La fotografia come “opera aperta” e specchio del sociale

Ghisi Grütter

Il MAXXI di Roma nell’autunno 2018 ospita una grande mostra dei lavori di Paolo Pellegrin, fotogiornalista associato della Magnum Photos. Nato a Roma nel 1964 pubblica sulle maggiori testate internazionali, collaborando con Newsweek e con il New York Times Magazine. Noto per i suoi reportage di guerra, è considerato uno dei più grandi e sensibili fotogiornalisti del nostro tempo: si è sempre mosso sul terreno della responsabilità richiesta dalla fotografia ogni volta che inquadrò un soggetto per offrirlo al lettore. Le sue raccolte di foto di guerra o di catastrofi hanno un motivo dominante: la disgrazia non è mai palesi, quasi sempre allusiva. Spesso spetta un attimo prima o un attimo dopo l’evento, come fosse un fotogramma estratto da un filmato che chiede, a chi osserva, di ricostruire la storia e di riflettere su. Più che mettere in evidenza la violenza, sottolinea la tristezza: non descrivere la catastrofe, ma capire il vuoto che resta dopo, ne fotografa la malconcia, induce alla riflessione. Le sue immagini sono trasposizioni poetiche di ciò che resta dopo uno tsunami, una bomba o un terremoto. La sua posizione è ben diversa da chi fissa con l’obiettivo il momento della disgrazia e spettacolarizza il dolore, sinceramente di grande impatto, ma che non fa pensare, non permette di andare oltre. Così afferma in un’intervista: «Io non credo di potere cambiare la testa a nessuno, e non è questo il compito che mi sento addosso […] le fotografie entrano in un circuito sociale, cariche di informazioni e di emozioni, acquistano nel loro vagare anche una vita propria, possono incontrare persone e coscienze e far nascere qualcosa. Una fotografia non è un’ideologia che sfruttavi le menti, è un seme: se sposta qualcosa lo fa piano, crescendo dentro chi la guarda. A questo credo ancora,学科 di salute italiana a disposizione da un soggetto che la accoglie e la completa». La foto, quindi, vuole “fermare” l’osservatore, è ‘un’opera aperta” che non fornisce risposte univoche e lascia lo spazio per interrogarsi.

Parole chiave: fotografia, opera aperta, reportage.

Cosi scriveva Umberto Eco nel 1962: «La poetica dell’opera “aperta” tende, come dice, a promuovere “atti di libertà cosciente”, a porlo come centro attivo di una rete di relazioni inesauribili, tra le quali egli instaura la propria forma, senza essere determinata da una “necessità” che gli prescrive i modi definitivi dell’organizzazione dell’opera fruita; ma si potrebbe obiettare […] che qualsiasi opera d’arte, anche se non si manifesta in modo autonomamente incompleta, esige una risposta libera ed in- ventiva, se non altro perché non può venire realmente compresa se l’interprete non la reinventa in un atto di congenialità con l’autore stesso. Senonché questa osservazione costituisce un riconoscimento che l’estetica contemporanea ha attuato solo dopo aver realizzato una matura consapevolezza critica di quello che è il rapporto interpretativo e certamente un artista di qualche secolo fa era assai lontano dall’essere criticamente cosciente di questa realtà; ora invece una tale consapevolezza è presente anzitutto nell’artista il quale, anziché subire la “apertura” come dato di fatto inevitabile, la elegge a programma produttivo, ed anzi offre l’opera in modo da promuovere la massima apertura possibile»1. Dalle riflessioni sulle analogie tra le avanguardie artistiche del ventesimo secolo e James Joyce, la pittura informale, l’arte cinetica e il nouveau roman, sono scaturiti i saggi di Eco raccolti in Operativa. Forma e indeterminazione nelle poesie contemporanee: da una serie di punti di vista diversi è emerguta una visione dell’arte contemporanea – e di altri media – come una sorta di “metafora epistemologica” che procede, con mezzi autononi, a una definizione del mondo affine a quella delle nuove metodologie scientifiche. Questo libro rimane a tutt’oggi un punto di riferimento per una discussione sulle tecniche linguistiche e sul ruolo ideologico delle avanguardie artistiche del ventesimo secolo, compresa la “neovanguardia” di cui è la summa teorica più provocatoria e al

