

Maggie Siner's Shapes

I am particularly fond of the word *shape*. I love its gentle hiss, like a wave washing against the sand, a razor blade shaving my cheek or a silk cloth slipping off an undone bed. And the final caress of the “ape”, far from being rough, is soft and fluffy, almost human, as the teddy-bears that here and there show up in Maggie Siner's paintings.

As I pronounce the word “shape”, I feel that I am touching what I imagine. I can picture the scene it triggers because it involves my other senses. And this is also what I feel in front of Maggie Siner's paintings: they please not only my sight, but my touch, my smell and my hearing. The shapes she creates have the feel of silk about them, they feel like silk, they are soft to the touch, I can hear them creasing, rustling and whispering, and I even smell the dry texture of smooth linen. She captivates my sight to connect to my other senses. This is what makes her paintings so lively to me.

Maggie Siner's paintings are all about relationships. Relationships between actual objects and their user, usually absent, although the scene (a bed most of the time: the *diva*, as the artist would put it, a very indecent diva, buxom and bombastic) is invested by his (her) wake. The shapes left behind are indeed memories of a past that has just been. Sumptuous draperies, sensuous curves, subtle folds encapsulate the action that happened a few hours, maybe a few minutes ago. I can figure out this recent past – and project my own memories into these open beds open to my own projections. What has just happened is mirrored on the stage but it is my own gestures that I see or the gestures of someone I love.

A rose, a hat or, more often, a little creature, a doll, a puppet or a teddy-bear, any connection of sorts with human beings, makes it even closer to life. The scene is animated thanks to these fetishes. Although they have no fixed meaning, they open up a window in a story. They add time and therefore life to the bed and invest it with human qualities. I happen to catch glimpses of limbs or faces looming up out of the folds (there is actually a sleeping woman in one painting, but we only see her nape, the back of her head, her naked shoulders and her improbable bum under the bunched up sheets: a tiny Pekinese squats at the foot of the bed watching us and crumpling up his thoughts, ready to bark). I empathize with the absent. And mirror myself as the absent. The most budding Lothario knows that props epitomize a story – a story embedded in the mind or reminded by the bed?

To enhance the suggestiveness of the scene, Maggie Siner makes a selection. She deliberately hides a crucial clue that my eye is looking for. What is missing in the picture? The clue in question is actually a hue. Pay attention to colour frequency in her paintings. They are not what you believe them to be. The display of such an efficient arrangement, of such an array of colours and shapes is meant to seduce your eyes (hence your other senses) for Maggie Siner knows their peculiar

weaknesses. She proceeds as a surgeon and her brush works as a lancet (the softest lancet ever). She does not intervene without considering the whole body of the painting. Any attempt has an impact on other organs because colours and shapes only exist in a context, in a set of relationships, and what seems round and blue is actually the result of an intricate network of effects and not the actual or rather “local” shapes and colours of things. Think of a shade, for instance. It becomes a shadow only if you see a light source, but is the colour in the shade similar to its corresponding colour in the light? Shadows convey hollows, hence relief, and things appear on the canvas. Provided the space is defined, shapes come to light.

After all, relief in Maggie Siner’s paintings is something of a symphony or a choreography. It is an abstract language, a narrative of shapes, colours, weights, thrusts, gaps, guesses, arabesques, a visual outburst in a symphonic or choreographic sense. An organic flow full of disconcerting surprises. A throbbing movement that fills me with joy through all my senses. Among the creases and the folds, the objects become all of a sudden unnameable. And I find myself saying *shape* like a prayer, and feeling shape, for the sake of it, for shape’s sake.

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