

Title Listen to the Weather
Date 2025
Event Mirage

Author Pedro Köberle
Artist Marina Rheingantz

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Marina Rheingantz's paintings are turbid atmospheres. Her particular mode of abstraction exists in a region of masses of paint, rhythmic brushstrokes, clouds of short markings, impasto, and colored blotches that consistently escape being frozen into imagery. Her manipulations of matter always stop just short of, or just beyond, identifiable referents.

In the paintings on view at the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nîmes, establishing analogies with landscape and organic elements, as has been widely noted in her work, is somewhat inevitable. Where Rheingantz's brushwork is hazy, rarefied, or gauzy, clouds come to mind; when she allows blots of oil to coagulate on the surface of the canvas or linen, allusions to mineral or visceral bodies emerge; when curtains of heavy oil bathe the canvas from top to bottom, rainfall begins. However, to reduce this abstract, process-based procedure to a camouflaging of scenery would not suffice.

To focus on these analogical parallels would mean ignoring pictorial intentions in favor of an approach to abstract art haunted by the expectation of mimesis. Not that the artist's works exist on a purely optical plane; on the contrary, they incite bodily involvement in the expansive space they create. They set off sensory stimuli as one draws nearer or walks away from the surface. We feel an urge to touch the crusts of accumulated matter, to smell them. We wish to listen to what the air might sound like inside the frame. This ambient, environmental sense field has become the defining feature of Rheingantz's recent work.

Such a configuration might be better understood if we emphasized process over imagery—the acquisition, rather than the identification, of form. Regenerating tissues, metabolic occurrences, atmospheric events, evaporation, petrification, and sedimentation are all processes, not things. We might think of Rheingantz's paintings as "places" in the sense that they are local concentrations of spatial coordinates. Places are geographically and territorially bounded entities, "locations of felt events," as Susanne Langer puts it¹. A painting is something of this kind—a framed structure of feeling.

The process-based nature of her work leads to the formation of concrete places rather than abstract spaces. This might explain why these works seem closer to landscape than to "pure" abstraction. They project physical experience or an appeal to sensory attention; they present the dynamics of place but do not depict it. Landscapes do not require that we know the names or identities of everything in them but that we perceive the relationships that make them up.

The internal rhythm of the artist's compositions—the pace and regularity with which patterns emerge and are unmade—appears organic, as if these layers of paint were natural reactions to environmental conditions, like the growth of moss, the transformation of the inside of a tree into bark, or the sedimentation of minerals into different strata. Like all these material changes, Rheingantz's paintings cannot be separated from temporal duration.

Ironically, the spontaneous, almost unsolicited aspect of these paintings results from considerable effort. The artist surrenders compositional intention, at least in part, to the fluent logic of gestural mark-making: her works do not conform to a previous design and are not the visual rendering of an intellectual project; they are the places where she stops along a trail. This is all the fruit of the artist's meticulous approach to surface accidents, color, and spatial organization.

On a brief biographical note, Marina Rheingantz was born in Araraquara, about 40 minutes away by car from my own hometown of São Carlos. The region is mostly flat, dry, and covered in monocrops, with a few remaining patches of cerrado, a native Brazilian savanna. If the area were seen from above, it might resemble one of the artist's paintings:

¹ Susanne Langer, *Mind: an Essay on Human Feeling*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967, p. 194

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stretches of barren land dotted with residual traces of vegetation, a few stains of the original biome refusing to dissolve into empty land, rivers and streams reduced to a fraction of their size, drawing squiggles and tenuous curves on the earth. It is an environment that resists romanticization, but it has its enduring grace when lit just right, when the sky takes on the changing colors of the atmosphere. Not that this matters to someone unfamiliar with these details, not that it changes how anyone should approach the paintings. Not that I mean to say Rheingantz's work is ultimately an illustration of her homeland. But just as a certain place is always shifting or an ecosystem is threatened with disappearance, just as the light striking a reddish-brown patch of land will soon move on to other objects and produce other glitterings, Marina Rheingantz's work is involved with the shades and accidents of all that is ongoing but not always visible, or not permanently so.