

Blown

The fluctuation between apparently opposing sides in a sort of exemplary convergence is the idiosyncrasy peculiar to the conceptual objective of Gabriele Giugni's photographic search. This is the first clue to be discovered among the evidence found in dozens of pictures taken during his adventures throughout the world and his sedentary travels in his studio, creating a portable universe for therapeutic mental escapes and flights of the imagination.

There is something about "Blow up's" scrutiny in fixing on enlarging details which blocks the image on the one hand in a metaphysical dimension at times reminiscent of Warhol - contaminated by fashion and advertising to the extent to which it crosses the boundary into a pure, almost abstract, seemingly surgically divided composition, creating connections between the plant and animal world in a hybrid mix which at times reconverts the body to its absence of media symbolism; while on the other hand instead, in its instantaneousness it brings everything back to reality in its most authentic form of everyday experiences, this time zooming into the individual's inner world. The ability to capture the moment is the photographer's daily undertaking, constantly delineating his own personal view of the world using his camera. Coupled with a healthy emotional pragmatism - to which he knows how to abandon himself to - while keeping up his guard in terms of mental detachment, it allows him to play with heterogeneous ranges without nevertheless falling into the vicious cycle of eclectic indefiniteness particular to the omnivorous photographer.

The female form as archetype. A real body of evidence, that is to say, of reality. Victim and executioner in our collective imaginations. From the very first inspection - if it really is true that the critic is also an investigator - in his study, bathed by light and

marked by shadows which from that very first instance, make many things clear. The unconscious process immediately becomes awareness in the young author, who confesses to be literally carried away by a vision of the feminine universe from all its different angles. A vision where details are the protagonists, details which, enlarged and remounted, give life to curious genetic creations. Creatures which are both artificial and disturbing, but also ironic, giving rise to an analysis of female identity from the stereotypes which traps it to the disquiet it can create. The visual layout employs a series of suggestions which span art history, starting from the classic canons of the Renaissance all the way to the graphic elements typical of Art Nouveau, to the photographic abstraction experimented by the avant-garde - teetering between reproduction and pictorial depiction. And then there are incursions into New Age, psychedelic and vital imaginary of the 60s, of which he is a great fan of - to reflect upon a certain type of Italian cinema typical of those years and on the erotic photography of Mapplethorpe and Newton all the way to Lachapelle. Though the digital filter, Giugni's image is twofold. The first created by the male eye - conforming to the perspective of desire and its perverse fantasies - or to the sublimation of collective anthropological imagination which exalts the same as either idols or demons. At the same time, by using a reporting technique, which Giugni admits he prefers, he allows himself to capture reality in all its naturalness and uniqueness. He reconnects the two different sides of the female identity by stressing the interconnectedness and interpenetration of opposites: looks and substance, crude reality and glossy contrivance, coldness and detachment with feelings and intensity, in something so inescapably connected that it cannot but contain the mystery underlining the ambiguity of the image as such. An ambiguity which, from the imagination, extends to images until it invades reality itself, contaminating the semiotic and epistemological musings of the nature of photography itself as a means which, by reproducing reality, can create a sort of self-deception, a retroactive illusion, just like in Antonioni's film.

More than enfolding the mystery of femininity, Giugni reveals it together with the enigmatic sense of the image in the disappearance of the female as an incarnation of reality engulfed by its own appearance, which then reappears anew in virtue of the authenticity and of the prevalence of the inner aspect, summing up this power play within the ambiguous status of photography as a privileged metaphor to depict the world "bizarre medium, new form of hallucination: false in terms of perception, true in terms of time" which swings as Barthes notes between "civilised code of perfect illusions" and "reawakening of inescapable reality".

*Giugni's photography in its compact survey of the apparently dichotomous meanings of the feminine universe, continues with a strict analysis of its fragmentations; of the forces and conditionings suffered by women, and of the ghosts that may be freed. Each picture narrates – even if each is destined to be free-standing – human attitudes to getting acquainted, or removing itself, revealing and obscuring as if in a mystery, inventing alibis to support parallel existences. Life is like a film, someone said, but without the boring moments. A life which includes play next to shaded areas, in the immersion of that borderline, controversial, and elusive place where identity grapples with stereotypes and the power play between symbols. If it is true that "All the world is a stage and all the men and women merely players" as Shakespeare declaimed in "As You Like It", Giugni's photographs sum up the strictly feminine predilection for costumes and disguises, acting out life with seduction and ambiguity coupled with authenticity, that sense by which reality is composed by the ethereal substance of the feminine ego, and of existence itself, which shapes the *deja-vus* of every day life as we live it and as we relive it through the artifice of cinema and photography, "... photographs (...) freeze moments of life or of a society", something which, "contradicts their shapes, which is a process, a flow of time", and as such "the photographed world has the same relationship with the real world that frames have with films, that is inaccurate".*

"Life is not significant details, illuminated by a flash, fixed forever. Photographs are."
(S. Sontag)

The tension between vagueness and veracity, depiction and reality, is what photography shares with life itself. It pours out of each of Gabriele Giugni's frames creating a space for projection and identification, where those who observe integrate their own gaze with that of the author, and where they can ignite both longing and the desire to imagine. A space which places everything under discussion again, where true and false proliferate, where exercising ethical awareness or unstoppable desire is transitory, cutting through gender and identity, as well as social, cultural and sexual roles. The intuition of this opportunity inexorably comes to light like the answer to a problem, as the unassailable proof which relentlessly nails the young photographer in the evolutionary process of his exemplary cross-eyed gaze - sensitive and impassioned, emotional and cerebral - to his clear-cut responsibilities in a promising creative adventure where we are all witnesses.

Patrizia Ferri