

For immediate release:

CLAUDIO PARMIGGIANI

29 April – 22 May 2009

Opening: Tuesday, 28 April 2009, 6–8pm

“A particular time is not recognisable in what I do [...] A work of art can find asylum only in a country without time, in a land without horizons, in a time without time [...]. It is natural that the fate of a work is to be public but, even if it might seem a contradiction, I think that the only indispensable condition for a minimum of truth to survive is in secrecy and mystery. Mystery, this is precisely the word”. Claudio Parmiggiani.

Simon Lee Gallery is delighted to present a new body of work by Italian conceptual artist Claudio Parmiggiani, one of the first exhibitions of his work in the U.K. During his time at the Istituto di Belle Arti di Modena (1958-1960), Parmiggiani frequented the studio of Giorgio Morandi, whose work was to have a profound impact on him. The spirit of Marcel Duchamp and Piero Manzoni was also apparent early on in his manipulation and presentation of objects, for example the arrangement of a globe and a pickle jar containing a crumpled map in 1968. He has never allied himself with any particular group, but he shared with some of his contemporaries, such as Michelangelo Pistoletto and Giulio Paolini, a progression from conceptual works, including installations, photo-works and books, towards a use of assemblage. In 1970, he exhibited his first ‘Delocazioni’, using powder, smoke and fire to make shadows and imprints on paper and board, combined with the subtle interplay of the architecture of the space created a sense of absence and uncertainty. The spirit of these early installations were to form the backbone of Parmiggiani’s practice.

Parmiggiani is an iconoclast, an ‘image-breaker’, a dissenter, a non-conformist. Here he presents ten works on panel again using fire, smoke, soot and ash to create forms that resemble the rise and fall of light and shade on a surface – the forms appear like veils, ethereal, ephemeral and weightless yet with a distinctly sculptural presence. As the critic and curator Sergio Risaliti has commented, ‘(...) these images recall inevitably the drapery of Bernini, Zurbaran’s effigies of saints and the *sfumato* of Leonardo, but here all that remains of these classical works of art and faith is the iconography of the veil, as though they were meditations on the nature of such images, while at the same time providing an iconoclastic liberation from them... Parmiggiani has often declared his interest in the psychic dimension in representation and these new works have the power to provoke profound spiritual meditation – we are confronted with silence, with the sacred and the tragic, with the passage of time, the inevitability of death and the nothingness of oblivion.’

Claudio Parmiggiani was born in Italy in 1943. His first major exhibition was held at Liberia Feltrinelli, Bologna in 1965. Parmiggiani has exhibited widely internationally. He has exhibited five times at the Biennale de Venezia (1972, 1982, 1984, 1986, 1995). A retrospective of his practice between 1960 and 1995 was held at the Musée d’Art Moderne et Contemporain, Geneva (1995). Recent solo exhibitions have been held at Galleria d’Arte Moderna di Bologna, Bologna (2003) and The Grand Palais, Paris (2005).

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