

## SERGIO VEGA

### *Utopian paradises: modernism and the sublime*

curated by **Luigi Fassi**

**Exhibition space:** Umberto Di Marino Arte Contemporanea, Via Alabardieri 1, 80121, Napoli, Italy

**Opening:** Tuesday 9th May 2006 – h 8:00 – 10:00 p.m.

**Duration:** 9th May – 9th September 2006

**Opening hours:** from Monday to Friday h 3:00 – 8:00 p.m., Saturday h 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m./4:00 – 8:00 p.m.

**July:** from Monday to Friday h 4:00 – 8:30 p.m. – **August:** summer closing until 3th **September**

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[Umberto Di Marino Arte Contemporanea Gallery](#) is pleased to present the first solo exhibition in Italy by [Sergio Vega](#) “*Utopian paradises: modernism and the sublime*” after his participation in the **51st Venice Biennale**.

For some years [Vega](#) has been carrying out a complex interdisciplinary research titled “*Paradise in the New World*”, that draws its inspiration from Antonio De Leon Pinelo’s homonymous seventeenth-century book. Pinelo was a Portuguese councillor of the King of Spain, an explorer and a historian of the New Indies. As many Jewish and Christian naturalists and geographers of the time, he was persuaded that Earthly Paradise had not disappeared but it really existed concealed in a remote place of the globe.

The characteristics of this delightful garden filled with wonderful treasures had been preserved and was inhabited by people uncorrupted by the original sin.

This nostalgic mythology about a lost and never forgotten happiness fed the imaginary of the Christian world during the sixteenth to the seventeenth century, reaching at last the power of a true historic and geographical reality. After Columbus’ travel to the New Indies and the following Amerigo Vespucci’s expeditions, people became convinced - and they thought to receive confirmation of this in the Book of Genesis - that the Garden of Eden was in the South of America. This belief was based on the marvellous natural prodigality of those temperate regions, which fascinated so much the European travellers in their first explorations. [Sergio Vega](#) has reconsidered Pinelo’s theory about the location of Eden and placed it in Cuiaba, a city in the state of North Mato Grosso in Brazil. He has written a detailed diary where he records his reflections about the present conditions and the history of that region, the mythology and the reality. With his biting irony the artist re-inscribes in his works the events of the colonization of South America showing their origin and development from the specific paradisiacal mythology. In this way this theory becomes a refined metaphorical context to focus indirectly in the difficult cultural reality of the Latin American continent. Through his new works in exhibition at [Umberto Di Marino Arte Contemporanea Gallery](#) featuring photographs, drawings, videos, installations and excerpts of his journal, [Sergio Vega](#) reconsiders with ambivalence the destiny of modernism in South America, its baroque, excessive and paradisiacal dimension that sets it in contrast with European modernism and its aspirations of a zero degree of minimal purity. In virtue of those exotically extravagant characteristics [Vega](#) coined the theory of “*Modernismo tropical*”, pointing out the ideological implications of this new idea as an architectonic expression of the politics of the ruling class. The tales of the Genesis and the history of Colonialism, the theory of the Sublime and an insidious critique of Ideology wrap up and mingle in the work of the Argentine artist creating a fascinating review of symbols and languages; this one expresses the intent to turn upside down the most established perspectives in order to interpret from a new viewpoint an array of doubtful events in the history of South American. (*Luigi Fassi*)