

Le lieu qui te revêt

Le lieu qui te revêt is composed of paintings and collages inspired by the Annunciations by Fra Angelico (Italian painter, 1395-1455).

I extracted a few words or sentences from the analysis that Georges Didi-Huberman carries out in the book "Before the image", of the fresco of the Annunciation that Fra Angelico painted in cell three of the San Marco convent in Florence. These words guided me when making decisions about my pictorial choices:

"Mystery. Frontal white. Contemplation surface, a dream screen. Angelico's white, this almost nothing visible. The Annunciation, the announcement. The image of everything that devours us in the evidence of dreams. Exegetical work that the use of a pigment manages to deliver itself. What is in front of becomes all around, and the white that the monk was contemplating perhaps whispers to him: I am the place where you live - the cell itself -, I am the place that contains you. Thus, do you make yourself present to the mystery of the Annunciation, beyond representing it to yourself. The place that covers you."

The 14th and 15th century Annunciations used a geometric organization of space, the perspective, to create the space where the encounter and dialogue between the angel and Mary take place, as well as to assimilate architecture to the body of Mary who is the place where the Incarnation happens.

I appropriate certain elements of Angelico's painting, for example the white color, but I build paintings according to a spatial structure inspired by the Kesa, a clothing worn by Zen Buddhist monks/nuns during meditation. Formally the Kesa represents a rice field which associates both territory and food. There is the idea of a field and we can make the analogy between the mind and a field that must be plowed and cultivated.

My paintings are made from pieces of rice paper, oil painted. They are large formats, sewn by hand. For the installation, I designed structures for the deployment of the works. These structures create space within the paintings and relate to the place both by their arrangement and by the inclusion of emptiness.

The choice of Fra Angelico's Annunciations is guided by the spiritual content of the paintings as well as by the particular condition of the painter, who was a Dominican monk. I revisit his work because my artistic questions relate to how to show what is of the order of the non-figurable, mystery and silence and because I am myself a Buddhist nun (Zen Soto).

Natalia Blanch, December 2021