**The theory of spectres according to Paolo Gioli**

Nadar tells us that Balzac refused to have his photograph taken and to justify his behavior conceived an odd "theory of spectres." In fact, considering that nothing can come of nothing, he believed that the Daguerre process could not take place without a little of the substance of the person photographed first being lifted off and then transferred to a sensitive plate. By constantly posing for the camera, a person ran the risk of being flaked away and therefore of losing one's very substance. There is something of this theory of spectres in the most recent series of photographs of Paolo Gioli. The fragments of sculptures he photographs are themselves the last spectral trace of human beings, gods, or of forgotten allegories. Their image is fixed in the dark room on a sensitive plate, but not one with silver salts, instead with a phosphorescent material. Once the plate reaches a sufficient level of incandescence it reveals a strange image that in its evanescence recalls the descriptions of apparitions of spectres during $19^{th}$ century spiritualist séances. By simple contact, this luminescent image is later transferred to a sheet of Cibachrome paper or Polaroid film. In this case, unlike in Balzac's theory, the objects have not lost their substance through the photographic process. Instead, the pieces of sculpture photographed by Gioli appear revitalized, possessed of a new aura, as if suddenly endowed with a residual light. There is, however, nothing occult in this. If there are any spectres at all, they are simply spectres of light. As for mediums, the only one that really interests Gioli, is the photographic one. And that's because this series of "transfers" of spectres emphasizes the passing of light: the manner in which it is reflected, in which it is transferred, and in which, in the end, it is captured. It is not the soul of these fragments of antiquity that Gioli has attempted to fix, but rather the process of their becoming images.

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