Dos verds i un blau: Ramon Enrich's Spatial Forms

Exhibition text by Matthew Holman

> Space is what enables us to distinguish a number of identical and simultaneous sensations from one another; it is the principle of differentiation.
> – Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will* (1910)

A quiet, staged landscape sits within the wooden frame, its forms arranged to remind us that these three-dimensional objects are flattened onto the levelled picture plane. A horizontal expanse of brown ground – like a felled tree planed flat by a joiner – leads to a low pink wall and a pale building whose blank façade, coloured like the rough edge of sandpaper, holds a narrow dark doorway. Inches above the ground, the opening looks less like an entrance than a portal, or a void. The empty doorway suggests a presence that has only just passed through – or might return at any moment, but not yet. To the left, a small green cone stands upright, casting a long silhouette that stretches across the earth. The sky above is a deep, even blue, meeting the distant outline of a low hill. Light seems fixed in a perpetual late afternoon, pressing against the walls and lengthening every edge. Nothing moves. The scene is held in a taut, precarious equilibrium, as if time has paused just long enough for the shadows to settle. Beneath this stillness, the quiet geometry of the place remains calm but not entirely at ease, its careful balance of light and space carrying a faint atmosphere of agitation despite, or even because of, the undisturbed vista. This is the realm of Ramon Enrich's *"NU"*. 'My constructive language leads to a tension where everything feels suspended, almost like a theatrical pause', the artist says of his work. Here, the landscape becomes a stage on which nothing happens, yet everything waits to begin.

Enrich is a painter of a world without men; his scenes are theatre sets with no actors. Their promontory walls, cuboid forms, and unmistakably Mediterranean incandescent light suggest abandoned city-states somewhere in the south. Yet they feel more contemporary than anything made by the surrealists, while their rectilinear volumes echo the pared-down clarity of the conceptual boxes of Donald Judd – one of his major references, with whom Enrich trained in Marfa in the early 1990s – despite seeming far removed from the hum of the modern world. The conventions of theatre are a useful way to approach Enrich's pictures. As Ann Finholt said of artist and Ballet Russes stage designer Christian Bérard who, like the other artists of a surrealist temperament, 'embraced the open theatricality of [Giorgio] de Chirico's spatial compositions, which were organised like stage sets with plunging perspectives, running arcades, and colonnaded backdrops', Enrich's paintings activate a dramatic sense of space.[1] In Enrich's work, architecture takes the place of actors, staging a silent drama that unfolds somewhere between classical memory and the present.

De Chirico is a clear influence on Enrich and perhaps the most obvious reference point through which to place – and cautiously historicise – his otherwise resolutely ahistorical compositions. Yet the paintings also

[1] Ann Finholt, 'Art in Vogue: De Chirico, Fashion, and Surrealism', in *Giorgio de Chirico and America* (New York: Hunter College of the City University of New York, 1996), p. 89.

speak back to history in quieter ways. In them, architecture and landscape – framing devices for his perfect objects of lines, surfaces, and solids – gradually collapse into one another. Block-like buildings sit within shallow, constructed spaces, recalling the structural logic of Cézanne's *Mont Sainte-Victoire*, where landscape is organised through geometry and the relation of planes. Walls, umbra, and horizon lines become compositional scaffolding that steadies the picture surface. A single cone or architectural block appears with the same quiet deliberation found in Giorgio Morandi's arrangements of bottles – objects held in careful suspension within a restrained palette. Across these measured compositions, the painted surface remains visibly worked. Subtle scumbles, rubbed passages, and faint traces of drawing recall the restless touch of Cy Twombly, introducing a delicate friction between the solidity of the forms and the painterly activity that surrounds them. Enrich's paintings revolve around such a small vocabulary of forms that reappear from work to work.

These are abstract openings that contain the mystery each of us projects onto them. According to the artist, they are familiar places – 'sometimes a humble vegetable garden, sometimes the gardens of Versailles', as he situates them – and each governed by human patterns that define its relationship with nature. Vast plains punctuated by small openings, dense skies with errant shadows. An interior courtyard demarcated in a desert of emptiness save only for the company of spheres, unclear if they are benevolent companions or treacherous outsiders on the march. But they may not always have been like this, as Enrich explains:

> I try to give each painting a life of its own. Its evolution begins with a very simple skeleton that gradually acquires its skin – its colour and its texture. Often, I go through a phase of destruction, which I later recover and redirect toward a different result that I had not anticipated at the beginning. Many of my works contain other works beneath their surface, and when I look at the finished piece, I recognise all those hidden stages that are no longer visible but that form the soul of the painting.[2]

This statement reveals much about Enrich's practice, not least because his forms – which appear so definitively realised, sometimes even as though they emerge as Platonic ideals of the shapes they represent – emerged through 'a phase of destruction'. In painting, these buried stages are often described through the term *pentimenti* – traces of former configurations, faint indications that a form once occupied a different position, that a colour once held another place in the composition. Even where they cannot be literally seen, the idea of pentimenti suggests that the painting retains the memory of its own making. Enrich's surfaces, with their seemingly resolved architecture of cones, sheer blocks, and penumbras, carry the quiet tension of those abandoned possibilities. 'It's what I call *the management of mystery*: you must suggest without showing', Enrich explains: 'I propose familiar spaces – without windows, but with a spatial quality that invites one to move through them. .... There is a canon, a repeated modulation that transports us to a world that balances protection with a sense of emptiness.'[3]

---

[2] Ramon Enrich, interview with the author, 6 March 2026.
[3] Ibid.

