

Revealing Progress in Petr Kvíčala's Conceptual Painting, 2012

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Petr Kvíčala (1960) arose a legitimate interest already in the second half of the nineteen eighties, when he in a pioneering way themed ornament in our country as a single, autonomous component of a work of art – and it is not uninteresting that in a really broad, internationally well-researched context this discourse took place only about ten or fifteen years ago with the participation of the international “stars” – both artists and theorists. In our country, Kvíčala first aroused even an utter “expert” aversion in some people. In the beginning there was a gradual repetition of a certain natural motif, such as the arrangement of hills, ridges in fields, or rows of plants, yet the brushwork articulation remained as important. In around 1986, the gradual serial arrangement became more important to him than the real stimuli, and he was increasingly fascinated by ornament per se. Gradually, he was able to explore a range of new themes, starting with cascaded wavy lines, a development of ornament in different directions or confronting several types of ornament, from the isolation of ornament itself to complex structures consisting of multiple repetition, layering of colour, mostly red, when he as one of the few in our country consistently devoted himself to monochromaticity. On the other hand, he perceived some simple compositions as thematising ornateness and sumptuousness themselves. This also affiliated him with the heritage of domestic popular culture, for example at the event with scattered wavy lines in the corridors of the Plasy monastery, but also of course with the art of the culture distant to us both in time and space, up to the primitive art manifestations, such as the not necessarily utilitarian decorating of ceramics in the Neolithic Times. Over time, this artist became one of the major ones in our context, anticipating issues later current in a broader context. The Brno exhibition (after the Prague presentation at the DOX) is the first and truly beautiful presentation of paintings from about the last three years, thanks to the rugged space of a reputable gallery, optimal just for paintings, of mainly larger formats. Since I, unlike with a few initiation exhibitions, took no part in its preparation, an expert on ornament in our environment, Lada Hubatová-Vacková, took care of it, and I was pleasantly surprised by the direction in which the artist's work is going – those freehand records, that is, in words of the philosopher Josef Šafařík, the “author's rubato”, have turned into far more subtle individual differences in distances of the carved strips of the glued template, or are excluded at all, such as the clean design in the *Waiting for Morgan*. And I have a good feeling that Petr Kvíčala is again in our country in the position of a pioneer – like at last year's Venice Biennale we all could admire the Spanish artist Asier Mendizabal's new concept of work with the language of geometry. Petr Kvíčala will probably not be rejected now, because he discovered a new geometric syntax, but articulated according to a rather complex general context, but then again I think that in this new syntax he is groundbreaking. His starting point are sketches of several cities exhibited in a few places at the exhibition, however, the vedute and marinas are converted into pure geometric forms. Sometimes, in a very subtle way, they lead to possible hints of space – thus they are very generalised “vedute”, based only on the structures of the drawings of urban architecture. The names of towns confirm that their architecture was there in the beginning, but earlier in that conceptual perception of their structure. The artist develops variations of this discovery of his differently every time, he never quite repeats himself even in the language of painting – on the contrary, he examines various effects of lines and surfaces. Although the aesthetic qualities are still present, each painting also explores other relationships: *Paris, 2010*, these are just colour surfaces, creating the aforementioned hint of space, while *Brno, 2012* is only shifting of the line breaks – and also, of course, proof that the artist's monochromes are not forgotten, and when the occasion is right, they become of use. The relationships of colour lines are the actual theme in *Barceloneta* (that is, the port district of Barcelona), 2012. The proof that by arranging of lines according to a certain formula originate completely different colour surfaces is confirmed by a comparison to *Malaga, 2011*. And *Raval, 2012*, it is an accurate combination of surfaces and lines, so we still realise that for Petr Kvíčala the actual artistic problem is always what the real message is for visual art – relations of lines, surfaces, and colours, at least since the beginning of modern art and of course even stronger since the formation of abstract art. I am sure that Peter Kvíčala is in a similar situation as in his beginnings, because in our country new discoveries in geometric art have always been accepted with distrust. František Kupka knew why he was not supposed to return, the fate of František Foltýn is warning the same.... Kvíčala has created a range of new solutions, those “marines” are undoubtedly paintings divided horizontally into two surfaces with a much simpler segmentation, with a subtle counterpoint of several colour surfaces and one line (No. 1 and No. 2, 2012), or situated diagonally with a similar subtle relationship (No. 22, 2011, No. 10, 2012). But the real synthesis of what we only figuratively call vedute is *Bamako, 2012*, in which meet lines and cleanly articulated colour surfaces with very impressive spatial paradoxes ... Of course, pure optical illusion was the theme of optical art, Op Art. These artists soon exhausted their problems, Petr Kvíčala through his partly illusive sequences created a new form of conceptual geometric ornament. But also at the Brno exhibition, if I know him a little, he indicated one possible way –

Boston, 2011, in which he themed a purely conceptual relationship between a drawn structure and a part of its colour painting interpretation. That is a concept par excellence, which would be a shame not to use! And it is also probably possible to develop much freer relations of transformations of three ornamental geometric fields, No. 9, 2012.

The Brno exhibition clearly showed that Petr Kvíčala has again found a new form of geometric ornamental structures, which he developed into completely original results and which adequately connect to what is “in the air” in a broad, international context of the current geometric art ... In my opinion, he sealed his path so far completely authentically!