

## The mists of exile

*by Lorenzo Canova*

Ernesto Morales has been working for a long time on the theme of exile and detachment, making his reflections with the video and painting on the links and the lacerations which simultaneously combine and separate Argentina and Italy. These two countries represent in fact the symbolic polarities of the works of Morales, that in his searching, whether painted or filmed, discovers the secret affinities which link these two lands in an almost metaphysical sense, as if Giorgio de Chirico, Jorge Luis Borges, Giovanni Papini or Julio Cortázar had decided to combine their visions into a single gallery of images.

It is no coincidence that in the past Morales has dedicated video works to the theme of Italian migration to Argentina, to the residency and loss of identity that mark the fate of the transplanted communities in a foreign country.

Video and photography, the essential tools for an objective documentation of a difficult and elusive reality are, not surprisingly, the starting point for the paintings of the artist, a base however that is manipulated, reworked and transformed into paintings that show a meditated process of metamorphosis, sublimation and decanting. Public spaces in the city, such as privileged territory of the historical, social and cultural roots of a people, are chosen then by Morales to give shape to a feeling of separation placed in the widespread thinning that evaporates the plastic force of volumes. In this exhibition, the artist has therefore worked on his country, on his origin, reflecting on Buenos Aires and revealing the indecipherable and obscure affinity exalted by the emptiness and the silence, where gray is the leitmotiv for the pictorial definition of buildings, of uninhabited and disturbing avenues.

These architectures could then show us a connection between Morales and the works of de Chirico, the artist that in the twentieth century was most linked to the feelings of disorientation and alienation, of perennial nostalgia for the source places hopelessly lost, to a vision of the city dominated by mystery, by the emptiness and by silence. However, if de Chirico constructed his paintings through the clarity of an unreal meridian and Mediterranean light, Morales prefers to dialogue with a “metaphysical” city of functionalism imprisoned in the stones through which vision is rarefied, and dissolves into a metaphorical fog, in a mist crossed by writing which recomposes in the dimension of memory. In these spaces purposely evanescent, anamnesis accomplishes its retrospect by combining the city of the living to the city of memory, the land of birth to the land of choice, in the urban labyrinths that emerge out of the mist of the geometries of buildings and structures. In these meanderings Morales underlines therefore the pathways of light highlighted by the lanes and traffic poles, by doors, by windows and railings that are lighted by blue and yellow glows, the only elements of colour in the serial monochrome of these fictitious and feasible territories. So, in these indicated paths, interrupted and broken, the viewer can look for the meaning of an inexorable and apparently incomprehensible exile that affects men and memory, the sense of an enigmatic loss, the way out from these roads where the mystery of unreal cities melts into the way opened towards a return eternally dreamed of and perhaps impossible.

In his latest cycle Morales has further broadened his speech symbolically working on the theme of cows, denizen animals that notoriously mark the economy and the cultural history of Argentina, represented in different allusive situations sometimes paradoxical, where they can become symbolic of the problems, of the resistance and disruption caused by migration, a kind of silent witness that can

open itself toward opposition to change or towards acceptance of the social transformations and historical-politics represented by the dialectical tension among animals, the earth and the whole landscape that represents an eloquent metaphor of dialectics and of transformation of the present and the future.