

## Painting <sup>squared</sup>

It is always difficult for the spectator to know if s/he precisely understands what the exhibited work means or if, in the end, the work is effective or not in *displaying* its meanings. And sometimes, at the outset, the start of a visit to a gallery interposes this inner dialogue, this accord, between the one who sees and what is seen.

In Maria Lucia Cattani's works this dialogue goes very well, since, little by little, it is possible to discern certain signs through her fascinating painting. Under each layer it is possible to discover each procedure, each chromatic course of a vocabulary written in the gestures that the artist insists on printing; and in the other direction, above each layer the systems are revealed that, either together or separately, produce painting which is not formed on the same plane of the support, but in the eye of the person looking at it.

Following this route, the relationship with the spectator runs alongside a fictitious construction – be it the fiction of the wall, which was previously in the work, or the narrative illusions suggested by the paper or the canvas – which suggests one painting in the place of another, which creates space reshaped by another, constructed not by the freedom of gesture, but by the limits predetermined by the artist. Beneath the lightness and beauty of the colours is an activity developed within many invisible rules; her paintings are in fact supports for mathematical equations, structures that obey a logic engraved through cutting and colour. Squares within squares, multiplied by the repetition of rubber stamps, divided into fixed spaces, subtracted by gradients of depth that are added together in the eye of the spectator.

And so, do we see the real paintings being shown? Probably not. But that is why one needs to look several times, to go round the gallery carefully, knowing that we will always be faced with two distinct pictorial dimensions, of inside and outside, paintings squared.

Alexandre Dias Ramos