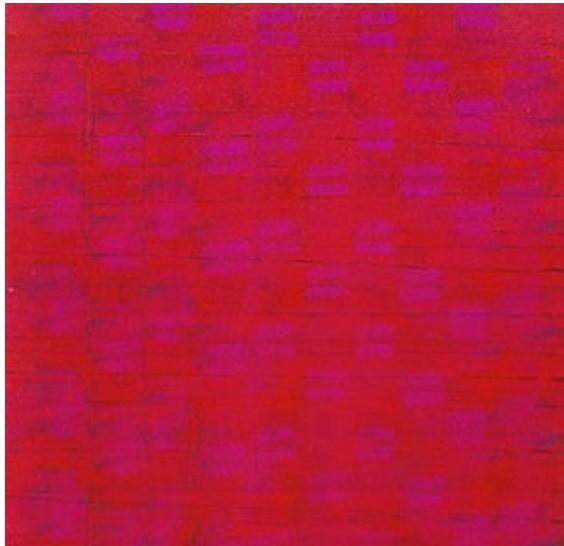


Analogies: With words and without them

Foreword to the 1998 exhibition
catalogue by Cecilia Vargas



"At Heart"
Oil on board.
24" x 24". 1996.
One Aldwich (UK)

With and without words by Cecilia Vargas 1999

With words

Here is a paradox. I am a painter. I have chosen to use a non-verbal vehicle to communicate and yet my work has very strong links with the written word. I look for specific instances in poetry which move my imagination into a creative frequency conducive to making paintings. For me, there is a strong analogy between painting and poetry both at the point of creation and in the moment of reception.

"The poem still offers possibilities of meaning - but only possibilities. Should any of them be too precisely realised, the poem would lose the greatest part of its efficacy, which is to agitate the consciousness with infinite possibilities by

approaching the brink of meaning and yet never falling over it" (1).

It is ironic that I find myself quoting Clement Greenberg on an idea which I believe grasps the essence of my recurrent linking of poetry and painting. The efficacy to which he refers is the kind of efficacy I would hope my painting could share with poetry. His seminal and controversial article had, nevertheless, the opposite intention. In an attempt to clarify the detrimental "confusion" that had been taking place between the arts "in the past several centuries", he sought to demarcate the boundaries between them and to define their own specific identities (2).

"Tendencies go in opposite directions, and cross-purposes meet", as Greenberg also said (3). Cross-purposes they are. It is the case that I had to refer to a theory of differences in order to find a way into an understanding of similarity and analogy.

Without them

Octavio Paz says that difference gives life to analogy. It is because something is not that it is possible to build a bridge between two words, between two worlds. The bridge does not eliminate the distance, does not cancel the difference. Analogy says that one thing is the metaphor of another thing (4).

The visual repertoire which inevitably informs the physical appearance of my present work is varied. It comes from painting, textiles, ceramics, pavements, old walls, nature, science. This repertoire has been reworked as an arrangement of repetitive motives within a given space. It has been focused towards an exploration of analogy. Taken literally, repetitive motives constitute a pattern. And yet what matters in this context is the pattern's analogical power - what it evokes. What it says and what it does not say. That is the function of the bridge.

For me, pattern is rhythm. It is shape, it is 'trapped colour'. It is not an image, it is not static. It is in motion. It does not have internal boundaries. There is no protagonism, no drama. It something which is happening. It is surface and substance, skin and structure. It speaks the complex language of visual analogy, a silent rhetoric.

Cecilia Vargas, artist
London, August 1996

(1) Clement Greenberg, 1985, 'Towards a Newer Laocoon', in Francis Frascina (editor), *Pollock and After. The Critical Debate*, Harper & Row, London (originally published in *Partisan Review*, Vol. VII, No. 4, July-August 1940, pp.296-310), p.42

(2) Op. cit., p.35

(3) Op. cit., p.40

(4) Octavio Paz, 1974, *Los Hijos del Limo*, Seix Barral, Spain