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Photography as ‘open work’ and social mirror

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In Rome, autumn 2018, MAXXI hosted a major exhibition of Paolo Pellegrin’s photos. Born in Rome in 1964 he is an Associated Magnum photojournalist since 2005. His pictures are published on Newsweek and New York Times Magazine. He is well known for his war reports and considered one of the greatest and most sensitive photojournalist of our time: he has always moved on the ground of responsibility. His collections of war or catastrophe photos have a dominant motif: the misfortune is it never clear, almost always alluded. Quite often his pictures deal with a moment before or a moment after the event, like a frame taken from a movie that asks the observer to reconstruct the story and reflect on it. They are poetic transpositions of what remains after a tsunami, or a bomb or an earthquake. Pellegrin underlines the sadness: not to describe the catastrophe, but captures the emptiness that remains after; he photographs the melancholy, induces reflection. Therefore, its position is quite different from the one that fixes with the objective the moment of misfortune and makes the pain spectacular, certainly of great impact, but it does not make you think, it does not allow you to go further. He says in an interview: “I do not think I can change anyone’s mind, and this is not the task that I feel […] the photographs enter a social circuit, full of information and emotions, they buy in their wander even a life, they can meet people and consciences and give birth to something. A photograph is not an ideology that you look at. To this I still believe, I say as a photographer but also as a reader, because no photography really exists if it does not meet a conscience that welcomes and completes it”. The photo wants to ‘stop’ the observer, is ‘an open work’ that does not provide univocal answers and leaves space for questioning.

Keywords: open work, photography, report.
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Figure 1

Figure 2


Il concetto di “opera aperta” può estendersi anche ad altri settori. Ad esempio alcuni architetti, al contrario dei sostenitori della “architettura disegnata”, pensano che il progetto di architettura si possa considerare concluso solo quando, una volta ultimata la costruzione, gli utenti usano l’edificio cambiando dettagli e perfino le stesse funzioni. Un tema di estremo interesse su cui, forse, il grande pubblico non riflette sufficientemente è, infatti, quello della durata delle opere, non tanto della loro resistenza fisica agli agenti del tempo, quanto del loro portato innovativo e del senso e significa- to che un oggetto architettonico ha avuto nel momento della sua nascita, cioè nell’ideazione progettuale.

In un certo senso questa visione umanizza il prodotto dell’arte, che sia musica, architettura o fotografia. In quest’ultimo caso il contenuto di un’opera diventa maturo solo nello sguardo di chi la osserva. A giudizio di chi scrive, un esempio perfetto di ciò che sostenne Umberto Eco si riscontra nel lavoro fotografico di Pa- olo Pellegrin. Nato a Roma nel 1964 pubblica sulle maggiori testate internazionali, collaborando con Newsweek e con il New York Times Magazine. Noto per i suoi reportage di guerra, è considerato uno dei più grandi e sensibili fotogiornalisti del nostro tempo: si è sempre mosso sul terreno della responsabilità richie- sta dalla fotografia ogni volta che inquadrava un soggetto per offrirlo al lettore. Le sue raccolte di foto di guerra o di catastrofi hanno un mo- tivo dominante: la disgrazia non è mai palese, quasi sempre allussa. Spesso scatta un atto prima o un atto dopo l’evento, come fos- se un fotogramma estratto da un filmato che chiede, a chi osserva, di ricostruire la storia e di rifletterci su. Più che mettere in evidenza la violenza, Pellegrin sottolinea la tristezza: non descrivere la catastrofe, ma capire il vuoto che resta dopo, ne fotografare la malinconia, induce alla riflessione. Le sue immagini sono traspo- sizioni poetiche di ciò che resta dopo uno sgu- nami, una bomba o un terremoto. La sua posizione è ben diversa da chi fissa con l’obiettivo il momento della disgrazia e ne spettacolarizza il dolore, sicuramente di grande impatto, ma non fa pensare, non permette di andare oltre. Così afferma in un’intervista: “Io non credo di potere cambiare la testa a nessuno, e non è questo il compito che mi sento addosso […] le fotografie entrano in un circolo sociale,

