

Roberta Valtorta "Passing Through", 2001

The central idea of the vast research work which Gioli develops on the basis of a radicalization and, at the same time, an extending of the traditional technique of the photo finish, is that an image is not given if not following a process of 'passing through', of profound and continuous mutation. Only by passing from one state to another, 'by way of' something, does the image manage each time to determine itself in form and attain a meaning. As in the conception of a being, while it moves the face is shot by a camera (also in movement) and registered on a film which in its turn is in continuous movement: the light dramatically propels the image of this face into the 'womb' of the camera: forcing it not to pass through a simple diaphragm, as takes place in traditional photography, not by way of a simple line-slit, as is in the case of the traditional photo finish, but by way of another figure (be this a pure sign, a writing, a tracing, a design/drawing, a scheme or - also - another photograph taken from natural realities or else constructed by man). In this way the face will owe its physiognomy - or better, all of its innumerable and temporary physiognomies - to the figure which in interacting with it literally moulds it and gives it visual consistency: like a trademark it denotes its existence. The procedure that Gioli has established possesses the extremely clear-cut meaning of a process of a genetic nature and the impressive characteristic of a metaphor of birth. At the same time, and coherently, the interpenetration between the face and the sign which acts as matrix makes one think of the importance of a distant memory that nevertheless continues its work within the present, or else of the action of an information technology programme capable of subjecting writing to its inexorable imprint. Gioli's research would appear to incarnate a sort of struggle in the course of which a possible identity - that of the person - colludes with other identities, those represented by the same signs. And yet the new identity which is generated from this dynamic and at times agitated passing of an image inside the other ends up by proving to be unattainable, disturbed, tormented and unstable, constricted within a destiny of continuous mutation. A provisional identity, only present for a moment and ready to set off again, swallowed up by the movement which inevitably continues and 'drags' it away, and also by the sign itself that is like a vortex, an engulfing whirlpool. The gesture, the expression of movement, is the pivot factor of a complex work which Gioli develops around the combined concepts of memory, experience and perception: he contrasts the temporal flux with the action of the signs which like wrinkles that embody meanings impress forms to the face, creating continuous traces similar to an 'existential lived' which is rendered plastic and visible, almost tangible. The same face narrates itself and runs after itself, emerging from the photographic black in various successive versions, the one the genesis of the other, or else its comment or shade or echo or travelling companion. And all of this under the guide of the sign. The images that remain impressed on the flux of the film/existence manifest a profound complexity precisely in so far as they are figures created by figures. Gioli works on the borderline between the sign and the figure, the image and language, which appear to confuse/merge

themselves in order - in a Panic way - to belong to a whole we no longer know has to do with a state of the matter which precedes human existence, whether it regards its dramatic unfolding or else refers to a far-off time, afterwards dispersed.

Exhibition at the Galerie Michèle Chomette in Paris, 7 March - 14 April 2001

(translated by Howard Rodger MacLean)