

21st Century Avant-Garde

By Tamara Bruzoni



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In the present state of art, the saturated combination and fragmentation of styles claim to be the rule of visual language. However, this context becomes diffuse when compared to the canonical past before the emergence of the avant-gardes. So, would it be possible to consider the launch of an artistic manifesto as an avant-garde in the 21st century? Reflecting on Chromatic Stereometrism, born in 2023 in Costa Rica and proclaimed as such, requires more than a handful of questions. It implies thinking about the present status of art and, why not, also about its future. From the micro, medium, and macro dimensions of the stereometrist movement put in relation to the way it dialogues—in diachrony and synchrony—with the elements that constitute the sphere of art, a first approach is proposed to account for the complex relational framework involved in its proposal.

In its fundamental document, the movement "seeks to generate significant and relevant aesthetic experiences for contemporary society," as reaffirmed by its founder, the artist Gustavo "Guti" Rivera. In the micro aspect, a glance at any of his works is enough to show that stereometrist production is based on technical guidelines that seek to innovate through geometrization, optical illusion, and volumetry of figures. Each piece is the result of experimenting with the expressive possibilities of form through digital technologies that include the use of artificial intelligence. From this aspect, it is possible to say that in the micro dimension, the diachronic dialogue is powerful and enriching in character. Another striking aspect is the meticulous compositional study that allows Rivera to use as a base for his paintings an appropriate tessellation of Japanese origami. As an example of this, we find in works such as *Jirafantástica* (2021) and *Cebrakadabra* (2022), animals from the African savanna emerging among the paper folds. The lines and vibrant colors of the animals evoke the illusion of an undulating movement on the plane. As in the first avant-gardes—such as Fauvism and German Expressionism—color becomes the main vehicle of expression. Although, in this case, it transcends its historical references for the reasons recently mentioned. This is how the concept of anachronistic study and "temporal montage" proposed by Didi Huberman for studies in art becomes indispensable to avoid a superficial analytical view. Even if one takes into account that the elements of the Eastern past together with African zebras and giraffes celebrate a dialogue fostered in Central America, it would not be misguided to annex a concept of "spatial montage" to Huberman's expression. The anachronistic key is fundamental to thinking about Chromatic Stereometrism.

When addressing the medium dimension, which involves the work-spectator relationship, it is possible to say that this movement moves away from the simple avant-garde gesture. It does not present itself as nostalgic, but rather problematizes and resignifies contemporary art. It manifests itself in a forceful rejection of the folding of language upon itself—both ephemeral art and conceptual art—which has an impact on the distance it generates with the common observer. From this angle, it could be thought of as aligned with the inherent contradiction that the avant-gardes harbored as an inherent quality, precisely, the fact of being avant-garde-anti-avant-gardes. Against all odds, its strong bet is the "natural" permanence of the observer in front of the works. And it achieves this by inciting the spectator to unravel the optical riddles that inhabit its volumetric puzzle format. Something similar to the 3D holograms that were all the rage in the 90s. In this sense, it is possible to agree that the stereometrists have achieved a proposal that revives and reinvents the playful spirit of some historical avant-gardes. Didi-Huberman says that "images are always anachronistic because they carry their own past with them, but they are reactualized in each present that contemplates them." And, in tune with this, the micro and medium dimensions are thus linked in these works that embody the montage.

Finally, and beyond its manifesto that could oscillate between a vintage gesture or a vigorous revival, it is surprising to see lucid that old search to unite art and life. For that is where the macro aspect is reflected, in the intention to unite art with life—and how much digital technology is part of our daily life! Chromatic Stereometrism is situated, in this way, at an intersection with other artistic currents that explore the relationship between art and science. But, unlike the avant-gardes that used to impose strict and exclusive rules, this movement doubles down by including collective creativity. Therefore, it can be concluded that Gutí Rivera's proposal is not a mere evocation of the historical avant-gardes, but a critical reinvention of them that responds to the needs of the 21st century by proposing an art that is observed, lived, and shared.