

Andrea Galvani

La deviazione

A conversation between Luigi Fassi and Andrea Galvani, Friday May 7th, 2004
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L.F.

I am very interested in the way you use your images as they contain multilayered meanings. They can be read as if they were a written text. All your recent work is very much inspired by the way writing works. Your photographs and drawings can be interpreted as a complex world of codes and signs which must be deciphered.

You are creating a visual vocabulary in which each tiny detail, each element becomes a letter or a number. These letters and numbers refer inevitably to something which we try to capture. You create a kind of strategy of decalage.

The way you work makes me think of Derrida and his conception of the world, a system in which each phenomenon is a code, a sign.

On the other hand, when you map your imaginary universe, you give contradictory directions almost to signify a simulation of meaning, or the creation of parallel self-generating universes which are welcoming, yet empty, devoid of direction or meaning.

The guidelines you set down in your work take the viewer to an immaterial place where event and actions fluctuate suspended beyond time and space. It seems as if there were a cryptic mathematical matrix that springs these events and actions into being.

A.G.

A sort of universal order informs the project *La Deviazione*, in which there are one or two initial sets. The visual elements which put in sequential repetition are never identical. Whether they remind us of tombstones, houses, computer hard disks or planets, they all look like man by default.

Each unit is autonomous and unique, and also indispensable. At the same time it cannot be extrapolated by the system to which it belongs.

What at first seems clear, hides a complex mechanism built by layers of different meaning which need decodification. Drawings are intended for the purpose of providing the viewer with a further decoding key.

In the specific case in which I reveal an underground maze of connections which is not visible in a photograph, the ducts become graphic elements, architectural drawings, whereas the different units, become rooms which contain images. But this is a trap, a labyrinth without exit.

L.F.

I think your work is focusing more and more on a kind of ground zero, from which you intend to reinvent an entire universe.

I think your work analyzes very closely the ambiguities of contemporary society, where meaning is submerged by millions of images to which we are all subjected

daily. The ambiguity in your work reveals this phenomena as it is based on a system where abundance of information doesn't clarify if there is a beginning or an end to anything.

My question is: does your work point out that in order to have a clear perception of what`s real one must, so to speak, make a detour through the exit sign, what do you think is happening to collective consciousness?

A.G.

Communication today is primarily carried through visual information. The consequence of the rapid growth of visual proliferation means that images decrease in value and are less meaningful. Consequently the imaginary world of each individual is affected and devalued by the humongous quantity of visual information circulating in today so called free society.

Computer viruses, artificial drugs, lethal weapons, harmful ideas can circulate more freely than ever before. This intricate web of criss-crossed exchange produces unpredictable consequences which multiple exponentially.

The great majority of images we receive belong to someone we don't know and are connected to a network. They are the product of a refined strategy. These images become part of our daily experience so much so that they become integral part of an individual's personal identity.

We all have seen images of the Amazons or of the North Pole, whales and lions, but how many off us have walked on the African Bush?

We experience the world less and less with our senses and are convinced that we can control reality through virtual knowledge. The world becomes a virtual clone of itself, a cluster of mediated information.

L.F.

How does memory and experience affect your work?

A.G.

My designed sets and my photographs reveal there is no memory as such. I illustrate a world dedicated to the obsessive act of recording and planning events, where there is no authentic direct experience.

L.F.

There is a fundamental ambiguity in your work about the difference between the outer and the inner quality of your images. I refer to La Deviazione-set 2 livello 0.

Here the exaggerated perspective of the solid geometrical shapes, makes one think of a mourning chamber filled by hundreds of coffins laying on the ground.

If one looks closely at this image, though one can see that these geometrical solids are not just coffins but are cathalists for an innumerable series of other shapes which make us think of other objects, like precious stones, pedestals, mausoleums. What at first seemed a coffin, a hollow shape containing a body, becomes a solid object, a monument, or a building.

Your drawings add other ambiguous keys to read this world: they show architectural openings which could also be electronic portals such as plugs, fire-wire jacks.

Each viewer becomes integral part of your work as he or she will define what they see in your work. They will decide what your shapes mean to them in a very personal way.

A.G.

What I question is not only the visual representation of an idea and its meaning but

reality itself. I am interested in seeding doubt. I would like to quote from Jean Baudrillard's "The Perfect Crime". Here the author describes perfectly the illusory nature of human perception of time and space:

" The only objective illusion is a physical truth: no object in this universe co-exists in real time with other objects. There is no correspondence between the sexes, between the stars, nor this glass and the table onto which it sits. Because light travels in space, when we look at an object, we look at it with a certain delay. This is the intrinsic disorder of creation. The absence of things to themselves, the fact that they don't take place while seeming to, the fact that everything withdraws behind its own appearance and can therefore never be identical to itself, all this is the material illusion of the world. Real time "does not exist as one cannot be completely in the present moment, hence the reality of human beings is always virtual. On the other hand, if we say that in any given moment in time you are in a specific temporal place, you will never be in a moment in time which contains your entire experiences. And this remains at bottom the great enigma, which plunges us into terror, and from which we protect ourselves with the formal illusion of truth".

L.F.

You anticipated what I wanted to say. How would you say the idea of time affects your work?

A.G.

Time is one of the funding elements in my work, particularly because I am a photographer. Acceleration and the lack of direction, is bringing society towards a place devoid of time, a global hysterical space. Time is compressed and artificial. I, on the other hand, look for time's intrinsic nature. I look for slowness which will bring to a natural excision of time. I look for a liquid and expanded time in which past and present coexist. I refer to a concept of natural time, to a universe where there are no artifacts, where day after day nature wakes up to an identical image of itself, unchanged for millenniums.

L.F.

Yes, it is like looking behind one's shoulder and discovering that time is immanent, there is no real progress in space, we have always been in the same spot. There is no competition, only stillness and a spontaneous unraveling of creation. Your work reminds me very strongly of monastic XII mysticism which nurtured the idea that the universe was formed by a subtle correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm.

According to this view of the world, man is a microcosm containing various doors which will put him in touch with each element of the universe. What connects him to the truth is an intricate mesh of metaphysical similitude which tie him to reality. The intricate networks and underground worlds in your work are informed by this way of perceiving the universe, but you seem to reverse the basic concepts of metaphysics and you create a kind of inverse theology.

A.G.

Yes, in fact, in the 12 drawings in question, I create a filmic decalage, on the 0.0 level of the sets. I intend to, so to speak, extend the lines which make up the objects and project them into cosmic darkness. In reality, though, even the most tenuous graphic traces form the sets, reappear as maps to the side of the landscapes. The fact that it is impossible to erase the traces of any object testifies to the impossibility of separating objects from their temporal life's, cells from the individual they belong

to, planets from galaxies. It is the demonstration that it is impossible to say: the end.

L.F.

In your work you create an iconography of death. On the one hand it would be impossible not to catch your intention, but on the other, it is also clear that the theme of death is only tenuously alluded to.

It is as if the metaphysical tension in your work is so strong that looking for a precise meaning to any element in your universe seems futile. I think this is a way for you to challenge the viewers as you ask them to decode your universe where death is a clear theme, death being a taboo subject which is seldom really faced in contemporary discourse.

The way in which you present death as an immanent, almost frozen metaphysical concept, devoid of subjectivity, reminds me of a verse by Milo de Angelis: "death is the perpetual point of departure for unanswered questions".