

Coco

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gallery 1

Coco is a sexy girl, provocative and coolly flirtatious. We see her traces in these works on the wall, and conjure her image from their style. Coco is all about surfaces, delicious, coquettish and enjoying herself. We don't need to see her; indeed, any representation would spoil the effect. Instead, we feel that we come to know this vivacious yet subtle personality through the touch and caress of sartorial remainders.

It is as if Marti has cut a swatch of 'fabric' from the ensembles which define her, and offered them as clues to a persona. An infectious glamour, a deep smoky elegance... each swatch evokes a mood and a manner. The works play and ripple with tension; hints and accents in texture or weave delineating a vision which is never directly expressed but, rather, felt on an intimate level through our own attentiveness to the nuances of dress. Light diaphanous stuff sits alongside the luxury of dark velvet; a summer day by a river, clad in greens and weeping trees, breathes easily next to formal lines of black.

In decorator or designer terms a swatch is a directive; compelling one to add, to accessorize, to start from a detail and imagine a whole. Synecdoche, art-for-whole, is the decorator's or stylist's trope: the part sets in motion a train of thoughts and unleashes the desire to fantasize and complete. But, not without an internal rigor and discipline: the swatch sets off a chain of aesthetic relay, which eliminates any dross in achieving a state of imagined perfection.

The swatch is a conjuring device: we are given leave to create our own Coco, as long as its within the bounds of the dictates of her style. One can't just add anything. The aesthetic relay is already set. We are not really permitted to deviate. Examine each of Marti's "swatches" in detail, and each one establishes a variant of her code. Like le Corbusier's motto, less is more. Frivolity is a grace mark, a sharp glint of red woven into larger skeins of blacks and greys, or a sheer 'organza' whiteness folding an airier texture into a structured black.

Coco is very much a twentieth century girl, a frequenter of the grand houses of couture: she reminds us of Suzy Parker, Balenciaga, B.B., Hepburn and none of these people at the same time. She's captured a movement, a tone, a sweetness but exists very much in the now, in a post-couture world where all that remains is an oblong of fabric: an expression, a style. We don't need the rest, to know more would only be a distraction.

Marti has pared her down to a series of simple planes. There's nothing baroque or excessively Oriental in these 'fabrics', nothing swirling out of hand and losing itself in spirals or folds. Clerambault's particular feminine perversion for volume of materials, for example, Arabic in its use of swathes and drapes of folded metres, is entirely absent from Marti's passion for cloth. Rather than trade in quantities of stuff, Marti puts the swatch under the microscope, and enlarges the play of warp and woof. We extrapolate from a patch, a blow-up, a detail. A semiotics of weaving cues us into Coco's system of signs. The system is no different from, say, the semiotics of speech, as defined by

Saussure, in which a regime of differences and repetition is organised into a code. When we tune our ear to the interplay of syllables, tone and spacing, we are, according to Saussure, able to participate in speech. Or music. Marti articulates Coco's system of difference and repetition, frequencies of resonance and modulation...

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