

# Guido Guidi

# Photography as Everyday Life

*Volumes 1 and 2*

Inaugural dissertation  
to complete the doctorate from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities  
of the University of Cologne  
in the subject Art History

presented by  
Veronica Liotti

born on 15.02.1976  
in Novara, Italy  
Rome, 11 August 2023



To my mother



Guido Guidi  
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*Volume 1*

*Text*

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My first encounter with Guido Guidi happened in the summer 2018, as I was working at the Galerie Thomas Zander in Cologne and was asked to accompany as interpreter Mr. Zander to Cesena on a studio visit. Guidi and I suddenly established a special complicity not only thanks to the common mother tongue, but mostly to our similar social background. Guidi's not presumptuous attitude both in his behaviour and approach to the photographic practice fascinated me. As he opened the first boxes of pictures, I was impressed by the strength of such humble and apparently simple images. The idea to write a dissertation about his work hit me a few days after my return to Germany, especially after learning that there was still no monograph on the subject. It goes without saying, that my first debt is to Guido for his patience in introducing me to his "world". I am also thankful to his wife Marta Zoffoli and his studio assistant Nicole Marchi for providing me with documents and scans from the archive. Thanks to the photographers and Guidi's former students Michele Buda and Francesco Neri for sharing with me accounts about their relationships with him. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Italo Zannier for the frank telephone talk about his own relationship to Guidi and the impact of the project *Viaggio in Italia* on Italian photography. I am also grateful to Roberta Valtorta for having found time to discuss with me about Italian photography. I would like to acknowledge Stefania Rössl of the Department of Architecture at the University of Bologna for allowing me to participate in the online lesson held by Guidi on 16 June 2020 for the Lab-based Course on Photography I, and for the nice meeting we had in Castelfranco, together with Massimo Sordi, on the occasion of my visit to Guidi's exhibition at Museo Casa Giorgione. I would also like to mention Mariano Andreani for his help with bibliographic materials. My thanks should also go to Charlotte Schepke of the gallery Large Glass in London for the beautiful conversation we had while I was visiting Guidi's solo show *Moon Faces*. I would be remiss in not mentioning the staff of Viasaterna gallery in Milan for providing me with useful information about Guidi's upcoming projects. On the occasion of my visit to the exhibition *Guido Guidi – In Sardegna: 1974, 2011* I had the pleasure to meet Luigi Fassi, former director of Museum MAN in Nuoro, who kindly offered me a free copy of the exhibition catalogue. Special thanks to prof. Giovanni Ferrario of Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore of

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most of all in the conception of the theoretical frame which structures my argumentation. Moreover, my reception of specific topics of photography history and theory – such as the postmodern impact on the analysis of the medium, the importance of the indexical paradigm, or the problem posed by the representation of clouds – was shaped by the reading of Wolf's writings.

I am really grateful to prof. Antonello Frongia for our fruitful and stimulating discussions, and for sharing with me his wide knowledge of Guidi's practice. His essays, interviews, and reflections on Guidi's oeuvre as well as on Italian and American photography constituted an essential source of inspiration for my work.

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Many thanks to my PhD. colleagues, especially Anastasia Khoroshilova and Sara Romani, for sharing with me the ups and downs of these years. After I recently relocated to Rome, I had the pleasure and the luck to find a wonderful and quite place of study in the reading room of Villa Sciarra, seat of the Istituto Italiano di Studi Germanici, where I met friendly and empathic people such as the post-doctoral fellows Costanza Calabretta, Katia De Marco, Raffaella Di Tizio, Giulia Iannucci, Cora Presezzi, and Marta Vero.

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# Preliminary remarks

Guido Guidi is an Italian photographer based in Ronta, a hamlet of Cesena, in Emilia Romagna region. His date of birth is already a bit of a riddle: his unofficial but *real* birthdate is 26 December 1940, but sometimes his biographies report the 1 January 1941. The truth is, that 1940 was the year of the great snowfall (*nivon* in the local dialect) and when Guidi was born, his parents were not immediately able to reach the local civil registry.<sup>1</sup> That is why his birth was registered only weeks later, and officially recorded on the 1 January 1941. Guidi started to make photographs in the mid-1950s, at the age of 15, with a 6x6 camera he had received as a gift from his uncle. He bought a tripod and began to photograph his friends and relatives, aligning the camera in order to avoid any parallax distortion and using a cable release.<sup>2</sup> Although he has worked mainly locally, photographing the surroundings of his home near Cesena or the marginal areas and industrial peripheries around Venice (where he studied architecture and industrial design, and later taught photography), he has also made international experiences in Spain, Portugal, France, Germany, Poland, Russia and USA. His gaze has always been mainly attracted by the so called “architectures without architects”, i.e., every trace left by man, that alters the natural landscape. Nevertheless, his camera captured both the marginal and anti-spectacular areas of the suburbs (documenting the changes undergoing in a former rural and meanwhile post-industrial landscape), and the architectures of internationally recognised masters such as Carlo Scarpa, Le Corbusier, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Alvaro Siza.<sup>3</sup> The present

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<sup>1</sup> Conversation with the author, 26 May 2023: Guidi also told me, that when his mother started the labour, his grandfather – who was a carpenter – quickly built a sleigh out of a vat and riding such a makeshift means went pick up the midwife. The account is moreover recalled by Guidi in his statement published in Giovanna Calvenzi (ed.), *Italia inside out*, ex. cat. Palazzo della Ragione Milan, Florence/Rome: Giunti/Contrasto 2015: 152.

<sup>2</sup> Guido Guidi in conversation with Antonello Frongia and Andrea Simi, in Guido Guidi and Andrea Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada 1980-1994*, London: Mack Books 2018: n.n.

<sup>3</sup> About Carlo Scarpa, see Guido Guidi, *Thinking with the eyes*, in Olsberg Nicholas, Ranalli George and others (eds.), *Carlo Scarpa Architect: Intervening With History*, photographs by Guido Guidi, Montréal/New York: Canadian Centre for Architecture/The Monacelli Press 1999: 205-215; and Guido Guidi, *Verum Ipsum Factum. Il portale di Carlo Scarpa allo Iuav*, Venice: Skinnerboox, 2017. About Le Corbusier, see Rosa Tamborrino (ed.), *Le Corbusier Scritti*, photographs by Guido Guidi, Turin: Einaudi 2003; and Andrea Simi (ed.), *Le Corbusier. 5 Architectures – Guido Guidi*, Heidelberg: Kehrer Verlag 2018. About Mies van der Rohe, see Phyllis Lambert (ed.), *Mies in America*, photo-

study features photographs that are either outcomes of Guidi's personal initiative or were taken on the occasion of institutional assignments. Due to Guidi's method, it is usually quite difficult to distinguish between the two groups of works on the basis of the motif alone, as I will try to describe in this writing.

Guidi is considered a pioneer of the so called "new Italian landscape school", while his work incorporates the lessons about composition and use of perspective by Italian Renaissance Masters, such as Piero Della Francesca, Paolo Uccello and Beato Angelico.<sup>4</sup> Also documentable are influences coming from the Italian Neorealist cinema, from the movies by Michelangelo Antonioni as well as from Jean-Luc Godard and the Nouvelle Vague. A further source of inspiration comes from the American experience of the *New Topographers*, which Guidi contributed to make known in Italy. Since 1970 he has combined his artistic activity with teaching at the IUAV-Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia [Higher Institute of Architecture of Venice],<sup>5</sup> at the Fine Arts Academy of Ravenna (from 1989) as well as at the ISIA-Istituto Superiore per le Industrie Artistiche [Higher Institute for Artistic Industries] of Urbino (from 2009). His teaching led to the spontaneous formation of a school of at least two generations of talented young photographers gathered around him and mainly based in Emilia Romagna and in the Veneto region, Guidi's second home.<sup>6</sup> Among them is worth men-

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graphs by Guido Guidi and Richard Pare, Montréal/New York: Canadian Centre for Architecture and Whitney Museum of American Art 2001. Finally, about Álvaro Siza, see Joaquim Moreno and Paula Pinto (curators), *Archigraphies. Guido Guidi and Álvaro Siza*, Casa de Arquitectura Centro Português de Arquitectura, 17 April – 3 October 2021, exhibition's documents available for download from the website of the museum, online resource.

<sup>4</sup> During the 1980s and the 1990s, the so called "Italian landscape school" took the place of the "reportage school", that had ruled the scenes and catalysed the social and civil engagement between the 1950s and part of the 1970s. It is also called "New wave" or "Nouvelle vague" (about the definition "Italian landscape school" see Arturo Carlo Quintavalle, *Muri di carta*, ex. cat. Biennale di Venezia XLV Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte, Padiglione Italia ai Giardini di Castello Venice, Milan: Electa 1993: 50). As to the notion of "New wave" see Claudio Marra, *La sovversiva normalità dello sguardo. Fotografi italiani di paesaggio negli anni ottanta*, ex. cat., Istituto Italiano di Cultura Montréal Canada, Ravenna: Danilo Montanari Editore 1995. Although the photographers usually associated with this movement never wrote a manifest nor formed a structured group, they worked on similar themes and formal aspects of their pictures, adopting an approach that replaced speed with concentration. For them «observing the landscape took the meaning of a test of the photographic operation, of the experience made through photography. [...] The landscape was no longer a genre but became the outside tout court, and the relationship with the exterior took the characteristic of a journey as a whole, not only adventure of the sight but also of the thought» (see Roberta Valtorta, *In cerca dei luoghi (non si trattava solo di paesaggio)*, in Idem (ed.), *Luogo e identità nella fotografia italiana contemporanea*, Einaudi, Turin 2013, 3-108: 3-5, 11-16; and Eadem, *Viaggi organizzati*: 17; see also Walter Guadagnini (ed.), *Photography. The Contemporary Era 1981-2013*, Milan: Skira 2013: 64). In the following chapters of the present work I return more extensively on this topic.

<sup>5</sup> Between the 1960s and the 1970s the Institute, inspired by the didactic tradition of the Bauhaus, included among his teachers Carlo Scarpa, Luigi Veronesi, Bruno Munari, Manfredo Tafuri, Giovanni Astengo, Italo Zannier, and through 1963 Bruno Zevi (see IUAV website, online resource).

<sup>6</sup> See Roberta Valtorta, *Viaggi Organizzati. Appunti per una ricostruzione della cultura fotografica contemporanea lungo la via Emilia*, in William Guerrieri (ed.), *Via Emilia. Fotografie. Luoghi e non luoghi 2*, ex. cat. L'ospitale, Rubiera: Linea di Confine 2000, 15-23: 18.



tioning Michele Buda, Cesare Fabbri, Marcello Galvani, Francesco Neri (winner of the August Sander Award in 2018), and Luca Nostri.<sup>7</sup>

## State of the studies

Even if a real academic monograph about Guidi's work has not yet been released, especially in the last few years he has been very prolific in the publication of photo-books. Since 2013 he has set up a long term collaboration with the publisher Mack Books of London, that in the end will count a total of 20 photographic books, each dedicated to a specific project and with a selection of images sequenced personally by him, usually on the basis of chronological or geographical criteria – the book *Lunario* makes an exception, since the selection is based on the theme of the moon.<sup>8</sup> Until today, the volumes *Varianti* (1995) and *Veramente* (2014) provide the most comprehensive insight into Guidi's practice, presenting images, that cover a wide time span through a variety of subjects, and different technical choices (with regard to cameras, type of films, formats, colour or black-and-white and so on).<sup>9</sup>

Guidi's name recurs in numerous volumes on photography history, especially by Italian authors such as Italo Zannier, but occasionally he is also mentioned in international overviews – although usually the most recalled names are those of Luigi Ghirri and Ugo Mulas.<sup>10</sup> The authors, who have been particularly engaged in describing and making

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<sup>7</sup> About this younger generation of photographers see William Guerrieri, *Attualità del documentario*, in Roberta Valtorta (ed.), *Luogo e identità nella fotografia italiana contemporanea*, Turin: Einaudi 2013, 193-256: 240-247.

<sup>8</sup> I thank Guidi's wife, Marta Zoffoli, for providing me with the list of planned publications.

<sup>9</sup> See Guido Guidi, *Varianti*, Udine: Art& 1995; and Marta Dahó and Agnès Sire (eds.), *Guidi Guido Veramente*, ex. cat. Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson Paris, Huis Marseille Museum voor Fotografie Amsterdam and Museo d'Arte della Città di Ravenna, London: Mack books 2014.

<sup>10</sup> See for instance: Italo Zannier, *70 anni di fotografia in Italia*, Modena: Punto e Virgola 1978: 159, 163, 180; Idem, *Conoscere la fotografia*, Milan: Il Castello 1978: 56; Andreas Müller-Pohle, *Series – Cycle – Sequence – Tableau*, in: "European Photography", vol. 1, no. 1, January/February/March 1980: 5-27; Italo Zannier, *Storia della fotografia italiana*, Rome/Bari: Editori Laterza 1986, 378-379, plates 191, 280-281; Idem, *L'occhio della fotografia: protagonisti, tecniche e stili dell'"invenzione meravigliosa"*, Rome: La Nuova Italia Scientifica 1988: 41; Paolo Costantini and Italo Zannier (eds.), *L'insistenza dello sguardo. Fotografie italiane 1839-1989*, ex. cat. Palazzo Fortuny (Venice), Florence: Fratelli Alinari 1989: 12 and 21, plates 12-19, 119-120, 173; Alain Sayag and Jean-Claude Lemagny (eds.), *L'Invention d'un art: cent cinquantième anniversaire de la photographie*, ex. cat., Paris: Éditions du Centre Georges Pompidou and Éditions Adam Biro 1989, 270-271; Paolo Costantini (ed.), *Effemeride. Cento fotografie dall'archivio di Italo Zannier*, Florence: Fratelli Alinari 1990: 11, 82-87; Paolo Costantini, *Un'avventura minima*, in Italo Zannier (ed.), *Segni di luce. La fotografia italiana contemporanea*, vol. III, Ravenna: Longo Editore 1993, 145-150; Italo Zannier (ed.), *L'io e il suo doppio. Un secolo di ritratto fotografico in Italia 1895-1995*, ex. cat. Giardini della Biennale, Padiglione Italia Venice, Florence: Fratelli Alinari 1995: 174 (the person portrayed in the photograph by Marco Zanta, *Untitled*, 1992 is Guidi: 22); Claudio Marra, *Fotografia e pittura nel Novecento. Una storia "senza combattimento"*, Milan: Bruno Mondadori 1999: 221-227, XXXVIII (Plate 69); Hans Michael Koetzle, *Das Lexikon der Fotografen. 1900 bis heute*, Munich: Knaur 2002: 182; Roberta Valtorta, *Die Erfahrung der Landschaft*, Ger. tr. Ulrike Stopfel, in Giovanna Calvenzi (ed.), *Italia. Portrait einer Nation*, Munich: Schirmer/Mosel

known Guidi's oeuvre, are almost exclusively Italian, although their texts have been often translated into English. Following a chronological order, the first name to mention is *Italo Zannier*, Guidi's photography teacher and mentor, his first admirer, and one of the most prolific narrator of Italian history of photography.<sup>11</sup> *Arturo Carlo Quintavalle*, with his work as director of CSAC (Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Arte dell'Università di Parma), can be considered one of the most active promoters of photographic culture in Italy, having established significant partnerships with international institutions (especially American), that will favour the diffusion and penetration of American photographic culture in Italy, thanks to the organisation of exhibitions and the publication of catalogues.<sup>12</sup> The CSAC archive conserves a selection of works by some of the photographers of *Viaggio in Italia*, among which 78 photographic prints by Guidi dated 1974-1993. The archive is open to the public for consultation and is accessible online too. Since the late 1970s *Roberta Valtorta* has been writing, describing, analysing, and following Guidi's work, with particular attention to his relationship with the Italian landscape school. She has promoted numbers of institutional projects about the representation of Italian landscape. Her engagement for Italian photography brought to the creation of the huge photographic collection of MUFOCO (Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea) in Cinisello Balsamo that conserves over two hundred pictures by Guidi.<sup>13</sup> *Paolo Costantini*

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2003, 140, 192-197 (orig. ed. *Italia. Ritratto di un Paese in sessant'anni di fotografia*, Rome: Contrasto Due 2003); Stephen Shore, *The Nature of Photographs*, London and New York: Phaidon Press 2007: plate 95; Robin Lenman (ed.), *Dizionario della fotografia I, A-K*, It. ed. Gabriele D'Autilia, Turin: Einaudi 2008: 512; Augusto Pieroni, *Arti fotografiche del Novecento. Lineamenti storici*, Rome: Editori Riuniti 2008: 209, 211; Denis Curti (ed.), *Una fantastica ossessione. L'archivio Italo Zannier nelle collezioni della Fondazione di Venezia*, ex. cat. Forma – Centro Internazionale di Fotografia di Milano, Venice: Marsilio 2009: 14, 19, 161, 184-186, 189, 195, 199; Antonella Russo, *Storia culturale della fotografia italiana, dal Neorealismo al Postmoderno*, Turin: Einaudi 2011: 374, 376, 377, 394, 396; Gabriele D'Autilia, *Storia della fotografia in Italia dal 1839 a oggi*, Turin: Einaudi 2012: 253, 322, 363. The photograph by Guido Guidi, *Accademia di Belle Arti, Ravenna*, 1998 is the cover of the book by Pierangelo Cavanna, *Il miele e l'argento. Storie di storia della fotografia in Italia*, Melfi: Casa Editrice Libria 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Italo Zannier, *Dopo Krims. Il fotoamatorismo inteso come punta avanzata di una ricerca fondamentalmente culturale e sostanzialmente civile*. Foto di Guido Guidi, in: "Popular Photography Italiana", no. 167, December 1971, 34-38 (text and images); Idem, *L'avanguardia di Guido Guidi*, in: "Diaframma Fotografia Italiana", no. 212, March 1976: 21-25 (text and images); Idem, *Guido Guidi. La Lunga Posa*, Florence: Alinari Idea 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Among his writings on Guidi's work, see for instance Arturo Carlo Quintavalle, *Guido Guidi. Album 1969-1977*, in Idem, *Enciclopedia pratica per fotografare*, vol. VI: S-Z, Fabbri Editori, Milan 1979: 2317-2322 (text and images); Idem, *Muri di carta*: 44-45, 308-321 (text and images); Gloria Bianchino and Arturo Carlo Quintavalle (eds.), *Il Rosso e il Nero. Figure e ideologie in Italia 1945-1980 nelle raccolte del CSAC*, ex. cat. Salone delle Scuderie in Pilotta Parma, Milan: Electa 1999; Idem (eds.), *I Mille scatti per una storia d'Italia*, ex. cat. Palazzo del Governatore Parma, Milan: Skira 2012: 163-165 (images), 431.

<sup>13</sup> See in particular Valtorta, *Viaggi Organizzati*, 15-23; Roberta Valtorta, *Stupore del paesaggio*, in Eadem (ed.), *Racconti dal paesaggio 1984-2004 a vent'anni da Viaggio in Italia*, Milan: Lupetti Editore 2004, 11-49; Roberta Valtorta, *Guido Guidi's Open Photography*, in Antonello Frongia and Marco Venturi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. In Between Cities*, Milan: Electa 2004, 172-174; Roberta Valtorta, *In cerca dei luoghi (non si trattava solo di paesaggio)*, in Eadem (ed.), *Luogo e identità nella fotografia italiana contemporanea*, Turin: Einaudi 2013, 3-108; Roberta Valtorta, *Guido Guidi in Milan and Other Places*, Eng. tr. Sarah Ponting, in Corrado Benigni (ed.), *Guidi Guido and Crowcroft-Brown Morgan* (design),

(1959-1997) was one of Guidi's best friends, unfortunately prematurely passed away. His discerning and empathic writings provide some of the most precise and fitting definitions of Guidi's work, often quoted and recalled by other authors. Moreover, in 1987 Costantini co-curated and conceived the exhibition *Dialectical Landscapes*, the first presentation of American "New Topographers" in Italy, that allowed Guidi to have his first personal contact with Lewis Baltz, John Gossage and Stephen Shore.<sup>14</sup> Currently the major expert of Guidi's oeuvre is Antonello Frongia. As student he attended Guidi's photography courses and workshops, today he is one of his fondest friends. It would not be wrong to claim that, at this stage, Guidi does not undertake any new project without consulting him beforehand. Frongia is the author of numbers of essays and interviews, has curated both solo and group exhibitions, has edited catalogues and photo-books (without forgetting, he is one of the supervisors of the present dissertation).<sup>15</sup> Nicoletta Leonardi's analysis emphasises the material aspects of photography, not to forget that a photograph is a real object rather than a mere immaterial image. She not only situates Guidi's oeuvre inside a tradition, shaped by a direct and straightforward relationship with the reality of the objects that populate the everyday life, but takes also into account the photographic tools as essential elements of comprehension.<sup>16</sup> As important source of knowledge quotations from the writings of the just mentioned authors will often recur in my work.

Yet Guidi's oeuvre has received neither the international attention attributed to other Italian photographers of the same generation nor an appropriate academic appreciation. Although the publications dedicated to him are not scarce, they are not always easy to find. Since they are often sold out and unavailable even in libraries, it was important to be in direct contact with him in order to have access to his private archive and to all the necessary documentation. Aim of my research is to subsume in one single study the various, scattered, and mostly non-academic reflections on Guidi's work, with the purpose to introduce his oeuvre into the academic discourse by means of a unitary overview, that

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*Guidi Guido, Cinque Viaggi (1990-1998)*, ex. cat. Complesso Monumentale di Astino Bergamo, London: Mack books 2021, 139-144.

<sup>14</sup> See Paolo Costantini, Silvio Fuso and Sandro Mescola (eds.), *Nuovo paesaggio americano. Dialectical Landscapes*, ex. cat., Palazzo Fortuny, Venice, 11 April – 19 July 1987, Milan: Electa 1987. Guidi was one of the fondest supporters of the exhibition, born from intense and passionate intellectual and bibliographic exchanges between him and Costantini, started at the end of the 1970s. See Antonello Frongia, *La fiaba e la precisione: la mostra Nuovo paesaggio americano/ Dialectical Landscapes (1987)*, in: "Rivista Di Studi Di Fotografia/Journal of Studies in Photography", no. 5, 2019, 54–77: 71). See also Paolo Costantini, *Percepire le differenze*, in "Fotologia", n. 5, Summer/Fall 1986: 80-82; Idem (ed.), *Guido Guidi. Rubiera. Laboratorio di fotografia 1*, Eng. tr. Antonello Frongia, Reggio Emilia: Linea di confine 1989.

<sup>15</sup> See for instance: Antonello Frongia, *Quello che resta*, in: "Dialoghi internazionali", no. 6, December 2007: 152-165 (text and images); Idem, *Il paesaggio che guarda me. Conversazione con Guido Guidi*, in: "L'uomo nero. Materiali per una storia delle arti della modernità", year IX, no. 9, December 2012: 392-415 (text and images); Idem, *Guido Guidi Interview*, Eng. tr. Marguerite Shore, in: "Aperture", no. 220, Fall 2015: 50-63 (text and images).

<sup>16</sup> See in particular: Nicoletta Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*, Milan: Postmedia 2013: 14-16, 81, 83.

hopefully will achieve international resonance. The concept of everyday life is the lens through which I propose my interpretation of his approach to photography. As far as I know this is the first monograph about him. To facilitate the comparison of images belonging to different periods of his life, my work follows a thematic structure rather than a chronological one. Most of the photographic material I present has been already published in books or magazines, nevertheless it has not yet been included in a comprehensive analysis covering such a broad period and variety of subjects.

## The archive in Ronta

Guidi's archive and studio is located on the ground floor of his parents' house – today his own – in the countryside of Cesena. As I started my project in 2019, I received from his wife Marta the results of a survey of 2017, according to which the archive should have included approximately the following items:

- 8.032 contact sheets (from b/w and colour negatives formats 120 or 135);
- 24.850 plates (from b/w and colour negatives format 10x12, 13x18, and 20x25);
- 21.600 slides (colour, format 135).<sup>17</sup>

Then, in 2020, Cesena Municipality announced the beginning of the campaign of cataloguing and digitisation of the archive, estimating a volume of circa 113 thousand photographic items, including negatives and positives.<sup>18</sup> Already in 2013, after the solo exhibition *Cinque paesaggi [Five landscapes]* organised by ICCD-Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione [Central Institute for Cataloguing and Documentation] in Rome, its former director, Laura Moro, solicited institutional subjects in Cesena to start the inventory. Unfortunately, her call found no answer until 2020, after she accepted the direction of the former Ibacn-Istituto per i beni artistici, culturali e naturali della Regione Emilia-Romagna [Institute for the Artistic, Cultural and Natural Heritage of the Emilia Romagna Region] in Bologna. Ibacn led the project together with Cesena Municipality and each institution contributed with a budget of 60 thousand Euros. Although the target was to finish the work in one year, today (2023) after over two years, the work is still on-going: only black-and-white negatives from 1959 through 1989 have been acquired in the database.<sup>19</sup>

Negatives and positives by Guidi are present in the collections of: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Bibliothèque National and Centre Pompidou, Paris; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin; ICCD in Rome; CSAC-Centro Studi e Archivio

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<sup>17</sup> Email from Marta Zoffoli, 9 October 2019.

<sup>18</sup> See Comune di Cesena, *Al via la digitalizzazione dell'archivio fotografico del maestro Guido Guidi*, 16 September 2020, online resource.

<sup>19</sup> Conversation with the author, 25 May 2023.

della Comunicazione in Parma; MUFOCO-Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea in Cinisello Balsamo (Milan); Fondation A Stichting in Brussels; Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal, and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.<sup>20</sup> Guidi's work is currently represented by the galleries Large Glass in London and Viasaterna in Milan.

