

Distinctive flavour of India

Sight, hearing, sense of smell: an exhibition to explore with all the senses, but also with all one's emotions. This is what the solo exhibition of Chittrovanu Mazumdar proposes at Macro. An exhibition that saturates the viewer. Who, as anyone who finds himself in India, may turn away or surrender himself to it. And in this case, the surprises will be intense. Between video, fragrant installations and darkness. Perhaps to discover what is left unsaid.

[by Maria Teresa Capacchione]

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View of installation, Chittrovanu Mazumdar

The first element of surprise, something you would never expect, is to enter a museum in distress, which is unfortunately what the Macro is today, and see such an impressive exhibition. "And what is

left unsaid ..." (until 20/9), is in fact, more than a show, it is an experience. Entering the large space that the museum has dedicated to the solo exhibition of **Chittrovanu Mazumdar** (Paris, 1956), is to enter another dimension where blinding darkness envelops the viewer. A darkness broken only by patches of strong colour - blood red, golden yellow, pure white - which escape from the huge monoliths of steel, like memories that emerge from the brain, like wounds in defenceless bodies. In this darkness, whispers, sounds, music, overlap as memories that crowd the mind, pushing the viewer to explore every corner of the room. And then, the fragrance. A strong, powerful scent of roses to complete the immersion in this dream world.

Sight, hearing and smell are the senses that are bewitched, overpowered when one explores India. The involvement of the senses in the works of Chittrovanu Mazumdar, therefore, is not only to recall individual experience, but also an explicit reference to a country that has deep cultural roots, the India, that cannot be ignored in his works just as much as the European cultural component cannot be ignored either.



Nightskin 2009, Chittrovanu Mazumdar

Born in Paris to a French mother and an Indian father - Nirode Mazumdar, one of the most successful avant-garde artists of his time, founder in 1943 of the Calcutta Group - Chittrovanu Mazumdar has access to two different cultures and his works are born out of a mix of these. This mixing is at the centre of his work and not just the mix of western and eastern cultures, but also the variety of materials he uses to produce his art - from wood to wax, from gold to steel, from tar to paper, sound to light - and the media through which he expresses himself: video, music, photography.

This exhibition is the result of a meeting between the curator Paola Ugolini and the Indian gallery owner **Malini Gulrajani**: "When I first met her about a year and a half ago in her gallery in Dubai - said Ugolini - Malini Gulrajani introduced me to Chittrovanu Mazumdar who was exhibiting the four video boxes (on display at the Macro).

Chittrovanu told me about the genesis of this work which relates to his childhood in a village outside Calcutta. In this village, devoid of any entertainment, there was a man who had an optical box/bioscope in which the children could watch moving images always accompanied by the same music. That box had immense power, to unleash the imagination of children, who looking through that hole, invented extraordinary stories. Mazumdar has reconstructed that optical box, turned it into containers of images without plot that evoke memories, feelings, and emotions that leave the viewer the possibility of inventing his own story.



View of installation, Chittrovanu Mazumdar

"I really loved the poetry in Mazumdar's works - continues Ugolini - and I wanted to bring to Italy this artist who is highly respected abroad, but who had never before exhibited in our country. I thought the Macro could be a space in which the work of Chittrovanu

could best express itself and when I spoke with Malini Gulrajani - thanks to whose financial efforts the exhibition was possible – she was thrilled by the proposal. The very large space made available by the museum has allowed us to exhibit the most impressive works of Chittrovanu Mazumdar and create an exhibition that allows the viewer to fully appreciate the installations, the complexity and the coherence of his work”, concludes Ugolini.

