

Between Times

BY JACOPO CRIVELLI VISCONTI, 2011

The almost constant presence of a highly precise geometric matrix can lead viewers to believe that the paintings by José Bechara gathered here seek, above all else, a dialogue with the history of art and, perhaps more specifically, with the concrete tradition that was essential to the development of Brazil's art over the last few decades. However, the fundamental question in these paintings, and possibly in the whole of this artist's work, is another, it is time. The green hued tones obtained from the steel oxides and copper emulsions, for example, are similar to, both from the chromatic and chemical points of view, those seen in the roof tiles of European cathedrals after centuries of being exposed to the elements. – although Bechara has managed to shorten the process to a “mere” few weeks.

A few weeks: the time of the cathedrals and that of the studio are separate, what is the blink of the eye outside, an insignificant wink over spiritual and temporal eternity, in here represents, and imposes, a hiatus in the vortex, a wedge of immobility in the urgency of daily life: at his studio in the Santa Teresa neighbourhood of Rio de Janeiro, there is always one or another canvas lying on the floor, resting, slowly changing colour. These must not be touched, it is only a question of waiting. The paintings take place over these two times, one accelerated, compressed to fit into life, and the other that dilates as much as possible, so that life can take care of the canvases.

This is why the artist can speak of a “hesitant geometry” when describing the mesh that underlies the majority of his paintings and that begins strictly, only to lose, slowly and consciously, this strictness. It is a geometry that belongs to the world, not the abstract universe of manuals, the inaccessible empire of theory. José Bechara's paintings, just like the cathedrals, are firmly settled in the world, and the way they reveal the solidity of their foundations is by letting the world take them over, little by little, gradually changing their colour and scribbling the marks of time over them.

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