

Giuseppe Loy, May 1981.

Introduction to Giuseppe Loy's volume of photographs "Il Mare degli Italiani" created for Laterza's Grandi Libri series and never published due to the death of the author.

*"If I listen I forget; if I see I remember; If I do I learn"* (Chinese proverb)

For someone who for years thought he could use his camera as one way of "doing", in the sense of the proverb quoted above, it's difficult for him to say something about his pictures – set down in time like memoranda on a negative – just when they are losing their inconsequential private dimension (as points of reflection, reminders of faces, object, places, as family album, etc.) to encounter – in an even broader ambit than that of an exhibition – a less "friendly" and specialized public. Aside from the pleasure of seeing them in print, the author believes he is publishing these photographs with the illusion that they may be an aid to others as they have been to himself, allowing him to carry on a certain dialogue with the society in which he lives. Being a book which includes colour photographs – although not much changes in the discussion for black and white – one subject it is particularly difficult to avoid without risking a charge of desertion in the face of the enemy (but especially because it's a pleasure to talk about it), is the one concerning photography's relationship to the arts that, for convenience's sake, we may designate as "sign arts" (graphics, drawing, painting, etc.). But perhaps the solution to the problem lies precisely in the idea of memoranda hinted at above. If you like, memoranda made agreeable in some way or other.

Naturally this is an oversimplified answer, but a necessary one, in our opinion, to keep from needlessly overloading the field with polemics (something that happens with tedious regularity when questions like these are raised). Some reference ought to be made, nevertheless, to that kinship with the unmethodical and "touristy" experience that seems to reach its climax in the snapshot. At that moment in fact various kinds of experiences come to the fore, but the most important of them, we think, are the formal ones connected to certain of our visual habits. Put more clearly, it has nothing to do with seeking in the photographable world the intensity with which one of Antonello da Messina's faces looks out of the picture frame or the aperspective masses of a Paolo Uccello. What it does have to do with, on the other hand, is finding in the little rectangle of a camera – and finding it instantaneously (that's the challenge) – the mass of formal ideas that we have placed over time in an "image gallery", owing to the particular interest we have cultivated (more or less consciously) in the ideas pertaining to the things we see. What we are trying to say is that perhaps something of every artist – every cherished artist, of course – remains in the camera's viewfinder, something of their "basic make-up": swaths on monochrome surfaces, emphatic close-ups or background shots, apparently haphazard details, whimsical tonal inventions, deliberately heavy-handed uses of color – not to mention, of course, certain hyper-realism, directly related to photography.

In more direct terms (taking a timely and precious piece of advice from Emilio Garroni), a certain way of visualizing, which belongs necessarily both to photography and to the above-mentioned arts, without the fields mingling in the slightest either on the expressive plane or on the plane of simple communication. This statement supports a deep-rooted and perhaps irremovable conviction: that it is not necessary to transfer any of the twaddle that goes by the names Art, Fantasy, Invention, Inspiration, Creativity onto the film's surface. It would be very negatively influenced by it. May the God of Images protect us from the various "isms" of painting being carried over onto innocent photographic plates. It's a question, usually, of

“isms” superficially pursued and poorly imitated (a case in point: “it looks like an impressionist painting!”). To return for a moment to the photographs in this book, it should be clear by now that we are tempted to talk about these pictures as mere instruments, which, it is hoped, someone sooner or later will take possession of and draw information and less ephemeral ideas from.

In other words, we think we can say that photography continues to be one of the less mystifying mediums when used to portray certain realities in a direct and honest way. As long as these realities are sought in modest and simple areas as well: respectful and prudent investigations that must often dodge the confused and misleading call of the “grand” occasions that tempt the photographer on his strolls and journeys into everyday life. We have never abandoned this idea, which artists in other and higher disciplines have shown to be true: that the examination of a minor reality may, in the long run, provide more accurate ideas – less bound to fashion, more authentic.

Or perhaps it’s a question tout court of providing ideas, seeing that it doesn’t occur to professional photographers to document certain inconsequential situations. And according to their own respectable logic, they’re right: that sort of photography doesn’t sell. Another subject not dealt with in this note and which deserves greater attention because it smacks of the truth is the pleasure that taking photographs gives. Something of that pleasure ought to be evident in the black and whites of some of these pictures, revealing a sense of irony that perhaps more than anything else has guided the author’s investigation.