



Eduardo Costa's Marriage of Conceptual Art and Personal Sensibility

Daniel Rothbart

Philosophers of antiquity like Plato and Pythagoras attributed mystical properties to geometry. Throughout history it has served as the structural underpinning for architecture, and there is a current in Modern Art that celebrates geometry from Russian Constructivism to De Stijl to Bauhaus to Minimalism. Artists working with geometric shapes sought to develop a universal language of form or a non-referential object. Primary colors and unfinished industrial surfaces characterize a tendency of artists to distance themselves from the realm of personal sensibility. This is not the case in Eduardo Costa's new geometric paintings which address the substantive aspect of paint and develop subjective palettes and imperfect geometries.

Eduardo Costa has developed an unusual working technique whereby he paints with heavy impasto, allows the paint to dry, and repeats the process until he has generated a three-dimensional object of acrylic paint that appears closer to the traditional realm of sculpture. Costa makes potentially free-standing objects, but exhibits them at eye level as wall pieces. The works do not make use of any illusionistic device, and as they consist of the same pigment and medium throughout, have a singular weightiness and integrity. Costa has liberated paint from canvas, and united two genres of art making that have remained distinct for thousands of years.

For his new exhibition at Cecilia de Torres, Costa has produced four variations on three shapes: the sphere, the pyramid, and the rectangle. Unlike the majority of conceptual artists, Eduardo Costa has chosen to realize imperfect geometric forms. Costa's *Blue Hemisphere Painting*, for example, appears to be a foreshortened

hemisphere. Apart from its appearance of having been flattened or compressed, Costa treats the surface with gestural impasto. The result is a piece that alludes to the hemisphere while remaining grounded in worldly imperfection. Moreover, it seems to reflect the personal geometry of Eduardo Costa's body by way of his repetitive movements that led its inception.

Brazilian artist Hlio Oiticica, who was a close friend of Costa, suggested that black, red, and white are the African primary colors. Costa's palette is derived from the red, yellow, blue trilogy of western primary colors along with white, but he has also chosen to tint certain colors with black (red + blue). In so doing, he alludes to the colors of Africa and distances himself from De Stijl issues of pure color. Eduardo Costa has lived his life between Argentina, Brazil, Europe, and New York. In developing these new paintings, he has begun to reflect on his life in terms of relationships between people, landscapes, cultures, and ultimately their essence in colors. □

Volumetric Paintings: The Geometry, an exhibition of Eduardo Costa's recent work, will be on view from January 27 through May 15 at Cecilia de Torres, Ltd., 140 Greene Street, New York City.