

THE PLACES OF THE MIND, FRANCO DONAGGIO

Two collections are exposed: *Station* and *Before the Day* grouped for the occasion with a unique title *The Places of the Mind*, to emphasize the link of intent and sensitivity between the artist's works. On show two videos made by the author.

Backlit shadows stand out in the atrium of Centrale station in Milan, emerging in black before the exit, sunlit. Phantasmagoric and unnamed passengers, that seem to have been taken by Franco Donaggio from a own personal dream to hire them here, in these fluid, impressionistic, visionary pictures, to give them a new chance of destination. They have ascetic expressions and their faces, coming to liquefaction, they look like the decomposed portraits by Francis Bacon. What these images, masterfully composed, most evoke, is the sense of solitude inherent to the human condition.

His station, temporary container of precarious presences and hurried footsteps, becomes the greater crossroads of solitary destinies on parallel tracks. The theme of loneliness, so dear to the author, is also proposed in *Before the Day*, depiction of a surreal world that refers, in the architectures and style, to the set of *Metropolis*, film by Fritz Lang; to the dreamlike environment of some "Invisible Cities" by Italo Calvino; to the metaphysical set of the pictures of De Chirico. They are icy, sophisticated, geometrically formidable works, enjoyable both through an interpretive reading that has an immediate impact, capable of giving the formal elegance back to the fly; and with more reasonable and inquisitive attitude, which encourages a more intellectual and conceptual view, with historical, cinematographic, pictorial references. The man, in Donaggio's frame, is but a small thing when compared to the giant scenic device that is existence. Here, in the station, there is a crowd of collective figures with an unstable gait; here in this apocalyptic planet, tiny men feel displaced in a futuristic world as hard as marble, without a blade of grass. And Franco Donaggio is an absolute expert to highlight, always and everywhere, the non-involvement of the human being in metropolitan contexts, the loneliness of a one-way travel, the silence of a cry without an echo.