

DWELLING ON COSMIC TIME

By Rosanna Albertini

Elizabeth Chandler brings her last series of paintings to the language of senses, or vice versa: our senses to painting as a sensitive language where colors meet and melt, where the canvas is tortured by frantic lines until a new space appears, full of light and life. Not a natural landscape, not surreal, these paintings have something in common with fantastic literature and surely with music.

Like a volume of sounds breaking the silence and filling a space without edges, a volume of blue invades *Convergence*, but it does not start there. How could it? Blue is the color that infinity wears to make us less frightened, and lost in our minds. A rectangle of blue has been stolen by the painter. Questions, rather than statements, are suggested by two indefinable images that converge, yes, and yet they could just as well never touch. One, perhaps the broken wing of a butterfly, or maybe a space ship's door, who knows? The other image, stretched by nervous directions in red, is a green density mounting from below. *Convergence* might happen or might not, but wings have to help this nocturnal flight.

Roots and stability are our lost paradise. Without waiting for the end of anxiety, Chandler has thrown into the act of painting the whirling existence of our days; she takes part in the magic dance between perception and invention by filling her imaginary world with emotional impact. She becomes in the process one of the infinite particles of matter, a cluster of chemical energy that changes nature and history and art at every nanosecond, and is herself constantly transformed.

Each painting is a very distinct image of a dynamic event, like the leaves of a plant generated from only one cell; each leaf unique, slightly different from the others within the forms typical of that species. A dominant image – we could compare it to a musical theme- seems to stay on several canvasses and tablets as if stuck in the back of her retina, resisting the inevitable transformations. Mysterious scenes that seem to escape History, a wish perhaps unconsciously stirring our minds, make those paintings seductive; they look like landscapes, but are they? Hills and lakes and drops and pebbles in the air are so round and soft, vulnerable things. I see Chandler making visible the never still, hidden landscape of our physical organs: hollow corners, vertical tongues, channels and pounding pockets, the quivering surfaces modified by sudden intrusions; we are not allowed to miss the scantily human shape of a ground which is sexual, vibrating, absorbent, never at peace. Spreading in layers the visions she is bursting to express,

the painter is able to light the feelings that go along with them. Emotions are the first spring of her inspiration, and the beginning of her thinking.

“One cannot spend time in being modern when there are so many more important things to be.”
(Wallace Stevens)

In a cycle of four or five years, the dominant image will be barely recognizable. *Jovian View*, 2004, shows the violent struggle Chandler had to endure to move her mind out of naturalistic patterns luring her sense of beauty. If a painted landscape can be wounded like an animal body, this is the case. The air is dense of blood and debris, silent tensions precipitate into the surface as in a riverbed. The final touch comes from a hand seemingly belonging to a spiteful child, adding to the scene –already a battlefield– quick vertical lines and circles with a pencil. We meet the remains of a deadly fight between Chandler and her own painting. Woman and bits of dreams, “whirled by the cold wind / that blows before and after time.” She likes T.S. Eliot.

Eventually Chandler enters a mental space whose loneliness is the same as the universe. Stronger than before, bigger, her paintings dwell on cosmic time. Don’t mistake her, it is not everlasting, nor unlimited, only the time which humans are able to think in. *Dwell*, 2007: “There is no absolute, says Chandler, this work doesn’t correspond to anything one sees in nature. It’s a way of spreading the feelings that nature gives you, putting perception in movement.” *Dwell* is warmer than hell, yet it’s a happy place. Suppose one could go inside the sun and discover a remembrance of houses on the eyebrow of an immense cave which is alive, partially refreshed by the surrounding blue. Colored bars of memories grow in a corner of this large womb, but they forget what to remember.

I don’t even know why we continue to use such an old, dry word as abstraction for paintings that do not look like photographic representations, in which we cannot recognize a familiar environment. Chandler’s paintings are perceptions of unfinished, sometimes self-destroying processes; other times of scenes as peaceful as a wave of migrating birds in the air. Ideas of wonderment vanishing before they take shape, before they enter a zone of mental clarity. We have such experiences at all times, and silently accept them without protest for the intimacy they cause, a secret space of self-awareness. Only a brave artist can dare to bring out in paintings such an acrobatic, dangerous performance. It takes a long, patient practice, which is attention to life even more than to art, and attachment to art history knowing there is no point to repeat, imitate. Paul Klee, Arthur Dove, Kandinsky, all the artists of the last century have become drops in her heart.

The *Coney Islands* of her mind, *Subatomic* and *For the Record*, all are variations of the same scape without land, scattered fantasies flying away from location, meridians and parallels. Fragile and impermanent as any image ever painted, they are structurally balanced and detailed as were the classic baroque scenes of centuries ago. Although, hello person, everyone knows they are images of our artifacts seen from afar, from the top of the sky, so that they pull our mind into their vortex and dissolve in the ether like a castle of straws only to be assembled again and again, through a spectrum of colors that blows time away and celebrates our beautiful world if we don't mind not being the center, not the clue, in the cosmic wind.

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