

## DISAPPEARANCES

*When approaching the works of Andrea Chiesi, the most insidious mistake, at least the way I see it, is that of not going beyond surface appearances, where they are the fruit, ostensibly, of a transparent and elemental quality, both declared and manifest, devoid of mediation (if it were just a matter of surface appearances, the only thing for art to do would be to settle among the ruins of history and the dust of daily living). However, to the attentive observer, familiar with Chiesi's work from its beginnings, this transparent and elemental quality is the end product in a complex process whereby a variety of experiences through the years congeal within the artist, and this is what raises suspicions. Consider just two of the leitmotifs which run through his artistic development like a scarlet thread: already in the comic strips, as in the sketchbooks and in his use of the camera (which replaced the notes and sketches), but also, come to think of it, in his current phase, the forms have always had the pace and cadence of cinema – sequences, long shots, pan shots, close-ups and so on – revealing his desire to organize and guide the way we view his work, whether it be cartoon, photography or the pictorial work. I insist, however, that this quality is observable in even the most summary of signs he leaves on the paper, regardless of the medium; the other salient feature being his monochromatic approach, the persistence of a color (or non color) situated somewhere between white and black. These considerations should be enough to help us grasp the direction in which Chiesi's work has been heading over the years, not towards representational painting, but towards a painstaking investigation of reality in which he extracts all of the elements that cause it to drift into indeterminacy, where the play of mirrors and reflections, the geometric interplay of space and volume, structure our field of vision and become the lead players in his drama, dense and multidirectional, where the transparent and elemental quality are the finishing rather than the starting line. Granted, with the selfsame thoroughness the attentive observer will recognize a particular bridge or canal or factory, but then the titles throw us off the scent, hinting at alternative readings and references (Kryptoi, Ucronie, Perpetuum, Chaos) like the dark world adumbrated by flashes in the underground, adding to the remoteness, given that the numbering tells us these works were done in series, created for ongoing cycles, suggesting something epic rather than industrial. Thus, to gauge accurately the distance between these and traditional works, a tradition that is not erased but rather rendered implicit, taken for granted, one only has to think of the brilliant, sunny American landscape of Charles Sheeler, in which the metropolis becomes a model in miniature, and where the "photographic" quality is underlined by the titles (genuine objective correlatives); or else of the phenomenological and rational research conducted by Bernd and Hilla Becher, transforming the anonymous past of the architecture into a comparative analysis of forms. With Andrea Chiesi, the metropolis as universal landscape and existential condition which shapes our behavior and feeds our imagination, creating new stage designs – as well as fostering cultural and social forms – is devoid of nostalgia and emotion, its avowed intent being to shift the objects that clutter the view into a sphere where they become "things", hypothetical, mental forms. It's no mere coincidence, whether we're talking about extras on the set (comparse) or conducting a socio-psychological enquiry, that we tend to use words like disaffected, displaced, uprooted, noun-adjectives that attempt to circumscribe a widespread modern condition. Hence, the title of the current show, Scomparse (Disappearances), ties in perfectly with these coordinates (it also contains the privative prefix), the difference being that the ambiguity is such as to allow us, henceforth, to use it as a rhetorical device, a cliché meaning (precisely) "vanishing points", mindful that the more art clings to the "photographic" instant, the more it attempts to elude the grasp of time.*

*If the uninterrupted global village is seen in the periphery of town, that mutant and simulacrum we know so well, the site on which many of the problems of contemporary life are worked out, loaded with anxiety, uncertainty, conflict, then, once deprived of its human presence, the periphery becomes a non-place, complex and impenetrable, dense with tensions, because the questions Chiesi poses inhabit the void between the ideal and the real world, between the object of desire and the perception of what is, a spacetime so saturated that space and time, ideas and the world, desire and reality threaten to cancel each other out, leaving an undecipherable aftermath which, rather than equilibrium, is a critical phase. "Rigor on its own is paralysis, but imagination on its own is madness", says Gregory Bateson, whose words might be quoted to comment on the precariousness of the viewpoint Chiesi adopts – angled shots, half glimpses, zooms and cuts that have been filed in memory and accessed later with deliberation, despite, perhaps because of, that precariousness. Following Luigi Ghirri's landscape bereft of architecture, and then the hybrid landscape in the work of Olivo Barbieri, perhaps we ought now to reflect on the disappearing landscapes of Andrea Chiesi.*

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