

Alfredo Chighine

(Milan, 1914 — Pisa, 1974)

In a text entitled *Ritratto*, 1962, Ennio Morlotti recalls his friend Alfredo Chighine in the years prior to World War II. He describes always seeing him with a large portfolio under his arm, “in which there were large drawings executed in broad strokes in rough charcoal. They were nudes of women and mothers, which bore witness to a dramatic, very passionate and sorrowful period. The atmosphere is evocative of Sironi, Permeke, Ensor and Kokoschka.” The use of charcoal and the broad strokes had a parallel in his paintings, figurative at the time, where the color seems scraped against the surface of the canvas as if it were a simple plaster surface.

Until the end of the war Chighine sculpted archaic mother figures in wood, as well as other figures that convey a humanity shaped by grief, rendered into something that is both more corporeal and in some way eternal. The surface of the wood is a dense accumulation of carved signs, subtle and long like those that, from this point on, would incise many of his pictorial surfaces. These sculpted furrows, like his early arrangements of color against the irregularities of the surface, presage Chighine’s ability, in years to follow, to open up dense wounds of light in the body of the pictorial material, arranged to compose solid spatial planes.

In the late 1950s, the radiation of light establishes a dialogue with a Sironian permanence that has a sculptural, one might say architectural, quality in his painting. Light and construction form the structure of his works. It is significant that Morlotti concludes his text with a discussion of walls and skies, perfect images of that duality: “In his softening of grays and pink he had transported and hidden all the nostalgia and melancholy of Lombard walls and skies. In the new forms his luminous material had attained a new enchanted splendor.”

The canvas acquired by the CRT Foundation, *Forme nello spazio (Forms in Space)*, 1958, joins a work from the previous year, already in the GAM collections, *Paesaggio invernale (Winter Landscape)*, which was acquired by the city on the occasion of the 1958 Venice Biennale. The CRT work, in comparison, has a more vertical layout created by the arrangement of parallel and frontal planes. The rough applications of paint are less profound, less tormented. They sometimes assume the airiness of broad calligraphy, while in the other work they compose a dense and almost shrub-like interweaving. The broad spatula strokes in this work once again recall Sironi’s accumulation of planes against the horizon in his *Paesaggi urbani (Urban Landscapes)*, but they also announce aspects of Chighine’s late period, where his numerous compositions of gleaming colors applied with a broad spatula infer more a critique of than a comparison with de Staël. (EV)