tural project could be considered finished only when, once construction is complet- ed, users inhabit the building, but so doing changing details and even some functions. As a matter of fact, of extreme interest perhaps is that the general public is not sufficiently aware of, is the works duration, of its physical resistance to time agents, and the innovation and meaning that a architectural object had at the moment of its birth, and also is to say, the design conception2. This vision should humanize the art product: music, architecture and photography. In the latter case, the work content would be con- sidered mature only in the observer’s gaze. In my opinion, a perfect example of what Umberto Eco claimed, is be founded in Paolo Pellegrin’s photographic work. Born in Rome in 1964, he publishes in major international newspapers, collaborates with Newsweek and New York Times Magazine. He is well known for his war reports, considered one of the greatest and most sensitive photojournalists of our time: he has always acted on the grounds of responsibility required by photography every time he frames a subject to offer it to the reader. His collections of war or catastrophe photos have a dominant motif: the misfortune is never clear, but almost always alluded to. Often it takes a moment before or after the event, as if it were a frame taken from a film that asks the observer to reconstruct the story and reflect on it. More than highlighting the violence, Pellegrin underlines the sadness: he doesn’t describe the catastrophe but captures the emptiness that remains after, he photographs the melancholy and induces reflec- tion. His images are poetic transpositions of what remains after a tsunami, a bombing or an earthquake. His position is very different from those who fix the moment of misfortune with the goal of spectacularizing the pain, the certainty of great impact, but do not make you think, do not take you any further. So he says in an interview: “I do not think I can change anyone’s mind, and this is not the task that I feel […] the photographs enter a social cir- cuit, full of information and emotions, in their presentation they could acquire their own life, they could meet people and consciences

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and give birth to something. A photograph is not an ideology to overturn the mind, it is a seed: if you move something, it do it slowly, in the vocal cords, he left the theater to devote himself to painting, drawing and photography. He particularly deepened the latter because he believed that he could provide painters, designers and architects with the basic documentation they needed for their job. Thus, he began to sell his works in Paris, until the National Library of France noticed him and bought the entire collection of photographs. He photographed an unconventional Paris unknown to the general public: with images of working people, alleys, courtyards, circuses, mannequins in the shop-windows, empty chairs outside bistros, families of gypsies and so on. The importance and meaning (mainly posthumous) of Atget depend precisely on the subject of his photos, a ‘real’ Paris that is independent of the iconic places and the classical image of the common imaginary. His photographs are the testimony of urban life in those days, with the alleys and its most hidden corners. In his work appear the people who live in places often portrayed as evanescent silhouettes (due to a large part to old cameras that required long exposure times). For these reasons, his immense documentary work is a very important testimony to the less common, but not inferior, places of the French capital in the first twenty years of the 20th century. Thanks to Berenice Abbott, the assistant of Man Ray, and to