

Art in America

JULY 2001



Eduardo Costa: Installation view of exhibition, 2001; at Cecilia de Torres.

Eduardo Costa at Cecilia de Torres

Eduardo Costa makes volumetric paintings—solid, geometric forms that consist entirely of acrylic paint, with no real chassis other than their own material substance. Neither carved nor molded, his new works, all dated 2000, proceed from a wad of paint or layers of acrylic subjected to a process of accretion until they reach their intended form and dimensions. Like Costa's previous volumetric paintings, dating as early as 1994—a representation in acrylic paint of a lemon on a saucer, a blue hammer, a bowl with fruit—these geometric monochromes are radical paintings uncompromised by the discreet apparatus necessary to attach them to a wall.

The essentially performed nature of their making is foreshadowed by Costa's activities as an early Conceptual artist involved with mass media in his native Argentina. Beginning in 1966, Costa divided his time between Buenos Aires and New York, where he became closely associated with the manifestations of such artists and poets as Vito Acconci, Scott Burton, John Perreault and Anne Waldman. He linked couture and culture with the publication of *Fashion Fictions*, his celebrated series of wearable gold sculptures. Costa decamped for Rio de Janeiro in 1978, where he became involved with the interactive experiments of Hélio Oiticica, Lygia Pape and Lygia Clark.

While his recent geometric paintings allude to the shaped abstractions of the neo-Concrete and recall the Latin American break from European modernist traditions, they possess an internal, physical logic of their own. Dramatically lit and inescapably installed at the viewer's eye level, each painting reveals some of the activity of its making. The businesslike yet painterly strokes of brush and knife that frost the surface of *White Rectangle Painting*, pleasingly proportioned at 60 by 39 by 4 inches, run parallel to its edges in an economy of movement, while the concentric strokes of *White Sphere with Black Invisible Core* suggest the winding of a ball of yarn, only its title revealing the core of black paint that resides at its center.

Emphasizing their condition as paintings, Costa crafted three volumetric rectangles at the standard 30 by 24 inches of a painting, but object-deep at 4 inches. In violation of the viewer's space, two were installed at extreme angles to the wall, while across the way three triangular paintings sharing equal dimensions jutted out like wedges, as though suspended in motion, each one attached to the wall along a different, narrow side. Witty and decorous by the nature of Costa's practice, these rigorously rectangular, triangular and spherical paintings moved in orderly fashion from their essence to their substance, from what a painting is understood to be to what a painting might wish to be.

—Edward Leffingwell