Because of his reserved and humble character and of the fact that he lives and works in a peripheral area, Guidi's artistic career has developed quite slowly. In recent years, however, it seems that critics are discovering him and even some major museums dedicated him solo shows (see Appendix 1).

Since Guidi does not speak any foreign language, to undertake my research project it was fundamental to speak fluently Italian to communicate with him. During the writing of the present work, I visited him six times in his studio, and we spoke several times on the phone. Unfortunately, unexpected tragic events such as the pandemic in 2020-2021 – that for a long time imposed the avoidance of personal contact, especially with vulnerable people like Guidi – and the recent regional flood in 2023 made my visits to the archive more difficult. Thus, the envisioned systematic survey on site in the archive had to be narrowed down, in favour of a research largely based on already published material. In so doing, sometimes the sense of processuality of the making might have get lost, because the pictures featured in book have been already pre-selected, declared appropriate for showing, so to say.<sup>21</sup> As Alan Sekula pointed out, «in an archive, the possibility of meaning is liberated from the actual contingencies of use», whereas,

«the specificity of “original” use and meaning can be avoided, and even made invisible, when photographs are selected from an archive and reproduced in a book».<sup>22</sup>

The archive conserves everything, as Guidi explains, not only final drafts, but also rough drafts, «copies that are bad today but might be beautiful in the future, and vice versa».<sup>23</sup> From time to time you take something from the archive with the consciousness, that what you are choosing today is the outcome of a momentary decision, and therefore it is inevitably provisional. The archive, unlike the museum or the book, preserves the whole path,

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<sup>20</sup> See Large Glass gallery's website, online resource.

<sup>21</sup> Antonello Frongia observes that in comparison to painters or writers, photographers produce a lot more material than that, that reaches the public through exhibitions and publications. Those display just the results of a selection, sometimes imposed by various practical reasons (see Frongia, *Il paesaggio che guarda me*: 392-393).

<sup>22</sup> Allan Sekula, *Photography Between Labour and Capital*, in Leslie Shedden, *Mining Photographs and Other Pictures 1948-1968*, Halifax, Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design 1983, 193-295: 194.

<sup>23</sup> In Antonello Frongia and Laura Moro, *Topografie del paesaggio e dell'archivio. Una conversazione con Guido Guidi/Topography of the Landscape and of the Archive. A Conversation with Guido Guidi*, Eng. tr. Mark J. Newman, in Frongia Antonello and Moro Laura (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Cinque paesaggi, 1983-1993*, Rome: Postcart/ICCD 2013, 100-105: 105.

«the entire process of the operational nature of the photographer's work, which is the most important thing».<sup>24</sup> Guidi regrets not to have conserved everything: for instance, he has lost his negatives of the 1950s. Often, when he looks for something in the archive he feels discouraged. Unfortunately, he admits, he was always too busy to take care of the archive.<sup>25</sup> Generally speaking, the archive produced by a photographer is a «labyrinthine involuntary text» created through the everyday accumulation of negatives, annotations, tests, print proofs, paste-ups and so on.<sup>26</sup> Personally, I regret not to have had the chance to spend more time in Guidi's archive, discovering more unpublished materials for my work. Apart from the just mentioned general difficulties, I had to accept his reluctance in showing the content of his boxes, due perhaps to an agreement with the publishing house. However, I am glad to include 17 still unpublished pictures catalogued at the end of the list of plates in volume 2.

## Guidi's everyday life: the archive and the yard

In *Mal d'archive*, Jacques Derrida observes that the word archive contains the root *arkhé*, which means not only *commencement* but also *commandement*. The archive – a place where things begin and receive an order – derives its sense from the Greek *arkheion*: «d'abord une maison, un domicile, une adresse, la demeure des magistrats supérieurs, les archontes, ceux que commandaient».<sup>27</sup> By virtue of the authority, conferred to them, the archons store in their house the official documents. The archive takes place «dans cette domiciliation, dans cette assignation à demeure».<sup>28</sup> The house is the place, that houses the archive. There it happens the institutional passage from private to public, as to say, «du secret au non-secret».<sup>29</sup> A scene of *domiciliation* becomes at the same time visible and invisible, because the archive gives shelter while immediately conceals itself.<sup>30</sup>

Just like the house of the archons, Guidi's house houses his archive: it is a private place, that at times acquires a public function. Thus it is precisely the place where private and public melts. As just mentioned, Guidi himself prefers to preserve a bit of mystery, and shows with reluctance the content of the boxes in his atelier. In a way that is quite understandable, since for him opening those boxes – containing both his achievements

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> See Laura Gasparini, *Una conversazione / Guido Guidi. Prendere contatto con le cose*, in "Doppiozero", 8 November 2017, online resource.

<sup>26</sup> See Antonello Frongia, *Il luogo e la scena: la città come testo fotografico*, in Roberta Valtorta (ed.), *Luogo e identità nella fotografia italiana contemporanea*, Turin: Einaudi 2013, 109-192: 143.

<sup>27</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Mal d'archive. Une impression freudienne*, Paris: Éditions Galilée 1995: 11.

<sup>28</sup> Ivi: 13.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ivi: 14.

and failures, images from his professional career mixed with those of his private life – is equivalent to lay bare. Today, due to his age, he travels even less than before, so the archive has really become his everyday life. He lives in it, among boxes of negatives, prints, catalogues. There he has his desk, where he sits in front of guests who come round. He moves slowly and handles with great care the photographic material he lays on the table with prudence. In the end, the boxes he opens are always the same, a few among many, mostly containing already published pictures. On the myriad of other boxes, he keeps a kind of secret, which he only breaks in exceptional cases.

Recognising the impossibility to describe an archive in its totality, Michel Foucault suggested that the analysis of the archive involved a privileged region near us, but distinct from our actuality.<sup>31</sup> I will call *Guidi's everyday life* the «région privilégiée»<sup>32</sup> of my research – meaning both a concrete and a theoretical “region” –: the concept of *everyday life* will select and highlight a portion from the space continuum of Guidi's corpus of works. Of course, speaking of Guidi's everyday life, the image of his *yard* comes immediately into mind: an ordinary not spectacular, but familiar place that provided the subject and the setting for many of his photographs. Reflecting on his own experience as photographer, Robert Adams admits: «Days of searching can go by without any need to reload film holders, and then abruptly, sometimes back in their own yards, photographers use up every sheet».<sup>33</sup> The *yard*, surrounding Guidi's house, hides and protects the archive, thanks to the guard of the tame barking dog, and to the lush, wild vegetation – he himself is too old to take care of the garden, and thus nobody harvest the persimmons, that fall down by the hundreds from the trees, and rot in the field. He still photographs his own yard as exercise, not to stop photographing, even if he is tired. The yard provides him with a constant source of provisional pictures, to train for the time when he would have to “truly photograph” again. But then, he corrects himself: all his pictures are actually provisional, attempts still in need to be completed, be made differently.<sup>34</sup>

In my argumentation, I recognise moreover a *methodological yard*. Such yard means for Guidi the acceptance of photography medium specificity, which leads him on the one hand to operate respecting the limits of his working tools, letting the instrument guide him, without imposing his will on it – which is his “credo”:

«The strength of a good photographer is to allow himself to be led and mastered by his instrument. Similarly, Galileo said, “the telescope tells me this”. If you master

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<sup>31</sup> Michel Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir*, Paris: Gallimard 1969, 171-172.

<sup>32</sup> Ivi: 172.

<sup>33</sup> Robert Adams, *Why People Photograph. Selected Essays and Reviews*, New York: Aperture 1994: 16.

<sup>34</sup> Conversation with the author, 26 May 2023.

chemistry, you lead it to do what you want, which is not exactly what the instrument can do with its potential, which continues to elude us».<sup>35</sup>

On the other hand, the recognition of medium specificity signifies to agree with a conception of photography as *photography itself*, as to say, the assumption – shared by artists such as Walker Evans or Lee Friedlander, and curators such as John Szarkowski –, that «there really is such a thing as photography».<sup>36</sup>

Finally, mixing together the conceptual idea of the yard with its concrete form, the consideration of Guidi's approach to the yard – intended as a portion of terrain made of soil, earth, dirt and humus – will bring me to define as *ethos of looking down* his attitude to exclude the sky from his pictures, in favour of the ground. As we will see in the last chapters of the present work, Guidi is indeed a man faithful to immanence and contingency. He is anchored to the ground, literally through the legs of his camera tripod, and ethically through an empirical, materialistic approach, that tend to avoid metaphysics, giving rather space to the ordinary, the marginalised and the deprecated (like garbage or mud).<sup>37</sup> To say it with the words of one of Guidi's favourite writers: «On ne peut pas rester toujours sur les sommets, il faut redescendre...».<sup>38</sup>

## Methodological note: medium specificity and everyday life

My aim was to concentrate my research on the specific concept of the everyday, which I consider one of the most suitable interpretative keys to investigate Guidi's oeuvre as a whole, with the purpose to comprehend its theoretical, aesthetical and technical structures – as I will explain later in the *Introduction*. For this reason, I privileged publications and works most closely related to Guidi's everyday life, while devoting less attention to those more eccentric to the core of my studies, as to say, all the projects about contemporary architects – Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, Scarpa, Álvaro Siza – or unusual subjects –

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<sup>35</sup> Guido Guidi, *Lunario*, London: Mack 2019: 102.

<sup>36</sup> John Szarkowski in conversation with Jaren Liebling (see Maren Stange, *Photography and the Institution: Szarkowski at the Modern*, in "The Massachusetts Review", vol. 19, no. 4, Winter 1978, 693-709: 697). For instance, Guidi appreciates the book *The Photographer's Eye* by Szarkowski (1966) (see Frongia, *Quello che resta*: 160; and John Szarkowski, *The Photographer's Eyes*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art 1966). About the different conceptions of photography as medium see Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire. The Conception of Photography*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: The MIT Press 1999.

<sup>37</sup> See below, chapter 5 (*Waste*) and chapter 6 (*Humus*).

<sup>38</sup> René Daumal, *Le Mont Analogue*, Paris: Gallimard 1952, 200.



such as the bunkers of the *Atlantic Wall* for instance.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, if you were to approach even those “out of the ordinary” works by adopting the categories of the photographic grammar of the everyday, that I am proposing for my study, you would eventually end up discovering in them the same attitude, that characterises other more “ordinary” subjects: the attention to seemingly marginal details and imperfections – a stain on a wall, a piece of rubbish, small traces of rust –, the lack of celebratory emphasis, the insistence and repetition of the same image with minimal variations, the use of sequences to document the passage of time – through the changing shapes of light and shadow –, and above all, the ethos to favour concreteness over abstraction. As a matter of fact, in a recent interview Guidi claims, that in Siza and Scarpa he appreciates their tactile relationship with matter (wood, sand, cement, stone). In their architectures, he perceives, they feel the thickness of the material, which brings their working method closer to craftsmanship. As he often repeats, having grown up in a family of carpenters, he has developed an acute sense for materiality.<sup>40</sup>

As just mentioned, his archive is immense, comprising more than 100 thousand photographic objects only in part organised. He himself recognises that his own memory sometimes is not good enough to put order in such heterogeneous material: «I am not methodical. Despite the apparent chaos, my archive seems to be ruled by a complex order which I wishfully think to have under control».<sup>41</sup> Confronted with such impossibility of completeness, it was fundamental to find a criterion of selection. My criterion arose from the combination of three factors:

medium specificity > Guidi’s practice < everyday life theories

Better said, the criterion is based on the intent to bring into focus what I called “Guidi’s method”: as to say his peculiar way of conceiving and practicing photography as an act performed every day and on everyday materials, profoundly anchored into the boundaries of medium specificity.

My narration is image based, in the sense that it starts from the images and follows concatenations of images, which include jumps, cuts, montages, harrowing connections.<sup>42</sup> Even though I sometimes compare works, that are very distant in terms of time and space,

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<sup>39</sup> See Guido Guidi, *Bunker Along the Atlantic Wall*, Milan: Electa 2006.

<sup>40</sup> Guido Guidi in conversation with Joaquim Moreno and Paula Pinto, *Exposição Arquigrafias: Em Conversa Guido Guidi e Álvaro Siza*, Casa de Arquitectura Matosinhos, Portugal 24-27 February 2021, online resource.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Benedetta Cestelli Guidi, *Guido Guidi, photographer*, in: “Leporello photobooks et al.”, online resource.

<sup>42</sup> I cannot deny my debt to John Berger’s method of analysis, see in particular: John Berger, *Understanding a Photograph* (1967), London: Penguin Books 2013; and John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (1972), London: Penguin Books 2008.

the majority of the selected pictures depict areas in the surroundings of Guidi's home or near to the places where he has worked as teacher. They respect a sort of spatial unity, that comprehends the province of Cesena, Ravenna, Venice, and Treviso – with few detours in Milan, Sardinia, and Europe (Spain, France, Germany, Poland, and Russia). Likewise, most pictures are dated 1970s-1980s, because during those years Guidi was still searching for his own voice, experimenting a lot with the possibilities provided by the medium – how the tools react to different situations and to the actions he performed – and reasoning about its intrinsic characteristics.

Often, I will resort to a comparative method of description, not only by confronting his pictures to those of other photographers, but also his working method to that of writers or thinkers. Notwithstanding the use of a comparative method entails a risk, the latter is the normal hazard involved in any relationships between subjects, as Franco La Cecla claims.<sup>43</sup> Mostly I will call into cause figures who Guidi himself has already acknowledged among his sources of inspiration, but sometimes I will propose original comparisons with authors who either adopt a similar or opposite way of thinking, or were active in analogous places, periods, or contexts.

The dissertation structure consists of two parts. In the first one, called “photographic grammar”, I study Guidi's work on the basis of categories, that define photography medium specificity, read in the light of the unifying concept of the “everyday”. To borrow the opening words from Kracauer's *Theory of Film*: «This study rests upon the assumption that each medium has a specific nature which invites certain kinds of communications while obstructing others».<sup>44</sup> I am aware, that the emphasis on medium peculiarities may give rise to various objections – such as, that since the properties of a medium elude any concise definition «it is inadmissible to postulate such properties and use them as a starting-point for analysis».<sup>45</sup> Even if the properties of photography are quite specifically defined since its origin, and have not undergone any substantial change in the course of the medium history, the discussion about which of them defines exactly photography specificity remains open. The four categories that I am adopting in the present work, drawn on a combination of definitions formulated by different authors such as Philippe Dubois, Rosalind Krauss, John Szarkowski and Clément Chéroux, are: “Framing”, “Repetition”, “Index”, and “Mistake”. On these four categories I base my analysis of Guidi's photographic grammar.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See Franco La Cecla, *Il Malinteso. Antropologia dell'incontro*, Rome: Meltemi 2022: 16.

<sup>44</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film. The Redemption of Physical Reality (1960)*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1997: 3.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> See Philippe Dubois, *L'acte photographique*, Paris/Bruxelles: Fernand Nathan/Editions Labor 1983; Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modern Myths*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: The MIT Press 1986; and Idem, *Le Photographique. Pour une*

The second part of the thesis focuses on what I call Guidi's ethos, as to say, how his vision of the world is reflected – more or less consciously – by his choices: what and how to photograph. The two categories – in which everyday theories and photographic practice meet – are “Waste” and “Humus” – two everyday materials, that figure among the most recurring subjects of Guidi's photographs. Both in the first and in the second part, the choice of the categories has privileged *quer* concepts, that do not fragment or segment the observation, but offer an overview by crosscutting the whole of Guidi's oeuvre.

## Conceptual references

In addition to the fundamental references for any writing that aims to discuss the photographic act in relation to the everyday and as a practice of every day – authors such as Roland Barthes or Pierre Bourdieu –, among more eccentric theoretical references often mentioned by Guidi, which I will also adopt in the present dissertation, there are: photographers such as Robert Adams and Lewis Baltz, both present through their writings and their photographic works; the art historian Daniel Arasse, an author very appreciated and read by Guidi;<sup>47</sup> the historian Carlo Ginzburg, often quoted by Guidi, especially with respect to the essays collection *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*;<sup>48</sup> Italian writers Carlo Emilio Gadda and Daniele Del Giudice, and the French Daniel Daumal and Marcel Schwob. Further sources of inspiration arrive to Guidi from the Neorealist milieu, in particular Cesare Zavattini, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Michelangelo Antonioni.

There are other authors, that I will often recall, although they do not strictly belong to Guidi's cultural background. Walter Benjamin's thought, for instance, appears several times in different chapters, not only by virtue of his fundamental role for both photography theory and everyday studies of course, but also because some of his reflections – even those not strictly concerning the medium – have provided me with essential research tools, useful to read, comprehend, and describe Guidi's oeuvre. Another (literary) refer-

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*Théorie des Ecart*s, Fr. tr. Marc Bloch and Jean Kempf, Paris: Editions Macula 1990; Szarkowski, *The Photographer's Eye*, cit.; Clément Chéroux, *Fautographie. Petite histoire de l'erreur photographique*, Paris: Éditions Yellow Now 2003.

<sup>47</sup> Guidi's library includes Daniel Arasse, *Le Détail. Pour une histoire rapprochée de la peinture*, Paris: Flammarion 1992 (It. tr. Aurelio Pinto, *Il dettaglio. La pittura vista da vicino*, Milan: Il Saggiatore 2007); Idem, *Le sujet dans le tableau. Essais d'iconographie analytique*, Paris: Flammarion 1997 (It. tr. Federico Leoni, *Il soggetto nel quadro. Saggi d'iconografia analitica*, Pisa: ETS 2010); Idem, *L'Annonciation italienne. Une histoire de perspective*, Paris: Hazan 1999 (It. tr. *L'annunciazione italiana. Una storia della prospettiva*, Florence/Lucca: La Casa Usher 2009); Idem, *On n'y voit rien: Descriptions*, Paris: Denoël 2005 (It. tr. Antonella Dell'Araccia and Andrea Robino, *Non si vede niente. Descrizioni*, Rome: Artemide 2005); Idem, *Le Portrait du Diable*, Paris: Les éditions Arkhê 2010 (It. tr. Anna Trocchi, *Il ritratto del diavolo*, Milan: Nottetempo 2012); Idem, *Histoire de peintures*, Paris: Denoël 2006 (It. tr. Frédéric Ieva *Storie di pitture*, Turin: Einaudi 2014).

<sup>48</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, *Miti, Emblemi, Spie. Morfologia e Storia*, Turin: Einaudi 1986.

ence that will return often in my argumentation is Samuel Beckett. Once again, this is not a source directly present in Guidi's theoretical panorama, nevertheless, his writings have contributed to shorten the distance between art and everyday life. Moreover, it must not be forgotten, that one of Guidi's favourite author is Carlo Emilio Gadda, whose work has already been compared to Beckett's by literary critics. Unfortunately, I do not have the chance to widely discuss this matter here, yet some analogies, shared by both authors in their writing style and approach to their works, are surprisingly attuned to some of Guidi's attitude – for instance: the use of variations of the same and repetitions; the tendency to leave the projects unfinished, or better said, open; the attention for concrete aspect of reality, especially earth, soil, mud; a sort of annoyance towards intentional symbolism, often ascribed a posteriori by the reader/observer.<sup>49</sup> Finally, quotations from novels and essays by Italo Calvino will not lack. Guidi himself sometimes has quoted him, but most of all Paolo Costantini has often commented Guidi's work through passages from Calvino's writings.<sup>50</sup> Of course, there is no need to explain why Calvino is an essential reference for Italian culture, but in the specific frame of the present work, I shall remember: his proximity to Neorealism, his ability to describe everyday life photographically, his inclination for an empirical and materialistic thought, always offering foreseeing food for thought – as the discourse about waste, developed in the second to last chapter of the thesis will prove – his attention for apparently marginal phenomena or negligible details of the existence, and his talent for making writing appear as an everyday practice – like Guidi does with photography.

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<sup>49</sup> About the comparison between Gadda and Beckett, see for instance Katrin Wehling-Giorgi, *Gadda and Beckett: Storytelling, Subjectivity and Fracture*, Oxon, Abingdon, Great Britain and New York: Legenda – Modern Humanities Research Association and Routledge 2017.

<sup>50</sup> For instance, Guidi quotes an excerpt from Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press 1993: 70-71 as exergue in Guido Guidi (ed.), *Un resoconto*, Venice: Università IUAV 2007.

# Introduction.

## Everyday life as key concept

«Watt learned [...] to accept that nothing had happened, that a nothing had happened, learned to bear it and even, in a shy way, to like it».<sup>1</sup>

### What is everyday life?

A fragment of 1888 from the *Nachlass* of Friedrich Nietzsche entitled *Zur Modernität. Was uns Ehre macht* contains the essence of a programmatic declaration of interest in everyday life that characterises the spirit of the modern time: «wir nehmen die von allen Zeiten verachteten und bei Seite gelassenen *niedrigen* Dinge wichtig. [...] Das bisher Verachtetste ist in die erste Linie gerückt».<sup>2</sup> In origin this epochal cognitive shift can be traced above all in the approaches to the study of modernity of authors like Georg Simmel, Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin. David Frisby explains that their «analysis of the refused and insignificant corners of modernity» reflects the new sensibility for «the fragments of everyday existence cut off from any higher meaning or significance». They

«turned towards the concretion of the fragment, not towards the perspective “from above” but from below [...] orientating [themselves] more decisively towards the material reality of an unrevealed everyday world».<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Watt* (1945), New York/London: Grove Press/Evergreen books: 1959 80.

<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Zur Modernität. Was uns Ehre macht* (1888), in Idem, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe Band 13. Nachgelassene Fragmente 1887-1889*, edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Munich: de Gruyter 1999, 236.

<sup>3</sup> David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity* (1985), New York: Routledge Revivals 2013: 111.

But what is precisely everyday life? The answer to this apparently simple question is all but simple. The theme is so vast and the concept so difficult to circumscribe that in an interview of the 1960s the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre described his own immense oeuvre *Critique de la vie quotidienne*, started in 1946, «sans commencement et sans fin».<sup>4</sup> In *L'homme de la rue* of 1962 – inspired by Lefebvre's writings – Maurice Blanchot tries to distil a comprehensive definition of *le quotidien* through a sequence of definitions. The first says:

«Le quotidien, c'est alors ce que nous sommes en premier lieu et le plus souvent: dans le travail, dans le loisir, dans la veille, dans le sommeil, dans la rue, dans le privé de l'existence».<sup>5</sup>

But a bit later on, he specifies in a second definition that «il faut penser que le quotidien, c'est le suspect (et oblique) qui toujours échappe à la claire décision de la loi [...] l'indifférence quotidienne».<sup>6</sup> This leads him to a third definition: «le quotidien c'est aussi l'ambiguïté»,<sup>7</sup> from which he develops his description of everyday life as political matter.

Following the emergence of the concept of the everyday in the first three decades of the twentieth century, John Roberts connects it to four interrelated sets of far-reaching critical practices:

«(1) the Leninist extension of politics into cultural politics during and after the Russian Revolution (Trotsky's cultural activism; Soviet Productivism and Constructivism); (2) the transformation of European Marxism into a philosophy of praxis out of Marx's critique of traditional materialism and the return to Hegel and the philosophy of consciousness (Georg Lukács, Karl Korsch, Antonio Gramsci, Walter Benjamin, Lefebvre); (3) Freud's demedicalization of mental disorders and illness; and (4) the emergence of the new avant-garde documentary art and literature. At some points these overlapping practices repulse each other, at other points they interfuse, yet what they produce overall is an extraordinary attentiveness to the political form and significance of cultural activity and change».<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Henri Lefebvre quoted in Maurice Blanchot, *L'homme de la rue*, in: "La Nouvelle Revue française", 114, June 1962, 1070-1081: 1070. See Henri Lefebvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne I* (1956), Paris: L'Archer Editeur 1977; Idem, *Critique de la vie quotidienne II* (1961), Paris: L'Archer Editeur 1980; Idem, *Critique de la vie quotidienne III*, Paris: L'Archer Editeur 1981.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ivi: 1071.

<sup>7</sup> Ivi: 1071-1072.

<sup>8</sup> John Roberts, *Philosophizing the Everyday. Revolutionary Praxis and the Fate of Cultural Theory*, London and Ann Arbor, Michigan: Pluto Press 2006: 3-4.

Although the genealogy of the interest in everyday life can actually be traced further back, with «echoes of the concept all the way to Antiquity»,<sup>9</sup> the literature and speculations about this topic has flourished especially in the period between 1960 and 1980,<sup>10</sup> marked by a peculiar vitality «in the emergence of the everyday as a paradigm».<sup>11</sup> This concern for the everyday was still in debt to the climate of «popular and intellectual dissent from the official forms of political restitution, associated with the old prewar bourgeois ruling parties and culture», unleashed by the European anti-Fascist movements at the end of the Second World War, with their strong instance of rejection for the pompous and monumental rhetoric typical of totalitarianisms.<sup>12</sup> This scenario gave rise in Italy to the Neorealist movement in literature, cinema and photography. In the preface to his first romance *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* (first published in 1947), Italo Calvino affirms retrospectively in 1964, that writing at the very end of Second World War was, rather than a matter of art, a physiological, existential, collective impulse that meant: «to treat the same matter of the anonymous oral narrator». Neorealism, he explains, was not a school, but «an ensemble of voices, mostly peripheral, a multiple discovery of the various Italies [...] until then mostly unknown», that followed the tradition of American writers of the 1930s, rather than the Italian Verism of the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup>

In the 1970s this vision encompassed pioneering investigations in the history of private life and micro-history, like the worldwide popular *Il formaggio e i vermi* (1976) by Carlo Ginzburg as well as works by Giorgio Agamben, whose writings «pursue a line where the historical, the archival, and the everyday interpenetrate».<sup>14</sup> To clarify the method of his research, Carlo Ginzburg quotes the historian Jaume Vicens Vives, who wrote that the ordinary man «se ha convertido en el principal protagonista de la Historia».<sup>15</sup> With his pioneering publication about the case of a miller in Friuli at the end of the 16th century, Ginzburg has demonstrated that

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<sup>9</sup> For instance, «the Ancient Greek philosophers paid meticulous attention, and were in ongoing debate, about what made the “good life”» (Nikos Papastergiadis, “Everything that Surrounds”. *Art, Politics and Theories of the Everyday*, in Jonathan Watkins (ed.), *11th Biennale of Sydney. Every Day*, 21-27: 22).

