

Galería Ehrhardt Flórez

Guillermo Pfaff
FFFF

From May 27th to July 22nd 2023

It is possible to say that Guillermo Pfaff's new paintings, presented in *FFFF*, his third solo exhibition at Ehrhardt Flórez Gallery, are determined by circumstance. While a truism, it is especially applicable to this group of works, which would not have been possible if the painter's particular circumstances and his relationship with the time of painting had been different.

The three groups of works into which we could divide *FFFF* depart from two of the issues that have always been fundamental in Pfaff's painting: imperfection and spontaneity in execution, which have now given way to a greater reflection on form, aesthetics, pictorial procedure and scale. While these interests are also found in some of his earlier paintings, all were resolved by a method in which speed of execution and what we might call naiveté ended up being mechanical resources for completing the work with the minimum means possible.

The work now is different, with a new restraint of gaze and pictorial practice. While the formulations of painting on a surface or the painter's bodily relationship with the picture are similar to those of the past, his cycles of looking and acting on the painting have changed radically. Whereas most of the paintings were formerly painted (solved, one might say) in a single session, they now require many more, probably because they remain unresolved. If the paintings seemed formerly to be based on certain knowledge and limits (painting as recognised and recognisable to the painter himself), the works now change tack and demand to be reconsidered. There is a strangeness in this new series of paintings. Many of the things taking place in the paintings cannot be explained by former pictorial procedures or by the configuration of the forms that constitute them, and it is in this conflict that one of the most fascinating questions in *FFFF* arises.

In the main room, four large paintings from two different series are exhibited, while paintings on coloured canvases are featured in the adjacent rooms. While the chromaticism is vibrant in some paintings, it is more hidden in others, concealed in the inferior layers in various shades of blue and violet which emerge to the attentive viewer. In others, the browns, purples, reds and oranges are more evident and constitute one of the main elements of the painting. In the main room the idea is simple: four walls, four paintings. Three of these paintings are composed on the basis of shapes detached from each other which, through repetition and variation of patterns, cover the surface of the canvas. The fourth accumulates all the scattered forms inhabiting the others in its centre. Whether dispersed or concentrated, these forms are everything and nothing at the same time. The geometric figures more typical of previous periods have given way to forms that are irregular and imprecise, even clumsy, and which are everything insofar as they are superimpositions of geometric and organic forms that function as models of accumulation, and nothing insofar as they lose their limits, blurring into pure indefiniteness. There is hardness, weight, consistency and complexity in these new shapeless masses, adverse at times, with both blunt and sharp contours, sediments that are glimpsed between the layers, blurred and tending to cover elements that are subtly revealed, such as columns, capitals, letters, signs, shells, thorns, palm fronds, clouds and plant forms. The pictorial space is filled with more static forms (without dynamism or movement), where the pressure exerted on the surface and the way the colour is deposited on the canvas become more notable. There are parts where a certain brightness is produced thanks to repeated gestures and layering, while others are drier, with the brush seeming to have exhausted its power. Modulation and pressure, with the brush sometimes sinking to the point of marking the canvas stretcher bars, while at other times only lightly caressing the surface.

The paintings on coloured canvases are developed on both sides, with the effects of bleach fading the canvas and the stitching and transparencies creating compositions that are unique in Pfaff's work. The paintings have been turned in all their possible variations. Like records of memory, they can be read in different directions and senses, with the pictorial elements themselves, and not only the shapes or the letters, but the paint itself, the patches and the matter, belonging to different faces, sides and surfaces.

Clouds, faded triangles, ethereal forms and highly visible signatures articulate compositions which, in both their formal structure and colours, could be reminiscent of certain paintings of the 1940s and 50s by Mark Rothko, José Guerrero, Philip Guston or Esteban Vicente. In general, the smudged, covered and patched forms in each painting entail a certain optical complexity, confusing the here-there, up-down, inside-outside and front-back.

Guillermo Pfaff is uncertain of the origin of these forms and is unsure why he makes them. Part of his intention with these new paintings seems to be to see the beauty of the conflicts and errors inherent in the painter's craft. Indeed, all the things that bother him as a painter appear in *FFFF*.