The *Tempo rallentato* (slackened time) by Nino Migliori

by Stefano Verri

Nino Migliori, born in Bologna in 1923, is one of the fundamental figures of the Italian photographic panorama - and not only - who since the first years of activity has been able to make a deeply original contribution to that aesthetic debate that was taking shape in the 1950’s, balanced, as it was, between the formalist heritage of Benedetto Croce and the new international influences. A fluid and never predictable approach, characterized by experimentation and not by imitation, in which alongside the photographic tales of neorealist inspiration, which represent an original interpretation of traditional photography, he realizes - in the late 1940s - the first informal photographic experiments.

A great mastery of the technique - that allows him to shoot in 1951, *Il Tuffatore* (the diver), an iconic image of the Italian photography - is the driving force of a reflection that goes beyond the image, pointing to the deepest and most intimate meanings of a photograph intended as process aimed at communication. Photography, therefore, is no longer aim but means, a tool that Nino Migliori uses by expanding its expressive possibilities with creative genius, regardless of the trio framing-shot-image. He invented new techniques such as the Hydrogram or the Pyrogram, aimed at giving voice to his own sensitivity, re-using ancient techniques, now handed over to

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history making them the subject of a new experiment, or adapting what is already widespread to his own creative needs, such as acting, starting from the 80's, on just impressed Polaroids in order to give a graphic contribution to the developing photographs.

Experimentation is the element that allows him, during a long career, to avoid Mannerisms or a tautological repetition of the stylistic elements, leading him to use every project to develop and recursively deepen a particular aspect of his reflection on humanity, on Nature, on the perception of time and its flow.

Photography, by its nature, does not lie, but can confuse. Its claimed objectivity relativizes itself in a detail, a particular perspective, a game that the photographer decides to play with the viewer. Therefore a series of glass jars with a composition of conserved vegetables - met by chance in the coffee shop of the Lousiana Museum in Humlebæk, near Copenhagen - become the further stage of a reflection on Nature that began already in the early seventies. In Tempo rallentato (slackened time), (2009) that dissolving effect of time already present in Herbarium (1974) returns, as the criticism of industrialization and consumerism that filters from Natura Morta (1977) a manifesto title for a series that reproduces the first cellophane packages of fruit and vegetables sold in the supermarkets.

Closed in these jars, drowned in oil or vinegar, these still lifes exist in a somewhat imperfect condition, they are

suspended over time by a chemical equilibrium which slows down, in fact, the natural dissolution of matter and while remaining exactly what they are, they transcend, in meantime, their objectivity generating the potential image they contain. An image filtered by the photographer’s eye who with a masterful close-up diverts our attention from the reality of things, bringing us unconsciously into our imaginative and creative dimension. Here the glass of the jar turns into an open window on a mental dimension in which the content loses its objectivity to become something other than itself: an element reinterpreted and changed by the spectator's subjectivity. The sprigs of curly parsley fronds of trees, the corn cobs an entrance, a door, the cloves of cut fennel topped with bay leaves a detail of the undergrowth, while the mushrooms, suspended in the liquid, open to a mysterious illuminated room, apparently, by the soft light of a small window.

Formal perfection, the clarity and the Caravaggesque colors give life to images of extraordinary lyricism, but photography, as we said, does not lie, and neither the photographer does. Therefore the detail of the small curved reflections that highlight the borders of these extraordinary still-lifes, suggests the rounded shape of the jar bringing everything back to reality. An objective dimension that Migliori himself will highlight a few years later, in 2014, creating trompe l'oeil of the object to which he was originally inspired using he same shots now mounted inside large glass jars.