

To See / To Look

Recent Paintings by Jaime Silva

When we assess the works from the various phases of the already long journey that Jaime Silva's painting has been tracing in the overview of Portuguese visual arts, it becomes clear that we are dealing with an artist whose creative activity is essentially driven by the incessant search for expressive pathways, with a view to obtaining results that can always go further. Research and experimentation play a decisive role in this painter's work as a driving force for creation that is always intended to be renewed.

Since the radiant and resonant years of the Group PUZZLE, filled with contagious irony that the April Revolution triggered its collective explosion, going through subsequent phases, sometimes of broad, torn and restless expressiveness in which transfiguring impulses appear, sometimes in intimate landscapes developing deep silent tropisms, until his most recent work, the result of a solitary reflection but never oblivious to the voices of the surrounding time, it has always been present as a catalyst for the creative effort, a constant curiosity, combined with the knowledge of the craft that characterizes the great visual artists who are not dazzled by the results obtained, unlike those who, convinced that they have reached the omega of creative possibilities, start to repeat in faded echoes, sometimes even spectral, their most significant findings. On the other hand, the reading and questioning of essay texts of various natures, especially those of the great thinkers of Philosophy, have provided the painter, attentive to other arts and knowledge in general, reasons for aesthetic reflection that encourage his practice, pointing out solutions for structuring and realizing his own artistic thought, whilst always preserving the principle of autonomy of painting which, like music, is essentially a work on forms.

And this attention to specifically visual elements is not only valid in the contexts of abstraction (more gestural at first, giving way to a certain geometricization later, always coexisting with lyrical elements), but also in the figurative order itself, because there, although the reality is summoned by the artist, it is still mere image and therefore form as well. The difference between abstraction and figuration is treated in the specialty literature, sometimes in a simplistic way, not valuing the fact that abstraction can result from phenomena of mere appearance, based on the way of perceiving reality (as Kandinsky taught us when reporting the discovery which led him to look at his own painting, in order to free it from representation in the strict sense), or it could be a consequence of the scale of observation and the fragmentation that derives from it, with emphasis on attention to detail. Lines, shapes, colours are the matter, the subject, of Jaime Silva's recent work. This painting, due to its autonomy and abstraction, is close to music. We can say that it is visual music that establishes harmony through contrasts or, using an oxymoron from Valéry, that reveals intensities of «harmonic incoherence».