

PRESENTATION FOR THE EXHIBITION OF PAUL THOREL AND ROBINHEIDI KENNEDY, GALLERIA BONOMO, MAY 1988

PAUL THOREL: "DERIVE"

Through a long and accurate process of the manipulation of photographic images, Paul Thorel conjugates the traditional technique of photography with the instruments for the digital treatment of the images, using the computer as a dark room. Inspired originally by the surrealist movement, and citing among his masters, Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879)- whose impossibility to focus due to an eyesight deficiency became her distinctive work signature- and the Bragaglia brothers who were the first ones to use photography in a non-scientific fashion.

Thorel turns photographic art into an evocative instrument of mnemonic images that only keep traces of the original shots. To characterise his photographic creations, the unmistakable absence of colour, due partly to a particular form of colour blindness, which makes him see nature in a different light. Starting from a simple re-transcription of reality from a photograph, a face, a landscape, Thorel poetically jumps over the threshold of reality to land on what he describes as "photographs by memory".

If initially his creations were the fruit of a similar process called "dream-like condensation" in which the final image was still recognizable because it came from real, existing human beings, his new "photographs by memory" are by definition alien to reality as we know it. In these new works where for the first time he faces the subject of landscapes, the spirit of the research remains the same. To create images that, instead of showing themselves, tend to hide and be elusive. However, through a subtle work of accumulation, stratification and simplification of the original photograph, Thorel reaches the limits of recognition.

With this ulterior step in his own research, he benefits from a larger interpretative freedom, allowing him to enlarge the horizons of his own fantasy by his creation. In front of Thorel pictures the observer turns into a creator, re-activating the process of the metamorphosis of the image so important in the artist's research.

As if animated by an innate discretion, Thorel creations open up slowly in front of the eyes of the observer. They are "prospective images", perceivable from a certain distance, offering themselves in two levels of interpretation: one is subjective, the other is filtered through the eyes of the author. A creation like "Volto di Mezzo" for instance, reminds a sea view. From a close observation you can vaguely distinguish the shape of a face. Thorel's poetical achievements lie in this complex dynamism, allowing us to play relentlessly with the evocative capacity of his images. Animating the sculptures of Robin Heidi Kennedy, we will be able to find the same feeble, calm breath which animates Thorel's creations.

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