



LUÍS PAULO COSTA
É SOBRE UMA COISA

OPENING 21 MAY . 10PM

22 MAY . 24 JUN

On Painting as Exercise

"A picture is finished when all traces of the means used to bring about the end have disappeared"

Within the scope of the familiar relationship we have with Luís Paulo Costa's work, we are tempted to start by thinking about the possibility for, and the degree of surprise that a certain number of artworks can still effect on us when displayed in different ways or in different spaces. In our opinion, this unexpected and unsuspected condition is mainly produced by two factors: on the one hand, by our openness (with more or less curiosity) to the artistic object, and, on the other hand, the invariably deceiving and discrete way it is presented to us. We are talking about paintings, even when their material support makes them seem objects of a different nature – the objects whose formal configuration differs from the common canvas mounted on an orthogonal wooden frame, for example, or the situation in which the artist uses other media (such as video projection or installation). Even in these cases, we are still talking about paintings.

Luís Paulo Costa's working process starts with a research in the field of image – literally, both in the traditional universes and in the more contemporary fields of image production and diffusion – in a moment when its relationship with the real is, in a way, still intrinsic and original.

He searches for, produces and finds photographic and graphic images with visual characteristics that have the potential to trigger a reflection within the process of producing his paintings. He gives no attention to themes and

¹ REINHARDT, AD in "Twelve Rules for a New Academy" published in ARTNews in 1957, and based on a document written and read by the artist at the 45th College Art Association annual meeting, Detroit Institute of Art, in January 26, 1957.

topics, he is not interested in aesthetical values or in the precision of his compositions, he is not interested in the social, cultural, political, or economic contexts that may have originated them, and he is not even interested in the quality or sharpness of any particular *prise de vue*. His true interests lie (shall we say) in the plastic characteristics of the image that he uses to create paintings whose completion poses a challenge for the artist in what regards the practice of painting. Luís Paulo Costa is engaged in the pursuit of potential questions concerning the pictorial, and tries to find the best solution for them (as if they were mathematical exercises) within the boundaries of the practice of painting. In order to achieve this, and in the process of producing, creating, and developing each painting, the artists uses a series of procedures that include the manipulation of the original image (subtracting and changing qualities such as color, composition, and format) and, in a second phase, the peculiar and surprising way he paints, repainting each detail of the image previously printed on the canvas with small (or slightly larger) brushstrokes of paint that, in their proximity, aim for a total verisimilitude with the matrix that originates them. A process of simultaneous revelation and elision, of construction and deletion, very difficult to extricate but whose existence is almost magically allowed to be both simultaneous and present.

The proficiency of this time-consuming activity is breathtaking. Its effect on the spectators is proportional to the time they let their gaze rest on the paintings' surfaces.

É sobre uma coisa (It is about/on/over/on top of one thing), the title the artist chose for this exhibition, could well be *Pintado por cima*² (Painted over), as the both actions are (at least physically) synonymous.

However, in this case (and we dare say always), the thing that it is about goes beyond matter, it goes beyond the object it is painted over and points toward Painting as a discipline, toward the verb that derives from the substantive – as if to paint was enough to justify the *raison d'être*, and the existence, in the world, of all paintings.

Ana Anacleto

² The title of the artist's previous exhibition at Cristina Guerra Contemporary Art (Nov. 17, 2011 – Jan. 11, 2012)