**Council of Milan**

Culture and Entertainment

**Palazzo Reale**

**PERCORSI RECENTI. *Una città per l'Arte***

**RECENT PATHS. *A city for Art***

**GIANFRANCO FERRONI**

17 June - 17 September 1997

The Council of Milan - Culture and Entertainment Dep. in cooperation with the Mudima and Antonio Mazzotta Foundations presents 50 paintings and 25 etchings, made from 1973 to 1995 by Gianfranco Ferroni. It is the first big exhibition that the city of Milan has organized about this important representative of Italian figurative painting, who was born in Leghorn (1927) but then adopted by Milan.

The exhibition is characterized by the particular selection of the works which favours the creations from around 1973 to today, and it is based on the interest towards the most pure points of painting meant as the analysis of the relation among the elements of light, space and sign in conjunction with psychological events and memory, with an inner "tale", which for the artist become the key to reading our existential condition.

When he moved to Milan in 1944 Ferroni experienced the violence of war, the misery and the economic disaster of his family. He interrupted his school education and he taught himself his artistic formation, bonding in 1956 with a group of young men fresh from the art Academy of Brera (Banchieri, Guerreschi, Ceretti, Romagnoni, Vaglieri) and taking part in group exhibitions which set the rise of the movement later called "existential realism". The term was invented by Marco Valsecchi and includes in itself the realism basis and the resulting ideological position of these young painters. In 1958 Ferroni earns his first important recognition by being invited to Biennale of Venezia. The works of these years are today still considered among the most meaningful creations of the artist who in 1957 starts a graphic production, which was considered very important since the beginning. From 1963 to 1968 Ferroni goes through a period of strong political involvement, always aware of the fears and the problems of the contemporary man. The memorable series about the Holocaust and Abraham's sacrifice are born, held as "parables" about the condition of violence and abuse which involve our inner and private life and also the relationships among peoples. In the following phase, from 1964 to 1968, the overt interpretation of the Middle East conflicts and the racial prejudices preserves (in Ferroni's painting and graphics) his deep link with the personal dimension of memory and the individuality of the existential tragedy.

The invitation to the Biennale of Venezia in 1964 brings to Ferroni, (in contrast with the triumph of American pop) the acknowledgement of the high contribution he gave to the renewal of figurative art in Italy, something that was at that time improperly and generically defined 'new figuration'. In 1968 the Biennale of Venice dedicated to Ferroni a personal room, which remained completely untrodden due to the protest of the artist who, supporting the juvenile uprisings, turns the paintings towards the walls for the whole duration of the exhibition. After some years of silence Gianfranco Ferroni reappears on the public scene in Tonno in 1974 exhibiting the magical silence of his "rooms" which are compositions of reacquired "classical" balance in painting that slowly crushes values of light and colour into floating dust presences.

The objects "alibi" of the world created by Ferroni, who more and more moves towards contents of secular trascendence, are those that surround him, as it is for Vermeer, the painter with whom Ferroni says he has most affinity (on display *Tavolo con oggetti/Table with objects, La stanza* *vuota/The empty room*, *Pavimento* - *Lo studio/Floor - The studio*, *Interno grigio/Grey indoor, Sul muro/On the wall*, *Pavimento* - *Sedia* - *Luce/Floor - Chair - Light*).

Since then the artist's career becomes a more and more skillful and deep refinement of his research on space and light, which are absolutely the main elements, beyond the no longer necessary and last figurative extension of the objects (on display *Equilibrio instabile/Unstable balance, Sedia* - *Cavalletto/Chair - Easel, Alcuni oggetti sul tavolino/Some objects on the small table*, *Nella luce* - *Diagonale d'ombra/In the light - Shadow diagonal, Nello studio* - *Sindone/In the studio - Shroud*).

"From the space that situates, the light that reveals", wrote Ferroni in 1994, "from their joining is set up time without conventional limits. Static, a micro-moment for ever, suspended, before the 'non-definitive time'. Only under extraordinary conjunctions this miracle can happen! And a particular soul disposition is needed, like in a religious anticipation: light as 'revelation', space as conceptual 'logos/word'".

Gianfranco Ferroni lives in Bergamo and works in Bergamo and Milan.

**Venue: Palazzo Reale, Piazza Duomo 12, Milan Italy**

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