



OKTP



CAIO FONSECA

2.1.15

Caio Fonseca's art continues to evolve. In his newest works, he has done away with the underpainting and pared the forms down. But the tension feels greater and he achieves a balance with fewer notes. This conversation took place on the telephone while he was up on a ladder working on a new canvas.

– Kenneth Caldwell

Paulson Bott Press: Tell us a bit about your new paintings. The most recent show at the Paul Kasmin Gallery was a departure from your earlier works. Is there less underpainting in your more recent work?

Caio Fonseca: It changed radically, I suppose because there is no underpainting. The construction of the painting is very different. In the past, I would put down the potential for a painting, not a painting itself. I would then go in and discover the eventual painting from what I left behind from that underpainting. That was the old way of working. Now the construction is completely different. My work up to that point was Darwinian, very evolutionary. If you came to visit every month, not much would have changed, while every six months, there would be some definite developments.

In my new work it's the white forms that create the red, blue, or black; the red forms create the white forms and in turn the white forms create the red forms. They are indivisible.



ULTRA-RED, 2014

Color aquatint and spitbite aquatint with hand-painting, chine collé and string; 37.5" x 37"; Edition of 35



Caio Fonseca and Pam Paulson in his New York Studio.

There is still one thing I don't want to give up, which is that sense of movement. You get this constant creation of form by the forms themselves. And no form exists as itself; it is in fact creating the form next to it. That interests me—I was able to keep the eye moving. Not just statically looking—it requires the eye to move one way or another. Eventually it could be seen as two paintings: the red and white existing at the same time, each making the other, each making the whole.

Q: There are at least two physical layers that are visible as one approaches your work. At a distance, these recent works are boldly graphic. But close to the canvas, they are still full of detail and texture. Is this true in these two new prints as well?

CF: The nature of prints is that physical texture is not a huge factor. The strings help. My treatment of the surface with spitbite creates visual texture. Yes, these are much more graphic, they rely on contrast in order to get the eye moving.

Q: Although these works are more vertical, my eye still wants to move from left to right. Maybe the eye is moving in both ways.

CF: When a piece moves like that, it is a magical thing. No matter how much my work

changes, I am trying to keep that. There is still a kind of almost vocal procession of details that move you left and right.

Q: Do you have another new direction?

CF: I am working on paintings now that are way more monothematic. One major form as opposed to most of my other works, which were about the interplay of many forms. With this new work, I'm trying to see if creating a certain kind of form can be so rich. The way the form is laid out and all its peculiarities. The way the form is constructed; it can act as many things. One form instead of many—that is a tall order to resolve.

Q: Did your recent study of music composition influence this direction?

CF: Yes, in a very large way. Music has always been influencing me. In fact, probably more than I realized. Now that I am studying counterpoint, I see how much of an overlap there is. In these newest paintings, the compositional studies that I am doing now are about getting a musical statement out in a clear form. Classical music is one clear idea that is developed. That invited me to try this one idea, as opposed to a more polyphonic idea of many voices. Just the way that intervals are resolved and