gallery owner Julian Levi, a large part of Atget’s archive has become his life partner. Due to an infection in the vocal cords, he left the theater to devote himself to painting, drawing and photography. He particularly deepened the latter because he believed that he could provide painters, designers and architects with the basic documentation they needed for their job. Thus, he began to sell his works in Paris, until the National Library of France noticed him and bought the entire collection of photographs. He photographed an unconventional Paris unknown to the general public: with images of working people, alleys, courtyards, circuses, mannequins in the shop-windows, empty chairs outside bistros, families of gypsies and so on. The importance and meaning (mainly posthumous) of Atget depend precisely on the subject of his photos, a ‘real’ Paris that is independent of the iconic places and the classical image of the common imaginary. His photographs are the testimony of urban life in those days, with the alleys and its most hidden corners. In his work appear the people who live in places often portrayed as evanescent silhouettes (due to a large part to old cameras that required long exposure times). For these reasons, his immense documentary work is a very important testimony to the less common, but not inferior, places of the French capital in the first twenty years of the 20th century. Thanks to Berenice Abbott, the assistant of Man Ray, and to gallery owner Julian Levi, a large part of Atget’s archive has become his life partner. Due to an infection in the vocal cords, he left the theater to devote himself to painting, drawing and photography. He particularly deepened the latter because he believed that he could provide painters, designers and architects with the basic documentation they needed for their job. Thus, he began to sell his works in Paris, until the National Library of France noticed him and bought the entire collection of photographs. He photographed an unconventional Paris unknown to the general public: with images of working people, alleys, courtyards, circuses, mannequins in the shop-windows, empty chairs outside bistros, families of gypsies and so on. The importance and meaning (mainly posthumous) of Atget depend precisely on the subject of his photos, a ‘real’ Paris that is independent of the iconic places and the classical image of the common imaginary. His photographs are the testimony of urban life in those days, with the alleys and its most hidden corners. In his work appear the people who live in places often portrayed as evanescent silhouettes (due to a large part to old cameras that required long exposure times). For these reasons, his immense documentary work is a very important testimony to the less common, but not inferior, places of the French capital in the first twenty years of the 20th century. Thanks to Berenice Abbott, the assistant of Man Ray, and to gallery owner Julian Levi, a large part of Atget’s archive has
been preserved, and since 1968, it has been kept in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Called the ‘Balzac of photography’, Eugène Atget is today considered one of the greatest photographers of the 20th century. The exhibitions and books by Gabriele Basilico (Milan 1944 – 2013) provide an important moment of reflection on urban landscape photography. His research on the boundaries of documentary photography and is an obligatory point of reference for those who deal with photography and architecture today. Basilico, in fact, a photographer much loved by architects, began to photograph in the early 1970s and graduated in Architecture at the Polytechnic of Milan in 1973. He participated with the project “La fotografia come ‘opera aperta’ e specchio del sociale” 5.


Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7

I “luoghi” come background del sociale: Walker Evans

Molte delle fotografie documentarie, per la loro stessa natura, sono da considerarsi “opere aperte”. Le inchieste fatte di immagini seriali costituiscono una sorta di database di immagini che rifletteranno, ragionare per poi, magari, prendere provvedimenti. Ciò può avvenire anche a trarre la fotografia amatoriale o occasionale, fecondando in costante sviluppo grazie alle nuove tecnologie e alla grande diffusione di massa di mezzi fotografici e dei social networks. In tutti i casi, oltre alla sensibilità e alla consapevolezza dell’occhio dietro la macchina fotografica, hanno un ruolo fondamentale la tecnica e la tecnologia, poiché la padronanza della macchina fotografica – sia digitale che analogica – è fondamentale per raggiungere precisi obiettivi. Ad esempio, l’espressività in fotografia si ottiene prevalentemente attraverso l’esposizione, variando la velocità dell’otturatore e l’apertura del diaframma, oppure attraverso l’uso di diverse tecnologie e dei social networks. Gli effetti della velocità dell’otturatore, che varia il tempo di esposizione alla luce, su una foto possono cambiare totalmente la percezione dell’osservatore.
lieve photography always moves around these two elements.1

1. The ‘places’ as a social background: Walker Evans

Many of the documentary photographs, by their nature, are to be considered ‘open works’. Inquiries made of serial images are a sort of database on which to reflect, to think about and, perhaps, take action. This could also happen through amateur or occasional photography, a phenomenon in constant development thanks to current technologies and the widespread mass distribution of photographic media and social networks. In all cases, in addition to the sensitiveness and awareness of the eye behind the camera, techniques and technology play a fundamental role, since mastery of the camera – whether digital or analogical – is essential for achieving precise objectives. For example, expressiveness in photographic images is obtained mainly through exposure, the use of different types of lenses. The effects of shutter speed, which vary the exposure time to light, on a photo can totally change the perception of the observer. A very short exposure time, that captures the instant of the shot, is useful for documenting and witnessing what happens at a precise moment; on the other hand, the use of longer exposure to stretch out the image of the shot is useful for representing the image of the ‘place’. Constantly following the human facts, the work of Walker Evans often sets the subjects in an urban background that reinforces the image of the ‘place’. His work is a social, documentary and photographic commentary of the human condition. His subjects are often the faces of the people, but also the houses and landscapes in which they live. His elegant and crystal-clear photographs and his articulated publications have inspired many generations of artists from Helen Levit, with whom he worked, Robert Frank, Diane Arbus and Lee Friedlander. His 1933 report on the popular uprising in Cuba against Machado still constitutes an exceptional historical document. Evans, who studied in various states before settling permanently in New York, became famous for picturing the United States of the economic and financial crisis of the 1930s. In that period, in fact, he was commissioned, by the Farm Security Administration, to document with his photographs the effects of the Great Depression on the inhabitants of the southern United States, particularly in the rural areas. In 1936 Evans began to collaborate with James Agee who prepared the texts to be associated with his photos in the book Let us now rejoice famous men published in 1941, the result of a trip to the South of the US and to a profound and widespread poverty. As Evans continued his work, he showed the urban landscape more and more, which became a witness. A scenario of poverty and abandonment emerged and the photographs ended up representing the urban condition of the people, whose desolation was reflected in their lived places. Between 1938 and 1941, Evans worked with the Newsyber documentary photographer Helen Levit, who probably influenced him in the choice of subjects. In fact, the famous images that make up the Subway portraits date back to this period. With the help of a 35mm Centex camera hidden under his coat, and using a rather sensitive film for those times, Evans snapped a series of photos in the New York subway of people unaware. Everything was published in a book called Many are called in September 1966, and republished in 2004, on the occasion of the centenary of the New York subway.

2. The solitude of the American province and the ‘non-places’: Gregory Crewdson and Joel Meyerowitz

American life in small cities is well represented in Gregory Crewdson’s photographs. His work is a social document, a reflection on the loneliness of the contemporary society, made more vivid by the choice of places and objects which are no longer ‘places’ of modern human life, but only contours of urban spaces. In this sense, his images also provide a sort of documentary contribution to the analysis of the loneliness that characterizes modern society, and are a avantgarde that is inseparable from the emigration of the human body. A very short exposure time, that captures the instant of the shot, is useful for documenting and witnessing what happens at a precise moment; for contrast, the use of long exposure times to stretch out the image of the shot is useful for representing the image of the ‘place’. In the second case, the protagonist becomes the site in which people and cars are just a contour that makes people and cars in motion become blurred in the image. A very short exposure time, that captures the instant of the shot, is useful for documenting and witnessing what happens at a precise moment; for contrast, the use of long exposure times to stretch out the image of the shot is useful for representing the image of the ‘place’. 7. Cf. Morris Hambourg, M. Roeheim, J.L., Eklund, D., Fineman, M., 2000. Walker Evans. Princeton: Princeton University Press. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, pp. 332.
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by Gregory Crewdson. His research digs deep into common and family life to find images that are obsessive and surreal. To take his photos Crewdson set up a real movie set (as for still life) even though what came out was a single frame. Obviously, this kind of work requires a big team of assistants, technicians, make-up artists, lighting staff, extras and postprodu-
Crewdson are isolated figures, which in their soul, emptiness and loneliness. The heroes of ‘American dream’ that becomes a nightmare.