<sup>10</sup> About the development of the cultural interest in the concept of the everyday, see for instance: Ben Highmore, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory. An Introduction*, London/New York: Routledge 2002; Idem (ed.), *The Everyday Life Reader*, London/New York: Routledge 2002; Johnstone (ed.), *The Everyday – Documents of Contemporary Art*, op. cit.; Roberts, *Philosophizing the Everyday*, op. cit.; Michael Sheringham, *Everyday Life. Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present*, New York: Oxford University Press 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Sheringham, *Everyday Life*: 9.

<sup>12</sup> Roberts, *Philosophizing the Everyday*: 6-7.

<sup>13</sup> Italo Calvino, *Prefazione* (1964), in *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* (1947), Milan: Garzanti 1993, 7-26: 7-9 (translation mine).

<sup>14</sup> Michael Sheringham, *Everyday Life*: 352-353.

<sup>15</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, *Il formaggio e i vermi: il cosmo di mugnaio del '500*, Turin: Einaudi 1976: XXVI. Ginzburg's first book, concerning the everyday life of humble and marginalised people, is actually *I benandanti. Stregoneria e culti agrari tra Cinquecento e Seicento*, Turin: Einaudi, 1966.

«in a modest individual who is himself lacking in significance and for this very reason representative, it is still possible to trace, as in microcosm, the characteristics of an entire social stratum in a specific historical period».<sup>16</sup>

Applying a similar thinking to the context of art practice, in 1980 Roland Barthes addressed Michelangelo Antonioni, asserting that the modern artist must follow «les changements du Temps non plus seulement au niveau de la grande Histoire, mais à l'intérieur de cette petite Histoire dont l'existence de chacun de nous est la mesure».<sup>17</sup>

## The concept of “everyday life” in Italian sociology from 1960s

The extreme difficulty to define the sociological concept of “everyday life” has brought to the growth of such an amount of literature about the theme, that it would be impossible to summarise all the positions in the present writing.<sup>18</sup> For the sake of my argumentation I will focus on the development of the theories about the everyday in Italy after 1960s, since this constitutes the background in which Guidi and his generation started to be professionally active.

In *Sociologia della vita quotidiana*, Paolo Jedlowski and Carmen Leccardi trace the path of the concept of “everyday life” within Italian sociology, emphasising that the latter generally refers to the everyday primarily in terms of research perspective, as to say considering it as a point of view that allows a cross-reading of social phenomena: a form of attention for details and edges, able to bring into light what consolidated theories leave in the shade.<sup>19</sup> In the 1960s, Italian sociology, only marginally interested in everyday life, developed most of all through the reception of and comparison with North American functionalist sociology (despite numerous important translations from German and French standard works). However, in the framework of the theoretical references that would later be collected under the name of “sociology of everyday life”, the term never appears: the definition is rather “sociology of modernisation”. Only from the mid-1970s did Italian sociology begin to speak explicitly of everyday life, foreshadowing research and studies that

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<sup>16</sup> Ivi: XIX. (Eng. trans. by John and Anne Tedeschi, *The Cheese and the Worms. The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press 1980: XX).

<sup>17</sup> Roland Barthes, *Caro Antonioni / Cher Antonioni*, official speech given in Bologna on 1 January 1980, on the occasion of the granting of the prize “Archiginnasio d'oro” for the year 1979 to Michelangelo Antonioni. Later published in: “Cahiers du Cinema”, no. 311, May 1980, 9-11: 9.

<sup>18</sup> See Mike Featherstone, *Undoing Culture. Globalization, Postmodernism and Identity*, London: Sage Publications 2000 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1995): 55-58.

<sup>19</sup> See Paolo Jedlowski and Carmen Leccardi, *Sociologia della vita quotidiana*, Bologna: Il Mulino 2003: 13-29.



would be conducted mainly in the 1980s. Jedlowski and Leccardi acknowledge at least four theoretical sources to explain the penetration of this new paradigm. The first one is a Marxist orientation, which partly undermined the modernisation paradigm – between 1975 and 1979 the Italian translation of the works by Agnès Heller and Henri Lefebvre are released.<sup>20</sup> Paradoxically, Antonio Gramsci was not widely read in Italy even though the emergence from his writings of his concern for the culture and forms of civil society as well as of the concept of “common sense” could have provided a considerable incentive to the explicit study of everyday.<sup>21</sup> By contrast, already in the 1960s, the works by the Frankfurter Schule gain great popularity, thanks to the editions released by the (at that time Marxist) publishing house Einaudi: Adorno’s *Minima Moralia* and Benjamin’s essays collection, *Angelus Novus*, abound with insights into the most minute aspects of social relations.<sup>22</sup> The second source is the American sociology of phenomenological and interactionist matrix: the translation of the first essays by Erving Goffman were published at the end of the 1960s, followed, in the next years, by those of the Austrian-American scholar Alfred Schütz, one of the most important interpreters and followers of Edmund Husserl Phenomenology and interactionism studies (the sociology of behaviours which, being routine, tend to be taken for granted).<sup>23</sup> The third source, that orients the social studies towards the analysis of the structures of material life, *longue durée* and *mentalités*, is the *Nouvelle Histoire* by Fernand Braudel’s and Jacques Le Goff’s *Annales* school.<sup>24</sup> From France come fur-

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<sup>20</sup> See Agnes Heller, *A mindermapi élet*, 1970 (It. tr. Alberto Scarponi, *Sociologia della vita quotidiana*, Rome: Editori Riuniti 1975). Two of the three volumes of Henri Lefebvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne*, 1947-1981 appeared in the Italian translations by Vincenzo Bonazza, *Critica della vita quotidiana I-II*, Bari: Dedalo, 1977.

<sup>21</sup> See Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere* (6 volumes), edited by Felice Platone, Turin: Einaudi 1948-1951. The first edition of his *Prison Notebooks* appears between 1948 and 1951 under the supervision of Palmiro Togliatti, leader of the Italian Communist Party.

<sup>22</sup> See Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben*, 1951 (It. tr. Renato Solmi, *Minima moralia. Meditazioni della vita offesa*, Turin: Einaudi 1954); Walter Benjamin, *Angelus Novus: saggi e frammenti*, Italian edition and translation by Renato Solmi, Turin: Einaudi 1962.

<sup>23</sup> See Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 1959 (It. tr. Margherita Ciacci, *La vita quotidiana come rappresentazione*, Bologna: Il Mulino 1969); Idem, *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*, 1967 (It. tr. Dina Cabrini, *Modelli di interazione*, Bologna: Il Mulino 1969); Alfred Schütz, *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt. Eine Einleitung in die verstehende Soziologie*, 1932 (It. tr. Franco Bassani, *La fenomenologia del mondo sociale*, Bologna: Il Mulino 1974); Idem, *Das Problem der Relevanz*, 1971 (It. tr. Giuseppe Riconda, *Il problema della rilevanza*, Turin: Rosenberg & Seller 1974).

<sup>24</sup> Respectively first and second director of the school of *Les Annales*. Fernand Braudel’s PhD dissertation, held in 1947 and published in 1949, appears soon in Italian, with the title *Fernand Braudel, Civiltà e imperi del Mediterraneo nell’età di Filippo II* (2 volumes), It. tr. Carlo Pischedda, Turin: Einaudi, 1953. Also to mention is: Fernand Braudel, *Civilisation matérielle, Economie et Capitalisme*, 1967 (It. tr. Corrado Vivanti, *Capitalismo e civiltà materiale (secoli XV-XVIII)*, Turin: Einaudi 1977). It is moreover helpful to remember the collection of essays by Jacques Le Goff, *Il meraviglioso e il quotidiano nell’Occidente medievale*, edited by Francesco Maiello, It. tr. Michele Sampaolo, Roma-Bari: Laterza 1983. Finally, I cannot forget to mention an emblematic work of the new historiography of *Les Annales* by the master of French micro-history Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Les paysans de Languedoc*, 1966 (2 volumes, It. tr. Silvia Brillì Cattarini, *I contadini di Linguadoca*, Rome/Bari: Laterza 1970), and Idem, *Montaillou, village occitan de 1294 à 1324*, 1977 (It. tr. Giovanni Bogliolo, *Storia di un paese: Montaillou, un villaggio occitanico durante l’inquisizione, 1294-1324*, Milan: Rizzoli 1977). Fi-

ther contributions, such as the oeuvre by Michel Foucault or Pierre Bourdieu – although *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* by the latter has been translated into Italian only in 2003.<sup>25</sup> Also the works by Michel Maffesoli and Georges Balandier are often mentioned, whereas, surprisingly *L'invention du quotidien* by Michel De Certeau, translated very late, has practically no influence in Italy.<sup>26</sup>

According to Jedlowski and Leccardi, all in all, the most specifically characteristic element of the “Italian way” in the sociology of everyday life seems to be the influence of Marxism. Although attenuated over time, such relationship explains the critical approach, that distinguishes this kind of sociology up to this day: its propensity to read the margins and shadows of everyday life as a critique of the dominant forms of social relations, its tension towards understanding and valorising emerging subjectivities or, more generally, its orientation towards emancipation. At the end of the 1970s and in the 1980s, the relevance of everyday life was affirmed first by new actors such as political movements, the youth, and the women, rather than by sociology which until that moment had considered it as insignificant, unworthy of theoretical reflection. As a matter of fact, in 1964, Umberto Eco's *Apocalittici e integrati* caused a stir, because it included trivial things such as comics, advertising and television in the theoretical reflection.<sup>27</sup> Actually it had paved the road, anticipating the academic discourse, but not that of a society that was beginning to reflect and represent its everyday life through a variety of forms, initiating a redemption of popular culture, which would only later be recognised and appreciated by intellectuals. “Everyday life” becomes not so much a rigidly defined concept, but rather an orientation or a perspective, that allows to deal with hitherto

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nally see also George Duby e Philippe Ariès (eds.), *Histoire de la vie privée*, 1985-1987 (5 volumes, It. tr. *La vita privata*, Rome/Bari: Laterza 1985-1988).

<sup>25</sup> See Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines*, 1966 (It. tr. Emilio Panaitescu, *Le parole e le cose: un'archeologia delle scienze umane*, Milan: Rizzoli 1967); Idem, *L'Archéologie du savoir*, 1969 (It. tr. Giovanni Bogliolo, *L'archeologia del sapere*, Milan: Rizzoli 1971); Idem, *L'Ordre du discours*, 1971 (It. tr. Alessandro Fontana, *L'ordine del discorso: i meccanismi sociali di controllo e di esclusione della parola*, Turin, Einaudi 1972); Idem, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*, 1975 (It. tr. Alceste Tarchetti, *Sorvegliare e punire: nascita della prigione*, Turin: Einaudi 1976); Idem, *Microfisica del potere: interventi politici*, It. ed. Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino, Turin Einaudi 1977. See also Pierre Bourdieu, *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique précédé de Trois études d'ethnologie kabyle*, 1972 (It. tr. Irene Maffi, *Per una teoria della pratica. Con tre studi di etnologia cabila*, Milan: Raffaello Cortina 2003).

<sup>26</sup> See Michel Maffesoli, *La Conquête du présent. Pour une sociologie de la vie quotidienne*, 1979 (It. tr. Alfonso Amalfitano and Anna Grazia Farneschi, *La conquista del presente. Per una sociologia della vita quotidiana*, Rome: IANUA 1983); Georges Balandier, *Anthropologie Politique*, 1967 (It. tr. Mario Antonelli, *Antropologia politica*, Milan: Etas Kompass 1969), and Idem, *Sens et puissance: les dynamiques sociales*, 1971 (It. tr. Silvia Brillì Cattarini and Riccardo Scacchi, *Le società comunicanti*, Rome/Bari: Laterza 1973); Michel De Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien*, 1980 (It. tr. Mario Baccianini, *L'invenzione del quotidiano*, Rome: Edizioni Lavoro 2001).

<sup>27</sup> See Umberto Eco, *Apocalittici e integrati: comunicazioni di massa e teorie della cultura di massa*, Milan: Bompiani 1964.

marginalised issues, by highlighting material and symbolic processes through which reality is constructed and reproduced by social actors.<sup>28</sup>

## Everyday life in art

Today, the rise of the interest in the everyday by contemporary artists is usually understood in terms of a desire to bring uneventful and overlooked aspects of lived experience – a vast reservoir of normally unnoticed, trivial, and repetitive actions – into visibility.

«For some, this turn to the ordinary leads to a recognition of the dignity of ordinary behavior, or the act of stating simply, “here is value”. For others, it may result in an unveiling of the “accidentally miraculous”, or the desire to make art with the unassuming ease of the amateur photographer. For others still, an art that focuses on the everyday might construct “a vaguely ethnographic aesthetic”, or be nothing more than the record of simply venturing out and happening across something interesting. Elsewhere, the everyday sparks a distrust of the heroic and the spectacular [...] while elsewhere again, the investigation of everydayness asks us to consider the deceptively simple question: What happens when nothing happens?»<sup>29</sup>

Stephen Johnstone notices that a straightforward documentary way is only one of the possible artistic approaches to the everyday. To represent or be engaged with the everyday the artists may resort to ruses and subterfuges, or adopt a childlike attitude, or appeal to a kind of willed naïveté, or nostalgic passivity. They may take advantage of chance and make choices to show the ordinary, or stage barely noticeable events. Often, the discovery of the everyday by artists is not a response to the writings by Lefebvre or de Certeau, but the expression of their desire to look at the ordinary reasserting «a non ironic kind of realism».<sup>30</sup> Jonathan Watkins, curator of 1998 Sydney Biennale – emblematically titled *Every Day* – noticed «a growing interest amongst contemporary artists, worldwide, in quotidian phenomena and the power of relatively simple gestures».<sup>31</sup> To him, such tendency answered the necessity to take distance «from an overloaded academic (often pseudo-academic) discourse in visual arts, engendered by early postmodernism». Artistic practices that emphasise the significance of any day

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<sup>28</sup> See Jedlowski and Leccardi, *Sociologia della vita quotidiana*: 13-29.

<sup>29</sup> Stephen Johnstone, *Introduction: Recent Art and the Everyday*, in Idem (ed.), *The Everyday*, 12-23: 12-13.

<sup>30</sup> Johnstone, *Introduction: Recent Art and the Everyday*: 16.

<sup>31</sup> Jonathan Watkins, *Every Day*, in Idem (ed.), *11<sup>th</sup> Biennale of Sydney. Every Day*, ex. cat. Sydney: Biennale of Sydney 1998, 15-20: 15.

«are characterized by efficacy and unpreciousness. They are unforced artistic statements, incidentally profound observations of the nature of our lives as lived every day. [...] Their impetus [...] is more human than spiritual, more empiricist than idealistic, more philosophical than ideological».<sup>32</sup>

They express what it is like to be in the real world, communicate what it really feels like to be here, now, and connect art with lived experience. A connection that marked photography since its very beginning.

Sir John Robinson, commenting in 1839 the appearance of the Daguerreotype and Talbotype, and their ability to record an incredible number of details that excited universal praise, wrote in the *Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal*:

«A crack in plaster, a withered leaf lying on a projecting cornice, or an accumulation of dust in a hollow moulding of a distant building, when they exist in the original, are faithfully copied in these wonderful pictures».<sup>33</sup>

Interesting enough, the accuracy of the new technic was most evident when it encompassed marginal, ordinary details, not to say flaws, usually overlooked by other traditional forms of representation. Various factors contribute to confer photography the status of everyday medium par excellence – prompting me to include the category of the everyday among the characteristic of medium specificity. First of all, photography was born within an everyday context: in order to test the medium skills the pioneering photographers used everyday objects they had at first hand – for instance, Talbot famously made images of the windows of his country house in Lacock Abbey, but also of glassware, ceramic vessels, figurines, shelves of books, an array of hats, trees, old walls and buildings, implements of husbandry, carriages, tables covered with breakfast things, in short, of every matter.<sup>34</sup> Second, by virtue of photography indexical nature, each picture bears the trace or imprint of a concrete referent in the real world (an aspect I treat thoroughly in chapter 2) – a fact that immerses the photographic image in the sphere of everyday life: photography «erfüllt die Aufgabe, an ihre leibhafte Wirklichkeit zu erinnern», claimed Siegfried Kracauer.<sup>35</sup> Last

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Beaumont Newhall, *Photography and the Development of Kinetic Visualization*, in: "Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes", vol. 7, 1994, 40-45: 40.

<sup>34</sup> See Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography from 1839 to the Present Day*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art 1949: 37; Geoffrey Batchen, *Each Wild Idea*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: The MIT Press 2001: 9; Herta Wolf, *Nature as Drawing Mistress*, in Mirjam Brusius, Katrina Dean and Chitra Ramalingam (eds.), *William Henry Fox Talbot Beyond Photography*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2013, 119-142: 130, 134.

<sup>35</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, *Die Photographie* (1927), in Inka Mülder-Bach (ed.), *Siegfried Kracauer Schriften, Band 5.2, Aufsätze 1927-1931*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag 1990, 83-98: 89. The distinction between indexical, iconic, and symbolic functions of the sign goes back to Charles Sanders Peirce. For

but not least, the automatism in the creation of images allowed by the photographic process extends and over the decades democratises the representation power of the medium in comparison to other creative forms – everyone without any special knowledge can take a photograph, everything can be photographed.

«In 1888 George Eastman marketed his revolutionary hand-held Kodak with the cheery slogan “You press the button, we do the rest” and was about to launch the “Bow Brownie” – the camera he claimed that everyone could afford and was easy enough for children to use».<sup>36</sup>

In *Before Photography*, Peter Galassi defines the syntax of photography as «the syntax of an art devoted to the singular and contingent rather than the universal and stable» and situates the development of a photographic sensibility inside a pictorial tradition that makes its viewers «participants in the contingent experience of everyday life».<sup>37</sup> As a matter of fact, Henri Lefebvre wrote in his magnum opus on everyday life:

«Or le temps se projette dans l’espace par la mesure, en s’homogénéisant, en apparaissant dans les choses et les produits. Le temps du quotidien ne se représente pas seulement dans les horloges et les montres; *il se représente aussi dans les photos*, dans les bibelots-souvenirs. Ces objets-mémoire, ces traces sensibles et immédiates du passé semblent dire dans le quotidien que le passé n’est jamais révolu».<sup>38</sup>

If for Lefebvre, photography represented the point where art and the category of the “everyday” meet, indeed, John Roberts claims, that the two «overlapping categories of “realism” and the “everyday”» offer a great «explanatory power in the discussion of photographic history».<sup>39</sup> Setting the focus on photography’s intimacy with the everyday reveals the ordinariness of culture and «renders unstable all transcendental defences of aesthetic value».<sup>40</sup> Thanks to this change in the theoretical paradigm, a photograph becomes a form of *practical* knowledge, which opposes to the production of «connections between things

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a comprehensive bibliography about the issue of “indexicality” see chapter 2.

<sup>36</sup> Patricia Holland, “Sweet it is to scan...”. *Personal photographs and popular photography*, in Liz Wells, *Photography: A Critical Introduction*, London and New York: Routledge 2015 (1996), 133-139: 135.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Galassi, *Before Photography. Painting and the Invention of Photography*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art 1981: 14, 25.

<sup>38</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne III – De la modernité au modernisme (Pour une métaphilosophie du quotidien)*, Paris: L’Arche editeur 1981: 133 (emphasis mine).

<sup>39</sup> John Roberts, *The art of interruption: realism, photography and the everyday*, Manchester (UK) and New York: Manchester University Press 1998: 2, 9.

<sup>40</sup> Ivi: 4.

without any sense of their social and political constellations». <sup>41</sup> Descending into the everyday, art stops to deny the right to exist to anything that exists, and recognises that

«it is the movement within whatever exists which transforms the world, past, present or future, and not theories about what should be rejected and what should be preserved». <sup>42</sup>

The impact of photography and film on the construction process of the category of the “everyday” was decisive. The assimilation of photography and film into forms of mass social transformation expanded the category of the “everyday”. According to Siegfried Kracauer, photographic media «alone are in a position to record the material aspects of common daily life in many places». <sup>43</sup> In his writings, the infinite partial aspects of the manifold everyday life, usually excluded from philosophical reflection, due to their alleged insignificance, become witnesses to the historical process they embody. The contradictions hidden behind surface phenomena – such as film and photography – are understood as expressions of the underlying contradictions of the society. <sup>44</sup>

«We cannot hope to embrace reality unless we penetrate its lowest layers. [...] But how can we gain access to these lower depths? One thing is sure, the task of contacting them is greatly facilitated by photography and film, both of which not only isolate physical data but reach their climax in representing it». <sup>45</sup>

## Photography and the everyday in Italy

In Italy, the relationship between photography and everyday life developed along two main phenomena, whose boundaries occasionally tend to overlap: Neorealism and Photoamateurism. In his *History of Italian Photography*, Italo Zannier explains the importance of the novelty introduced by Neorealism in the 1940s:

«The photographers [...] found out, that another unknown Italy existed behind the monuments and the archaeology – until then the only subjects of photographers like

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<sup>41</sup> Ivi: 5.

<sup>42</sup> Ivi: 9.

<sup>43</sup> Kracauer, *Theory of Film*: 310.

<sup>44</sup> See Stefan Oswald, *Introduzione*, in Siegfried Kracauer, *La massa come ornamento*, It. tr. Maria Giovanna Amirante Pappalardo e Francesco Maione, Naples: Prismi 1982, 25-36: 31.

<sup>45</sup> Kracauer, *Theory of Film*: 298.

the Alinari – and that beyond the folklore (other topic of the past) there was indeed a tradition, but of ancient misery, rather than of Arcadian serenity».<sup>46</sup>

The young Neorealist photographers showed an unknown cruel world, totally different from the image of the *Bel Paese* exported by the genre scenes for more than a hundred years. In this frame, the work on the suburbs of Milan proposed by Alberto Lattuada in his book *Occhio Quadrato* (“Squared Eye”) of 1941 was groundbreaking and remains a fundamental reference even for the authors of Guidi’s generation: in his 26 pictures Lattuada, inspired by Walker Evans’ photography,<sup>47</sup> turned to the most marginal aspects of the man-altered environment intentionally avoiding relevant architectonic objects and public monumental spaces, in favour of fragments, materials, and relationships of a fading urban pattern. Although the book had no immediate success and remained practically forgotten for more than forty years, Antonello Frongia defines it as a prototype of an organic exploration of the ordinary modern landscape in Italy.<sup>48</sup>

A further fundamental Neorealist reference for the following generations of photographers was the book *Un Paese* of 1955 by the writer Cesare Zavattini with pictures by Paul Strand.<sup>49</sup> In 1952 Strand proposes Zavattini to realize together a book about a place of the Italian province. The writer suggests Luzzara, his birth town in Emilia Romagna region – the same region where Guidi is born and currently lives. *Un Paese* is composed like a sort of static documentary movie, playing with the relationship between words and images, juxtaposing Strand’s photographs of the landscape surrounding the river Po, of people, places, objects, to the voices from Luzzara’s inhabitants collected by Zavattini.<sup>50</sup>

Art historian Antonella Russo emphasises the difficulty of precisely defining Neorealism in photography, due to its various contaminations with literature and cinema. In general, Neorealist photography is described as an “attitude” or a new “image” in Italian photographic production, practically renouncing the elaboration of a theoretical framework capable of identifying its characteristic traits. Often Neorealism ends up identifying

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<sup>46</sup> Zannier, *Storia della fotografia italiana*: 309 (translation mine).

<sup>47</sup> In an interview of 1980 Alberto Lattuada admits, that in making *Occhio Quadrato* he had been influenced by the vision of a very successful album of America photographs, whose title he had forgotten. «It shocked me and made me realise that photography had to detach itself from formal research, planned spaces and abstract matters that, although very beautiful, do not have an emotional impact on the viewer» (quoted in Piero Berengo Gardin, *Alberto Lattuada*, in: “Progresso fotografico”, year 87, no. 7-8, July-August 1980, 50-53: 52, translation mine). About the influence of Walker Evans’ book *American Photographs* (1938) on Lattuada, see also Ennery Taramelli, *Viaggio nell’Italia del neorealismo: la fotografia tra letteratura e cinema*, Turin: SEI – Società Editrice Internazionale 1995: 66.

<sup>48</sup> See Antonello Frongia, *Fine della città. “Occhio Quadrato” di Alberto Lattuada*, Milan: Scalpendi 2022 and Idem, *Fotografia, urbanistica e (re-)invenzione del paesaggio “ordinario” nell’Italia del secondo dopoguerra*, in Annunziata Berrino and Alfredo Buccaro (eds.), *Delli Aspetti de Paesi*, CIRICE, Naples 2016, 536-537: 535.

<sup>49</sup> Cesare Zavattini (text) and Paul Strand (photographs), *Un paese*, Turin: Einaudi 1955.

<sup>50</sup> See Taramelli, *Viaggio nell’Italia del neorealismo*: 131.

