

From Zlatko Wurzburg

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The great modernist painter Vasily Kandinsky warned against theorists who either blamed or praised his paintings based on their analysis of existing forms, as if it were a wall built between his work and the observer's innocent eye. Non-representative art comes without thematic reference, if not out of the artist's subconscious, that is to say, out of nothing for the beholder. When confronted with such a work of art stripped of all other content except its bare form, and while searching for its meaning, we are too ready to examine its expressive means, seek some outer connections with a picture and its parts, to trace the story or the idea that might underlie its expression, etc. But in doing so, we are still not getting closer to the inner feeling of these artworks. When looking at Rezi van Lankveld's paintings, we are puzzled by the same problem. Equally so, we won't understand them better by finding correspondences with, suppose, late paintings of Philip Guston when he reintroduced abstraction in his work: with their undefined figures, their colour palette with crimson red and medium blue, associated with purples and yellows. Perhaps also by finding similarities with beautiful opalescent greys and other tones that were so cherished by Georgia O'Keeffe, with similar sensuality of the painterly touch, more or less abstract forms. Still, when we put ourselves in front of Rezi's paintings, what would then be the right way for us to reach their inner meaning? Through a vision, as the modernist canon would suggest, that is not dictated by any outward motive or associated with external objects, and that, on the other hand, doesn't indulge in a pure play of colours and forms. Beholding a painting in terms of purely artistic language implies that the onlooker should put almost the same mental effort that the artist put into the realisation of their work. As Marcel Duchamp said: "The painting is as much made by the viewer as by the artist." Therefore, this would certainly require the talent of a poet for a subtle

interpretation of the painter's work. Knowing how uncompromising Rezi van Lankveld's working method is, it brings to mind the figurative expression that Jean Genet put forward in his essay *The Tightrope Dancer*: "... you should risk a definite physical death. The dramaturgy of the Circus demands it. It is one of the rare cruel games that coexist with poetry, war, the bullfight. Danger has its reason for being: it will force your muscles to achieve a perfect precision – because the smallest error is the cause of your fall, causing ensuing infirmity or death – and this precision will be the beauty of your dance". Regrettably, we are more often compelled to speak the prose when considering poetic works. Nevertheless, we can always try to describe how we see Rezi van Lankveld's paintings in general, though we should normally consider each one individually. Although they may be regarded as abstract at first glance, these pictures are by no means fully and purely abstractions. Almost always we can discern volumes in space, or a figure-on-ground compositional organisation. They often bring to mind motifs of landscapes, various figures in space, still life. Also, in her recent paintings we often get the impression of illusionist ambiance and space containing distinct volumes. Furthermore, the role of colour can be perceived as somewhat different than in her earlier work, which becomes more precise, more suitable to fix zones of space and form. Their loosened curves set limits on fluid areas whose surfaces may appear as chromatically plane or tonally or chromatically modulated, sometimes translucent, in skin-like textures. Melodious chromaticism is remarkably sophisticated and restrained, without dissonant transitions that would break the painterly surface and disturb the picture unity. But conversely, there can also be found cases of sharp, almost collage cuts within the composition. In Rezi's recent works, the composition has become subtly complex, using a broader range of colours than before. The palette is wide open throughout the scope of colours, from mauve to deep purple and cadmium yellow, through variants of red, blue and green, mostly in pastel tones. The composition is structured by the succession of layers that the artist developed with a still wet medium. Subtly modulated fluid chromatic surfaces sometimes abruptly discontinue or overlap, creating a back and forth relation, or seem to slide one into the other, towards a vague figure-like

image. However, a definite determination of the form never occurs. The painting doesn't comply with a resolutely defined form, a form that would be fixed objectively and depend on a non-painterly nature. Instead, it develops following its inner necessity, guided seemingly more by the artist's intuition than by reason, bearing in mind the idea that what is created can be valid only if produced spontaneously. It seems that nothing that can be presupposed is really decisive in her painterly gesture. Not her taste, education, intelligence, knowledge, know-how. Nothing that is acquired, but the innate, innermost, instinctive qualities. It is well known that original forms can be created only as personal forms. The elimination of conscious will in art was the essential preoccupation of most avant-garde movements between 1910 and 1930. Above all, they were interested in subconscious and unconscious contents of the work they were producing. The contemporaneous psychoanalytical assumption that behind each image is hidden another one draws attention to the fact that the artist's imagination is structured by numerous layers of memory that are overlapping in his unconscious. The painter's vision depends on the memory that is richer than the literal one, which is acquired by simple comparison. The latter, superficial type of vision, overlooks numerous accumulations of memory, layers that are deeply imprinted in the subconscious. These are much more important in the artist's creation, but they also inform the viewer's eye when they're confronted with such multi-faceted images as Rezi's, which carry a multitude of meanings. It is up to the beholders to decipher them within a context they are more familiar with, whether social, art historical, or intimately psychological.

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