Instead of climbing to success and social assimilation, they become ghosts of the American unconscious. In fact, the atmosphere and seem to embody the fears and anxieties present in the US, are filled with a disquieting and dreamlike quality and rarefied, the images of Gregory Crewdson...
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can dream’, but what is behind it? We dig into the solitude and find strange situations, people that are borderline. The photos of alienation make us reflect on what actually produces the American society. Joel Meyerowitz was born in New York in 1938 and, after working as art director, he began taking photographs in the 1960s, inspired by pictures of Robert Frank, the Swiss national American photographer. Meyerowitz is one of the first photographers to have used color film. In fact, at the time there was still a suspicion about color in photography, although it had already appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century: technical difficulties, high costs, the habit of shooting in black and white had accustomed the vision to the gray scale. Meyerowitz immediately felt the communicative power of color and turned it into true language. He has collaborated with several important authors – such as Garry Winogrand, Tony Ray-Jones, Lee Friedlander, Tod Papageorge and Diane Arbus – and held photography courses. The 35 mm camera allowed him to cross various cities, especially New York, and to behave like a real street photographer, recording casual events, minimal details and detectors, faces and urban landscapes. Meyerowitz then used a large format until the important work after September 11, 2001, when he was the only one allowed to take a close look at Ground Zero, immediately after the attack. Many of these pictures were collected in the book Aftermath: World Trade Center Archive in 2006. The object of his photos seems to have been inspired by many Wim Wenders films shot in the United States. Indeed Meyerowitz can be considered a photographer of ‘places’. The ‘places’ he observes are often relics of the present or ruins of our time as abandoned drive-ins that do not store memory or tradition, that sometimes have not accumulated time, or are ruins from birth, as motels or service stations near the highways – Robert Venturi called them the ‘decorated shed’ – or the metropolitan crowd – as described by Leonard Cohen in the song Please do not pass me by. Even New York after September 11 becomes a ‘non-place’ for Meyerowitz.

3. The ‘non-places’ in cinematography: Wim Wenders

Wim Wenders was born in Düsserdolf in 1945 and is a contemporary director who seems to use film as a mean to represent the city and the environment. Particularly sensitive to architecture, Wenders has an artistic background having studied painting in Paris and worked as an engraver in a Montmartre studio. In addition to being a particularly sensitive director attracted by urban realities, he is also a photographer of ‘places’. The sites he portrays are not always recognizable. As a matter of fact, his predilection for abandoned areas, for the suburbs, for the ‘other’ city, for the squalor of the ‘middle of nowhere’ and for what is called the ‘non-place’, often makes the places in his films unrecognizable. Nonetheless, his images are precious testimonies of urban and environmental realities that Wenders carefully chooses and analyzes with obsessive professionalism, as evidenced also by his collections of photographs. Each ‘place’ for him contains a story that once happened or will happen and only waits to be told.

His attention to contemporaneity differentiates him from the New German Cinema directors, such as Werner Herzog, Rainer W. Fassbinder and Volker Schlöndorff. He underlines the imbalance and standardization of modern society, describes the crisis of the individual and the reification of human relationships lived within consumer culture. It is no coincidence that one of the predominant themes of Wenders’ work is that of incommunicability and difficulty of articulating language, spoken or written, or current mass media. In fact, the film-director portrays them in his films with images of billboards, radio and television sets, jukeboxes and slot-machines as consumer goods. In some films his pictorial references are explicit, as in Don’t come knocking, in others, it is the American super-realists who suggest both the film cut of the shots and the subject itself, as in Paris Texas or The Land of Plenty. The super-realism manifested as an artistic current in the United States at the end of the Sixties, and in its universal object figures, means of communication and urban landscapes that are borderline. The photos of alienation make us reflect on what actually produces the American society.

Figure 10

Figure 11

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converge and the scenes of metropolitan life or situations without making judgments, simply recording and lingering in long shots of objects, signs and degraded urban situations, without any elaboration and not-affective style.

Essential elements of the super-realist figurative language, both in painting and in cine-matography, are a photographic observation, a factual representation of details, an absolute psychological detachment with the elimination of personal and subjective choices, an overall impression of a kind of ‘presence of absence’.

As the director himself says in some interviews, the shots of the film Don’t come knocking in 2005 bring to mind Edward Hopper’s paintings, their own sense of suspension and loss of reference points. In these scenarios the restless characters of both Wenders and Hopper seem to be perpetually foreign, passing through, in search of their identity and, if they are not stuck waiting in a reflexive attitude, they are traveling in search of something that modifies their existences.

