

FRANCO DONAGGIO

by Cecilia Ci

Works 

There is, in this artist, the fascination of a new space, of places which do not exist. Worlds met during the wandering of the mind through dreamy reminiscences. Franco Donaggio, (Chioggia, Venice, 1958; he lives in Milan) is the artist and advertising photographer who starts work when the day is still long to come, when everybody is sleeping. "And it is my unconscious to be illuminated" he reveals. "It's then that I feel life closer, that I regain possession of my spirituality". The images take shape and change little by little just like the sight appearing to those who travel through time or to those who fly high in a hot-air balloon. A kind of architecture that resembles a cathedral in his first big work, a diptych reminding of a Lilliputian iconography. Very little men – and it's always Donaggio who portrays himself – move on a precarious bridge that is anchored to the structure by some cables. A human character is seen climbing the cables, running, resting. Dying as well? Throwing himself in the void. We see him falling down. Tiny living creatures acting as in a dream, fighting and moving inside a Kafka-like space which is inhabited by the deep awareness of human finitude, by the feeling that man cannot fill up this space and that he only can rise above things by using his thought.

Two smaller photos. In the first one there is an indoor space, a mirror image: the detail of a famous church with glasses that let white clouds enter. A suspension in the sky, the earth seems faraway: to inhabit that space here are three tiny men including, again, the artist himself. "Man is nothing but a reed, but it's a reed which thinks". Then clouds and clouds again, which are in fact very popular elements in all Donaggio's work. They may symbolise the origin of all things and perhaps the rise of incertitude and ephemeral. And then they disappear. There is a platform showing a big exclamation mark in a reclined position which is actually a small marble sculpture representing a question about life ultimate reasons. And men are always tiny. Then comes a disquieting photograph: a marble square resembling a monastery, a head of a statue placed in the middle of it whose lips are touching the ground like a Christ who stumbles under the cross. Small human figures are moving around mysteriously. The sky is black, the clouds are light, the space is wide. Inside this space a little solitary man with white hair is looking up in a vibrant, unreal atmosphere. Here is a new square, a crossroads of paths, a big aperture in the middle, jaws of the earth, trunk of thoughts which wanderers allow to rest. Photographs showing an intimist taste, a tangible expression of the product of the mind. "Towards destiny", might as well be the title of another work included in this exhibition: two walls that are very close together and that are high, large, unreachable marble towers parting like the Red Sea waters during the flight from Egypt to let a single man walk through. A little one.