

Notes on >fucking hazziness<. Sérgio Costa's "Strata- Sampling Puzzles" (2015)¹
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I **Working-Images as Observational Program** Sérgio Costa³ is not observing any kind of biological microcosm by a microscope, nor does he take up the telescope and observes nebulae -*Nebula for Latin* >cloud<: a name used for any nebulous, that is, diffuse astronomical object. Nevertheless, nebula and gullies can be found in Sergio Costa's recent painting works, in which materials (hand-molded clay-things, different types of painted textiles, cracks of painting layers) are confronted in an *observational program*⁴ called >Strata< in which a variety of oil paintings, and material try-outs are presented in a systematic way. In the Sampling Puzzles exhibit, strata show an intimate conceptual relation to "working images"⁵ (Nasim 2010) as experimental praxis. In the case of Costa's strata, the molds, gullies on the different canvas materials are conducted as experiments of >working images< in the artist lab between science and art. These working images interact with scientific instruments of observation, but as well with descriptions/depictions of other images (in the case of Costa with images of explosions/ volcanic eruptions; Strata#23-#27), maps, oil paintings, etchings, drawings and sampled paint/media experiments (Gullies), molds and crack-samplers.

II **Experiments in matter behavior** Strata Sampling Puzzles –e.g. gullies- appear as *experimentation in matter behavior* and deal with >entrainments< on different media. In physical geography >entrainment< is a process in which surface sediments are incorporated into a fluid flow (air, water, ice). Geological Entrainment is inherent in the operation of erosion. In Costa's >gullies< the diluted oil paint is poured on different textile supports ("veludo"=velvet and "cetim"=satin) taking advantage of their different textures, while minimizing subsequent interventions. The ink proceeds similarly to formation of water in the ground or dust, particles and gases in the formation of nebulae. Subsequently the fabric is mounted on wooden grids of small formats.

III **Vapor of the events** Costa in his long term strata series is interested in showing the differences, strategies and time lags, of an >Aesthetics of appearing< (Martin Seel 2005) in experience: First, the >neptunic< longtime development is difficult to be experienced escaping human experiential limitations, and the meditation of which is thematic in earlier

¹ Excerpt from the book: Gerner, A. (upcoming). *Strata. Geophilosophical notes on Sérgio Costa*

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³ see: <http://www.sergiocosta.eu/works/index.php?categoria=5>

⁴ Nasim, O. (2014). *Observing by Hand. Sketching the Nebulae in the Nineteenth Century*. Chicago: Chicago University Press

⁵ Nasim, O. (2010). "Observation, Working images and procedure: The 'Great Spiral in Lord Rosse's astronomical record books and beyond," *BJHS* 43 (3), 353-389

⁶ Seel, M. (2005). *Aesthetics of Appearing*. Stanford: Stanford University Press

paintings (Strata #2-22) on rock stratification. Costa's strata series (2014/2015) develops another mode of experience though: the intimacy of the small and medium scale gullies experiments and the meditation on volcanic explosive *cloud strata* (Strata #23-27). In these explosive events we become reminded on our temporal and rhythmical absolute experiential thresholds such as the 30ms of *temporal order threshold* of experience, in which events appear to be happening in distinguishable temporal orders and not simultaneous, or the *fusion threshold* of 2-3ms in which events are distinguished as two and not as one event, need the *retardandis* of painting as a form of observing the too fast phenomena, the too nebulous, the explosive, that escapes our experience otherwise. Costa in this Strata-Sampling Puzzles exhibition searches for "key events" (Waldenfels 2007, 42) a) attentional >scenic events< and >dramatic events< (Waldenfels 2007, 42) the eruptive "vulcanic" fast events in contrast to b) geophilosophic longtime-events, the "neptunic" (slow and steadily evolving) experience: *What if we would live more than 500 years?* Maybe then even the neptunic experience of earth's kinetics of strata that Sérgio Costa Strata series hinges on would become part of our daily experience. This vulcanic experience that Costa pain(t)s seems to have a matrix, a black hole from which all emerges or is sucked into.

IV **Explosive geo-sampling** What matters in vapor-becomings- "this isn't yet a duskscape" is that Vapors hints towards *transformations of matter*, not just in their strata of aggregation, but of bodily form in general. With Jean-Luc Nancy we can say: „If we wish to keep the word *matter*, then we should say that it's the impenetrability of what is form – in other words, relation, sensing oneself, being sensed, and sensing something as if from the outside“. We experience strata even in its vaporous blurred form *as if from the outside*, we are never located inside strata, the knowledge strata, the sensing strata, the social strata being sensed, the material strata: we are already puzzled by a multiplicity of layers and relations, but always from the outside, by their uncertainty in hazziness without the one clear strata appearing for us in experience: >this isn't yet a duskscape<. The vulcano explosions contrasting the slow artistic process of Costa's delicate oil paintings, remind us on the foggy atmospheres created by the 19th century painter J.M.W. Turner- a mix of a Victorian steamboat in which steam immerses the painting in mist, sea-motion and a lightscape from the harbour („Snow storm. Of a Habours mouth“ 1842)- but, in Costa's Strata #23-#27 (2014/2015) we are deprived of anthropocentric reference of ports and boats, nor do they refer to anthropocentric responsibility in global domicides; on the contrary, >Strata< confront us by natural hazards and evaporating life: blurred thoughts on >fucking hazziness<! Vulcano Explosions... Just yesterday on the 23rd of April 2015 while writing this text -two

⁷ Waldenfels, B. (2007). "The Power of Events". In: Bernhard Waldenfels. *The Question of the Other*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 37-51

⁸ Nancy, J.-L. (2008). „On the Soul“. In: Jean-Luc Nancy. *Corpus*. Translated by Richard A. Rand. New York: Fordham University Press, 127

⁹ Porteous, D.J. & Smith, S.E. (2001). *Domicide. The Global Destruction of Home*. Montreal: Mc Gill Queens University Press

days before the Nepal earthquake in which thousands are killed-, the >Calbuco< Vulcano eruption in Chile *interrupts* me, thinking as far as a 20 km radar of evacuation: *breaks, cracks* and *ruptures*, the fragility of our existence, its necessity for our experience.... Sérgio Costa's >Strata< ask us two questions: Are we prepared for >volcanic< events? How are we able to experience long-time change?