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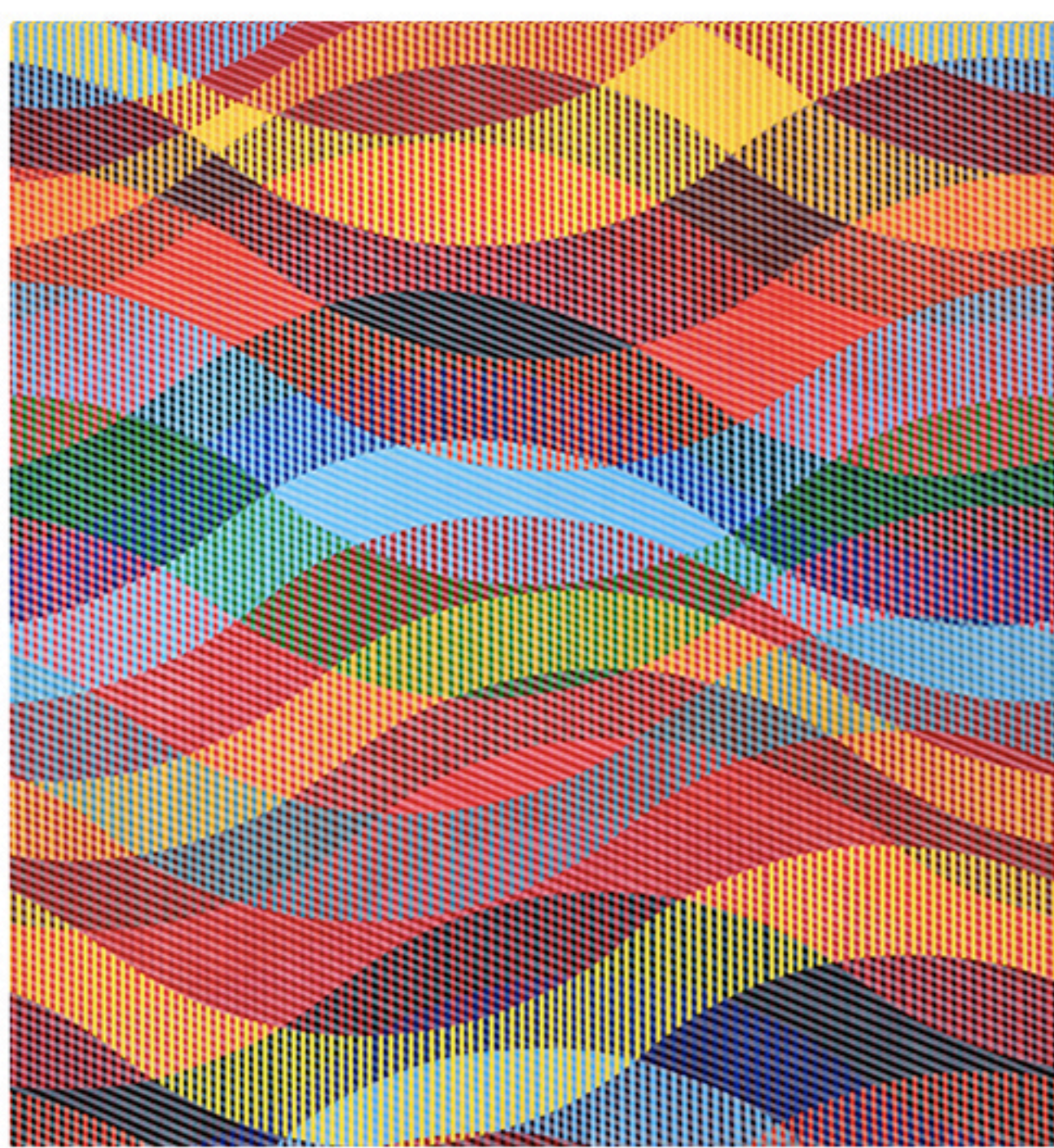
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Q&A: Mariano Ferrante - Geometric Abstraction

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Mariano Ferrante is the unassuming artist from Buenos Aires taking geometric abstraction one step further. A form of abstraction that is based on mathematical structures, basic geometry and grid-like forms, since the early 20th century geometric abstraction has been widely explored by some of the most influential artists like Piet Mondrian and Wassily Kandinsky. During the 1950-60s Argentine artists like Luis Tomasello further experimented with the phenomenon of human perception through colour and motion. **Emma Russell** talks with Mariano Ferrante about his intricate paintings in his first exhibition in Asia, how he shares his predecessors' obsession with repetition and geometry, and infuses it with his own intense and vibrant contemporary style.



What inspired you to follow the great masters of Latin America and paint in the style of geometric abstraction?

In 2009, I started my investigation into Latin American paint. I wanted to research and investigate the history of painting particularly by some of the great masters that came from Latin America. The investigation into their optical art exposed that colour was very important, as was the composition, the behaviour of paint and the act of painting itself. What I call research is actually not about taking the result of painting as given but through the act of painting again trying to analyse the behavior and then the final result.

Can you tell us which elements you have taken from the old masters' work?

You cannot really trace back specific elements in these paintings but what I do is maintain concepts. For instance, their idea that line is the element or the foundation of the painting and the use of a very limited palette of colours – in these paintings I will only use seven to nine colours. And the mathematical structure is important too. One of the most important movements that came from Latin America to the world is the idea of geometric abstraction. In post-World War I and II, a lot of South American artists were trying to find an answer to chaos through reason and mathematics. What I am keeping from that is the mathematical language and limited colours to create something new.

Why do you choose these colours?

Just because I like it. [Smiles] Strong colours, it's about choosing colours that have their own personality and their own strength.

What is the mathematics behind the artwork you discussed earlier?

The line structure is mathematically based. [He begins sketching an example]. It's a structure based on repetition and the time is mathematical. For one colour, one layer there is one time. I set a line structure but then I will deface it so it's not that it is perfectly geometric, instead it will move. It moves with a mathematical pattern and once the structure is laid out I will start painting in the colours, one colour at a time. Then time is the structure. Each line is a little bit different, a little bit defaced.

Why do you think mathematics is so important in controlling the chaos?

The objective is not to control chaos but to put an order to it. And with that order it allows you to understand it. For me I feel like chaos or a more free way of life is always the case for people in Latin America for one reason or another. So from that point of view, putting an order to things to make sense of them is always relevant. And in a way we are a little bit like that as people, our behavior can be a little bit chaotic.

So how long does it take you to complete one painting?

I work on three paintings at the same time for three or four weeks. I work every day of the week, eight hours a day.

Does this collection differ much from your other artworks in the past?

I never work on a series of works. I take one painting at a time and from that painting something else will come. So it's continuous. For me the act of painting is a type of research for understanding something new. It's not that I decide to make 10 works, but the experience of painting will give me the path for the next one. I take history not as old but as a starting point and I do the exact same thing for my paintings. So every time I finish a painting I use it as a starting point for the next one.

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Geometric Abstraction Until Dec 20, Puerta Roja, 189 Art Lane, 189 Queen's Rd W, Sheung Wan, 2803 0332; puerta-roja.com.

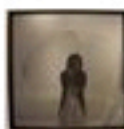
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