

## Emilio Scanavino

(Genoa, 1922 – Milan, 1986)

“I paint because I exist”: this statement by Emilio Scanavino contains the reason behind his art. Painter, sculptor, and ceramicist, who was also interested in architecture, literature, and philosophy, Scanavino was the author of an original language that contributed to the development of *Art Informel* in Europe. His works manifest the artist’s complex inner life, the existential nature of his doubts and anxieties, and his attitude toward probing the mystery and hidden aspects of reality. In Scanavino’s world phantasms and shadows are never annulled, the light of day is not strong enough to banish torments and fears, and the balance between life and death seems to tilt in favor of the latter. The artist’s palette is austere and restricted almost exclusively to black and variants of gray. If Scanavino uses red, it is only because he interprets it as a tragic version of black.

*Le voci del silenzio (The Voices of Silence)*, 1958, is typical of the artist’s research during the period when he moved from Genoa to Milan. Dominated by a gray ground, which can be interpreted as a manifestation of silence and solitude, the work is articulated by a succession of three groups of signs, black knots that collect the emotional tension that has generated them. Each stroke is like the registration of an instant, the materialization of a dolorous presence that one can evoke but not identify. As in other works from this period, the signs do not articulate a codified language, but contain a statement of existence that attests to an anxiety about life. “I have not found peace but I am aware of not wanting it,” he said. “Peace,” he continues, “only gives you a safe formula, and I, instead, work in doubt. Fear, panic, the sense of death and destruction are still my strongest motives. Clearly with painting, I react: a biological fact, an attempt at survival.” (“Scanavino, disegni e scritti inediti”, in *Scanavino, La coscienza di esistere*, by Accame, G. M., ed., Bologna: Grafis Edizioni, 1994). (MB)