Italianisms itself, or the whole of Italian post-war photography is seen exclusively as Neorealist photography. On the contrary, a revisionist interpretation has even questioned whether Neorealism ever existed. In my text I would avoid delving into such a discussion, and recommend Antonella Russo's analysis, moreover, accepting her definition and periodisation. According to her, photographic Neorealism was neither an unambiguous and well-defined movement, nor a "background" shared by several authors, but rather an aesthetic and ethical project, that emerges in some works – she recognises Elio Vittorini's magazine *Il Politecnico* as the true voice of Neorealist culture.<sup>51</sup>

The foreign sources of Neorealism undoubtedly include John Grierson's anti-aesthetic documentary and Robert Flaherty's epic one, as well as the images by the Farm Security Administration (FSA), based on the adoption of a formal approach, that makes the image appear honest and non-artistic – a naked, unadorned picture. Neorealism borrowed this approach from American and British documentary tradition, which led it to «lend its eyes and heart» to the social problems of post-war Italy, focusing on anonymous individuals, the invisibles, anti-heroes taken from the street. Russo explains that Neorealism in photography lasted just a few years, from 1940 to 1949, and that in 1950 it had already turned into an editorial product, requested mainly by illustrated press, a sort of empty cliché. While in the post-war period, as in photography as in cinema, circulated an idea of public outcry, a participatory concern for the social emergency of the Country, which produced pictures defined by Cesare Zavattini as a kind of «domestic universal judgement, without trumpets, without celestial intervention»,<sup>52</sup> over time Neorealism remained only in the subjects: not a Neorealist photography, but a photography of "neorealist" subject.<sup>53</sup> In 1958, Zavattini and Luigi Crocenzi launched the photographic contest "The Day of the Italians", with the aim to renew the Neorealist commitment – which had waned by then – by engaging ordinary citizens.<sup>54</sup>

In the same years of diffusion of Neorealist photography, in Italy restarted also the activity of amateur photographic associations, that played an essential role for the promotion of the photographic culture, especially in the North and Centre of the Peninsula.<sup>55</sup> However, in the mid-1950s inside the photographic circles, began to proliferate a manneristic form of Neorealism that, as Giuseppe Turrone pointed out, often tended to fall into a fragile and risible folklore, a kitsch verism, featuring homeless, old women dressed in

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<sup>51</sup> See Russo, *Storia culturale della fotografia italiana*: 3-8, 26.

<sup>52</sup> Cesare Zavattini, *Il cinema e l'uomo moderno* (1949), in Idem, *Polemica col mio tempo: cinema, comunicazione, cultura, società*, Milan: Bompiani 1997, 61-66: 63 (translation mine).

<sup>53</sup> Russo, *Storia culturale della fotografia italiana*: 9-10.

<sup>54</sup> Ivi: 75-76. See also Cesare Zavattini, *Ai fotografi* (1957), in Idem, *Opere 1931-1986*, edited by Silvana Cirillo, Milan: Bompiani 2001, 1635-1636.

<sup>55</sup> Russo, *Storia culturale della fotografia italiana*: 95.



black and street musicians.<sup>56</sup> In 1969 the polemic about “Sunday photography” exploded on occasion of the so called “Verbania meeting”: the associations were accused of promoting a kind of amateurism, based on landscapes with flocks and banal snapshots.<sup>57</sup> The late 1960s saw the end of the parable of amateur photography, with its progressive degeneration into dilettantism. Nevertheless, Giuseppe Turrone recognises in the photo amateurism of the associations a specific trait of Italian photography – up to present days – that, as much as museums or academies of fine arts, fulfilled an institutional function by supporting the development of visual culture in the Country. Despite the many accusations, it was not mere dilettantism, but a cultured, advanced amateurism, practiced also by many professional photographers, who later gained international notoriety. Since the 1970s also Italo Zannier has been engaged in describing and enhancing the role of Italian photo amateurism.<sup>58</sup> Not by chance, one of his first articles dedicated to Guidi’s work is entitled *After Krims. Photo amateurism intended as advanced point of a fundamentally cultural and substantially civil research. Photos by Guido Guidi*.<sup>59</sup> Zannier recognises that until that moment, the impact of the activity by amateurs on Italian photography was stronger than that of the professionals. Although too often they had been unfortunately exposed to the influence of mediocre craftsmanship, photographic groups and circles had the merit of having introduced in Italy the message of the avant-garde and developed Italian photographic culture. As the work by a photographer such as Mario Giacomelli testifies, sometimes remaining inside the aristocratic sphere of amateurism (as profession) proves to be the most appropriate way to pursue a set of issues, not easily anchorable to the methods of professional standards. Of course, this kind of amateurism must not be confused with that of those, who photograph as hobby, with cheerful after-work spirit. To the front, of what Zannier called “concerned amateurism”, belonged also the work by the, at the time, young photo amateur, based in Cesena, Guido Guidi – a former student of Zannier.<sup>60</sup>

Although Guidi defines himself as eternal beginner, his practice is far from both the banality of craftsmanship (though respectable) and the superficiality and hedonism of amateurs.<sup>61</sup> He belongs to the first generation of professional photographers with a solid preparation, who at the beginning of the 1970s refined their researches on the photographic language, focusing on studies of visual perception and phenomenology of the form, opening a discussion about the uncertainty of the description of the space, intended as an

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<sup>56</sup> See Giuseppe Turrone, *Realismo in fotografia*, in: “Fotografia”, no. 6, XII June 1959, 14-15.

<sup>57</sup> Ivi: 261.

<sup>58</sup> See Italo Zannier, *Artista fotoamatore-fotoamatore artista*, in: “Popular Photography Italiana”, no. 161, May 1971, 45; and Giuseppe Turrone, *Il parere di Giuseppe Turrone*, in: “Skema”, V, no. 10, October 1973, 58.

<sup>59</sup> See Zannier, *Dopo Krims*: 34-38.

<sup>60</sup> Ivi: 34-35.

<sup>61</sup> See Zannier, *L'avanguardia di Guido Guidi*: 22.

intricate mess of signs. He debuted at the end of the 1960s with a series of black-and-white pictures portraying his friends and relatives, blurred images of domestic interiors and free time, on which he wrote with a pen the title, date, and a description of the depicted objects, sometimes also impressing some numbers with a stamp. Such invasion of the photographic surface neutralised any ambition of interpreting the picture as *analogon* of the real.<sup>62</sup>

Inspired by his first encounter with Walker Evans' work, Guidi's personal investigation on everyday places started with a series of images of architectures of his region – country huts, schools, houses and other buildings, that he found along the road between Cesena and Ravenna.<sup>63</sup> He was photographing the same places already touched by Strand, but his approach excluded any form of narration, proposing on the contrary ambiguous visions with tilted horizons, fading tonalities and various elements of vagueness, that offered only a provisional and partial description of a problematic and unstable daily environment. About his own relationship with the Neorealist tradition Guidi declares:

«I'm interested in all of Neorealism as a stimulus to go and see things as they are. Zavattini spoke of 'anythingness', and I too have to draw on this concept in the past, but more than the 'anythingness', I would insist more on the 'trifling matters' as Pasolini taught us.<sup>64</sup> The attention of Neorealism to trifling matters, to country house, to the peasant living in them or the lamppost I found interesting because I was also born there. Even Talbot photographed a ladder leaning against a haystack:<sup>65</sup> all authentic photography starts out from things of little importance, from what you find in front of your eyes».<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> See Russo, *Storia culturale della fotografia italiana*: 372, 374. The theoretical discussion about the photographic image as *analogon* of a real referent stays at the core of the semiological discourse on photography indexicality. See among others René Lindekens, *Essai de sémiotique visuelle*, Paris: Éditions Klincksieck 1976, in which he clarifies his previous analysis appeared in Idem, *Éléments pour une sémiotique de la photographie*, Paris: Didier 1971.

<sup>63</sup> Guidi remained particularly impressed by Walker Evans, *American Photographs*, ex. cat. New York: The Museum of Modern Art 1938. Guidi's photographs of that time are partially published in Guidi, *Varianti*, cit.

<sup>64</sup> It is worth remembering Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Ragazzi di vita*, Milan: Garzanti 1955 and Idem, *Una vita violenta*, Milan: Garzanti 1958 as well as his most significant films of Neorealist inspiration: *Accattone*, 1961; *La ricotta*, 1963; *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, 1964; *Uccellacci e uccellini*, 1966.

<sup>65</sup> The picture mentioned by Guidi is Henri Fox Talbot, *The Haystack*, probably 1841 (salted paper print from paper negative), included in Henri Fox Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature*, London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans 1844-1846.

<sup>66</sup> Guido Guidi quoted in Antonello Frongia, *The vestiges of what was. Guido Guidi in a conversation with Antonello Frongia*, in Antonello Frongia and William Guerrieri (eds.), *Red Desert Now! The legacy of Antonioni in contemporary Italian photography*, Rubiera: Linea di Confine editore 2017, 70-71: 70.

For Guidi a photograph of the trash-can renders the splendour of that banal anonymous object. He underlines that also Dutch painting of the seventeenth century was interested in aspects of the daily life.

«According to Michelangelo, on the contrary, [the Dutch painting] would appeal to foolish monks and candid nuns. As a matter of fact, Vermeer painted the milkmaid or the view of Delft. The interest in reality and in the subject “things of nothing”, as Pasolini said, was born from that tradition».<sup>67</sup>

## The experience of *Viaggio in Italia*

Speaking of the relationship between photography and everyday landscape, I cannot avoid mentioning Guidi's participation in the project *Viaggio in Italia* – curated by the Italian photographer Luigi Ghirri – that has become the manifest of the so called Italian landscape school.<sup>68</sup> *Viaggio in Italia [Italian Journey]* took the form of a group exhibition and a book. The exhibition was curated by Ghirri together with the art historian Pina Belli D'Elia, the photographer Gianni Leone and the art historian Enzo Velati. After almost two years of preparation, it was held from January to February 1984 at the Pinacoteca Provinciale of Bari, displaying 300 photographs by 20 authors. After Bari the exhibition travelled to Genoa, Ancona, Rome, Naples, and Reggio Emilia. The photographers invited by Ghirri were sixteen Italians (Olivo Barbieri, Gabriele Basilico, Giannantonio Battistella, Vincenzo Castella, Andrea Cavazzuti, Giovanni Chiaramonte, Mario Cresci, Vittore Fossati, Carlo Garzia, Guido Guidi, Mimmo Jodice, Gianni Leone, Umberto Sartorello, Mario Tinelli, Ernesto Tulliozi, Fulvio Ventura), one French (Claude Nori), two Americans, curiously enough, the only two women (Shelley Hill and Cuchi White). A lot of them became very important figures of the Italian photographic scene, but also academics, publishers, or influential cultural operators. Others abandoned photography and took completely different paths.<sup>69</sup>

During the 1980s the image of Italy was still based on both touristic and journalistic stereotypes. The photographers of *Viaggio in Italia* were looking for a new way of

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<sup>67</sup> Guidi quoted in Laura Gasparini (ed.), *Walker Evans Italia*, ex. cat. Palazzo Magnani Reggio Emilia, Cinisello Balsamo (Milan): Silvana Editoriale 2016: 34-35 (translation mine). The expression «thing of nothing» is used by Pasolini in the short film *La forma della città*, 1974. In referring to Dutch painting and to Michelangelo's negative judgement, Guidi is loosely quoting from one of his favourite books: Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing. Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1983: 222-223.

<sup>68</sup> Luigi Ghirri, Gianni Leone and Enzo Velati (eds.), *Viaggio in Italia*, Alessandria: Il Quadrante 1984.

<sup>69</sup> See Valtorta, *Stupore del paesaggio*: 11.

reading the Italian reality, less influenced by the peculiarities of a specific place and the unicity of the event, that could better suit the representation of the new fragmented territories, which had substituted the past coherent landscapes apt to be depicted through the form of the panorama. After the 1970s, charged with political engagement, the reportage and the Bressonian decisive moment show their limits: history and human existences seem too complex in order to be depicted by the sudden perfection of a snapshot. Roberta Valtorta notices that many of the photographers of *Viaggio in Italia* expressed doubts about the traditional reportage, in favour of a longer and more meditative approach to reality. Although they admired Henri Cartier-Bresson, felt a keener affinity to Eugène Atget. Their approach to leave away special and exceptional things and turn to everyday life and ordinary things was in debt to the sensibility surfacing in the work by American author “of reality” such as Walker Evans, Robert Frank, and Lee Friedlander. With them, they shared two main elements: on the one hand the research of the sense of the human presence in the space, not through the actions of people but through the reading of the signs they left in the places they inhabit; on the other hand, the refusal of exceptionality, a sort of abdication to beauty and formal perfection. The “American lesson” introduced into Italian photography the idea of the equality of every object in front of the camera, the practice of working in progress on ordinary things, and the ability to read inside the landscape the stratified signs, that compose the enigma of our world.<sup>70</sup>

In an interview of that period, Luigi Ghirri explained that every place has a past to preserve, but without forgetting its relationship to the present:

«The ultimate image that the tourist has of Italy is that of the Faraglioni [sea stacks] of Capri, but to arrive there you must travel eight hundred kilometres of motorway, passing through that landscape. [...] The minor Italy is actually the majority».<sup>71</sup>

The photographers of *Viaggio in Italia* tried to set a different relationship with the real places inhabited by Italians, with the aim of starting a process of knowledge neither based on apology nor on critique, but rather on an interrogative method. The visual imagery inherited from the past included the pictures of the Alinari, postcards, schoolbooks, publication of the Touring Club and so on. The problem was to finally depict a real Italy, excluded by this kind of representations. *Viaggio in Italia* tried to cancel the hierarchy between beautiful and ugly things, between important and less important things, to look at the world suspending phenomenologically the judgement. The photographs of *Viaggio in Italia* valued both the province and the city, included outdoor as well as indoor spaces, faces of

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<sup>70</sup> Ivi: 14.

<sup>71</sup> Luigi Ghirri quoted in Marco Belpoliti, *Nel regno dell'analogo. La fotografia italiana secondo Luigi Ghirri*, in: “Il Manifesto”, Friday 16 March 1984, 7 (translation mine).

people and animals, because everything is landscape, as Friedlander taught.<sup>72</sup> As Arturo Carlo Quintavalle points out, those photographers shared common roots and paid attention to the history of photography but, most important, were able to build images of long last, in which the time remains suspended, isolated, and the extended moment appears more evidently. Indeed, with regard to this group of authors, he coined the expression *photographers of slowness*.<sup>73</sup> They practiced what Paolo Costantini has called the *insistence of gaze* [insistenza dello sguardo]. This kind of photography, explains Costantini,

«does not aim to fascinate, if it is true that fascination is the supreme act of distracting, of being 'inattentive' to the world as it is. To designate the oriented vision, Starobinski explained that the French language resorts to the word 'regard', whose root in origin does not designate the act of seeing, but rather the wait, the worry, the guard [...]. This act is not finished in an instant, because it implies a lasting impulse, an obstinate take, as if it were animated by the hope of increasing its discovery or reconquering what is about to escape it».<sup>74</sup>

## The everyday as a state of mind

«Why try to seek only impressive phenomena and not simple, everyday moments?» asks Guidi a bit provocatively, denying the existence of the decisive moment, while advocating a gaze upon a real landscape, not the ideal view of the central perspective, but the view of an ordinary landscape from whichever point of view.<sup>75</sup> He photographs his own places, tools, atelier «like Giverny for Monet», he claims.<sup>76</sup> This landscape belongs to his history, because he has lived there. As Robert Adams states too, the work of many photographers of importance «is usually marked by an economy of means, an apparently everyday sort of relationship with their subject matter».<sup>77</sup> Guidi's everyday photography encompasses the private space of his house, atelier, and yard, as well as the public space of the streets and fields of his neighbourhood. Agnès Sire notices, that he does not keep

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<sup>72</sup> See Valtorta, *Stupore del paesaggio*: 21.

<sup>73</sup> Arturo Carlo Quintavalle, *Viaggi di ritorno*, in Valtorta (ed.), *Racconti dal paesaggio 1984-2004*, 50-73: 53.

<sup>74</sup> Costantini, *L'insistenza dello sguardo*: 13 (translation mine).

<sup>75</sup> Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n. See also Frongia and Moro, *Topografie del paesaggio e dell'archivio*: 100.

<sup>76</sup> Quoted in Frongia, *Quello che resta*: 162 (translation mine).

<sup>77</sup> Robert Adams, *Beauty in Photography*, in Idem, *Beauty in Photography. Essays in Defense of Traditional Values*, New York: Aperture 1996, 21-36: 30.

«a distance as his photographic technique might imply; rather he exercises his control over the everyday without trying to separate himself from it. And he travels very little, but when he does, it is above all in order to find a kinship between cities».78

Guidi works on the lively structure of everyday life, cultivating a “worldly” form of conceptuality rather than an abstractly analytic one. Since the beginning in the 1960s his pictures have been characterised by the double condition of being at the same time traces of the material world and products of a visual thought. Nicoletta Leonardi has pointed out that Guidi shares this approach with fellow photographers such as Mario Cresci, Franco Vaccari, and Luigi Ghirri<sup>79</sup> as well as international ones like Kenneth Josephson, Lee Friedlander, Stephen Shore, and John Gossage.<sup>80</sup>

In his acute analysis of 1992, Paolo Costantini – good friend of Guido Guidi and profound connoisseur of his work – compares Guidi’s approach to reality to the “sight of the archaeologist” [*sguardo dell’archeologo*] delineated by Italo Calvino in his essay of 1972.<sup>81</sup> According to Calvino human beings have accumulated such an incredible amount of material objects, that it has become impossible to keep them in order. He proposes to adopt the sight of the archaeologist and paleo-ethnographer to describe both our past and our present, scattered with unclassifiable and fragmented human products.<sup>82</sup> Costantini, from his part, suggests to start from photography to help us deciphering this everyday landscape invaded by objects, to orient us in this «mare dell’oggettività» [ocean of objectivity].<sup>83</sup> In particular he acknowledges in Guidi’s practice a concrete engagement in the representation of the present that through accurate observation and attention for details adopts the archaeological gaze proposed by Calvino, as to say a look that indicate and describe the fragments he collects without the ambition of explaining them, since explaining

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<sup>78</sup> Agnès Sire, *Afterword*, Eng. tr. Miriam Rosen, in Marta Dahó and Agnès Sire (eds.), *Guidi Guido Veramente*, cit., n.n.

<sup>79</sup> Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*: 15.

<sup>80</sup> See Antonello Frongia, *In Sardegna: 1974, 2011*, in Guido Guidi and Irina Zucca Alessandrelli (eds.), *Guido Guidi. In Sardegna: 1974, 2011*, vol. Texts, London/Nuoro: Mack books and MAN Museum 2019, 13-18: 14.

<sup>81</sup> See Paolo Costantini in Guido Guidi, *Rimini Nord*, ex. cat., Rimini: Musei Comunali di Rimini 1992, n.n.

<sup>82</sup> See Italo Calvino, *Lo sguardo dell’archeologo* (1972), in Idem, *Una pietra sopra*, Turin: Einaudi 1980, 263-266. Originally the text was written as programmatic introduction to a new magazine never published, that Calvino had projected together with Gianni Celati, Guido Neri, Carlo Ginzburg, et al.

<sup>83</sup> See Italo Calvino, *Il mare dell’oggettività* (1959), in Idem, *Una pietra sopra*, 40-45. On the growing disproportion, typically metropolitan, between the objective and subjective spirit, namely the rapid multiplication of external objects compared to the slower expansion of the individual mind, incapable of rationally and conceptually grasping and processing mutual relations and meanings, see the well-known essay of 1903 by Georg Simmel, *Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben*, in Georg Simmel, *Gesamtausgabe Band 7: Aufsätze und Abhandlungen. 1901-1908 Band I*, edited by Rüdiger Kramme, Angela Rammstedt und Otthein Rammstedt, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 1995, 116-131.

would mean to impose his own self on them, bringing the result back to the very beginning: himself.<sup>84</sup> Only in this way

«we will understand that not an external motivation to those objects, but the mere fact that such objects find themselves so in that point already says everything there is to say».<sup>85</sup>

In his essay dedicated to Georg Simmel, György Lukács admires «his ability to see the smallest and most inessential phenomenon of daily life so sharply *sub specie philosophiae* that it becomes transparent».<sup>86</sup> Paraphrasing his definition, I dare say that Guidi is able to see it so sharply *sub specie photographiae* that it becomes visible.

For Guidi an everyday photograph does not mean exclusively a photograph depicting an everyday object or context but has to do with the *state of mind* under which it was taken. Everydayness signifies, for him, a way of seeing things, without searching for the extraordinary. Even if he takes a picture of a Mies van der Rohe's architecture, for instance, he approaches the assignment as a personal experience, not as an intellectual or commercial project: he points his camera not upwards, to the top of the buildings, but downwards, and pays attention to the signs of decay on the structure, he looks for traces of rust on the concrete, because they belong to his own everyday horizon.<sup>87</sup> Similarly Lisette Model claimed that what identifies a photograph as a snapshot is not the type of camera used, or the subject, or the moment, or the style. Besides being focused on «basic everyday experience», the «power of snapshots» can only occur under a specific *state of mind* with «no pretence or ambitions», that she calls «innocence».<sup>88</sup>

Model's statement appeared in the first number of *Aperture* of 1974. This issue of the famous American photographic magazine marked a fundamental step in Guidi's approach to photography and increased his interest in vernacular culture.<sup>89</sup> The magazine, featuring photographs and contributions by authors such as Walker Evans, Lee Friedlander, Tod Papageorge, Henry Wessel Jr., Garry Winogrand, included an article by John A. Kouwenhoven. According to Guidi, this was his first encounter with Kouwenhoven's thought.<sup>90</sup> Since he could not read English, he asked a friend to translate the text for him.

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<sup>84</sup> Calvino, *Lo sguardo dell'archeologo*: 264.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid (translation mine).

<sup>86</sup> Georg Lukács, *Georg Simmel*, in Kurt Gassen and Michael Landmann (eds.) *Buch des Dankes an Georg Simmel: Briefe, Erinnerungen, Bibliographie*, Berlin: Ducker and Humblot 1958, 171-176: 171.

<sup>87</sup> Conversation with the author, 9 June 2020. See in particular plates 1, 28 and 29 in Phyllis Lambert (ed.), *Mies van der Rohe in America*, Montréal: Canadian Centre for Architecture and Whitney Museum of American Art 2001: 522 ff.

<sup>88</sup> Lisette Model in: "Aperture: The Snapshot", vol. 19, no. 1 [73], 1974, 6-7.

<sup>89</sup> Conversation with the author, 9 June 2020.

<sup>90</sup> Another important text for Guidi was John A. Kouwenhoven, *Made in America. The Arts in Modern*

In this essay, after having explained and historically situated the birth of the word “snapshot” – that from the context of birds hunting was adopted by the photographic discourse in 1860 – Kouwenhoven comes to the conclusion that taking snapshots provoked a revolution in seeing, that he calls «democratization of vision», because it altered «our assumptions about what matters» by enabling people «to see *as significant* a great many things whose significance they had never seen before».<sup>91</sup> What Kouwenhoven calls «democratization of vision» perfectly defines Guidi’s mental attitude, shaped by a profound respect for all things, «an act of devotion towards things, the “things which are nothing” as Pasolini says».<sup>92</sup> Roberta Valtorta confirms that for Guidi no fragment of the world, however “empty” or “banal” it may seem, is insignificant, and it does not pertain to human beings to identify superior hierarchies of importance, that assign definitive and absolute meanings.<sup>93</sup>

Sure enough, Guidi’s encounter with overseas studies about vernacular culture, such as those by Kouwenhoven or J. B. Jackson, acquired through the debate on the snapshot, was particularly significant for his own dedication to the culture of “spontaneous” dwelling.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, Guidi specifies:

«I was lucky enough to study in Venice with Bruno Zevi who, having graduated from Harvard, introduced organic architecture and the American “vernacular” to us (*Saper vedere l’architettura, Architettura in nuce, Storia dell’architettura moderna, ecc.*).<sup>95</sup> In Italy, the interest in vernacular came later – see, for example, Andrea Emiliani’s experiences – but the first photographs I looked at were those of my uncle, which were 6x9 contact prints; those were genuine snapshots, which, as Lee Friedlander used to say, are closely related to the vernacular».<sup>96</sup>

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*Civilization*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company 1948, although it was never translated into Italian, therefore Guidi could only achieve a partial comprehension of the writing. Guidi mentioned the book in a conversation with Antonello Frongia, suggesting a possible influence of this Kouwenhoven’s text on the concept of vernacular architecture, conveyed by Guidi’s teacher Bruno Zevi during his lectures at the University of Venice (see Frongia, *Quello che resta*: 160).

<sup>91</sup> John A. Kouwenhoven, *Living in a Snapshot World*, in: “Aperture: The Snapshot”, vol. 19, no. 1 [73], 1974, 106–107.

<sup>92</sup> Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>93</sup> Valtorta, *Guido Guidi’s open photography*: 160.

<sup>94</sup> See Antonello Frongia, «*Almeno un sasso*»: note sulla geografia minima di Guido Guidi / “At Least a Stone”: Notes on Guido Guidi’s Minimal Geography, Eng. tr. Mark J. Newman, in Frongia and Moro (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Cinque paesaggi*, 90-99: 97. See also John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1984: 83-87.

<sup>95</sup> See Bruno Zevi, *Saper vedere l’architettura*, Turin: Einaudi 1948; Bruno Zevi, *Storia dell’architettura moderna*, Turin: Einaudi 1950; Bruno Zevi, *Architettura in nuce*, Venice/Rome: Istituto per la collaborazione culturale, 1960.

<sup>96</sup> Guidi quoted in Frongia and Moro, *Topography of the Landscape and of the Archive*: 105.