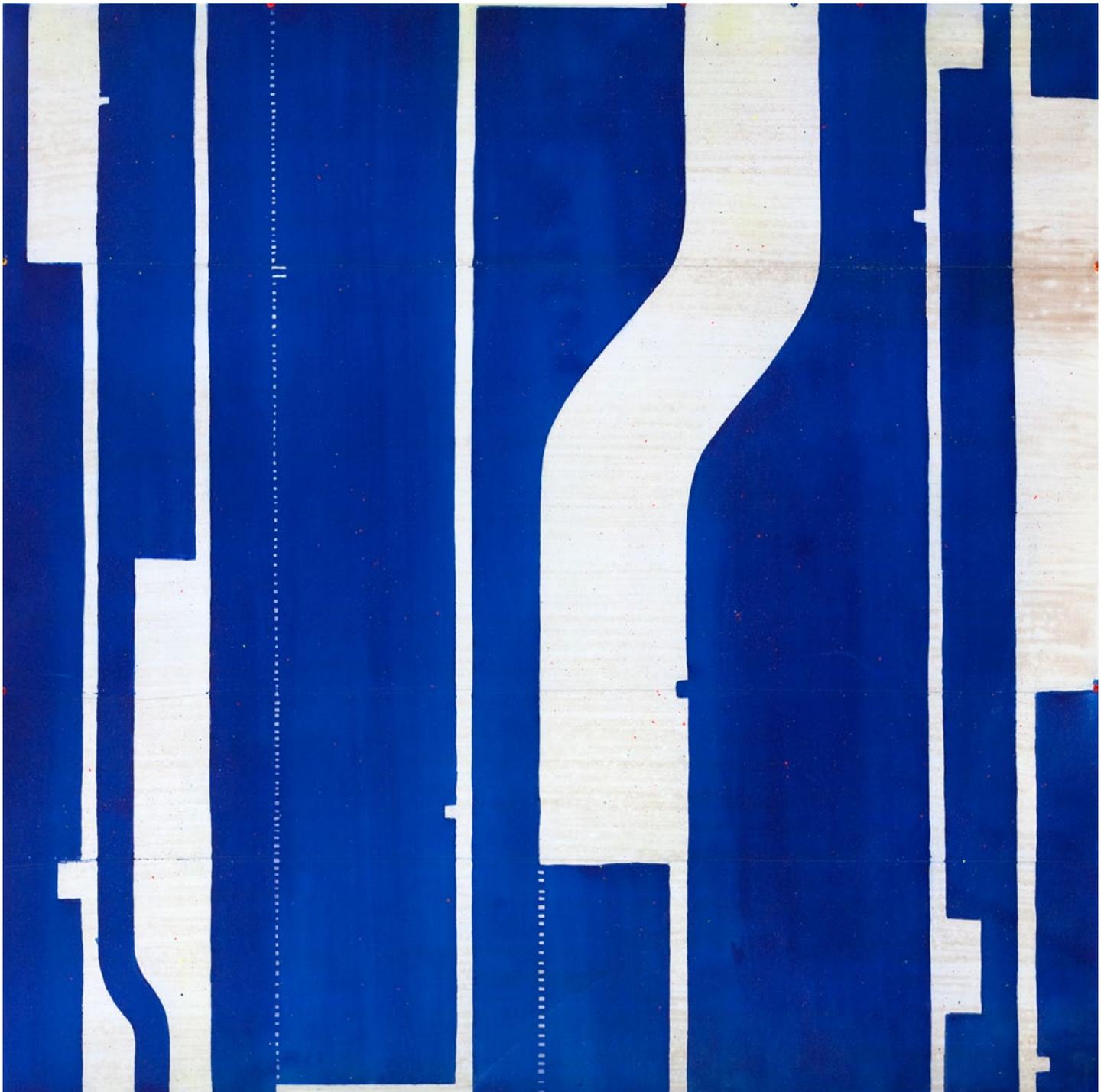
also how you can play off of rhythms. In a sense, my underlying proportion might be static. Rhythm, however, is asymmetrical. I am so into composition now. I am trying to remember my first profession.

Q: Can you elaborate?

CF: I think that mostly I was trying to invent a form that is so concise and pregnant with possibility that it begs development. That is a rather new approach for me, as opposed to finding a painting that was preexisting underlying a structure. I now have to invent out of whole cloth a form that is interesting enough to survive on its own.

Q: In your earlier work, you used the word tonal frequently. In this more recent work, you appear to be using far fewer colors. What phrase from music might you use to describe these works?

CF: Tonal I understand from my old work. In this new work, it's not atonal, there are still tonal relationships. They are not concerned so much with those tonal relationships that I found in nature per se and that I had based my work on. Nonetheless, there are tonal relationships, but they've been pared down to simple relationships based on contrast. I am primarily focused on structure. The



ULTRA-MAR, 2014

Color aquatint and spitbite aquatint with hand-painting, chine collé and string; 37.5" x 37"; Edition of 35

shift towards structural, architectural in the sense of musical painting, their structure reveals their tonal relationship rather than the choice of color. The choice of color is important because they are so simple. The color has to be overwhelming, impactful. It can't be seen in photographs.

Q: How would you characterize your music compositions?

CF: I have written study pieces for violin and cello and one larger piano piece that is about eleven pages. I don't have a style yet. Palestrina meets the modern world? But you could say that about many composers. Strangely romantic. I just want to understand this thing. I go back and forth between composing and painting. It is exciting, especially during the summer, when I have all day. I enjoy both. ✎



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