

## **The Artistic Interpretation of Industry:**

### ***Factory Interiors in Lecco***

by Barbara Cattaneo

The cycle of paintings entitled *Factory Interiors* by Alessandro Papetti was conceived in 1992, when the Bellinzona Gallery of Lecco asked the Milanese artist to paint a series of works on industrial archaeology and factories, whether active or not, in the Lecco area of northern Italy. After surveying some local factories (including Oasa, Trafilerie di San Giovanni, Cartiere Cima, Caldara di Caslino d'Erba, Ferriere Cima, Caleotto, Complar di Veduggio), and studying photographs and texts, for example *La valle del Gerenzone*, by the writer of this article, the artist agreed to create several large paintings. When the work was completed, about 3 years later, Bellinzona Gallery proposed to the Lecco Civic Museum to show the paintings at Villa Manzoni: and so the 1996 exhibition *Factory Interiors* took place.

“Contemporary painting, even if figurative, has hardly dealt with the portrayal of the factory, nor of its past and present significance in Italian society. Only a few exceptions can be mentioned: in the 1960s and 1970s, Ferdinando Farulli painted a series of factory images of strong emotional impact; some works on the same subject were occasionally painted by Arduino Cantanfora, Paola Galdolfi, Guido Somarè and Raffaele Bueno as well. [...]

The numerous works painted by Alessandro Papetti from 1992 to 1996 are therefore a unique event in the contemporary art scene. Papetti approaches this theme at the moment of industrial decline, which began in Italy during the second half of the 1980s. The positive attitude of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries is gone, as well as the description of a space filled with living men and machines, the celebration of hard work, and the political engagement of the post-war years. Wide grey spaces without people or voices and the silent neglect of a falling civilization fill huge canvases, evoking the memory of a recent past that hasn't yet completely disappeared. [...]

In the empty space of memory that lies between past and present, we find “Factory Interiors” [...] as the one and only interpretative effort of a moment in Italian history still to be understood: the years of transition from the industrial to the post-industrial era”. (from B. Cattaneo, *L'arte e la rappresentazione dell'industria*, in *Alessandro Papetti. Interni di fabbrica 1993-1996*, catalogue edited by Mario Pancera, Galleria Bellinzona, 1996, Milano)