is only in recent years that I have begun to make sculpture. In the exhibition in Venice I will present a large sculpture in the main exhibition space of the gallery and a series of different sizes in the access corridor.

While *Dirty Geometry* showed paintings and a linear installation, *Kissing Squares* will focus mainly on paintings and sculptures.

In the last ten years I have also started something different: I have established new collaborations and created objects that are close to design. I have done mobile sculptures, experiments and collaborations with the fashion world.

AP: *Tell us about your solo exhibition at the gallery in Venice.*

ES: *Kissing Squares* focuses on painting. Even though I always use black and white and a system very similar to the one I employed before, I hope I have been able to develop my work in comparison to what I have done in the past. Perhaps, the title of the exhibition already partly explains the way I use squares in my paintings. In these, however, there is more freedom than there used to be; there is still the grid, but you can't really see it. These are paintings that relate more to a galactic-cosmological topic, in dialogue with geometry. In the exhibition there will also be sculptures and a video that will refer to sculptures that can be conceived as fashion.

AP: *You have somewhat anticipated my question in your previous answers. I would like to ask you about the several collaborations you have been carrying out with the fashion world for a few years now: why are you attracted by it and how do you find it inspiring?*

ES: In a way, I find this world inspiring precisely because I don't belong to it. I come from an opposite, almost anti-fashion world. I have always been interested in philosophical and formal concepts and not in developing an aesthetic “sense. I myself, for a long time, did not have much interest in fashion and design. Over the years, however, I realized that these universes are all linked to that of art. The Russian Avant-garde and the Bauhaus had created these connections, thinking in a more universal way, and this is where I feel, in some way, the roots of my artistic practice lie.

In German there is this word - which is difficult to translate exactly - *Gestalt* or the verb *gestalten*, meaning shape or to design an object. *Gestalttheorie*, the theory of perception, is something I am very close to in my work. Moreover, I like experimenting!

Another element that I think is important to stress is the artistic responsibility. Doctors have to sign a code of responsibility, an almost ethical code, in which they commit themselves, given their skills, to helping people. I think this is something right and applies to all talents: there is a responsibility for artists too. Fashion is not a field I know very well, but I think we artists have a duty for imagination, for fantasy, for ideas that are a bit more 'risky'. Perfect designs and furniture already exist. I think these 'risky' ideas are part of our responsibility and also our artistic necessity. When we feel ready, it is right to experiment with new ideas and try to establish a discourse and dialogue in a broader sense. My interest in fashion and design is not related to something tangible, but rather to visionary ideas that I think are part of the artistic responsibility.

AP: *What is your view of the contemporary artist?*

ES: Perhaps I have already partially answered talking about the artistic responsibility. This is part of my vision of being an artist. I don't think that every artist has to deal with fashion. For me, the meaning of being and behaving as an artist, not only today, but always, is to represent a great freedom, also by taking risks somehow. In my opinion, art should be connected to life, but it should not teach people. The heart of art is more anarchic, it must always be a road open towards many directions and remain a field of freedom.

AP: *What do you expect from this exhibition and what are your future plans?*

ES: In this exhibition my goal is to share my ideas with the public and in so doing to establish and expand a dialogue, not only with myself, but with others. My future projects are other exhibitions with paintings and sculptures, but I cannot specify too much yet!

Esther Stocker

(IT, 1974)

Renowned worldwide for her paintings, sculptures and large-scale installations characterised by an abstract, geometric style and the use of a palette limited to black, white and grey, Esther Stocker focuses her research on vision and on the perception of space, through an existential and social approach.

"In my paintings, sculptures and installations I try to describe the ambiguity and uncertainty of the system. I use the precision of a system to investigate the system itself. I try to release and abandon our ways of seeing and understanding that are associated with the recognition of forms and that distinguish us from each other, sometimes unconsciously."

Esther Stocker studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, the Brera Academy of Fine Arts (Milan) and the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California. She regularly exhibits in international museums, foundations and galleries. Her work has been shown in venues and events such as Changwon Sculpture Biennale (South Korea) Museum Haus Konstruktiv (Zurich), Museo Vasarely (Budapest), Museo Gegenstandsfreier Kunst (Otterndorf, Germany), LA BF15 (Lyon), Setouchi Triennale (Japan), Kunsthalle Bratislava, Italian Embassy in Vienna, MACRO (Rome), Museum Ritter (Waldenbuch, Germany), Georg Kolbe Museum (Berlin), Künstlerhaus Hannover, CCNOA - Center for Contemporary Non-Objective Art (Brussels), Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig (Vienna), Sharjah Art Museum (United Arab Emirates), just to mention a few.

Recent collaborations with the world of design and fashion include those with Flora Miranda for Cyber Crack 2020, a runway show held during Paris Fashion Week (2020), with BMW Japan for the Setouchi Triennale (2019), with Eider for the 2018/19 winter collection, with Kohlmaier Wien for the International Contemporary Furniture Fair (ICFF) in New York and with Iris van Herpen in Milan (in 2018).

In 2020 she won the Aurélie Nemours prize.

Exhibition Dates & Opening Hours

13.11.2021 - 29.01.2022
Tuesday - Saturday, 10.30am - 6.30pm

Galleria Alberta Pane

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Esther Stocker, Perspectives of Longing, 2021, installation, Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale, Japan



Esther Stocker, Site specific installation, 2020, Museum für Konkrete Kunst, Ingolstadt, Germany