## Guido Guidi as bricoleur

Italo Zannier claims that without the need to be supporter of the DIY, one must admit that photography, more than any other activity, allows and inspires the *bricolage*: with a few small tools it is actually possible to obtain professional black-and-white prints even in the closed of a basement or in a temporarily adapted bathroom.<sup>97</sup> As a matter of fact in 1943, in the mythical volume *Photography. First yearbook of the photographic activity in Italy*, Ermanno Federico Scopinich highlighted the «art to make do of Italian photographers».<sup>98</sup> Guidi feels not ashamed – on the contrary he is quite proud – to describe how he sometimes compensates the lack of economic means with the recourse to *bricolage*:

«At the beginning I did not own a sophisticated camera, thus I had built myself a 20x25 wooden camera using two recycled lens, two glass bottoms, a wide angle and a normal one, that did not cover the format completely, especially when I decentred».<sup>99</sup>

An older self-built device – that he still owns – is described by Nicoletta Leonardi in her article, *The rude machine and the intractable reality*. It is composed of two plywood boxes of slightly different dimensions, so that the smaller one can slide inside the bigger. On the bigger box, there is a hole, to which a lens taken from an old copy machine has been attached with a piece of tape.<sup>100</sup> [Plate 1] Leonardi explains, that with such an obsolete instrument, the photographic act turned out to be a quite strenuous process: first, Guidi positions the bulky camera on a stool, and choses the framing and the focusing. Then, he marks the spot of the camera on the stool or on the floor with a chalk and brings it to the darkroom, where he substitutes the frame used for the focusing, with the negative, fixed to the structure with a piece of tape. Finally, he repositions the camera on the stool, and since there is no shutter, he shoots by simply removing the cap from the lens for the necessary exposure time.<sup>101</sup>

The anthropological notion of bricolage and the figure of the bricoleur assume absolute centrality in the discussion on everyday life. In the famous definition provided by

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<sup>97</sup> See Italo Zannier, *La pratica della fotografia*, Bari: Laterza 1984: 107.

<sup>98</sup> Ermanno Federico Scopinich, *Fotografia. Prima rassegna dell'attività fotografica in Italia*, Milan: Gruppo Editoriale Domus 1943: 9 (translation mine). See also Taramelli, *Viaggio nell'Italia del neorealismo*: 123-125.

<sup>99</sup> Quintavalle, *Muri di Carta*: 311 (translation mine). See also the description of the cameras used by Guidi in Appendix 2 of the present writing.

<sup>100</sup> Nicoletta Leonardi, *La macchina maleducata e l'intrattabile realtà: per una lettura media archeologica del lavoro di Guido Guidi*, in Roberto Cappai, Alessandra Franetovich and Anita Paolicchi (eds.), *Dal Medioevo ai videogames. Saggi sull'interattività e la performatività delle arti*, Pisa: Astarte edizioni 2021, 142-165: 145-146.

<sup>101</sup> Leonardi, *La macchina maleducata*: 146. I discuss the use of this tool again in chapter 1 (*Framing*).

Claude Lévi-Strauss in *La Pensée Sauvage*, the engineer «interroge l'univers» while «le bricoleur s'adresse à une collection de résidus d'ouvrages humains, c'est-à-dire à un sous-ensemble de la culture».<sup>102</sup> From a practical point of view, the bricoleur employs

«des résidus et des débris d'événements: "odds and ends", dirait l'anglais, ou, en français, des bribes et des morceaux, témoins fossiles de l'histoire d'un individu ou d'une société».<sup>103</sup>

Guidi's working method shows analogies to the practice of DIY, not only in virtue of his artisanal ability to build a functioning camera out of wood and broken glasses, but also in his aversion towards «progetti fatti a tavolino» [projects stemming from a deliberate decision]. He prefers fieldwork, in the manner of Michelangelo Antonioni, who said that in the evening he still did not know what he would film the day after.<sup>104</sup> Guidi works by taking what is close at hand, without a precise plan or a predetermined idea in mind about the subject of his takes. He is like the bricoleur because «la règle de son jeu est de toujours s'arranger avec les "moyens du bord"», as to say a set of heterogeneous tools and materials, unrestrained by a specific project. The result is thus always contingent to all the resources and occasions, that have presented themselves in the course of the actual performance. Guidi seems to speak «le langage même du bricoleur», since he collects and conserves every element according to the principle that «ça peut toujours servir».<sup>105</sup> For him everything can be the subject of a photo: «a house, a tree, a bollard».<sup>106</sup>

## Case studies: Apartment of Zoffoli Renato (1974) and Room of Salvatore Rosponti (1976)

Italo Zannier defines Guidi's work as «photography of humble things».<sup>107</sup> In his book *70 Years of Photography in Italy* he publishes two pictures taken by Guidi in the 1970s: *Apartment*

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<sup>102</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée Sauvage*, Paris: Librairie Plon 1962: 29. About the relevance of the bricolage in the everyday see also *ivi*, 26: «Dans son sens ancien, le verbe bricoler s'applique au jeu de balle et de billard, à la chasse et à l'équitation, mais toujours pour évoquer un mouvement incident: celui de la balle qui rebondit, du chien qui divague, du cheval qui s'écarte de la ligne droite pour éviter un obstacle. Et, de nos jours, le bricoleur reste celui qui œuvre de ses mains, en utilisant des moyens détournés par comparaison avec ceux de l'homme de l'art».

<sup>103</sup> *Ivi*: 32.

<sup>104</sup> Guido Guidi in conversation with Antonello Frongia, Laura Moro and Daniele DeLuigi, *IBC Emilia Romagna - IBC incontra: Guardare con insistenza*, 3 October 2019, online resource.

<sup>105</sup> Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée Sauvage*: 26.

<sup>106</sup> Guido Guidi in conversation with Margherita Guccione, Antonello Frongia and Laura Moro, Museo MAXXI Rome, July 2016, online resource.

<sup>107</sup> Zannier, *Guido Guidi. La Lunga Posa*: 6 (translation mine).

ment of Zoffoli Renato, *Emigrant, Geneva, 1974* and *Room of Salvatore Rosponi, Professor of Mathematics, Treviso, 1976* [Plates 2, 3].<sup>108</sup> Both photos – as it is the case by most of Guidi’s works – were taken without premeditation, just because the occasion turned up. Renato Zoffoli and Salvatore Rosponi were his acquaintances, and he was visiting them for different purposes rather than photographing.<sup>109</sup> In these pictures of common places, there is nothing exceptional to see and nothing has been set in pose. *Apartment of Zoffoli Renato* shows the corner of a kitchen or dining room, with a tiled floor, where we see a table, three chairs and a radiator. The squared tablecloth is crumpled, the table has not been properly cleared, and the chairs are disposed chaotically around it. Random objects stay casually on the table: two bottles, an ashtray, a radio, a magazine, what seems a used napkin or dish rag, and some further unidentifiable little objects. Another rag is hanging loose from the back of one chair. We notice that the style of the chairs does not match with the table and that they are not all identical. One dish has been left on the radiator (maybe to warm up some food?). On the wall in the background hung two calendars and two bananas. An uneven line, running vertically on the wall, connects the table to one of the calendars, then it runs straight horizontally along the wall, almost until the corner, and finally leans abruptly towards the radiator. Guidi’s calligraphy has scribbled on the image that this line is the antenna of the radio (“antenna della radio”) and that the tablecloth is a plastic-cloth (“tovaglia di plastica”). Similarly, *Room of Salvatore Rosponi* depicts a bedroom furnished with a briar-bed, a tiny night table, a blanket spread on the floor for exercising (as Guidi’s handwritten note tells us), and a fabric closet.<sup>110</sup> The photograph seems taken from one corner of the room, the perspective is very inclined and most of the image is occupied by the herringbone wood floor. Even if only a small portion of the window and of the threshold are visible, it is enough to understand that both the window and the door are opened, like the zipper of the wardrobe, letting visible the clothes hung inside. The bed is still undone, and scarce objects are spread – at times tidily, others quite chaotically – on the floor, on the night table and on the top of the closet. These two pictures speak not only about their direct owner or inhabitants, but they even mirror Italian socio-economic situation in the 1970s. If we confront them for instance with akin cross sections of everyday life by Robert Adams of the same years, the difference is astonishing [Plates 4, 5]. Although they all depict middle-class contexts, the humble settings visually described

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<sup>108</sup> Zannier, *70 anni di fotografia in Italia*: 180.

<sup>109</sup> Conversation with the author, 9 June 2020. Guidi explains that he usually avoids those situations in which he depends on the availability of others, in order to photograph a private space. He supposes that Italo Zannier chose to precisely publish these pictures, because they remembered him of his own project: Italo Zannier, *Una casa è una casa*, Pordenone: Ente Provinciale per il Turismo 1971. To take those pictures, Zannier passed off as antiquarian, to be allowed inside the private houses he photographed. Guidi admits, he would never conceive a similar plan.

<sup>110</sup> The version of this print bearing Guidi’s handwritten notation can be found in the archive of CSAC – Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione Parma (archive number C002846S).

by Guidi place themselves somehow closer to Walker Evans' interiors of farmer houses of the 1930s,<sup>111</sup> rather than to Adams' 1970s style furniture, testifying the gap between social and economic development in Italy and USA. In Evans' *Farmer's Kitchen* of 1936 we even notice the details of the plastic-tablecloth [Plate 6]. For the sake of precision, the apartment of Zoffoli was in Switzerland, nevertheless Zoffoli was an Italian emigrant, who brought with him his own traditions and habits, that imbued the place he inhabited. Borrowing the words by Michel De Certeau and Luce Giard about private spaces: «Indiscret, l'habitat avoue sans fard le niveau de revenu et les ambitions sociales de ses occupants».<sup>112</sup> In their fundamental study about *le quotidien*, the French scholars explain that «even the most modest home reveals the personality of its occupant» and that «a place inhabited by the same person for a certain duration draws a portrait that resembles this person based on objects (present or absent) and the habits that they imply». The arrangement of the furniture, and of the most various objects, such as «an open book, a newspaper lying around, a racquet, ashtrays», and so on «compose a "life narrative"» that speaks even «before the master of the house has said the slightest word».<sup>113</sup> As a matter of fact, in *La poétique de l'espace* Gaston Bachelard affirms, that it is possible to "read" a house or a room, «puisque chambre et maison sont des diagrammes de psychologie qui guident les écrivains et les poètes dans l'analyse de l'intimité».<sup>114</sup> The simple humility of the room penetrates into us, until the intimacy of the room becomes our own intimacy, «la chambre est, en profondeur, notre chambre, la chambre est en nous».<sup>115</sup> Following this kind of considerations, in his volume *Ordinary Lives*, Ben Highmore investigates our everyday relationship to things, in particular to «familiar things», with special regard to the phenomenon of «inundation», through which a symbiotic relationship between people and things is established:

«Things act on us (affect us, entice us, accompany us, extend us, assist us) and we act on things (make them, break them, adjust them, accredit them with meaning, join them together, discard them)».<sup>116</sup>

Inundation is the process through which a chair becomes our favourite chair – a thing is not to us anymore just an anonymous object among the others, but it receives our emo-

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<sup>111</sup> James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941), Boston/New York: Mariner Books 2001: n.n.

<sup>112</sup> Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard, *Espace privés*, in Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard and Pierre Mayol, *L'invention du quotidien 2. Habiter, cuisiner*, Paris: Gallimard 1994, 205-212: 206.

<sup>113</sup> de Certeau and Giard, *Espace privés* (English trans. Timothy J. Tomasik, *Private Spaces*, in *The Practice of Everyday Life. Volume 2: Living & Cooking*, University of Minnesota Press, 1998, 145-148: 145).

<sup>114</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *La poétique de l'espace*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1961, 51.

<sup>115</sup> Ivi: 203.

<sup>116</sup> Ben Highmore, *Ordinary Lives. Studies in the Everyday*, London and New York: Routledge 2011, 58.

tional investment. This reflections highlight that, if such an exchange between people and objects – or between people and the everyday spaces they inhabited – actually takes place, it is easy to understand why these pictures of rooms by Guidi inevitably urge our imagination to infer deductions on the personality of their absent inhabitants, based on the kind of things they own, the care they seem to have, or not, dedicated to furnitures arrangements and to tidiness, the more or less casual disposition of the things and so on. The picture of the bedroom of *Salvatore Rosponi* seems to provide a precise illustration of George Perec's thoughts about *la chambre* that, he claims, act on him «comme une madeleien proustienne».<sup>117</sup> Perec confers a central role to the bed, for its power to acutely reactivate his memories of the configuration and atmosphere of every place in which he has slept, starting from the remembrance of the sensations he felt as he laid on the bed and of the spatial perception he had, from the bed, of the topography of the room. Perec poses the question – that he defined of «topo-analyse» – whether to move the place of the bed inside a room, would be equivalent to move to another room.<sup>118</sup> «Le lit est» explains Perec «l'espace individuel par excellence, l'espace élémentaire du corps [...] nous n'avons qu'un lit, qui est *notre* lit. [...] On ne dort bien, paraît-il, que dans son lit».<sup>119</sup> Eventually the photograph *Apartment of Zoffoli Renato* discloses a further fruitful element of reflection with regard to the connections between Guidi's practice and *le quotidien*. As just mentioned above, he has hand-written on the surface of the print indications referring to the depicted objects – antenna of the radio and table plastic-cloth. Through this act of tautologically indicating objects already visible and iconographically recognisable, he ironises with the “specific” of photography, as Zannier notices.<sup>120</sup> In the text for the exhibition *Mario Cresci / Guido Guidi* of January 1977 at Galleria di Palazzo Galvani, in Bologna, a young Vittorio Sgarbi points out, precisely referring to this picture, how these kind of interventions by pen on photographs, rather than confining the results to photoamateur or reportage aesthetics, compare Guidi's use of words and images to the practice of a Pop Art painter such as Jim Dine. Like Dine, Guidi lays down the ambiguous and self-referring message of the word upon the evidence of the photographic data. For both Guidi and Dine, Sgarbi states, the fundamental problem seems to be how to refer to reality, how to nominate it.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Georges Perec, *Espèces d'espaces*, Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1974: 34.

<sup>118</sup> See *ivi*: 31-37.

<sup>119</sup> *Ivi*: 26.

<sup>120</sup> Zannier, *L'avanguardia di Guido Guidi*: 22.

<sup>121</sup> See Vittorio Sgarbi, *Mario Cresci - Guido Guidi. Due aspetti dell'attuale ricerca fotografica*, critical text published in the flyer of the exhibition at Galleria di Palazzo Galvani, Bologna, 15-30 January 1977, n.n.

## To write is to touch

Roberta Valtorta underlines the importance of writing in Guidi's practice, that concerns his photographs in two different ways: it is present inside the image in form of posters on the walls, signs, car plates, shop or factory signs, street signs, and graffiti; and it is juxtaposed upon the picture in form of hand written annotations, that go from the indication of the place and the date, to short notes, sentences and quotes [Plates 7, 8].<sup>122</sup> Writing allows the incursion of everyday life into the photographic image from the inside and from the outside: through the representation (*signifié*) and the medium itself (*signifiant*). On the one hand, the camera captures the words, randomly spread on the most various surfaces of the things around us – similarly as in Lee Friedlander's project *Letters from the People*<sup>123</sup> – on the other hand, the words materially colonise the concrete surface of the photograph, through Guidi's uneven calligraphy, sometimes even intentionally smudged by his finger.<sup>124</sup> Through the act of writing, he seems to accomplish a gesture of appropriation of the objects and of the space around him. He writes on single pictures, on the boxes containing the pictures, on the door of the wardrobes of his archive. [Plate 9] He writes on the walls and on small and large pieces of paper, disseminated and hung everywhere in his house. A huge transparent sheet of paper, – like the ones used in architectural drawing – fully covered with annotations, is even applied upon the windowpane in the bathroom. Thoughts, reflections, quotes from books, pieces of poetry, telephone numbers, names of people and places, dates, in form of graffiti invade the everyday surfaces of his habitat. Since the photographs belong to this everyday scenario, they are not exempted from this act of appropriation. As Marta Dahó describes, Guidi

«likes holding a pencil; the walls of his house are covered with words which are traced, or even drawn by hand [...]. The prints often bear captions written very visibly on the white border of the image. A print is not sacred; it is part of a whole, an archive, a collection of views which he has patiently been bringing together for the past forty years in order to make his world exist».<sup>125</sup>

It is important to consider, that the appropriation of the photographs as everyday objects, through the act of writing on their concrete surface, is made possible also thanks to their

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<sup>122</sup> Valtorta, *La fotografia aperta di Guido Guidi*: 159.

<sup>123</sup> Lee Friedlander, *Letters from the People*, New York: D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers 1993.

<sup>124</sup> On this topic and on the analogy between Guidi's and Friedlander's work, see Tiziana Serena, *Fotografie, testi, segni. Note sull'opera di Guido Guidi*, in: "Versants. Revista Suiza De Literaturas románicas", vol. 2, n. 68, 2021, 93-110: 97-99, 104.

<sup>125</sup> Marta Dahó, *Through the empty room. Some notes on the work of Guido Guidi*, Eng. tr. Nuria Rodriguez Riestra, in Dahó and Sire (eds.), *Guidi Guido Veramente*: n.n.

reduced dimensions. For Guidi a photograph must be an object that you can pick up and hold in your hand – as a matter of fact, he sometimes polemicises against the tendency to gigantism of a certain kind of contemporary photography. He recalls a conversation he once had with Luigi Ghirri, who claimed that photographers did not receive enough attention, and to gain more consideration, they should start calling the photographs «opere [artworks]». Guidi answered that maybe «operette [tiny artworks]» would better suit.<sup>126</sup> He is more akin to the medieval tradition of polyptychs – constituted of sequence of small paintings narrating the life of saints and martyrs – that absolved a remembering functions, rather than to the huge altarpieces that were propagandistic like an *ante litteram* form of advertising.<sup>127</sup> Of course the question of the scale opens up to multiple implications – especially in the field of photography – that now it is not possible to consider wholly. At least it is useful to remember that Claude Lévi-Strauss describes the artist as a particular maker, in-between the «savant» and the «bricoleur», who owns the ability to create copies of reality as «modèles réduits». These reduced models allow us to establish a new relationship with the object in its entirety because now it can be fully grasped in both senses of understood by mind and caught by hand, «souplesée dans la main, appréhendée d'un seul coup d'œil».<sup>128</sup> After all, Bachelard confirms that «la miniature sait emmagasiner de la grandeur. Elle est *vaste* à sa façon».<sup>129</sup>

As just mentioned, Guidi seeks physical contact with the photographs: they must be small enough to fit into a drawer like a personal experience, be taken in the hand, touched through writing and through fingers.<sup>130</sup> They are not sacred objects, they are everyday things. As Nicoletta Leonardi observes, the use of writing for Guidi is a way to draw. «Through handwriting Guidi gives voice to his desire of contact with the epidermis of the photograph».<sup>131</sup> In his essay *Profanazioni*, Giorgio Agamben explains that indeed the simplest act of profanation is accomplished by touching (from Latin ablative *contagione* «by contact»). If to consecrate (Latin *sacrare*) means to remove, to distance things from the sphere of human use, «profane [...] is the thing returned to the common use of men».<sup>132</sup> For instance Georges Didi-Huberman notices how brownish drops, that invade the paper

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<sup>126</sup> As it is well known, in musical jargon, the word “operetta” identifies a specific genre of theatre and “light opera”, that differs from the “opera” for its shorter length and amusing character. It seems that choosing this term, Guidi would like to underline the popular character of photography. About the operetta, introduced by Jacques Offenbach in the mid-nineteenth century, see Siegfried Kracauer, *Jacques Offenbach und das Paris seiner Zeit*, Amsterdam: de Lange 1937.

<sup>127</sup> Guido Guidi in conversation with Daniele De Luigi, Antonello Frongia and Laura Moro, *Guardare con insistenza*, Biblioteca IBC Bologna, 3 October 2019, Mediateca Giuseppe Guglielmi, online resource.

<sup>128</sup> Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée Sauvage*: 34-36.

<sup>129</sup> Bachelard, *La poétique de l'espace*: 195.

<sup>130</sup> Guido Guidi, Margherita Guccione, Antonello Frongia and Laura Moro in conversation, Museo MAXXI Rome, July 2016, online resource.

<sup>131</sup> Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*: 92.

<sup>132</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Profanazioni*, Rome: Nottetempo 2005: 83-85.

surface of a crucifixion (c. 1430) by Fra' Beato Angelico, work like a gestural assault to the support – like Guidi's calligraphy on the photographs – and move the representation closer to the observer, by offering the image almost in a tactile manner. From the rain of stains originates the highest visual and haptic proximity.<sup>133</sup> Didi-Huberman speaks of the attempt by the hand to see and by the eye to touch.<sup>134</sup> [Plate 10]

In his essay *Vernacular Photographies*, Geoffrey Batchen treats of the importance for photography of the simultaneous encounter between the «thingness of the visual» and the «visuality of the tactile». Batchen reminds how at the origin of photography «hand and eye must work as one» to bring a daguerreotype into visibility. The first photographic images were essentially «designed to be touched». In fact «most daguerrotypes were made to be viewed in the hand and scaled accordingly». In Batchen's opinion «it is surely this combination of the haptic and the visual, this entanglement of both touch and sight, that makes photography so compelling». <sup>135</sup> As a matter of fact, Guidi states, that he uses photography as a prosthesis, «as the blind man's cane described by Descartes: a tool to establish a relationship with reality, to touch it». <sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Georges Didi-Huberman, *Phasmes. Essais sur l'apparition*, Les Éditions de Minuit, Paris 1998 (It. tr. Chiara Tartarini, *La conoscenza accidentale*, Turin Bollati Boringhieri 1995, 123-124).

<sup>134</sup> *Ivi*: 22.

<sup>135</sup> Geoffrey Batchen, *Vernacular Photographies*, in *Idem*, *Each Wild Idea*, 56-81: 59-61.

<sup>136</sup> Guidi quoted in Luca Fiore, *Ritorno alla realtà*, in: "Il foglio quotidiano", year XXIII, no. 306, Saturday 29 and Sunday 30 December 2018, VIII. René Descartes' description of the blind man's cane appears in the first discourse, *De la lumière*, of his tractate *La Dioptrique* (see René Descartes, *La Dioptrique*, in *Idem*, *Discours de la méthode, pour conduire la raison et chercher la vérité des sciences, plus La Dioptrique et Les Météores qui sont des essais sur cette méthode*, Leiden: Maire 1637: 3-4).



# **FIRST PART**

## **An Everyday Grammar of Photography**



«[Photographs] are a grammar and [...] an ethics of seeing».<sup>1</sup>

In 1969 Italo Zannier releases in the monthly magazine *Foto&Film* a column entitled *Exercises of photography grammar*.<sup>2</sup> Each issue deals with a specific question of the photographic act, and proposes exercises to become familiar, through direct practice, with the resources and the limits of the camera. To illustrate the fifth and the seventh exercise Zannier chose photographs by Guidi, who at that time was his student at the Advanced Course in Industrial Design at IUAV.<sup>3</sup> Even in his future career as photographer Guidi never abandoned in his practice a similar method of investigation of the photographic act, based on an experimental attitude, typical of movements he feels akin to, like the Bauhaus. So, Antonello Frongia summarises Guidi's approach: «the act of photographing meant posing a visual problem and finding the cleanest possible solution, even if it meant relying on already-tried solutions by the same photographer and the photographic tradition itself».<sup>4</sup>

During the second half of the 1960s in Italy, parallel to the diffusion of neo-avant-garde movements, of New Dada, Conceptual Art and of Minimal Art, translations and writings linked to structuralism began to circulate. Especially successful were the fundamental *Cours de linguistique générale* by Fernand De Saussure (1916) as well as studies on Russian formalism, Roman Jakobson's essays, and the theories of Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco. Moreover, the texts by Claude Lévi-Strauss and Michel Foucault became decisive for the elaboration of paradigmatic experiments in art and photography, with the aim to test possibilities and boundaries of the medium.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (1973), New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux 1977: 3.

<sup>2</sup> See Italo Zannier, *Esercitazioni di grammatica della fotografia. Parte II*, in: "Foto&Film", no. 6, June 1969, 65-71; and Idem, *Esercitazioni di grammatica della fotografia. Parte III*, in: "Foto&Film", no. 8/9, August/September 1969, 16-19.

<sup>3</sup> See Zannier, *Esercitazioni di grammatica della fotografia. Parte II*: 69; Idem, *Esercitazioni di grammatica della fotografia. Parte III*: 17. The pictures have been recently republished in Guido Guidi, *Lunario 1968-99*, London: Mack books 2019: 98-99.

<sup>4</sup> Frongia, "At Least a Stone": 97.

<sup>5</sup> See Russo, *Storia culturale della fotografia italiana*: 359.

Guidi himself recalls that around 1965, when he decided to take on photography over painting and architecture, he made a lot of photographs dealing with metalinguistic investigations, questioning the photographic language by means of photography itself.<sup>6</sup> He explains that very often he just stops casually in a place to take a photo, because everywhere there is something that attracts him. He is interested in recognising the relationships among the objects and with the space. The object is part of the place, of the context, is not external to it. Photography allows him to bring structures into light by cleaning up, but carefully, without subtracting too much. He speaks of

«a cleaning of the frame, which has nothing to do with the “composition” of a photograph (this term belongs mainly to painting), but with its structure, its bones. As John Cage said: “Structure without life is dead, life without structure is unseen”».<sup>7</sup>

Guidi respects the specificity of the medium and continues to question the basic structures of the photographic act within the everyday and on everyday materials. Differently from Ugo Mulas – whose work *Verifiche* (1971-1972) by the way represents an important reference – Guidi does not proceed methodically, following a predetermined set of experiments inside the controlled context of his atelier, but simply exercises his “attentive gaze” on reality, in order to discover *within* reality itself, situations and structures, that make the specificity of the medium evident. As a matter of fact, Roberta Valtorta underlines how

«Guidi uses this syntax that, rather than being imposed by the artist, seems to mysteriously arise from reality itself and the photographer’s activity of tackling the irrevocable lack of uniformity of the urban landscape».<sup>8</sup>

The basic concepts I will employ to define what I have called “Guidi’s grammar of photography” have been inspired by Philippe Dubois’s fundamental text *L’acte photographique*, which provides me with a theoretical as well as practical grid of reference, in order to organize my analysis – borrowing Herta Wolf’s words, I dare say that: «Dubois’ Buch [...] gibt [mir] ein Werkzeug in die Hand, Fotografien zu verstehen».<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Even if, after some time, he got tired of such close field of action and felt the need to open more to the world, he admits, that you can never actually stop to investigate the medium and confront yourself with it, because every time you take a photograph, the medium reminds you of its presence (Guido Guidi and Roberta Valtorta, *Rediscovering Milan*, 11 November 2021, online resource).

