

Abstract Stone

Contemporariness is, then, a singular relationship with one's own time, which adheres to it and, at the same time, keeps a distance from it. More precisely, it is that relationship with time that adheres to it through a disjunction and an anachronism. Those who coincide too well with the epoch, those who are perfectly tied to it in every respect, are not contemporaries, precisely because they do not manage to see it; they are not able to firmly hold their gaze on it.

Giorgio Agamben (*Nudities*, "What Is the Contemporary?" 2009)

What is the relationship between the colored lines that have been traced into an ancient Andean textile and the development of modern pictorial technique? César Paternosto (La Plata, 1931) has wandered through this question and others over the course of six decades, intent on building a pictorial system attuned to that which shifts slightly out of its own time, a kind of anachronistic remove that has allowed him to see the immediate present in its fleeting, unstable dimension. This turn towards the past has allowed him a sideways entry into the contemporary. His beginnings in Grupo Sí, in the city of La Plata, steered his work towards geometric abstraction; years later, he developed a poetics of his own: the so-called "oblique vision."

Paternosto settled in New York in the 1960s, where he lived immersed in countercultural debates about the displacement of the limits on traditional artistic media and the emergence of a system of international conceptualism. Over the course of this 37-year-long chapter, the artist painted on modular forms, opened windows and doorways on canvases, inscribed archaic signs into monochrome paintings, and conceived the chromatic bands and lateral markings that are emblematic of his work today.

His aesthetic and anthropological research trips on ancient Andean cultures, undertaken in the late 1970s, resulted in a thematic undertaking related to the architectural, sculptural, and textile heritage of Amerindian cultures. Paternosto set out his observations on abstraction among Indigenous cultures of South America in the book-length essay *Piedra abstracta*, which he later expanded and published in English as *The Stone and the Thread: Andean Roots of Abstract Art*, earning him high standing in North America and Europe. This exhibition traces the trajectory of an artist, now based in Segovia, who relocated the surface of abstract painting to activate peripheral vision, striving to neutralize pictorial frontality, and shift attention from the center of the canvas towards the edge, that unexpected space of perceptual exploration.

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