



Woman at Rest 42" x 42" Acrylic and texture paste on wood

VAETA ZITMAN and

THE DEPTH OF FEMININE SIMPLICITY

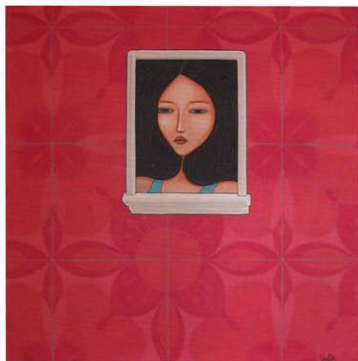
When Vaeta Zitman attempts descriptions of the objectives of her series of paintings, the awkwardness of English words like "bounty" and tributary images like "all plenty" – suggest an inadequacy on the part of language itself, rather than merely Vaeta's command of an adopted tongue, to sufficiently portray the subtle qualities of what she is translating to canvas. We can see them, though, and react to their effectiveness to touch upon something which is indeed difficult to define.

When Hypatia of Alexandria, who in the early years of the 4th Century A.D., taught about levels of reality beyond the reach of human language and thought, she included subtle, not commonly appreciated perceptions of the world, near mystical forms of awareness and mathematical realms that defined otherwise unreachable concepts. She referred to realities not readily apparent to our ordinary gaze and a quality of things, and of life, that can be delicately summoned to attention.

Mathematics was also an early magnet for Vaeta Zitman's notice in her native Caracas, Venezuela. She enrolled in an engineering course at the prestigious Simón Bolívar University when she was sixteen and she still considers mathematics to be "one of the languages of beauty." Another passion would hold sway, however, and several years later she would emerge from the Institute of Design of Caracas having studied Design and Illustration. Ahead of her would be a quest to describe, with images, qualities she could sense.



Lady with Shoes 72" x 60" Acrylic on canvas



Camila From the Window 70" x 70" Acrylic on canvas



Portrait 48" x 60" Acrylic and texture paste on wood

"I started working as a designer and I realized that I wanted to do things other than that which others asked me to do," Zitman recalls. "Without a particular purpose or, perhaps, just coming from a purpose of my own... According to my mother, I started painting the female form when I was two years old. I knew I wanted to paint or draw when I was young but I graduated from high school when I was fifteen and entered one of the most widely recognized universities in Venezuela to study engineering. But, then I was only sixteen and not very sure of myself..."

There can be small wonder that her earliest work, after deciding to take a self-centered approach to artistry that built upon a necessity; a need to create, were sculptures, because her grandfather, Cornelis Zitman, was, and is, an influential sculptor in both Latin America and Europe.

"My grandfather has been important in my life—more as an artist than a grandfather. I have to admit, as I grew up," Vaeta acknowledged. "I lived with him for two (separated) years, so I think I may have some of his influence."

Vaeta began developing her own style of painting when her oldest daughter was born twelve years ago. Her most obvious focus, in terms of subject matter, plays upon attributes of the Feminine, extracting nameless qualities associated with the principle and its perspectives as much as the gender. Her sense of beauty embraces attributes which are not contained by physical aspects—the so-called physiognomic science of femininity, proportion and beauty developed in Nineteenth-century European and American culture—but reaches beneath and above common appreciations of the artistic eye.

The qualities of womanhood Vaeta seeks to portray relate simply to unassuming, even humble, elements of feminine presence. The soft, rounding lines and play of hues in her current series take these characteristics merely as starting points to explore a pervasive ingredient of "fruitfulness," "plentifulness"—an almost mystical abundance of life and spirit. A "rural, Latin and tropical abundance," she indicates, which she undoubtedly sensed in the composure of the women of her early life.

"It's something very intimate to me that I can see in myself or in any woman—in fact, in *all* the women that I paint," Vaeta reveals. "It is something I abstract from myself."



Carrying Bananas 48" x 31" Acrylic and texture paste on wood

It is something which has attracted admiration in the galleries which have exhibited her paintings in Latin America or, as she spoke, in the Holter Museum of Helena, Montana as well as the Amsterdam Whitney Gallery and Agora Gallery in New York City. A something which carries tropical Creole hints into new environments since her move to California recently, after stays in Florida and Georgia. A something which contains an elegant simplicity of manner without a hint of the limitations of true simplicity but, rather, haunting allusions to mysterious and incalculable depths of feminine extension; an earth-toned serenity manifesting without the full restraint of a formal perspective sense to inhibit its permeating and compellingly magnetic residence. It is not just a woman or women in general; it is the Feminine...

-G. Alexander Irving