

Béatrice Casadesus, the motif and the intimate

Is it possible that Béatrice Casadesus has enjoyed being spotted with freckles? Is it possible that she feared the intense power of radiance filtered through this screen of her face? This small pattern of points, this swarm of red-hot embers, are so unsuitably called in French – “stains”; and what face of redhead would not be offended, and would not blush from the impoliteness of the word? The designation of “stained” skin uses nevertheless a term specific to painting or to the stained glass technique, that suggests an art of twinkling, giving its singular pattern to the art of Béatrice Casadesus. The skin is therefore a filigreed membrane over the flesh, a sort of vibrating reed of a wind instrument; thus the shallow epidermis becomes in its slenderness, “what is the most penetrating” (Valéry). When this skin is painted, or covered in make-up it gains even more luminosity with an increased power of reflection. It absorbs the light, and yet returns it. On the rolls of multicoloured tulle of Béatrice Casadesus, the skin sensitivity is transferred to the support of the paint, to the cloth: the function of the image is therefore changed. Not that in the past, the icon has concentrated already in itself the powers of face, of veil and of imprint. But here the pattern is released from the figure, it ignores finally the face, it does not mould on any relief: no organic feature can reduce its function of establishment, its power of expansion and of incorporation. The pattern gets neater as it becomes more abstract, and more expressive as it loosens all resemblance and all figurative pretext. The “spots” painted by Béatrice Casadesus cover the (large) walls as well as the small pieces of paper. They roll, as they would be ready to be taken for an itinerant spectacle by roving players. They unfold as they would have to cover entire walls, to coat a space as vast as it may be. They are painted on long surfaces, notebook pages, CD boxes, the support no longer counts. The point forms the pattern only in fusion with the light, with its power of reflection or diffraction. The interaction of a point with the light, and further with the space, gives to the pattern its pretexts, its opportunities, its chances, its variations and a kind of objectivity tempered by the artist. The point is not emerging alone. The points attract each others, they form crowds, nebulous, and one does not resemble another. Sometimes the points create an opacity on a translucent support. Sometimes they create, as in a negative, the transparent holes that pierce the voile or the cloth.

Béatrice Casadesus studies the solar light projected through the stained glass window. Or she follows the sun’s glare on the balconies or on the mouldings of a façade. The stain joins a trajectory, a movement, or a dance. The colour is a response of the wall struck by light, its liveliness has an equal only in the moving energy that animates it. Therefore, for the painter, the ideal colour is no longer the chemical colour, that of the pigment and of the mixed paste. The ideal is that of the optical colour, its prismatic partitions, its vibrant associations. The positive point and the negative point, the chemical colour and the optical colour form thus four terms in a poetic combinatory, that seeks nothing but the light’s exhaustion. Is that the reason why Béatrice Casadesus overlays the X-ray image of a skull and the projected (virtual) image of one of her paintings? Nothing resists to the power of light, nothing should obstruct its radiance, except for the recesses of thinking and the status of shade. The paint has become diaphanous, the intimate reason is secretly linked to the drawing, to the subtlety of material, to the evanescence of support. In a different version of the installation, a stain of light will superimpose over stains of paint, the former as little opaque as the latter, in a strange “photographic” sublimation attempted by the paint.

The chemical colour retrieves its rights since it has become dye/tincture, and it is applied on materials that Béatrice Casadesus rolls in balls and exposes on the ground: indifference fully assumed for the tension of the cloth, for the flatness of the paint, for the stiffness of the framework. The painter is then closest to the salesman of saris, the Chinese dyer, the stage and costume designer, the ancient mystical meditating on the mysteries of art. This joy unbridled in the use of dyes and pigment surprises at an artist as meticulous and precise as she can be in the devices that she installs. But this is the effect of a liberation, of a self-inflicted distance in relation to the postures (standings, murals, sacraments) of the art of easel painting. The construction of the image is no longer that of the painting, its display returns maybe to the construction of sculpture without pedestal or figure, but opened instead to a number of gazes (the opposite of plans), to the multiple axes that an image can offer when it is suspended, translucent and visible from several sides. The installation of Béatrice Casadesus designates the agility to pass from one visual syntax to another. The propensity of her painting, playing on a diversity of spatial situations, certifies her taste for the performing arts, the dance, the music, the theatre, the cinema. This liveliness is a sign of the complexity of her relation to different realms of arts, and the signature of her elegance.

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