

The Triumph of Landscape

by Ionit Behar

As an extension in space, then, the line is also an extension in time. Not time in the sense of measurement of a finite duration, but rather time that just goes on *ad infinitum*. In Mariana Sissia's new drawings *Mental Landscape*, we find, not a place nor even a point, but a conception in the mind. Sissia calls this series of work *Mental Landscape*, where the artist traces an order that one cannot quickly grasp, the order of emotions and sensations, something similar to the feeling of your own skin, your hair or your body. Sissia's drawings are not a "thing," but a *layer of a thing* that proposes an order that can be contained in paper. Their space is both physical and abstract – concerning materials and matter, and escaping precisely being a thing.

Using rice paper, Sissia creates large scroll-like drawings, with extreme dedication, patience and caution. Known for its use in 19th century Chinese painting, this thin material is delicate and untextured. Sissia starts by applying "frottage," a graphic art technique developed by surrealist German artist Max Ernst in 1925, to create a basis for further refinement. Sissia rubs over textured surfaces, such as cement floors, walls, and stones, which she then intensifies and marks with graphite of different scales. She refers to her method as "temperamental," slowly building a landscape that develops according to the artist's daily energy. These passionate scenes are investigations of materials – resembling masses of air or pieces of sky, ethereal realms. Sissia's skies remind the ones by Argentinean artist Oscar Bony in the mid-1970s. What seems to be a banal topic, the sky becomes an intense metaphor for freedom. Sissia, like Bony, cuts the skies loose, separating them from the infamous world of figures.

Here, matter reaches the sort of complexity we find in the human brain. Similar to the philosophical position or the belief that consciousness is a universal feature of all things, Sissia attempts to extend herself into the environment and to work with its problems and events. She becomes aware of her own body, in a way that has nothing to do with the accepted idea of the self-portrait, but more with the questioning and observing of sensations. The absence of figures and human bodies in the landscapes give a sense of "loss of touch" – not only with ourselves and with each other, but also with the culture of which we are a part.