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Frongia and Moro, *Topography of the Landscape and of the Archive*: 104.

<sup>8</sup> Valtorta, *Guido Guidi in Milan and Other Places*: 143-144.

<sup>9</sup> Herta Wolf, *Vorwort*, in Philippe Dubois, *Der fotografische Akt: Versuch über ein theoretisches Dispositiv*, edited by Herta Wolf, Amsterdam/Dresden: Verlag der Kunst 1998, 7-14: 12.

Dubois and Guidi share a pragmatic vision, that makes them avoid abstract reflections outside the concreteness of the photographic act.<sup>10</sup> The categories that I have adopted to describe Guidi's photographic grammar are *Framing*, *Index*, *Repetition*, and *Mistake*. The latter does not appear in Dubois's text, nevertheless it is fundamental in order to understand Guidi's working method – partially inherited from the avant-garde – based on the acceptance of the error as a source to reveal the structures of photography. Two concepts of this photographic grammar have a direct connection to real objects from everyday life: the act of *Framing* can take advantage of everyday structures such as doors, windows, mirrors, or even television sets; while the category of the *Index* presupposes the ordinary act of pointing at something with the finger, but it also allows to access further indexical signs such as the shadow.<sup>11</sup> All these things are present in Guidi's repertoire. The other two categories, *Repetition* and *Mistake* possess factual referents rather than objects. Almost no need to explain how both the repetition and the mistake have a place in the normal unfolding of everyday life, from the simple idea of an everyday routine up to Sigmund Freud's definitions of *Wiederholungszwang* and *Lapsus*.<sup>12</sup> The everyday, the daily is essentially a time, or better a form of lived temporality: the time of repetition, habit and routine, of that which comes back cyclically, and with its return engenders such an aura of familiarity around its content to subtract it from attention.<sup>13</sup> Until something out of the ordinary, like a mistake, breaks the continuum of repetition and awakes the attention, because:

«La vie – de là son caractère radical – c'est ce qui est capable d'erreur [...] la vie a abouti avec l'homme à un vivant qui ne se trouve jamais tout à fait à sa place, à un vivant qui est voué à "errer" et à "se tromper"».<sup>14</sup>

To better explain in short, the main concept, that has inspired the structure of the following chapters, I will borrow from Antonello Frongia the comparison between two self-portraits by Guidi, he has proposed in an article of 2012. [Plates I/1-2] The first image is a medium close-up of 1956-57, characterised by a traditional pose, the second is a complete view, taken with an ultra-wide-angle, in which Guidi does not look into the camera seek-

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<sup>10</sup> Dubois, *L'acte photographique*: 57. As Herta Wolf points out «Die These Dubois' ist, daß kein Foto nur als Bild betrachtet und begriffen werden kann, sondern auch und vor allem als Resultat eines Aktes. In diesem Sinn kann eine Theorie der Fotografie beziehungsweise des Fotografischen nur aus der Pragmatik des Aktes, aus dem, was sich während der Genese des Fotobildes abspielt, entwickelt werden. Wenn es denn ein Wesen, eine Essenz der Fotografie gibt, dann liegt diese darin, Akt zu sein» (Wolf, *Vorwort*, in Dubois, *Der fotografische Akt*: 9).

<sup>11</sup> See Dubois, *L'acte photographique*: 59.

<sup>12</sup> See Sigmund Freud, *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens. (Über Vergessen, Versprechen, Vergreifen, Aberglaube und Irrtum)*, Berlin: Verlag von S. Karger 1917; Idem, *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*, Leipzig/Vienna/Zurich: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag 1922.

<sup>13</sup> See Jelowski and Leccardi, *Sociologia della vita quotidiana*: 13.

<sup>14</sup> Michel Foucault, *La vie: l'expérience et la science* (1985), in Daniel Defert and François Ewald (eds.), *Michel Foucault Dits et écrits (1954-1988), vol. IV (1980-1988)*, Paris: Gallimard 1994, 763-776: 774.

ing a contact with the viewer, but is concentrated on his own environment, and shows his own hand holding the button of the shutter, thus staging the ongoing process of the photographic act, as to say, photography in its making. Frongia explains that the difference between the two pictures is clear-cut: in the first case the portrait is like a window, through which the subject establishes a direct contact with the spectator; in the second, instead, emerges the photographer who has started to reflect on the essential vocabulary of the medium, despite continuing to take direct photographs, not altered, and based on the same old optic-chemical process. The photographer's purpose is not only to show himself, but to show Guido Guidi while he is taking the photograph we are looking at. The second self-portrait says: «This is a photograph».<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See Frongia, *Il paesaggio che guarda me*: 396.

# 1. Framing

## Old Frames

In a photograph of 1957 Guidi has portrayed his father, who was a carpenter, in the act of building a window. [Plate i/1] «A photograph is also a window onto the world», states Guidi with simplicity.<sup>1</sup> On various occasions he has repeated that «a photograph starts from the edges, not from the centre».<sup>2</sup> He affirms that the main problem for a photographer lies in finding relationships among the things falling before his eyes.

«That is why the framing is a very interesting aspect of the photographer's work: if I photograph with a certain light these things in front of me, I must think about Vermeer; but if I photograph them in another manner, I can see the things [...] from another side, cut in a different way, and take them by surprise».<sup>3</sup>

As a matter of fact, the operation of cutting is inseparable from the photographic act, because a photograph is literary a slice, cut out from the space-time continuum of reality. Each photograph is a section, a portion of reality: as if the photographer worked with a knife, cutting and trimming the world every time he presses the button.<sup>4</sup> Whereas the painter works to fill up a given empty, autonomous and enclosed space, the photographer neither builds nor fills up a given empty space, but cuts out a part from a continuum. The photograph comes out by subtraction from an existing whole, because to photograph

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<sup>1</sup> See Frongia, *Il paesaggio che guarda me*: 396 (translation mine). The boy next to Guidi's father is not Guidi – who was taking the picture – but another kid almost his same age and as skinny as him. Guidi considers him as a sort of “visual replacement”.

<sup>2</sup> See for instance: Guido Guidi (ed.), *Looking On*, ex. cat. Museo della città di Ravenna and Spazio Antonio Paraggi Treviso, Rubiera: Linea di Confine per la Fotografia Contemporanea 2002: n.n. (translation mine).

<sup>3</sup> See Frongia, *Quello che resta*: 162 (translation mine).

<sup>4</sup> Dubois, *L'Acte Photographique*: 153.

means always to cut, to trim, to separate the visible.<sup>5</sup> According to Philippe Dubois the cutting act, that defines the photographic space, brings about the establishing of three relationships: first, between all things inside the photographic space and all things left outside when the picture is taken; second, between the actual frame of the photograph and its own internal composition; third, between the photographic space and the context in which the photograph is seen, as to say, the topological space of the observer. The photographic act creates four types of space: «espace référentiel, espace représenté, espace de représentation et espace topologique».<sup>6</sup> Considering the relationship between *espace représenté* and *espace de représentation*, Stanley Cavell underlines that the main difference between a painting and a photograph is that «a painting *is* a world, while a photo is *of* the world». Looking at a photograph one might ask questions about objects adjacent or behind other objects visible in the photographic space, questions that have actual answers in reality.

«The camera, being finite, crops a portion from an indefinitely larger field; continuous portions of that field could be included in the photograph in fact taken. [...] When a photograph is cropped the rest of the world, and its explicit rejection, are as essential in the experience of a photograph as what is explicitly present».<sup>7</sup>

That is due to the nature of the photographic cut, to its relationship of continuity with the real world excluded from the view: an absence, of which we know the presence, but outside, cut *out*. An invisible presence.

The relationship between inside and off-space can be made evident «*par effet de (re)centrage*», for instance including a second frame inside the main one. This creates another off-space between the two frames as well as another inside-space into the secondary frame, an «*espace cadré dans le cadre*» that acquires a peculiar visibility. Although the main photographic frame and the secondary frame share some analogies, they differ a lot in their relationship with the off-space, since the off-space of the primary frame is completely off, outside, and invisible. Nevertheless, there exist ways to introduce the off-space in the primary frame, creating a consistent continuous space, without the need to resort to manipulation or montage effects, but simply using “natural frames” already at disposal in the real space and playing with the visual angle to accept more or less off-space into the photographic space. That is what Dubois calls the «*hors-champs par fuite*», which takes advantage of «*portes, fenêtres, embrasures et ouvertures diverses donnant sur un champ*

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<sup>5</sup> Ivi 159.

<sup>6</sup> Ivi 170.

<sup>7</sup> Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed. Reflection on the Ontology of Film*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1979 (enlarged ed.): 23-24.



nouveau, inattendu ou non, situé “derrière” le champ clos de la représentation».<sup>8</sup> The perspectival view allows to pass through «*en enfilade*» a series of apertures and halfway situations, each of which with a potential off-space, that step by step narrows the visual field. In this case, the issue of the relationship between virtual exteriority and photographic field, takes place

«à l’intérieur même du cadre, dans son filé, dans sa fuite, dans la contiguïté spatio-temporelle du représenté photographique, dans la profondeur diégétique de l’énoncé. D’ont l’usage de ces jeux de découpes et d’ouvertures “naturelles” dans les compositions à l’effet narratif ou de suspens, ou d’inquiétude surréalisante».<sup>9</sup>

Guidi’s fondness for the inclusion of apertures within the composition provides his oeuvre with a true repertoire of doors, windows, portals, gates and so on. [Plates i/2-8] For the Italian photographers of Guidi’s generation – especially for those who, like him, are connected to the Italian landscape school of photography –, the expression “natural frames” calls immediately into mind the thought of Luigi Ghirri, who was intensely active not only as photographer, but also as theorist. With “natural frames” Ghirri meant all those structures that you usually find in the landscape and in architectures (arches, colonnades, doors, windows), which might even open onto nothing in particular in the environment but acquire a precise function within the photographic space.<sup>10</sup> They become like thresholds, allowing us to enter somewhere to access the outside world. Ghirri compares them to the camera viewfinder, since they make us look through, directing and putting an order to our sight. Of course, Ghirri explains that is not enough to take a photograph of a closed door, or of a door open onto the street or onto the inside of a house. The question is to go beyond the simple reproduction of a threshold and make it become an element of the space and of the time, but especially of the space: «an element of access to the view of the outside world or to a specific way of representing the outside world».<sup>11</sup> That should emerge in two directions: through the choice of the photographic frame and through the choice of the place to photograph. It is important to bear in mind, «that a photograph is essentially a device of selection and activation of [our] field of attention».<sup>12</sup> Ghirri’s suggestion to include natural frames into the photographic space was essentially an invitation to activate a mental process, to activate the sight in order to discover things inside the re-

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<sup>8</sup> Dubois, *L’Acte Photographique*: 181.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Luigi Ghirri, *Inquadrature naturali* [Lecture of 19 January 1990, second part], in Giulio Bizzarri and Paolo Barbaro (eds.), *Luigi Ghirri: Lezioni di fotografia*, Macerata: Quodlibet 2010, 159-168: 159.

<sup>11</sup> Ivi: 161 (translation mine).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. (translation mine).

ality, that were still unseen. The window is of course one of the easiest and quickest “natural frames”. Ghirri thought that

«in reality there are many “viewfinder”, many windows already outlined. It could be the television set, the cinema screen, the triumphal arch in the valley, the open gate in a pictorial representation, the open gate in reality, the wide-open door on the landing or the window in our room. There are a lot of paths already marked to look at reality. The camera, quite simply, should be an underlining of these already present directions».<sup>13</sup>

Antonello Frongia underlies that, when they appear in Guidi’s photographs, these “natural frames” always withhold some amount of the basic materiality of the depicted object, avoiding to turn into simple visual puzzles, they stimulate the viewer to activate the sight and observe beyond the surface.<sup>14</sup>

### *The “Fenestraliter” translation*

The theme of the image framed inside another image has remote origins and becomes very common in the Flemish painting during the fifteenth century, mainly in the *Annunciations*. The North-European tradition used to set this kind of sacred scene in a domestic context, to remind that the evangelic message concerns everyday life. Mary is usually depicted at home inside a room on which a bit defiladed opens a window or a door, offering the view of another room, maybe a kitchen or a little garden. Windows and doors break for an instant the focus on the main action, showing a second scene, often a landscape, that establishes a dialogue with the first scene.<sup>15</sup> From 1550 onwards Pieter Aersten, a painter based in Amsterdam, introduced in his works the device of the «image dédoublée», as to say the co-presence in a main scene of a secondary one within the same picture. The second scene is seen through a door or a window. According to Victor Stoichita, those kinds of unfolded images were real theoretical objects, since they were images built around the theme of the image. Doors and windows doubled and repeated the limits of the painted picture. Portions of the space inside the painting were cropped and framed by means of doors and windows just like the whole painting was separated from reality by the frame. In the case of holy subjects, like the *Annunciations*, the door, or the window, that allows two scenes to take place simultaneously inside the same representation, invites

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<sup>13</sup> Ivi: 162-163 (translation mine).

<sup>14</sup> See Frongia, *In Sardegna*: 1974, 2011: 16.

<sup>15</sup> Riccardo Falcinelli, *Figure. Come funzionano le immagini dal Rinascimento a Instagram*, Turin: Einaudi 2020: 126, 135.

«l'œil surpris» of the viewer to establish the connection between the different layers, as to say, the level of the ordinary everyday life with the level of the supernatural evangelic scene. The door or the window consented to translate *fenestraliter* (in the manner of a window) the transcendence into immanence. Whereas for Alberti the window was a metaphor of the perspectival method, in the Flemish paintings it represented the cut of a fragment from reality.<sup>16</sup>

Both Flemish paintings and Guidi's photographs abound with windows, doors, shutters, framings, and images inside the images. [Plates i/9-16] Even if Guidi is more acquainted to the Italian painting tradition of the Middle Ages as well as to the early Renaissance in Tuscany, Veneto, and Ferrara, than to the Flemish tradition, both this latter and the genre of the *Annunciations* influenced his practice. «As John Szarkowski says, "a photograph arises from the borders", not from the centre» explains Guidi.<sup>17</sup> This makes a huge difference between the Italian painting tradition – that instead starts from the centre – and the Dutch painting tradition, that begins from the margins.<sup>18</sup> «From Vermeer onwards, there is a visualisation of the world from the edges rather than from the centre, unlike how it was in the Renaissance with its emphasis on central perspective»,<sup>19</sup> claims Guidi, who often makes reference to the writings by Svetlana Alpers and by Daniel Arasse, as in this passage:<sup>20</sup>

«I would like to make an Atlas of doors since a door hides what is beyond it, and is a space to start thinking. My own interest in doors was enhanced by Arasse interpretation of Fourteenth century Annunciation paintings: a door is always within the painting and works as a duplicate of the Virgin Mary».<sup>21</sup>

Also Nicoletta Leonardi underlines that Guidi's interest in doors and windows has its roots in the genre of *Annunciations*.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> On this topic see: Victor I. Stoichita, *L'instauration du tableau. Métapeinture à l'aube des temps modernes*, Geneva: Librairie Droz 1999 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.): 17-34.

<sup>17</sup> See Gasparini, *Una conversazione/Guido Guidi. Prendere contatto con le cose*: online resource (translation mine).

<sup>18</sup> Guidi quoted in *ivi*: online resource.

<sup>19</sup> Guidi in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*, vol. texts: n.n.

<sup>20</sup> See Alpers, *The Art of Describing*, cit.; and Daniel Arasse, *L'Annonciation italienne. Une histoire de perspective*, Paris: Hazan 1999.

<sup>21</sup> Guidi quoted in Cestelli Guidi, *Guido Guidi, photographer*: online resource.

<sup>22</sup> Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*: 97-99.

## *The photographic space*

In the famous essay *Towards a Newer Laocoön* (1940), Clement Greenberg claims that «to restore the identity of an art the opacity of its medium must be emphasized».<sup>23</sup> He was referring to painting, advocating the reversal of the motto of the Renaissance artist, *ars est artem celare*, into *ars est artem demonstrare*, as to say: the artist should stop annihilating the material of his art, stop pretending to conceal his medium in favour of illusion.<sup>24</sup> On the contrary according to Greenberg, photography «comes into its own only insofar as it becomes transparent».<sup>25</sup> Quite funnily, Guidi's practice instead seems to restore the identity of photography by making it "opaque", in the sense that in his pictures the materiality of the medium and its technical process are never concealed, on the opposite they are often openly displayed. It is impossible not to compare a similar approach to Bertolt Brecht's pioneering conception of *episches Theater*: «Folgt die Theaterszene hierin der Straßenszene, dann verbirgt das Theater nicht mehr, daß es Theater ist».<sup>26</sup> As Guidi explains

«You can't understand the instrument if you go against its rules; you understand it by going in its direction. [...] I have to adapt to its limits, but if I'm unaware of them, then I can't take photographs».<sup>27</sup>

In this chapter I concentrate on how the act of framing can be employed to dissolve the transparency of the medium. In particular I will present a selection of Guidi's works that, using the framing potentiality of everyday objects and situations, inspire considerations about photography specificity.

In her well-known text *The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism*, Rosalind Krauss defines the «recourse to the definition of a photographic subject through the act of framing it» as «economy of the supplement». According to Krauss:

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<sup>23</sup> Clement Greenberg, *Towards a Newer Laocoon*, in: "Partisan Review", VII, no. 4, July-August 1940, 296-310, republished in John O'Brian (ed.), *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism. Vol. 1: Perceptions and Judgements: 1939-1944*, Chicago University Press, Chicago 2008, 23-38: 32.

<sup>24</sup> Greenberg, *Towards a Newer Laocoon*: 24, 34.

<sup>25</sup> Clement Greenberg, *Review of the Whitney Annual and Exhibitions of Picasso and Henri Cartier-Bresson*, in: "The Nation", 5 April 1947, republished in John O'Brian (ed.), *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism. Vol. 2 – Arrogant Purpose: 1945-1949*, Chicago: Chicago University Press 2008, 137-140: 139. About Greenberg's concept of photography as transparent medium, see also the analysis by Herta Wolf, *Greenbergs Schatten: Fotografische Medienspezifik oder Literarizität*, in Georg W. Bertram, Stefan Deines und Daniel Martin Feige (eds.), *Die Kunst und die Künste*, Berlin: Suhrkamp 2021, 337-355: 350-351.

<sup>26</sup> Bertolt Brecht, *Die Strassenszene. Grundmodell einer Szene des epischen Theaters* (1938), in Idem, *Schriften zum Theater. Über eine nicht-aristotelische Dramatik*, Berlin und Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 1957, 90-105: 92.

<sup>27</sup> Guido Guidi, Antonello Frongia, Marcello Galvani and Sabrina Ragucci, *In conversation*, in Matteo Galvani and Guido Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro, 1976-81*, London: Mack 2020: 124.

«The frame announces that between the part of reality that was cut away and [the part included in the frame] there is a difference; and that this segment which the frame frames is an example of nature-as-representation, nature-as-sign».<sup>28</sup>

Guidi too likes to play with evident frames, not hiding – sometimes even on purpose underlying – the nature-as-representation of the photograph. Roberta Valtorta points out that he often resorts to duality (inside-outside, in front-behind, open-closed, b/w and colour), to indicate that we find ourselves in the universe of images, while reality is something else.<sup>29</sup>

### *Playing with the geometry of the everyday space*

In this chapter I am focusing on a selection of works that use doors and windows as a secondary frame (or “natural frame”), overlooking, for the coherence of the argumentation, all the other numerous pictures in which Guidi indulges on close-ups of the surface, materiality, and patina of door-boards, or of details such as locks and handles. He states:

«In the openings of doors and windows, I resumed a theme I had appreciated in a famous photograph by Edward Weston – *Church Door, Hornitos, California, 1940* – and that I also explored in provincial houses: the perspectival framing and the face/façade».<sup>30</sup>

My aim is to show how Guidi plays with the framing qualities of doors and windows, for example, using their casings to frame a person, like in a portrait, or to introduce elements from the off-space into the main photographic space.<sup>31</sup> As a matter of fact his passion for windows and doors derives also from the consideration that they «have the same rectangular proportions as a photograph, they are a sort of photograph in some sense».<sup>32</sup> Guidi declares to conform to the principles enunciated by Leon Battista Alberti in *De Pictura*: «First of all, on the surface on which I am going to paint, I draw a rectangle of whatever size I want, which I regard as an open window through which the subject to be painted is

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<sup>28</sup> Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism* (1981), in Eadem, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, 87-118: 115.

<sup>29</sup> Roberta Valtorta's text in *Due fotografie per il Teatro Bonci*, with pictures by Luigi Ghirri and Guido Guidi, Cesena: Silarte 1984, n.n.

<sup>30</sup> Guido Guidi and Antonello Frongia, *Architecture that does not wish to self-destroy*, in Andrea Simi (ed.), *Le Corbusier. 5 Architectures – Guido Guidi*, Heidelberg: Kehrer Verlag 2018, 109-113: 112.

<sup>31</sup> Guido Guidi, *Lab-based Course on Photography I*, academic year 2020/2021, single cycle degree programme in Architecture, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna, Campus of Cesena, lecture of 17 June 2020, n.n. Guidi's work is plenty of examples of this practice.

<sup>32</sup> Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*, vol. texts: n.n.

seen».<sup>33</sup> Guidi uses *inside framing* quite often in his photographic practice, even if he does not create additional frames in the photographic space on purpose, but simply exploits already existing frames offered by everyday situations and objects, like windows, doors, cupboards and so on. [Plates i/2-14]

Even if doors and windows are related constructive elements, they acquire a different value as matrixes of images. Through a window you can observe, but through a door you can go in and out. The window, not the door, is the metaphor of the painting for Alberti. Nevertheless, you can also look outside through a door. In this case the door functions like a pseudo-window. [Plates i/2, 7] The sight can even be directed towards the inside from the outside. But the specific characteristic of a door, that differentiated it from the window, is the possibility to observe a room from another room, the inside from the inside. [Plates i/9-11]

«Si l'embrasure de la fenêtre fonctionne comme matrice de toute peinture, et particulièrement, à partir du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, comme matrice du paysage, l'embrasure de la porte, en revanche, vise, inébranlablement, l'espace domestique. La porte peut fonctionner comme matrice de la peinture d'intérieur».<sup>34</sup>

## Doors

Although the need to define such a common and ordinary object might seem foolish, I find it stimulating to shortly resort to some considerations by Giorgio Agamben about the door. Agamben reminds us that the door has two meanings: on the one hand it means an aperture, an access, while on the other hand it means the fixture that closes the aperture. So, in the first sense the door allows the passage, in the second is a dividing structure. The door as aperture is defined on the left and right sides by the wall, on the upper side by the architrave and on the lower side by the threshold. The door as fixture is an object realized in a variety of materials and fixed to the wall through hinges, by means of which the door opens and closes, allowing or impeding the passage.<sup>35</sup> We are so used not to distinguish between the two types of door that we forget how opposite their function can be: we may infer that the door-fixture has been invented in order to control the door-threshold, to lim-

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<sup>33</sup> «La prima cosa nel dipingere una superficie, io vi disegno un quadrangolo di angoli retti grande quanto a me piace, il quale mi serve per un'aperta finestra da la quale si habbia a veder la historia» (Leon Battista Alberti, *De Pictura* (c. 1435), in *Idem*, It. tr. Cosimo Bartoli, *Della Architettura, della Pittura e della Statua*, Bologna: Nell'Istituto delle Scienze 1782: 296; Eng. tr. Cecil Grayson, *On Painting and Sculpture*, London: Phaidon Press 1972: 67).

<sup>34</sup> Stoichita, *L'instauration du tableau*: 71.

<sup>35</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Quando la casa brucia. Dal dialetto al pensiero*, Giacometti & Antonello, Macerata 2002: 26-27.

it its unconditioned aperture.<sup>36</sup> The Latin has at least four words to indicate the door: *foris* (or *fores*), survived as adverbial form in Romance tongues: *foris, foras, fuori* (outside). It did not indicate the door as object, but the entrance to the *domus*, intended not in the sense of the edifice, but as the space of the family. *Foris* stays in opposition to *domi* and defines all that stays outside the sphere of the family. *Porta* (cfr. gr. *peiro*, to go through) evokes the idea of passage, while *ostium* indicates an aperture (like in the Italian word *uscio*, from *os*, mouth). Finally, *iauna* – linked to Janus, the *deus bifrons* – describes the threshold looking in both directions. The idea is still of a passage, whereas only *foris* underlines the division between inside and outside. The outdoor space (It. *fuori*) is separated from the indoor space by means of a border.<sup>37</sup>

The first volume of Guidi's book *Per strada 1980-1994* starts with the black and white picture of a half open door: *Via Montanari, Cesena, 1980*. [Plate i/15]<sup>38</sup> Even if the door is held open by a piece of wood, we cannot see the inside, that remains hidden in the dark. The door stays on the threshold between light and shadow, it divides at the same time as it unites the darkness of the inside and the sun light of the outside.

Agamben proposes to consider the threshold not only as a place to pass through, but as a place of mutations – for instance between light and shadow, as in this picture –, recalling that the German word *Schwelle* is similar to the verb *schwellen* (to grow, to swell up), which suggests change, passage, tides.<sup>39</sup> [Plate i/16] Without the need to bring up such a complex notion as the rite of passage,<sup>40</sup> Guidi confirms that the image of the door has maintained a deep suggestive power on him since his childhood.

