

THE BLUE OF THE BLIND

*Seeing things all the way to the bottom...
And what if things don't have a bottom?*

Álvaro de Campos

It's all about reading as a cadenced, collective gesture and about blue as mystery. It's also about the silent relation between the word blue and the sensitive perception of everything that can be held in that word. From lapis-lazuli to cobalt, from turquoise to ultramarine, from petroleum blue to sapphire, from Goethe's shadowy blue to the albatross of Baudelaire, the awkward king of azure – that obtuse tone that modern poets knew how to reflect like no painter ever did – along with all that a word conceals or reveals. For the scholars of the relation between words and things, or between language and perception, colors have always been an uneasy, intriguing point for reflection. The Eskimos (Inuit) have many different names for the shades of white because their eyes are culturally sharper and more capable of grasping the differences - or do they manage to capture the differences because their linguistic culture gives a different name to each shade of white?

We know that blue enjoys a privileged place in the history of Western painting, after inhibiting and later substituting the golden glow of those glorious backgrounds in the art of the Renaissance. Reading – neither contemplation nor vision – would be a third way for us to realize the differences, where we perceive the blue in all its nuances, like in a syntax of tones, but with no need to interpret them, no need for them to make sense. Colors before they receive all the attributes that a posteriori define their reading: the yellow of envy, the purple of hate, the liberated color of the dramas of the history of art, without any of the psychologism of super-interpretations. Blue rid of explanations, color no longer as a vehicle (but not as a structure either), color as an enigmatic sample that, when seen in all its simplicity, stripped of attributes and suppositions, shifts us from the thing seen and puts us in front of our own ways of seeing. Perhaps Tove Storch agrees with Schopenhauer that perception is never just sensitive, it is also the effect of the sensitive stimuli on the intellect. Here too the act of reading is affirmed as a cognitive micro-choreography, an experience of repeated gestures – turning over each page, and the soft sound that this produces: an exercise in concentrating and intensifying the way we look through the spectrum of blues.

From the participant's point of view, Storch's performance could easily be associated with Lygia Clark's notion of the proponent artist, although at the same time Reading Blue neither denies nor dissimulates the beauty of the paradoxical spectacle that group-reading produces in those looking on "from the outside".

Reading, which is generally seen as an isolated, inaccessible act, an anti-spectacular and individualistic gesture by its very nature, rises again in its musical and trans-individual dimension, all this in interspersed rhythms of attention. If color is conventionally located in the sphere of the sensitive, reading is on the other hand confined to the intellect. So, besides a meditation on pure chromatic experience, Storch offers us the opportunity to broaden the very notion of reading, which is usually bound to an idea of a solitary delving process of interpretation. This is precisely the interpretation barred here: reading blue would be closer to a semiosis that is fundamental, short of or beyond significations. Tove Storch's blues notebook shows us that reading can mean perceiving the difference in the word blue, the asymmetry between words and things, language not as representation of the seen world but as a discontinuous, fractured path, whereas vision is an act that is somewhat enigmatic, somewhat playful, perhaps even Oriental. As if we were in the presence of a very old rite, but one of such a modern simplicity that - without making too much of a fuss - reconnects us to our perceptive present.

Laura Erber, November 2014