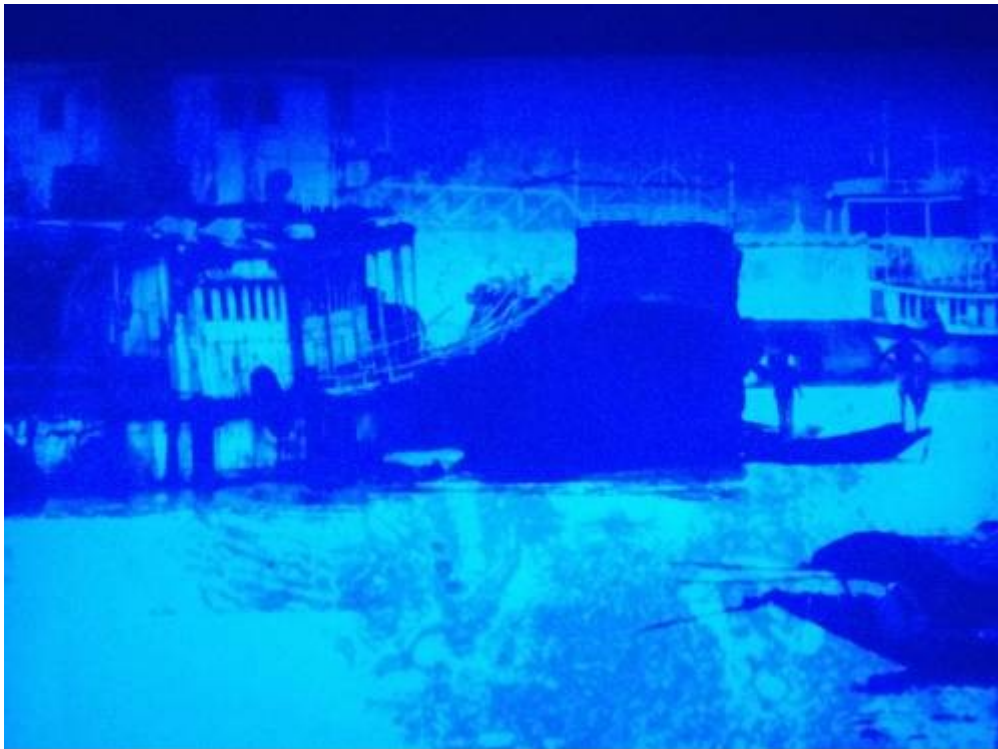
Complexity and coherence winds through the exhibition that from the dominant black of the first room, in an atmosphere increasingly Lynch, brings us into the reddish purple of the second, in which dozens of images locked in steel boxes are suspended in the air: it is the graveyard of memories. Here there seems to be no more life, everything is motionless, suspended memories are locked up, frozen until the warm, penetrating sound of bells coming from the sound installation in the back, cuts the silence breaking into a crescendo to life.



View of installation, Chitrovanu Mazumdar

Manifesto, a brand new installation composed of nine pieces made of iron, copper, lead and wood representing an illegible book, has never been presented elsewhere and is perhaps the work that best expresses the sense of the exhibition. Because "And what is left unsaid ..." brings to the fore what is left unsaid, the pain linked to the death of his mother - who inspired this work, not surprisingly, the most western of the works present - that cannot be expressed. The walk through leads us finally into the last room where a more immersive work awaits us, a four-channel video installation that projects images on all four walls in staggered synchronicity. It is a poetic work and technological at the same time, which reproduces the mechanism of memory in which the images appear to us not necessarily in a logical sequence. Images of people and places that surround us and entrap us. In this work, the unsaid is the claustrophobic nature of memories and memory, and is the anxiety

that is expressed in the blue dawn of Calcutta, that cannot be cathartic.



Untitled 2009, Chittrovanu Mazumdar

One comes out of a Chittrovanu Mazumdar exhibition with the feeling of having been through an intense physical and emotional journey, of having stepped into an unknown world made up of infinite possibilities and surprises, and of having taken part in it with all one's senses. One feels one has been at the centre of this experience to which each would give a different meaning. Because in the work of Mazumdar, there is no narrative, there is no single story to tell, but suggestions and associations to find. There aren't even titles for his works; all works are Untitled to free them from any interpretation imposed by the artist. It allows the viewer to read the work as he wishes, inventing a title for the works he prefers.

The choice of Malini Gulrajani, who with her financial commitment made the exhibition possible and believed in a museum in danger of extinction, confirms that abroad the Macro still has a good reputation (probably not for long), thanks to exhibitions of past years. We hope that this exhibition will serve to remind people of the great potential of this space that cannot and must not become yet another container of exhibitions and private events: the capital of a country, that claims to focus on culture in order to develop, deserves much more.