Edward Hopper is also interested in the anonymous life of the metropolis and suburban landscapes and desolate city scenes. His paintings evoke domestic objects, isolated figures and empty streets, represented in impersonal language. Having been born in a small town in the State of New York, he knows small towns well and secondary roads, so that his favorite subject becomes a certain type of urban environment which has been born in a small town in the State of New York, he knows small towns well and secondary roads, so that his favorite subject becomes a certain type of urban environment which

4. Conclusions

The photos often succeed in giving an iconic image: the facts and events, as they can influence the opinion on an event or a character, also based on how they are represented. Beyond the subject/that is portrayed, therefore, in photography are important elements such as composition, framing, focusing, distance from the object and so on. For the composition, in my opinion, a study of historical iconography is fundamental, it will be discovered, for example, that the diagonal that starts from the top left and goes down to the right, is a key element ‘descending’ in the Depositions of Christ and communicates a sense of fall, while all that is in relation to the diagonal starting from the bottom left and going upwards to the right, it is proper to the Ascensions of Christ and communicates a sense of ascent. About the distance from the object represented, it is up to the focal used. For example, Paolo Pellegrin, using mainly fixed focal length lenses and preferring the wide angle, he must be closer than others to the scene and to the subject he intends to portray. Despite the amount of information and news in real time to which we have access through the media and the Internet, photographic images always have a significant impact on our opinion. I would therefore like to reiterate the importance of awareness of the political role that photography has – even those that are taken quickly with smartphones – because the image has an enormous power in the mass communication society.

It is important to provide the glance of the observer with a material that stimulates reflection. I finish by quoting Gerry David Badger, the British ‘apocalyptic’ writer and photographer (to quote again Umberto Eco): ‘Photographers have a moral imperative to not give up and to create documents to explain to people the inhumanity of the human genre’. Photography, therefore, as an ‘open work’ and a social mirror.

un’osservazione fotografica dell’oggetto, uno stile fredo e il più possibile oggettivo, una grande attenzione ai dettagli, un assoluto distacco psicologico dall’oggetto con la conseguente eliminazione delle scelte personali e soggettive, un’impressione complessiva va di una specie di “presenza dell’assenza”. Come afferma lo stesso regista in alcune interviste, “Don’t come knocking del 2005 riportano alla mente i quadri di Edward Hopper, il loro stesso senso di sospensione e di perdita di punti di riferimento. In questi scenari gli inquieiti personaggi sia di Wenders sia di Hopper sembrano essere perennemente stranieri, di passaggio, alla ricerca della propria identità e, se non sono fermi ad aspettare un cambiamento in atteggiamento riflessivo, sono in viaggio alla ricerca di qualcosa che modifichi le loro esistenze.

Anche Edward Hopper è interessato alla vita anonima della metropoli e situazioni suburbane e alle desolate scene della città. In suoi quadri sono evocati oggetti domestici, figure isolate e strade vuote, rappresentate con un linguaggio impersonale. Essendo nato in una piccola località nello stato di New York, conosce bene le piccole città e le strade secondarie, così come il suo soggetto preferito diventa un certo tipo di ambiente urbanamente abbandonato. Hopper pone le sue figure in spazi vuoti illuminati da una luce crude, come nel “Ristorante americano”, per accrescere l’angoscioso senso di isolamento che pervade alcuni anonimi locali. Egli stesso dichiara a proposito dei suoi soggetti pittorici: “La vista di una strada abbandonata sotto il sole cocente di mezzogiorno […] i vaporetti di una pioggia estiva che può colmarsi di una nota disperata […] la desolata tristezza del nostro paesaggio suburbanos”.

In Domenica mattina presto l’immagine della facciata del palazzo e, in seguito, la distanza dall’oggetto rappresentato, essa è in rapporto con il tipo di focale utilizzata, ad esempio Paolo Pellegrin, usando prevalente mente obiettivi a focale fissa e prediligendo il grandangolo, deve essere più vicino di altri alla scena e al soggetto che intende ritrarre.

Thus photographs can be a stimulus for the reflection. Finally I would like to cite a phrase of Gerry David Badger, writer and photographer. “Photographers have a moral imperative to not give up and to create documents to explain to people the inhumanity of the human genre”. Photography, therefore, as an ‘open work’ and a social mirror.