In *Adeu 3*, *Canon*, and *Villa Gran* (2025), Enrich's forms are approached from a different vantage point: the oblique aerial. Departing from the frontal perspective that characterises much of his work, the viewpoint lifts upward and tilts, revealing the scene from above. From this height, the courtyards and cuboid architectures of the silent town unfold beneath us. The effect recalls the view from a passenger plane on descent from thirty thousand feet, where the fields below resolve into a patchwork of squares and rectangles, abstract planes shifting through subtle gradients of colour. From this height, the world is quietly defamiliarized. Intimate places – our apartment block, say, or the body of water where we take our morning swim – resolve into a cubic mass or a dark line cutting across the surface when we no longer encounter them in relation to our own size, as in face-to-face. To see *Villa Gran* – grand house, estate, or town in Spanish – is to see it stripped of its grandeur. The square lies deserted, as though a sudden quarantine had emptied it. Objects that might seem imposing at ground level – those improbably slender cones and spheres – lose their authority from above, reduced to minor presences scattered across the plane. The view recalls Tolstoy's description of Napoleon's magnificent army when seen from afar in *War and Peace*: a vast force suddenly diminished, 'like ants swarming over a twig that has fallen across their path.' From this altitude, scale collapses and hierarchy dissolves; what once appeared monumental becomes only another small element in the larger pattern of the ground.

Enrich's sculptures offer another way to approach the problem of space. Many are sequentially (and merely) titled *Form*, a term that refers, among other things, to the style, design, or arrangement of an artwork as distinct from its content. We might say of *Form 2*, for instance, that it resembles the 'form' of a human figure – the two small plinths as feet, perhaps, the larger blocks standing in for legs and torso, the smaller one for the head. The mind has a habit, ingrained since childhood, of identifying patterns and coherence in abstract phenomena. Yet we encounter it less as representation than as a meditation on material presence: blocks of wood arranged before us, existing simply as such. *Form 3*, however, resists this neutrality. I cannot look at it without imagining what function it might serve in the world. It carries the visual authority of a tool: its proportions and finish recall the logic of a carpenter's implement, something designed to be grasped, balanced, and put to work; or a structural device to maintain the internal stability of a building. Its purpose, however, remains stubbornly obscure. In this way the object quietly activates a problem described by Martin Heidegger: the distinction between tools that are *ready-to-hand* and objects that become conspicuous when their function collapses. A hammer ordinarily disappears into the act of hammering; attention rests on the task rather than the tool; *Form 3* interrupts that logic. It appears engineered for use while withholding any clearly activatable function, leaving the viewer in a state of suspended expectation. Deprived of practical context, the form cannot withdraw into usefulness. Instead, it becomes newly visible – no longer a tool within a network of actions, but a solitary object whose presence is felt precisely because its function remains unresolved.

Other sculptures explicitly refer to an object of relation outside of themselves: *Sneaker*, for instance, or *Two Legs*. *Sneaker* sits low to the ground, its compact form meeting the floor with a familiarity that invites a sideways glance, as though one had stumbled upon an object momentarily set aside. From certain angles it reads almost as something worn smooth by use, its modest scale encouraging the viewer to approach closely

and circle it, adjusting their own position in relation to its quiet presence. What first appears casual begins to feel deliberate, the sculpture occupying the space with the understated certainty of an object that belongs to the everyday world yet resists easy identification. *Two Legs* rises more vertically, its paired elements establishing a simple but slightly uncanny stance within the room. The forms hold themselves apart just enough to suggest balance or potential movement, so that walking around them becomes a way of testing their stability in space.

I find myself most drawn to *Venus*. It is not immediately clear what the title invokes: the second planet from the sun – brightest in the sky after the sun and moon, appearing at twilight as the evening or morning star – or the Roman goddess of love, whose name has long been bound to ideals of beauty. Perhaps it gestures toward both. Perhaps toward neither. The title opens a field of associations whose scale feels cosmic or mythological, yet the object before us remains modest. At 55 × 29 × 5 cm, the sculpture sits firmly within the human register, its body reduced to right angles and a triangular measure more architectural than anatomical. Nothing here resembles the soft contrapposto or flowing marble of the *Venus de' Medici*, which might well recoil in baffled misrecognition at her namesake. What emerges instead is a small geometry of relations. The sculpture asks us to measure the distance between the name it bears and the form it assumes, between the cultural weight of 'Venus' and the spare, almost schematic structure that occupies the space before us. Or, to put it another way, as James Thrall Soby said of de Chirico: 'an art of incantation and revelation, in which emotion rather than intelligence should dominate.'[4] Enrich's paintings compel us to suspend explanation and to let the body respond before the mind intervenes. His mysterious topographies of form and light offer themselves to perception first: they are there for our pleasure, yet they also carry the quiet reminder that the world will continue without us – a thought at once liberating and faintly unsettling.

---

[4] James Thrall Soby, 'Giorgio de Chirico', in *Giorgio de Chirico* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1955), n. p.