«I used to like to photograph the doors and gates of the streets in the centre. I don't know whether these doors are the ones that in some sense pushed me away when I was a child, the doors of power, the doors of the city that in some ways rejected me as a boy born in the countryside. [...] But I have always photographed doors with the idea of starting from the detail: photographing a house starting from the door, the threshold, the window. It might be a sort of return to a visual simplicity, a yearning to return being a child amongst children».<sup>41</sup>

Among the images that have impressed themselves in Guidi's mental archive, he credits for instance August Sander's portray of a young girl, hanging out the half-opened win-

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<sup>36</sup> Ivi: 30.

<sup>37</sup> Ivi: 33-35.

<sup>38</sup> Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n. The three volumes of pictures truly abound with photographs of doors.

<sup>39</sup> Agamben, *Quando la casa brucia*: 31-32.

<sup>40</sup> See Arnold van Gennep, *Les rites de passage*, Paris: Émile Nourry 1909.

<sup>41</sup> In Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*, vol. texts: n.n.

dow of a caravan-door, pictured on the cover of *Photography Until Now* by John Szarkowski, that Guidi owns in his library.<sup>42</sup> [Plate i/17]

The incorporation of pre-existing frames from the real world is a procedure that connect Guidi's practice to the example of old masters he admires like Eugène Atget. Impossible not to compare *Teatro Bonci Cesena. 21 Aprile 1984. Guardando verso Ovest* with, for example, Atget's *A La Biche, Rue Geoffrey-Saint-Hilaire* (1905) as well as with the many various photographs of café and shop-doors included in the series *Art dans la viex Paris*.<sup>43</sup> [Plates i/18, 19] These photographs by Guidi and Atget share the same arrangement, with the rectangle of the door, containing the smaller rectangle of the windowpane, at the centre of the image. The figures of both photographers are partially mirrored by the glass, where they confuse with the shapes of the people on the opposite side.<sup>44</sup> On the glass surface of the door of the Bonci theatre, outside and inside merges in such a confuse dream-like formless reality – as if seen under water – that it becomes impossible to understand if Guidi were actually photographing from outside or inside the building. The sight of the children peeping in from the other side of the door meets the sight of Guidi photographing.

Traces of more or less evident tributes to the «*photographe des photographes*»<sup>45</sup> can be detected in a lot of Guidi's works. Compare for instance Atget, *Ancien Collège de Chanac, 12 rue de Bièvre, Paris, 1900*<sup>46</sup> with Guidi, *Per Anna, TV, 1979* [Plates i/20, 21] or Atget, *Versailles, maison close, Petite Place, March 1921*<sup>47</sup> with Guidi, *Piazzola sul Brenta, 1985*.<sup>48</sup> [Plates i/22, 23] In all these pictures, the structure of the door or of the window isolates the portrayed figures, functioning like a secondary frame inside the main photographic space.

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<sup>42</sup> Guidi, *Lab-based Course on Photography I*: n.n. Cf. August Sander, *Mädchen im Kirmeswagen*, 1923-1926 (Group: Die Großstadt; Portfolio: VI/37 Fahrendes Volk – Jahrmarkt und Zirkus; Number: VI/37/1), was seen by Guidi in John Szarkowski, *Photography Until Now*, ex. cat. The Museum of Modern Art New York and The Cleveland Museum of Art, New York: The Museum of Modern Art 1989: front cover and 241; already published in Gunther Sander (ed.), *August Sander Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts. Portraitphotographien 1892-1952*, Munich: Schirmer/Mosel 1980: 349.

<sup>43</sup> See for instance the selection of works proposed in Sylvie Aubenas and Guillaume Le Gall (eds.), *Atget - Une rétrospective*, Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France / Hazan 2007: 201.

<sup>44</sup> The role of reflections in Atget's work would need a discourse apart since historians still do not agree about this point. On the one hand Atget is considered a true master of mirroring effects, able to calculate so precisely the position of his camera in order to create even a self-portrait through photo-montage, by means of superimposing reflected images, while on the other hand the idea of Atget as primitive and naïve accounts the presence of his reflected image as an unintentional error, resulting from a mix of negligence, luck and chance. See for instance: Clément Chéroux, *Le contexte de spéculation. Sur quelques photographies de vitrines*, in Aubenas and Le Gall (eds.), *Atget. Une rétrospective*, 84-93; and John Szarkowski, *Eugène Atget*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art 2012.

<sup>45</sup> Olivier Lugon, *L'histoire de la photographie selon Eugène Atget*, in Aubenas and Le Gall (eds.), *Atget. Une rétrospective*, 104-117: 111.

<sup>46</sup> From the series *Art dans le Vieux Paris*.

<sup>47</sup> The picture was one of the three photos by Atget published in: André Breton (ed.), *La Révolution Surréaliste*, no. 7, year 2, 15 June 1926: 28.

<sup>48</sup> Guido Guidi, *Lab-based Course on Photography I*: n.n.



## Windows

I will now consider more thoroughly the aforementioned *Per Anna, TV, 1979* [Plate i/21] in comparison with Atget's *Ancien Collège de Chanac, 12 rue de Bièvre, Paris, 1900* [Plate i/20]. In Guidi's photograph, his daughter Anna looks out the window downwards, probably at him on the street, taking her picture and looking upwards at her from below. Atget instead, although photographing someone looking out the balustrade of the first floor, apparently has not taken the picture from bottom up – in accordance with the most obvious position of a photographer in the street – but, as suggested by the straight angle of view, from the same level as the subject, as if he had placed his camera on the first floor of the opposite building.

Both Anna and the girl in Atget's photograph emerge from the dark space of the invisible room behind their back. In both images the window selects a uniform black rectangle of space inside the irregular wall surface, marked by various signs of deterioration, such as drippings, stains, and efflorescence. Guidi's photograph appears more disorienting, since the window, from which Anna is leaning out, wanders inside the wall surface like on a white page, with no landmark. Atget instead – faithful to a typological criterion to inventory old Parisian buildings – has included a lot of details of the facade.<sup>49</sup> The centre of the photographic space is occupied by the statue of the Archangel Michael, of which the girl at the window constitutes a sort of counterpart.<sup>50</sup> In Guidi's picture, on the contrary, we see no detail of the building, we have neither topological nor topographical references, apart from stains on the wall, and Guidi handwritten notation: TV – as to say Treviso, a city in Veneto. But if we look just at the image, ignoring the caption, the window loses any connection to the context and becomes almost abstract, floating in a two-dimensional surface; were it not for the structure of the iron frame of the shutters that projects itself forward, towards the foreground, the three-dimensionality would totally be gone. The wall fills up the greatest part of the photographic space functioning like a *pass-partout* around Anna's portrait. The window cuts out a portion of space from a continuum creating a discontinuity in the uniformly indistinct weave of the wall. Two stains – or better scraped areas – just underneath the windowsill resemble clouds, thus Anna appears to

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<sup>49</sup> Atget had the ambition of photographing the whole city belonging to the so called *vieux Paris*. The series *Art dans le vieux Paris* began in 1898 and lasted until his death in 1927, occupying the core of his oeuvre and comprising a detailed study of the architectures and decorations of the old town. In this corpus of works Atget privileges an approach that later will be defined *documentary style*. «Cette immense documentation sur le vieux Paris amènera Atget à créer des typologies très précises. Ainsi, les éléments décoratifs d'un côté, et les monuments, de l'autre, sont divisés par types dans des albums distincts. *Les Fontaines, Les Portes, Les Heurtoirs, Les Escaliers, ou Église Saint-Gervais-et-Protais, Notre-Dame*, par exemple, constituent des albums de référence qui structurent la série sur *l'Art dans le vieux Paris*» (Guillaume Le Gall, *Un photographe archéologue*, in Aubenas and Le Gall (eds.), *Atget. Une rétrospective*, 34-50: 44).

<sup>50</sup> Klaus Honnef (ed.), *Eugène Atget (1857-1927). Das alte Paris*, Cologne/Bonn: Rheinland-Verlag/Halbet Verlag 1978: 138-139.

lean out from a window “floating in the sky”. This is one of the rare occasions in which Guidi was pointing his camera upwards, whereas he usually tends to direct his view and his lens downwards, onto the soil, the earth.<sup>51</sup>

To better comprehend Guidi’s approach within the broader horizon of the history of photography, I would like to briefly summarise some facts related to the role of the window in the visual arts. Almost every history of photography reproduces as the world’s first photograph an image of 1826 by Nicéphore Niépce, usually titled *View from the window at Le Gras* or, in French, *Paysage à Saint-Loup de Varennes*. It presents a view from Niépce’s studio window, looking out over a courtyard and buildings.<sup>52</sup> Also Daguerre around 1838 made two views of the Boulevard Temple from the window of his studio.<sup>53</sup> Obviously the window had a central role at the beginning of the photographic era because it consented access to sun light for enough long interval of time (in June 1840 a table of exposure times was prepared by Daguerre’s assistant: these times ranged, depending on the season and quality of light, from four and half to sixty minutes).<sup>54</sup> Moreover, we must not forget that in the painting tradition, the window functions as matrix of the landscape. If in a painting, the frame divides the space of the representation from everything else that is not representation but reality, defining a new world by separating it from the real world, likewise the aperture of the window in the wall separates the view of the outside from the inside.

According to Victor Stoichita the window is the element of reality more similar to a painting.<sup>55</sup> The painted window catalyses the pictorial genre of the landscape, because the rectangle of the window updates the dialectic between inside and outside, from whose opposition the landscape-painting is born. In short, the window turns the outside into landscape. In the Venice of the seventeenth century, the painting is like a second nature, that goes beyond nature thanks to imitation. It is fundamental that the cut takes place and that it is visible, so that nature can be perceived as a painting. Such cut is provided by the window-frame, that prepares the observer to the contemplation of a specific pictorial object: the landscape. It would be too much to suppose that the whole of landscape-painting is painting through the window, nevertheless the motive is widespread and also influences the relationship between frame and landscape-painting, independently from the presence of the window. The window, by isolating the landscape, proposes it as a new to-

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<sup>51</sup> As we will see in the last chapter (*Humus*).

<sup>52</sup> Batchen, *Burning with Desire*: 123.

<sup>53</sup> Ivi: 133.

<sup>54</sup> Ivi: 135.

<sup>55</sup> Stoichita, *L’instauration du tableau*: 58 ff.

tality. The painted window is the remain of an interior from which the landscape detaches itself, but also through which it defines itself and becomes possible.<sup>56</sup>

Coming back to Guidi, besides photographing many houses from the outside, he takes a lot of photographs of windows seen from the inside. According to Nicoletta Leonardi, those images arise from a double need: on the one hand, to represent what you see from the inside of a window designed by a surveyor, as to say, which part of the landscape the surveyor has unwittingly framed through his construction (a construction, that sometimes actually contributes to degrade the same landscape it is framing); on the other hand, to project towards the outside the mechanism of perception. They are photographs in which the room appears as counterpart of the camera, where the window is the eye, the lens. The idea is to draw a parallel among the house, the camera and the photographer, this latter intended as a body capable of perceptive abilities.<sup>57</sup> [Plates i/24-26]

In his description of Guidi's works from the period 1969-1977 – included in the encyclopaedia of photography, released by the Italian publisher Fabbri in 1979 – Arturo Carlo Quintavalle identifies in the window a key protagonist of Guidi's narration of a local reality, substantially without date and without specific class levels, an investigation on duration of spaces and times in a standardised province.<sup>58</sup> The window is photographed from the outside, with open shutters and the rug hanging out like a tongue. Or it is seen from the interior of an ordinary bedroom. The window can be like an eye on the world, and through the window the light comes in. From the inside, you can read the outside, through the wide-open window, or through the dotted veil of the closed roller shutter.<sup>59</sup> [Plates i/27-29] As a matter of fact, in a conversation with Antonello Frongia, Guidi reminds us, that according to Giulio Paolini, you truly get the real perception of the world, not when you look through the window, but only after you have closed it.<sup>60</sup>

Speaking of which, two negatives on paper made by Guidi in the Spring of 1981 come to mind: *Ronta, Italy, 19 May 1981*. [Plates i/30, 31] They depict the closed window of his studio in Ronta seen from the interior and display the typical effect of tone reversal. After having been buried in Guidi's archive for more than thirty years, they were first shown to the public in 2014, on the occasion of his retrospective at the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson in Paris.<sup>61</sup> Nicoletta Leonardi has recently described the genesis of these pictures in a essay aimed at demonstrating a media-archaeological attitude in Guidi's

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<sup>56</sup> Ivi: 62-69.

<sup>57</sup> Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*: 97-99.

<sup>58</sup> Quintavalle, *Guido Guidi. Album 1969-1977*: 2318.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> See Frongia, *Il paesaggio che guarda me*: 405.

<sup>61</sup> See Dahó and Sire (eds.), *Guidi Guido Veramente*: 30-31. After Paris, the exhibition, featuring Guidi's oeuvre from 1959 to 2014, travelled to Huis Marseille Museum voor Fotografie Amsterdam and Museo d'Arte della Città di Ravenna.

practice. To take these photographs, he used a self-built camera, supporting big format negative up to 50x60 cm, made of recycled materials. The adoption of such an improper instrument, unable to deal with backlight, has turned the brilliance of the light into a dark zone, “burned”. Leonardi compares Guidi’s rudimental assembled camera to a time machine, that by bringing back the photographic practice to its “primitive” and unstable dimension, problematises the linear narration of the invention of photography, in favour of an idea of history as co-presence of different overlapping temporalities. Guidi’s experimental attitude and the pictures obtained recall the pioneering experiments carried out by William Fox Henry Talbot, who in 1835 was able to achieve the first photographic negatives of the history, depicting the interior of a window of his country residence, the Lacock Abbey in Wiltshire.<sup>62</sup> [Plate i/32] From Talbot’s notebooks emerges clearly, that «his first photographs were the result of a lengthy series of experiments based on the available knowledge, which had to be (re)combined in order to reach a successful result».<sup>63</sup> If in 1839, Talbot proudly announced, photography ability to reproduce with accuracy especially the effects of light and shadow, Guidi describes his own images, in fact, as a meditation on the relationship between light and shadow. Nevertheless, it seems, that their experimental attitudes point in opposite directions: whereas Talbot’s aim was to achieve a medium able to equal or even surpass the drawing skill of the human hand, on the contrary Guidi is not particularly concerned with a successful output of his actions, but rather with acquiring practical knowledge on the technical boundaries of the medium, by putting himself in the shoes of a primitive photographer. Thinking retrospectively about that experience, he also insinuates a connection to contemporary art:

«I photographed the window using an extremely low quality lens, making negatives directly on 40x50 cm paper, where the light coming from the window (black as being a negative) glared inside the photogram, especially on the edges of the window itself. It was a sort of critical re-interpretation of the homage to the structure of photography that Duchamp paid in *Fresh Widow* (1920), by covering in black leather the frames of a window, transforming the glass into a matt surface and the window into a sort of negative, where on the contrary the light – or better, the shadow – does not glare».<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> See Leonardi, *La macchina maleducata*: 147-148. On the theme of Guidi’s self-built devices, see also the Introduction.

<sup>63</sup> Herta Wolf, *Nature as Drawing Mistress*: 120. In this essay, Wolf points out, that those early photographic experiments were actually in debt to «a number of specialised skills and fields of knowledge: for example, glassmaking, lens grinding, achromatic optics, and [...] chemistry» (ivi: 122).

<sup>64</sup> Guido Guidi in a conversation with Antonello Frongia, translation by Antonello Colloded, in Guido Guidi, *Verum Ipsum Factum. Il portale di Carlo Scarpa allo Iuav*, Venice: Skinnerboox 2017, n.n.

Marcel Duchamp's *Fresh Widow* of 1920 was the first work to be signed by his feminine alter-ego Rose Sélavy, whom he invented in New York in the same year.<sup>65</sup> [Plate i/33] The little "semi-ready-made" – as Arturo Schwarz called it – was a miniature replica of a standard French-style window, made by a carpenter in New York. Duchamp completed it by replacing the glass panes with panes made of leather, which he insisted should be shined every day like shoes.<sup>66</sup> Apart from the pun of the title, that offers a multiplicity of meanings, the motif of the window/widow might be "seeing prohibited", because the blank and black panes cut off the promise of a revelation by seeing through the window.<sup>67</sup> The blind window is considered Duchamp's response to the problem of negating the spatial illusionism of the *perspectiva artificialis* based on Euclidean geometry.<sup>68</sup> On his use of windows, Duchamp clarified himself in an unpublished interview of 1953:

«I used the idea of the window to take a point of departure, as... I used a brush, or I used a form, a specific form of expression, the way oil paint is. [...] See, in other words, I could have made twenty windows with a different idea in each one».<sup>69</sup>

## *Mirrors & Windows*

In applying the framing functions of the afore mentioned everyday "devices", Guidi does not disdain to propose more or less evident considerations on photography specificity. He often remembers MoMA's exhibition *Mirrors and Windows* (1978), curated by John Szarkowski, as theoretical background. As Szarkowski clarifies in his essay, with the two categories of mirror and window he meant two different although usually coexisting «conceptions of what a photograph is». On the one hand a photograph can be considered like «a mirror, reflecting a portrait of the artist who made it», while on the other hand a photograph can be «a window, through which one might better know the world».<sup>70</sup> Szarkowski associates the first kind of approach to the work of Alfred Stieglitz whereas the latter to Eugène Atget.<sup>71</sup> Not surprisingly Guidi, who has often recognised Atget as

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<sup>65</sup> See Alice Goldfarb Marquis, *Marcel Duchamp. The Bachelor Stripped Bare. A Biography*, Boston: MFA Publications 2002: 153.

<sup>66</sup> See Anne D'Harnoncourt and Kynaston McShine (eds.), *Marcel Duchamp*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art 1973: 291.

<sup>67</sup> See Marquis, *Marcel Duchamp*: 153-154.

<sup>68</sup> See Herbet Molderings, *Kunst als Experiment. Marcel Duchamps »3 Kunststopf-Normalmaße«* (Eng. tr. John Brogden, *Duchamp and the Aesthetics of Chance. Art as Experiment*, New York/Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2010: 31).

<sup>69</sup> Duchamp quoted in D'Harnoncourt and McShine (eds.), *Marcel Duchamp*: 295.

<sup>70</sup> John Szarkowski, *Mirrors and Windows. American Photography since 1960*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art 1978: 25.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

one of his masters, seems more likely to consider a photograph as a window, projected towards the exterior, rather than as a mirror, reflecting his introspective view. In his photographs, he prefers to depict the world without charging it with psychological issues, even if nobody can suppress his own biography while taking a picture: as a matter of fact, already the choice of the subject or the angle of view reveals something about the maker, as we will see in the second part of the present work.

Yet, Guidi is more interested in visuality than in psychology. Of course, he admits the impossibility to avoid every inherent metaphoric message in a photograph, because everything has a metaphoric significance, that the viewer might perhaps discover.<sup>72</sup> Even his mirrored self-portraits do not particularly indulge on introspection. The mirror simply reflects Guidi's exterior image: a photographer taking a photo using a cumbersome field camera on a tripod, but it remains silent about his thoughts or feelings. Guidi does not use the self-portrait as a means to explain himself to the viewer, but just to state his presence, like when he includes his own shadow in the photograph: he is there like anything else in the picture.<sup>73</sup> In a sense it could be claimed, that mirrors in Guidi's photographs function like windows, since they lose their self-reflective, introspective power.

Take for instance *Ronta, Italy, 9 September 1981*: in this picture Guidi seems to gather all the basic elements, that make possible the act of framing: the lens, the window, the door, the mirror. [Plate i/34] The scene is seen through the round hole of a black silhouette which advises us that we are looking through the camera lens. To be precise, we are looking through the copy-machine lens – attached to the already described self-built camera – that does not completely cover the surface of the negative. What's more, Guidi has intentionally omitted the rectangular mask, usually placed between lens and film. In so doing, he is not pretending that this is not a representation, on the contrary, he is laying bare the conventional aspects of the photographic process, by reminding us that the original image, generated by the camera lens, is not rectangular but circular.

In the circular image, we see a rectangular mirror – whose geometry is slightly deformed to a scalene trapeze because it is leaning against the wall behind it – that reflects the figure of Guidi with his rudimental camera in the act of taking the picture in front of an open window, through which it is possible to glimpse the canopy of a tree. There are two open doors, one on the right edge of the picture, and the other on the left. The right door opens onto another room, where the partial shape of a white commode appears from the darkness. Instead, we cannot see the room behind the left door because it remains outside the photographic space. Its off-space is nevertheless present, thanks to a beam of light in the form of a small triangle, that enters the scene from the left. We might refer the trian-

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<sup>72</sup> Conversation with the author, 14 April 2022.

<sup>73</sup> The theme of Guidi's cast shadow in his photographs is treated in chapter 2 (*Index*) of the present writing.

gle to the perspectival cone, but also to the light rays depicted by Renaissance painters in the *Annunciations*, evoked furthermore by the intimate atmosphere of the room, which is strangely empty. On the floor, Guidi left a white piece of paper with the date of the shot (9 September 1981), to playfully recall the traditional cartouche of the paintings, bearing the artist's signature and the date.

It is also interesting to notice that the mirror reflects Guidi taking the picture with his self-built plywood camera – hidden under the black cloth – placed not on a tripod, but on a box on a stool, creating a curious sculpture out of everyday items, and making photographing an everyday practice in the very sense of the term, almost amateurish.<sup>74</sup> Remembering Szarkowski's exhibition, we can eventually infer, that Guidi here physically interprets the position of the photographer in between the window (behind him) and the mirror (in front of him). Interesting enough however, he is neither facing the mirror, nor giving his back to the window but, with his head slightly bowed to look into the camera, he stays in profile both to the mirror and the window, thus in a certain sense neither siding the "photograph as mirror" nor the "photograph as window" approach.

It seems moreover important to bear in mind that although the mirror, just like the photograph, establishes an indexical relationship to the things it reflects, such relationship last only as long as the object stays in front of it. Differently as the photosensitive surface, the mirror is not able to capture "permanently" the image of the reality it reflects. As soon as the object is not present anymore, the mirror remains just an empty rectangle.<sup>75</sup> A photograph instead requires the presence of the referent only at the moment of the shot, but then it holds the image of the object even in its absence. Yet, mirrors introduce the off-space into the main photographic space. It can be off-space completely outside the photographic cut, or it can be off-space internal to the cut, maybe a portion of the space not visible due to the chosen point of view. The mirror, as a fragment of the off-space, takes its own place into the visual field, inserting a visual presence from the outside. The position of the mirror in the visual field can create zones of indistinction, where fragments of the off-space are so blended into the main photographic space, that is not possible to distinguish them anymore. «Dans le deux cas, on voit bien qu'il s'agit principalement de *multiplier le regards* à l'intérieur du champ».<sup>76</sup>

I cannot end this short selection of mirror-photographs without showing one last puzzling example I found in Guidi's private archive: *P. Civran, 1970*. [Plate i/35] The Civran Palace was a temporary seat of the course of Urban Planning at the University Institute of Architecture in Venice, where Guidi was working as photographer and photo-

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<sup>74</sup> See my Introduction and Leonardi, *La macchina maleducata*: 146.

<sup>75</sup> See Stoichita, *L'instauration du tableau*: 249 ff.

<sup>76</sup> Dubois, *L'Acte Photographique*: 184.

lab technician, before the faculty relocated to Villa Albrizzi in Preganziol (Treviso).<sup>77</sup> In the diptych we see a mirror, that reflects Guidi's hand in the act of releasing the button of the shutter, his camera on the tripod and some figures of fishes, evidently depicted in the mosaic on the wall facing the mirror. The two almost identical photographs, to recall the tradition of the stereoscopic views, were taken in the bathroom of the faculty. The mosaic of the wall behind the mirror creates a paradoxical discontinuous continuity with the mosaic of the opposite wall reflected by the mirror. This happens because the dimension of the tiles is different due to perspectival distortion. Yet the continuous discontinuity between the space photographed directly and the off-space, introduced indirectly by the mirror, engenders the first moment of perplexity in the viewer. This is accentuated by the presence of fishes inside the mirror, but not in the mosaic all around it. This fact makes the rectangular space of the mirror resemble a fish tank, containing the fishes, the camera and Guidi's forearm. In the slightly surreal scene that takes place, a part of the real Guidi occupies the same space inhabited by depicted fishes: in the area of the tank fish-mirror reality and representation mingle. But the presence of the camera and the gesture of pressing the button performed by the photographer remind us, that this is all just a representation. By the way, Guidi remembered me, during one of our conversations, that «photography is always surrealist, even if it is realist»<sup>78</sup> – I would suggest, *precisely because it is realist*.

## *Wrong frames*

Nicoletta Leonardi claims that the whole of Guidi's practice is characterised by his appreciation of the error in vernacular photography and in primitive photography of the nineteenth century, and by his approach open to listening, learning and interrogation, that avoids to over-control the process of the image generation.<sup>79</sup> The importance of the mistake in Guidi's practice, his acceptance and apparently *searching for* the error as a source of knowledge, his conception of the failure as an experience that can produce unexpected "successful" results, is such a vast subject to deserve to be treated extensively. I therefore dedicate chapter 4 (*Mistake*) to this issue. Nevertheless, in the present chapter, I would like to anticipate the observation of a couple of examples, in which Guidi plays with the potentiality of, what I would call, *wrong framing*. As it turns out, his avoidance of irony does

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<sup>77</sup> Conversation with the author, 14 April 2022. Nevertheless, Guidi's memory and his note on the backside of the picture might not be precise about the year. It is true, that the faculty of Urban Planning was based in Palazzo Civran, but only from January to December 1971. (See Martina Carraro, *Cronache dai Tolentini: studenti, docenti, luoghi 1964-1975*, in: "Giornale IUAV", no. 110, 2012, 1-16: 13).

