

Luigi Meneghello's most recent book, "The Dis-patriate", does not communicate a sensation of either exile or expatriation, but rather of something which these terms fail to express: a feeling of loss but not of nostalgia, of partial uprooting and complicated transplanting. Every "dis-patriate" is a world to himself and - in a nutshell - a new culture. Being the exclusive domain of one person, this culture risks noncommunication; on the other hand, it may be a grain of richness, a step not so much towards the levelling of all forms of culture into one single pot *pourri*, but towards the complexity of variation, i. e. persona! differentiation, the diametrical opposite of "Big Brother" politics. All this to talk about Moani Haghighi. Or rather, not so much about him and how he feels after fifteen years' absence from Iran - despite a strong temptation to indulge in psychological and sociological interpretations - but more so about his work as an artist with a Persian-Neapolitan background (he lived in Naples until five years ago) or even with a Milanese background. Although his experiences and feelings as a "dis-patriate" - a clever neologism - are more suited to the pen of a writer or to the pages of a diary, his artistic work fits into those formal conventions which, though difficult to analyse especially in a case like this, must absolutely make their own way towards communication. Also from this point of view, is Haghighi like an electron wandering between two elements which sometimes look on him as one of their own and other times deliberately shy away from him. He is part, at the same time, of the eastern and western cultures, but he is also doomed to be considered eastern in the West and western in the East. In fact, we cannot look on Haghighi's work without thinking of a sort of historical memory firmly anchored in the cells of his brain, without detecting in his work not so much a visible formal closeness with the art of his "homeland" - the sublime art form of Persian rugs - but rather a reflection of the conception of the time of life and work belonging to his country. Thus, when faced with Haghighi's larger works, one tends to wonder more about how the piece has been achieved before actually considering the piece itself. One cannot immediately make out the drawing, the form, or even the decoration (a term which is far from negative): instead, one ponders the length of time involved in creating the work, the obsessive repetition of the gesture - obsessive to us but normal to all those whose conception of the time of life is different to ours. Continuity, a sequence of identical moments following incessantly on from one another, can only be suggested by a working mode which is theoretically infinite because it is always equal to itself, but which manifests itself in such significant fragments, as Haghighi's huge compositions. Each time I see one of his works I cannot help but imagine him actually creating it: brushstroke after brushstroke - always apparently the same - followed by brushstroke on top of brushstroke, until the first chromatic scenario is almost blotted out, often concealing a symbolic drawing - a human figure, two fish swimming in opposite directions, a circle/cosmos - visibly easing its way outwards after a moment's silent contemplation. After a period of precociously developing "westernish" technical skills in Iran and a brief spell of expressionism, when his compositions were much too heavily laden with symbolism and actually seemed to be screaming from their canvasses (the expression of deep anguish for his country), Haghighi has now attained a sort of learned ease and, more importantly, an independent way of stating it: the use of the repeated gesture. This, apart from a number of figurative details, is the real subject matter of his work: time expands and comes to a standstill as in a sequence of identical words without either beginning or end, not easily isolated if not in fragments (as Haghighi would appear to be doing in his works). Is the artist echoing the knotting of a very delicate rug by a loom worker? Well, despite a strong temptation to the contrary, the answer must be "no", because his gesture is the result of a conscious effort, a gesture which has been reconquered after a long and lonely voyage.

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