

## Conversation between Pierre Restany & Katrin Fridriks in her Paris studio

*Transcript*

**Pierre RESTANY:** I just noticed something, are you in your blue period at the moment?

**Katrin FRIDRIKS:** Absolutely, I am trying to pare down the script by using a single colour; I am moving into minimalist mode!

PR: It is true that it does give more sense to your research in “writing syntax” and grammar, namely your layout, sequences and sentences. You are developing a more global, more cosmic approach. The same applies to the emotional and sensitive side. It is a hypersensitive, hyper acute period, a true task involving the rhythm and drive in writing! The works that are connected with this period are arranged from the sequences and presentations that led to the large-scale canvas lying over there called “Deeply Connected”. When this painting is compared to the more standard, less formatted works in the series, it shows a very strong capacity to affect and even stupefy the reader! It is the cut-off point where painting becomes writing. And I think that this writing that you are tackling at the moment has already gone beyond your tag art.

I certainly feel that it would be good to hold an exhibition of this blue period, because it shows the importance of gestural freedom and at the same time, your way of arranging sequences or verses within the flow of the subject or language.

Finally, once again, as long as you have a deep instinctive faith in the expressive power of this language shown in your calligraphic works I think you will have a huge field of action and above all great freedom of expression. You do not need to worry about any differences because you are the one who is in charge, but the “inspector” or viewer must be able to realise that your work has to be perceived according to its specific expressive problems.

I noticed that you have this idea of introducing and associating politics through narrative with painting. You are one of those people who create language through gesture and word at the same time, and who are able to synthesize a vision. I think you are on a path that is right for you. It is part of your life, of the way you discovered graffiti, followed by this reduced language – “lowbrow” culture compared to “highbrow”. Consequently, filtered through your own reflection, you turned all this into an autonomous language. In your paintings, there is truly a wonderful autonomy of language! The great danger would only lie in gestural reproduction, repetition in the gestural approach. Focus must be placed on the head as much as the heart. It is an interesting point because it is a problem specific to our era, and in painting, it belongs to a field of expression that is at risk, an endangered species.

KF: Do you really think so?

PR: Yes, because for us, in the western world, it is difficult on an emotional level for an artist to paint in the same way as one would write; the way we in the west focus on the mental aspect in any situation. If you talked to somebody who had not seen in your painting the little note, the love poem, or what you were seeking to express, and if you explained your approach from a spiritual viewpoint, he would consider it a mirage because he would no longer *see* it. Once you have told the viewer “this is what it is, this is the course of the poem”, from that moment on, it is all over. The viewer no longer *sees* the painting, he *reads* it. Therefore, it is a difficult process, because we must not forget that we have come to the end of a certain type of culture, and visual culture in particular. We are living in a civilisation dominated by the influence of media communication. In this civilisation, a painting that tends to represent intimate feelings or emotions is perceived as an element of some past incident.

So you are on the dividing line between script and graphics, between the gestuality of the painter and semantics. It is a very interesting boundary but which must be accepted as such. It is a beneficial venture.

I didn’t think I would find this, I didn’t expect it on coming here. I didn’t realise I was going to see this

in your work. I have a vague recollection of Eric telling me about your sensitivity towards script and writing and your contact with Iceland, but I did not expect your generalisation approach to the problem. It is a problem that goes beyond the morphological imprint. It finally deals with the great problem of the eye. There is a good reason why there is an eye in some of your works, and why it exists like the centre of the universe in figurative work. Everybody has pupils, a crystalline lens...

You are tackling a structural problem of vision, and I believe that it will become increasingly more difficult for you as our civilisation becomes progressively affected by all the problems of communication. Later, you will certainly have a very interesting rear-guard action to perform because of your "religion"...

Painting is steadily losing terrain for the very simple reason that it is considered too static by the virtual consumer. This staticity blocks its progress.

The image of tomorrow that already captures our interest today is a television image: a flexible, mobile image on a fluid evanescent support. Therefore, those who can still survive today and basically represent active nostalgia or conscience in this vision of your painting are those who manage to have a great memory for faces (of portraits for example) or those who, like you, manage to free pictorial writing or the pictorial gesture from this torpidity into which multimedia and television have plunged them. All this is very interesting because you have already taken this on with your work!

"Quand la peinture devient lecture..."

Pierre Restany, April 15, 2003