



PAOLO SOLLAZZO

Sottopelle

Sottopelle, a photography exhibition displaying the work of the artist Paolo Sollazzo, will be inaugurated on the 11th of June at Gallerja in Rome. After several collaborations with RAI, RCS, and MONDADORI for the realization of photo features in New York, Miami, Managua, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Honduras, Paolo Sollazzo applies his talent to artistic photography; A documentary approach remains tangible together with his awareness of space and concern for the subject, yet the medium is now enriched with new significance. The encounter in 2007 with David Alan Harvey, from the Magnum agency, was of crucial importance to the artist. These are the words Harvey used to describe him *"Paolo Sollazzo is a poet (...) He never stops photographing, and I mean never. What I have understood about him is that his Peter Pan-like personality, his instinct in making use of light, in capturing the moment, and his sense of composition do not interfere with one another. He is utterly free and true to his self. He already stands where others will arrive"*.

In 2015, with the photography book *DISSOLVENZE* - edited by Graffiti - he was awarded the Gold first prize for the 2016 TIFA contest (Tokyo International Foto Awards), and the Honourable Mention for 2016 IPA (International Photo Awards). The photography exhibition relative to the book was displayed at the SMAC Gallery of Rome, and at the Dar Issaf Nashaahibi Center for Culture and Literature of Jerusalem. With *Mongolia - Taccuino di silenzi* published in 2016, he added the Gold first prize for the 2017 PX3 (Prix de la Photographie Paris) to his list of awards. A selection of photos from the book was displayed in Rome at the SMAC Gallery and in the Hall of Science of the Museo delle Civiltà - Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico Luigi Pigorini. With his last photography book, once again edited by Graffiti, with whom he has collaborated since 2014, he was awarded the SILVER prize in the Documentary Category for the 2018 MIFA - Moscow International Foto Awards, and the

BRONZE prize in the Fine-Art Category for best photography book.

His last production, part of which is here displayed in the exhibition, expresses and promotes an idea of art which is not merely photography or painting; what we see is a dream. These photos share stories of fleeting encounters, they represent an empirical demonstration of consciousness, and by overriding appearance they aim straight at the soul; of a person, of a group of people, of a landscape. With *Sottopelle* the *sfumato*, which at times becomes extreme, presents itself as the main feature of Sollazzo's photographic representation, questioning both the idea of sharpness and recognisability. These two fundaments have been considered distinguishing characteristics of photography for a long time, pursuing a relentless realism intended to designate this medium as art of the future. And yet Man Ray claimed that photography's real destiny would not in fact be that of becoming the art medium of the future, yet to simply evolve into a different way of making art; this simple statement unfolds an entire range of means of expression to photography, all of which lie outside of mere practical purposes, pretensions of perfection and accuracy.

This is what the Russian photographer Alexei Vassiliev, who made of the *sfocato* the distinctive feature of his portraiture, wrote when addressing his anti-naturalistic thought: "*What I find fascinating about a place is when it is immersed in implacable light which, by interfering with the surrounding space and colours, makes it almost impossible to decipher the concept of time*". The beauty of the world revealed by the photographer with his aesthetic approach is an unusual one. It's in the most anonymous locations and unexpected moments that the allure of the undefined and indefinable finally appears.

The two concepts which this new artistic vision finds itself questioning are those of *time* and *light*, founding principles of the very same act of photographing. To perfect the exposure and carefully adjust all the different elements in order to obtain the most technically flawless result is seen now as nothing more than the basis for bypassing any documentary intent, and at last for rewriting the traits of these two criterions: *time* becomes dilated and *light* permeates all colours, almost as if choosing which shapes and which shades to enhance, and always dialoguing in parallel with space, and of course with the photographer.

Also Rosalind Krauss took a stand against the modernist supremacy of *vision*. Contemporary theorization culminated in her definition of denial of vision, which directly recalled Walter Benjamin's expression of *optical unconscious*. The *subject* is intended as an effect of the unconscious (according to the Schema L developed by Jacques Lacan) and the act of photographing results in the relationship between the

ego and the *optical unconscious*, whereas the pragmatic spirit of Modernism seems to insist on denying such a concept. Somehow the cyclic nature of history draws attention to this dichotomy once again today: the liquid essence which characterizes Sollazzo's work, definable both as pictorial photography and photographic painting, designates inspiration, the undetermined and instinct as main vehicles of his dialogue with reality. By doing so he reveals once more the necessity of an emancipation from the boundaries imposed by an academic rationalism, a dystopian modernism in the society of the so called post-medial era. The digital hegemony, with its wild post-production and manipulating advertising, more often makes of true vision an instrument for transforming (adjusting, correcting, modifying) reality rather than enhancing it. Paraphrasing Susan Sontag, photography has exalted its role of ambiguous link between the individual and the rest of the world, and by vertiginously increasing the value of appearance it has caused appearance itself to become a model of reference for reality.

The body of works displayed at Gallerja illustrate an alternative and anti-figurative evolution of the photographic medium allowing one to step away from an often forced truthfulness, choosing instead a non-vision which seeks a more intimate verity. When admiring these images, we find ourselves distant from the photo intended with its original encyclopedic significance, from Modernism and from the cold, and at times almost chilling, Hyper-realism, which much has prevailed on the art world during this last decade. In Sollazzo's work the sense of movement suggests some sort of emotional positivism. Photography is here considered as a pure matter of light and colour; the world portrayed by the artist has the possibility of expressing itself beyond the limited criteria of recognizable/unrecognizable, and finally in its deepest essence, alive and in motion. Therefore the focus is not on the analysis of reality yet on engaging and embracing the constant motion of the universe with a loving an optimistic approach.

Inauguration on Monday 11th of June 2018 at 18.30
from June 12th until September 21st 2018

Gallerja

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