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Quodlibet
 Luigi Ghirri
 Niente di antico sotto il sole
 Scritti e interviste

Quodlibet, the publisher of highly selected and often dispersed books, continues his work of reconnaissance of the work and thought of Luigi Ghirri with the publication of *Niente di antico sotto il sole. Writings and interviews 1973-1991*. An indispensable tool to access one of the most important chapters of the reflection on images of the late twentieth century by Luigi Ghirri, photographer, but photographer who has relocated that particular figure of operator of images in an extremely complex function, between the season of conceptual research and the results of the postmodern. The book integrates the texts written by Ghirri that his friend and traveling companion Giovanni Chiamonte, with the photography scholar Paolo Costantini, collected starting from the day after his death in 1992, and published for the SEI editions of Turin in 1997. The title of the collection was taken from the one that Ghirri used in 1988 for a dense article on the landscape published in "Gran Bazaar". In those years, the collaboration with Giulio Bizzarri, then Art Director of that periodical, was fundamental: with him the company of *Esplorazioni sulla Via Emilia* (1986), and, shortly before, *Fatto a Parma* (1984) had been designed and implemented. The first text, 1973, is *Paesaggi di cartone*: a short declaration of poetics that in a folder of 2000 characters clarifies the intentions and perspectives of a very conscious research. *Paesaggi di cartone* was a series of photographs, in color, on the contemporary landscape made up of fictions and artifices: «[...] I am especially interested in the urban landscape, the suburbs, because it is the reality that I have to live daily, that I know best and therefore I can best re-propose it as a -new landscape- for a critical and systematic analysis». From that series he then drew a portfolio, homemade binding, in hardboard, cover with the writings traced with the transferable characters Letraset, the ones that surveyors used - this was his job - for the inscriptions on the ink drawings on the glossy paper. On the cover, a composition of fake slides, actually the cardboard frames of the Ektachrome with tiny prints of images inside, both photos taken by himself and reproductions from illustrated magazines, postcards, etc. Composition perhaps inspired by Andy Warhol's cover for John Cale's *Academy in peril*: music has always been somehow inside his work. Ghirri then donated that portfolio, in the second half of the Seventies, to the CSAC of the University of Parma, founded and then directed by Arturo Carlo Quintavalle. Ghirri

assiduously brought updates of his work to Parma: other poor construction portfolios, hardboard, gummed paper, school stationery labels, and beautiful: *Km 0,250*, *Colazione sull'erba*, the *Atlante* series, other refined sequences of that unpublished photograph, of any space a few kilometers from home until, in 1979, in the Sala delle Scuderie della Pilotta the CSAC created its great anthology, *Vera Fotografia*, an exhibition and catalog curated by Massimo Mussini. It is in that period, in addition to what Ghirri wrote in 1978 for the volume *Kodachrome*, at the beginning that almost coincided with the end of the *Punto e Virgola* editions by Ghirri himself founded with Chiaramonte, Paola Borgonzoni and a few others, and above all with the texts that he spreads out for the catalog of the Parma exhibition, which begins his systematic practice of writing.

The texts that we now find in *Niente di antico...* from pag. 33 on page 63 are cards and minimal essays on the series that he had lined up for that occasion, and in the catalog, they were published alongside the historical-artistic framework cards written by Mussini, the introduction was by Quintavalle. Those series temporarily systematized research, a flow of photographs that in the first decade of his work perhaps intertwined with the work of artists such as Franco Guerzoni (do not miss the narration that he makes of it in *Nessun luogo da nessuna parte. Viaggi randagi con Luigi Ghirri*, curated by Giulio Bizzarri, Skira 2014) building a compact path and infinite combinatorial possibilities such as, to quote another of his works, and also one of his favorite forms of combinatorics, in a *Slot-machine*.

Then a different season opens: the first text is *Introduction*, 1981, published in a section of the catalog of the exhibition at the Gallery of Modern Art in Bologna Landscape image and reality, to which he was invited by Vittorio Savi. The architect and architectural theorist had seen the Parma exhibition, invited him to carry out the iconographic part of the research on the riparian landscapes of the Po. Ghirri for that occasion took pictures from his archive, uses reproductions of photos of others, even anonymous ones (postcards, then the first photo to illustrate her intervention is the reproduction of a famous photo by Paul Strand in Luzzara) and photos taken expressly for the occasion: these are to be considered, these made for Savi, her first commissioned landscape photographers, which was followed by those for Aldo Rossi at the instigation of Savi, and many others.

One continually wonders if there is more continuity or discontinuity between the Ghirri of the seventies and that of the following decade. The text *After ten years of photography* (on page 67, originally in "Photographic Progress", 1982) it seems to answer, as Luigi often did when faced with questions that are basically idle and above all of purely academic interest, in an elusive and clear way. It is a collage of quotations from Hoffmannstahl, Canetti, Novalis, Fieding, Kraus, Lichtenberg, Hobbes – as his readings were branched out but basically compact around a well-defined poetic! – which tells us that the work is made up of many rumors, that the author and his autarchic subjectivity are a laughable myth, just when he is asked to account for its supposed importance. I find it moving how much this posture resembles that of the Nobel Prize acceptance speech by that Bob Dylan so loved and continually cited by the great photographer, how much the lyrics of one of his most recent songs, I contain multitude, could have been written together. in Ghirri. Too bad that Luigi has lost it, but who knows ...

The Eighties for Ghirri will be years in which he writes assiduously, also to clarify his intentions, in particular to refute the idea that many had of

that not famous but very influential photographer who had filmed the geometric villas - from the beautiful neologism coined by his friend Gianni Celati- with the gypsum dwarves like a flogger and mocker of the rampant kitsch. He writes about Aldo Rossi, and then about music, spaces, other photographers, his models: Atget, Lartigue, Evans, Adams, Gossage, up to William Eggleston at the instigation of Christine Frisinghelli who invited him to Graz at Forum Stadtpark, the published on Camera Austria. Eggleston, the New American Topographers seemed to constitute an evident parallel to the research that Ghirri and, soon, his fellow travelers Barbieri, Castella, Chiaramonte, Cresci, Basilico, Leone, Jodice, Guidi, Ventura, had undertaken on the Italian landscape; and this too was a theme on which Ghirri defined paths that were never flattened on the uncritical repetition of models. We find it in his writings, he repeated it in the lectures he gave at the University of Parma and then at the University of the Project of Reggio Emilia where the creator of that strange institution, again Giulio Bizzarri, arranged for its recording, and from the transcription the *Lezioni di fotografia* also published by Quodlibet in 2010. Those conversations with the students proposed with disarming clarity an extremely simple way of confronting the outside to reveal new aspects of it because they are too worn, the how to photograph linked to the why to photograph: to establish a relationship with the world. The texts published now, returned to light - the SEI edition of *Niente di antico ...* sold out and practically disappeared, for years to read them it was necessary to translate the choice published in English by the Mack editions - return the mosaic of an unfortunately short reflection, not much more than ten years, which has changed many fields of seeing. The very notion of landscape and not only in photography, architectural photography which is no longer the image of objects but of relationships, the sense of place and city, without hierarchies between historical and contemporary, between natural and artificial: in fact, everything seen as for the first time, nothing is ancient under the sun.