<sup>78</sup> Conversation with the author, 14 April 2022.

<sup>79</sup> See Leonardi, *La macchina maleducata*: 155.



not prevent him to act sometimes like a little pest towards the expectations of a “correct” use of framing.

Playing with the geometry of everyday “natural frames”, Guidi does not care to avoid obstructions or daring cuts, that compromise the completeness of the framed subject and frustrate the observer’s wish for a “beautiful” composition. For instance, in *Treviso, 1980* [Plate i/36] the border of the frame created by the balustrade runs exactly over the eyes of the portrayed couple, cutting off the top of their heads from the space, framed by the balustrade itself. The proportions of the white bar of the balustrade resemble those of the photographic border, as if we were truly looking at a photograph inside a photograph. The half-cut heads look then all the funnier, as if the off-space were still visible, while it protrudes out of the photographic space, due to an unsuccessful, not sharp enough, photographic cut.

The second example – *Treviso-Venezia, train, 1979* [Plate i/37] – instead shows a case of obstruction. The sight of the landscape, framed by the train window, is blocked by the body of the woman, who stands in the middle of the view. Nevertheless, the picture provides a good example of «image dédoublée», where the main scene takes place inside the train, at the same time as the secondary scene, that takes place in the landscape outside, thanks to the mediation of the window frame. Like in the Flemish paintings described by Victor Stoichita, the window frame functions as matrix of the landscape or, better said, the window frame would function as matrix of the landscape, if it were not for the obstructing presence of the woman.

Both aforementioned photographs appeared in the photographic book of recent publication, *Di sguincio*. Here Guidi presents a selection of his works from the 1970s: they are small-format black-and-white snapshots, taken without a tripod, but holding the camera in the hand, with a very direct, straightforward, unconventional approach, «apparently without any concern for the aesthetic outcome».<sup>80</sup> A communal trait of these pictures is the casual, careless attitude towards the “rules” of photographic framing. [Plate i/38] Antonello Frongia says that, the way Guidi used the camera «brings to mind the boxing term “low blows”», because almost all portraits, rather than an encounter with the people, seem to take the form of a collision.<sup>81</sup> The harsh light of the flash and the extreme close up – that often cuts off the faces from the photographic frame – render the subjects unrecognisable. This viewpoint interests Guidi, because «it makes you see things in a different way», he explains,

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<sup>80</sup> Antonello Frongia, *Chance encounters*, in Guido Guidi, *Di sguincio 1969-81*, London: Mack books 2023, 135-139: 135.

<sup>81</sup> Ivi: 137.

«such a close, off-centre view that you might not see anything at all. The protagonist of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* says that when he kissed Albertine, he unfortunately could no longer see her, because closeness precludes sight. Similarly, the faces in these photographs are almost always cropped».<sup>82</sup>

This happened above all because Guidi was photographing holding the camera at chest height, without looking in the viewfinder, thus excluding the support of the sight, so to say, *excluding the eye*. The subjects were his friends, or work colleagues, who knew about his obsession, so «there was also a playful aspect, or a complicit, playful teasing».<sup>83</sup> They are also photographs, that have something to do with impatience. Guidi recalls, that he was trying not to overthink things, to work quickly, so as not to use his mind too much.

«When photographing quickly, things are rough-hewn; while if you work with a tripod and stop to think, you start to check the edges, details, composition, and so on».<sup>84</sup>

Literally in Italian, Guidi says that when you photograph quickly «you cut the things with the axe». I find this expression particularly fitting in this context because it truly visualises the “violence” of the photographic framing, that he performed in these pictures.

### *Squaring the circle*

To conclude this selection about the use of “natural frame” found in everyday situations, I would like to propose one last group of images, that introduces another type of format: the round image. Although the space of the photographic representation is defined, almost without exceptions, through a «stricte *structuration orthogonale* (rectangulaire ou carré)», this *quadrification* of the photographic image is not natural at all, but totally arbitrary.<sup>85</sup> As a matter of fact, since the image created by the camera lens is circular, the rectangular photographic space of representation is obtained by means of a further internal cut, that isolates only a portion of the space already selected by the lens.

Luigi Ghirri's lessons on photography, provides us again with some useful information about this matter. Ghirri explains, that in the nineteenth century the formats of the photographs were not yet standardised, thus it was not unusual to see round or oval photographs. The problem was, which form to choose in order to best represent a certain part

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ivi: 138.

<sup>84</sup> Ivi: 136.

<sup>85</sup> See Dubois, *L'Acte Photographique*: 195.

of the world, and it suggested each time the most various solutions. The question was still the framing: what would you like to show and what would you rather not show or even erase? To erase is really the central issue of photography. Ghirri reports, that according to a lot of studies about vision, we see in a quite horizontal rather than vertical manner. The field of vision, that we are able to cover with one sight, is more or less analogous to the area occupied by an ordinary sheet of paper of common use. [Plate i/39] This idea influenced the standardisation of the photographic formats. However, nothing forbids that our perception of reality could be, sometimes, even round. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore some practical facts: the film imposes the rectangular format, cameras are rectangular, thus a circle must be inscribed inside a rectangle.<sup>86</sup> As a matter of fact, Dubois explains:

«L'opération de re-cadrage interne qui vient inscrire la découpe quadrangulaire dans la figure circulaire de départ se fait par un dispositif mécanique, [...] qui a été introduit à cette fin dans le boîtier entre l'objectif et la pellicule sensible: c'est ce qu'on appelle, ce n'est pas un hasard, *la fenêtre*».<sup>87</sup>

Some of Guidi's pictures are surrounded by a black circular silhouette that, he explains, pops out when he off-centred, since the lens does not cover completely the plate. [Plates i/40-43] Antonello Frongia underlines, that the inclusion of the vignetting curve at the top, and more rarely, in the lower part of the frame, witnesses «the inscription in the photographic object of traces of its own making».<sup>88</sup> Guidi himself tells:

«The use of various objectives such as the wide angle and then the wide angle with very little coverage, were experiments I initiated to decide how to proceed. My question was: "How can I photograph the city? Using what method?" In this way I tried to put myself in [Eugène] Atget's shoes. He used lenses which did not cover the whole field of the image».<sup>89</sup>

In the first volume of the book *Per strada*, Guidi even dedicates a chapter to his French precursor: *Emilia Road, between Rimini and Bologna (for Atget), 1984-1985*.<sup>90</sup> One evident detail in common is indeed the black vignette framing the photographic space. [Plates i/43, 44] As Marta Dahó points out, Guidi's use of the vignettes is a strategy that invokes a myriad of resonances.

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<sup>86</sup> See Ghirri, *Inquadrature naturali*: 165-166.

<sup>87</sup> Dubois, *L'Acte Photographique*: 195.

<sup>88</sup> Frongia, "At Least a Stone": 97.

<sup>89</sup> In Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*, vol. Texts: n.n.

<sup>90</sup> Ivi, vol. 1: 78-93.

«He himself has suggested that they may invoke the arch of his own eyebrow or the black cloak that covers the photographer when he takes a photograph with a plate camera, and also the effect of looking through a telescope. As he has commented on several occasions, it is about “how the photograph is born: you have the negative and the lens, the image projected by a lens is not rectangular but circular, and this circle also brings to mind the circular nature of the eyeball”».<sup>91</sup>

[Plate i/45] In *Treviso (Dario)*, 1980, the centrality of the roundness for both the vision and photography is funnily highlighted by the presence of the magnifying lens, whose circular shape frames and enlarges the boy’s eye, in resemblance of the eye depicted on the face of the little toy horse. Digging into art history, we might establish a conceptual parallelism between this portrait with magnifying lens and André Breton’s 1938 self-portrait with the microscope, entitled *L’écriture automatique*. [Plate i/46] I do not mean to suggest that, while taking his picture, Guidi had in mind Breton’s surrealist photomontage (although he surely knows it). I simply notice, that both images place at the core of the representation a lensed instrument, a supplement of our defective sight, perhaps to symbolise and underline the primacy of a purely visual experience.<sup>92</sup> This Breton’s self-portrait is one of the surrealist works analysed by Rosalind Krauss in *The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism* (1981). Purely by chance, a translation by Alfredo De Paz of an excerpt from Krauss’ text appeared on the second issue of *Fotologia*, the Italian magazine of photography edited by Italo Zannier (with writings, among others, by Paolo Costantini).<sup>93</sup> Guidi must have read the article, since an article dedicated to his work was published in the same issue, accompanied by a selection of photographs.<sup>94</sup> He, by the way, confirms his interest in psychoanalysis and surrealism, and that the writings by Henri Michaux and André Breton belong to his readings in those years.<sup>95</sup>

Probably Guidi is still playing with the analogy between eye and photography, and with the roundness of the eyeball, in *Treviso*, 1980. [Plate 47] Yet, this time, the ping-pong ball – that Anna is holding before her eye – is not supplementing, but rather mocking the eye, while it becomes an obstruction to the binocular vision. After all, especially in

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<sup>91</sup> Dahó, *Through the empty room*: n.n.

<sup>92</sup> Rosalind Krauss claims, that through this photo-montage Breton achieved a dialectical synthesis of the constant juxtaposition of writing and vision. (See Krauss, *The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism*: 102-104).

<sup>93</sup> See Alfredo De Paz, *Aspetti del rapporto fotografia-surrealismo*, in: “Fotologia”, no. 2, Winter/Spring 1985, 24-35. Interesting enough, apart from a record among others in the bibliography at the end of the article, I found no mention by De Paz about the fact that his text is actually a free translation of an excerpt from Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism*, in: “October”, vol. 19, Winter 1981, 3-34.

<sup>94</sup> See Italo Zannier, *L’aldilà della fotografia: Paolo Gioli, Guido Guidi, Roberto Salbitani*, in: “Fotologia”, no. 2, Winter/Spring 1985, 47-64: 47-49.

<sup>95</sup> Frongia, *Chance encounters*: 138.

the history of photography, the eye offers an enduring metaphoric material. On the one hand, photography is praised for its ability to capture the images of the world in the blink of an *eye*, on the other hand, the widespread myth, that the discovery of photography developed first and foremost within the tradition of geometric optic, establishes a direct continuity, that connects the photographic device of Daguerre to the camera obscura of Della Porta.<sup>96</sup> Already on 12 April 1816 Nicéphore Niépce wrote to his brother Claude to have built an «espèce d'œil artificiel». The “artificial eye” consisted in a small cubical box of 15 cm per side, to which he had attached an extractable tube provided with a lens. In a word, it was nothing else than a camera obscura, in which he was able to obtain images he called «points de vues», as to say, views, facets, perspectives.<sup>97</sup> In *Die Augenmetapher der Fotografie*, Herta Wolf demonstrates, that photography actually inherited the metaphor of the eye from the earlier comparison – accepted by the majority of the physicians and physicists of the nineteenth century – between the functioning of the eye and of the camera obscura, both based upon the projection of images according to the scheme of the perspectival construction.<sup>98</sup> However, if the perspective is «eine Konstruktion, die das beidäugige menschliche Sehen in einen zyklischen Blick überführt»,<sup>99</sup> in transposing the eye’s metaphor to the photographic process (through the mediation of the camera obscura), the binocular vision gets mutilated: just as it happens when the photographer closes one eye to look in the viewfinder.

The camera lens is often compared to the eye also by virtue of its circular shape. Circular images are a recurrent topic in Guidi’s work. Leonardi explains, how he pursues them by means of a variety of tricks, such as: an improper coupling of lens and camera, the use of the wide-angle with the flash – so that the emission of light produces a sort of halo around the subject –, or the masking in the darkroom – in order to create clearer round zones at the centre of the photographs surrounded by darker ones at the edges. Similar transgressions do not aim at producing innovation, but rather at comprehending the past, the origins of the medium, by walking in the shoes of the ancient alchemist photographer, who experimented with wonder a new technic, still unknown and not fully under control.<sup>100</sup> An emblematic example of such attitude is a series of 1980, made at the Po delta using a fish-eye lens, mounted on a 35 mm camera, to obtain circular images with a curved horizon.<sup>101</sup> [Plate i/48] The project originated from a request by Italo Zannier, who suggested Guidi to realise a work with the fish-eye, for the exhibition entitled *Land-*

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<sup>96</sup> See Herta Wolf, *Die Augenmetapher der Fotografie*, in Claus Pias (ed.), *Neue Vorträge zur Medienkultur*, Weimar: Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften 2000, 201-231: 209.

<sup>97</sup> Ivi: 212.

<sup>98</sup> Ivi: 211.

<sup>99</sup> Ivi: 212.

<sup>100</sup> Leonardi, *La macchina maleducata*: 157.

<sup>101</sup> Ivi: 158.

scape: *Image and Reality*, organised by Tomás Maldonado in 1981 at Museum of Modern Art of Bologna.<sup>102</sup> Following that request, Guidi worked on distortion, as a physical answer to a conceptual question. Even if his response might bear a conceptual vein, he states, «it's more internal to things, rather than superimposed on them».<sup>103</sup> The presence of the photographer in the landscape is made evident by Guidi's cast shadow, that stretches inside the photographic space.<sup>104</sup> He says that these are also «photographs that hint at looking at things from the point of view of a giant, who sees the world at his feet and all around him».<sup>105</sup>

## New Frames

As we have seen in the previous section, doors and windows provide Guidi with *prêt-à-porter* framing devices, that render manifest the act of photographic cut, thus introducing his works into the discourse about photography specificity. Since doors and windows have inhabited our everyday life since the establishing of the first forms of shelter – you build walls to protect you, but then inevitably need an aperture to enter and exit from them – I consider them as *old* frames. But there exist further devices that can likely serve as ready-made frames and that I will call *new*, because their introduction in our everyday panorama is in comparison a lot younger. Among them, television screens and car windows appear quite often in Guidi's production, mostly used for their framing qualities, though not exclusively. As in the case of doors and windows, sometimes television sets and cars simply catch Guidi's attention not differently from any other common object in his surroundings: they enter the photographic field just by virtue of being there. Of course, both the television screen and the car window differ from the window and the door also by virtue of their mobility and the peculiar relationship they consent to establish between private and public sphere. On the one hand the television screen inserts an always changing public space into the private space, on the other hand the car's cabin is a sort of private space in movement inside the public space, whereas doors and windows are constrained by their fixed position, that limits the radius of their framing action, establishing their role as threshold between inside and outside, private and public.

At this point some further introductory annotations seem necessary. The histories of the development and establishing of respectively television and automobile inside our everyday life proceed in parallel under the technological, the social and the anthropologi-

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<sup>102</sup> Tomás Maldonado, *Paesaggio: immagine e realtà*, ex. cat. Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna, Milan: Electa 1981: 49-53.

<sup>103</sup> Guidi, *Lunario*: 99-100.

<sup>104</sup> This is another of Guidi's habit, that I treat extensively in chapter 2 (*Index*).

<sup>105</sup> Guidi, *Lunario*: 100.

cal perspectives. In Italy the boom in the motorisation of the Country arrives in the 1950s and 1960s, when together with the economic growth and the increase of the general wealth, the Italians start to “buy a car”: a goal sought by everyone, that was becoming more and more accessible. From the 1960s onwards, every family owns a television set at home as well as a car to commute to work or go on holiday.<sup>106</sup>

Guidi, born in 1940, started working in the years of the “Italian economic miracle”, when cars and televisions were becoming more and more part of the everyday life. Both objects have shaped our daily lives, changing not only the aspect of our environment, but also our habits and the way we organise our time. The television marks the daily routine with the show schedule, and it is often kept on without being watched just for the sense of company.<sup>107</sup> The images on the screen enter the home and are captured by Guidi’s lens, which records everything that inhabits the domestic spaces. The car instead allows to move around easily and without constraints of time or route. Guidi has always made extensive use of it, especially when he commuted to work. For example, he realized many of the photographs during his daily or weekly travel between his home in Emilia Romagna and his work in Veneto or Friuli. Until today Guidi still drives around by car to photograph, because it enables him to carry along his cumbersome plate camera more easily.

## Television

Of course, «television, the everyday medium par excellence»,<sup>108</sup> could not fail in Guidi’s repertoire. Even if he claims to have photographed the television set and the figure on its screen only because they were there, like any other everyday object, it is worth to dedicate some thoughts about the choice of this subject, due to its hybrid status in-between domestic device – like a washing machine, a vacuum cleaner or a refrigerator – and medium – in this case, a mostly passive means of communication, that brings messages from the exterior into the daily life of the family.<sup>109</sup> Bearing this in mind, rather than on the sociological implication of the television in the domestic space, I will nonetheless concentrate my

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<sup>106</sup> Marco Mocchetti, *Storia dell’automobile: quando c’era un’auto ogni 230 abitanti*, in: “Focus”, 2 November 2020: online source.

<sup>107</sup> «In general, men talked more of [domestic] technologies providing a substitute for social contact (using constructs such as “keeps me company”, “stops me feeling lonely”) or an alternative to social contact (“when I’m by myself”). For them, the key technologies which carry these social meanings are the radio, Walkman and television» (Sonia M. Livingstone, *The meaning of domestic technologies*, in Roger Silverstone and Eric Hirsch (eds.), *Consuming Technologies. Media and information in domestic spaces*, Routledge, London and New York 1994, 104-121: 111).

<sup>108</sup> According to Censis reports, television is to all intents and purposes the only universal media language, that people know. (Aldo Grasso, *Storia della televisione italiana*, Milan: Garzanti 2004: 41-43.)

<sup>109</sup> See Roger Silverstone, Eric Hirsch, and David Morley, *Information and communication technologies and the moral economy of the household*, in Silverstone and Hirsch (eds.), *Consuming Technologies*, 13-28: 13.

analysis on the role of the television in the photographic space as a particular kind of framing device, provided with the power of expanding the field of the medium specificity.<sup>110</sup>

But first, to better understand Guidi's attitude towards television, a short historic excursus might be helpful.<sup>111</sup> When the Italian television started the transmissions on 3 January 1954, the Country was poor, with a level of illiteracy largely above 50%. According to the Italian scholars Tullio De Mauro and Umberto Eco, the television linguistically unified the peninsula, penetrating even in those areas still not reached by the school.<sup>112</sup> At the beginning the RAI (Italian Radio Television public company) tried to give a pedagogical imprint to television contents, but during the 1970s the transition from the ideal of the early TV to the advent of commercial networks took place, and audience laws supplanted serious content-planning. The 1970s are known as the era of the *mezzibusti* (half-busts) – from the word used to mock the newsreaders.<sup>113</sup> During the 1970s and the 1980s, the number of domestic devices as well as of the broadcasting time reached a 24h-coverage.<sup>114</sup> From the very beginning, Italian intellectuals demonstrated mistrust and aversion towards television.<sup>115</sup> Marc Fumaroli describes television and mass tourism as the two orders of the middle class way of life. Television founded its empire on routine, because nothing makes the spectator happier than the reassuring “once again” of the show schedule.<sup>116</sup>

The television proposed itself not only as authoritative and reliable – acting as messenger of State and Church – but also as friendly, *au pair*, trustworthy. Over time the television became a place that the spectator can occupy with his own body, his own experiences and, above all, with the narration of his everyday life, a space dominated by the private sphere, whether of the everyman or of the VIP. Despite its centrality, power and universality, the domestic apparat risks most of the time to lose visibility, to become

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<sup>110</sup> See Rosalind E. Krauss, *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* (1979), in Idem, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, 276-290.

<sup>111</sup> About the impact of the advent of television on photographic practice in Italy see Arturo Carlo Quintavalle, *Fotografia e racconto 1940-1985*, in Cesare Colombo (ed.), *Tra sogno e bisogno. 306 fotografie sull'evoluzione dei consumi in Italia 1940-1986*, ex. cat., Milan: Longanesi 1986, 9-19: 14-17.

<sup>112</sup> Aldo Grasso, *Prima lezione sulla televisione*, Rome/Bari: Laterza 2011: VIII.

<sup>113</sup> Ivi: 24.

<sup>114</sup> Ivi: 34.

<sup>115</sup> Ivi: 20, 27. The phenomenon is not limited to Italy. For example, with regard to USA Stanley Cavell too speaks of «refusal of interest in television [epitomized] in the familiar disapproval evinced towards television in certain educated circles» (Stanley Cavell, *The Fact of Television*, in “Dædalus: Print Culture and Video Culture”, vol. 111, no. 4, Fall 1982, 75-96: 75). As it is well known, photography too has often been ignored or disdained by “high” art. Zannier writes that even though in the 1960s it began a discourse about photographic culture in Italy, academic culture remained indifferent to photography (See Italo Zannier, *Fotografia italiana contemporanea*, in Idem (ed.), *Venezia '79: la Fotografia*, Milan: Electa 1979: 5).

<sup>116</sup> Grasso, *Storia della televisione italiana*: XXXIII.



transparent, taken for granted and unperceived.<sup>117</sup> Stanley Cavell considers the existence of television at once «among the most obvious and the most mysterious fact of contemporary life».<sup>118</sup> As a matter of fact television, like other communication and information technologies, poses special problems, due to its status as medium, which distinguishes it from other objects «such as plants or pictures, and other technologies such as refrigerators or hair dryers or hammers».<sup>119</sup> Communication and information technologies

«provide, actively, interactively or passively, links between households, and individual members of households, with the world beyond their front door», they are «doubly articulated into public and private cultures».<sup>120</sup>

Once appropriated into the domestic culture these commodities are domesticated, and through appropriation they are incorporated in accordance with the household's own values and interests.<sup>121</sup>

On his part, Guidi admits that television bothered him, so perhaps by photographing it, he was looking for a way to exorcise his annoyance.<sup>122</sup> The majority of his “television” pictures dates to the 1960s and the 1970s, in a way following a general trend in the photography of the time. «In the early 1960s – as Marc H. Miller acknowledges – many photographers, including, [Robert] Frank, Garry Winogrand, Diane Arbus, Lee Friedlander and Bruce Davidson, discovered that the presence of a TV in a picture could add a distinctive note. They initiated a photographic genre, a tradition of images of TV “in situ”».<sup>123</sup> In particular Lee Friedlander «continued to photograph television sets as solidified centrepieces of the modern American interior» throughout the 1960s.<sup>124</sup> In an interview of 2015 Guidi explains how he came to know Friedlander's work:

«I remember that I had seen Friedlander's name in Ugo Mulas's photo book *New York: The New Art Scene* (1967). And one of Mulas's *Verification* photographs, the one featuring the mirror, was dedicated to Friedlander. As soon as Friedlander's *Self Portrait* came out in 1970, I bought it, but it was only on the occasion of the lone photography biennial, *Venice '79*, that I was able to meet him. That was when I

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<sup>117</sup> Ivi: 41-43.

<sup>118</sup> Cavell, *The Fact of Television*: 75.

<sup>119</sup> Silverstone, Hirsch, and Morley, *Information and communication technologies and the moral economy of the household*: 13-14.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Conversation with the author, 25 October 2021.

<sup>123</sup> Marc H. Miller, *Television's Impact On Contemporary Art*, in: “Aperture. Technology and Transformation”, no. 106, Spring 1987, 65-69: 67.

<sup>124</sup> Saul Anton, *Lee Friedlander. The Little Screens*, London: Afterall Books 2015: 17.

heard him talk about the vernacular. He said he wasn't interested in art photography, but in the vernacular photograph, in the snapshot. I could relate to this, of course, since I had grown up with the family photographs shot by my uncle, who had them printed at the photography store before gluing them into an album».<sup>125</sup>

Since then, Friedlander has remained one of his main references. For instance, they share the habit to include their own projected shadow in the photograph, or the passion for street signs and writings (graffiti, shop signs and so on). Guidi television photographs might seem a sort of homage to Friedlander's famous series *The Little Screens*, with whom they share the concern for a "classic" photographic theme – the family, the home, domesticity – linked to a reflection on the relation between photography and television as media.<sup>126</sup> But despite evident and proved analogies, Guidi's and Friedlander's photographs of television sets present a lot of differences that deserve to be analysed.

To start with, Friedlander made an actual series of his TV-photos, that were first published in a four pages picture essay in *Harper's Bazar* in February 1963, accompanied by a comment by Walker Evans.<sup>127</sup> Guidi instead never made a systematic series: although the television set appears in different photographs, it was never the subject of a precise project.<sup>128</sup> Second, in photographing the television set, Friedlander was driven by a political and critical intention. In his short description Walker Evans wrote: «The pictures on these pages are in effect deft, witty, spanking poems of hate»,<sup>129</sup> and Saul Anton goes even further defining Friedlander's encounter with television «as much conversation as *agon*, as much reflection as combat».<sup>130</sup> Guidi's attitude instead tended to be less critical, avoiding any explicit judgment or manifest political statements. About his engagement during the late 1960s, he reminds:

«I have never felt I was so denunciatory. Certainly [...] around 1968 nothing was going well. My friends were all protesters, and I too participated in this social rage.

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<sup>125</sup> Guidi quoted in Frongia, *Guido Guidi Interview*: 54. See also Ugo Mulas, *Le Verifiche, 1971-1972*, in Idem, *La Fotografia*, Einaudi, Turin 1973, 141-176: 150-151. However, I wasn't able to find any reference to Lee Friedlander in Ugo Mulas, *New York: Arte e Persone*, Milan: Longanesi 1967 (Eng. version Ugo Mulas, *New York: The New Art Scene*, Canada: Holt, Rinehart Winston 1967).

<sup>126</sup> Saul Anton, *Lee Friedlander. The Little Screens*, London: Afterall Books 2015: 18.

<sup>127</sup> Walker Evans and Lee Friedlander, *The Little Screens. A photographic essay by Lee Friedlander with a comment by Walker Evans*, in: "Harper's Bazar", February 1963, 126-129. The essay comprised six black-and-white photographs of televisions. Since 1963 individual *little screens* have appeared often in exhibitions – testifying to their importance to the evolution of Friedlander's work – until the publication of the book Lee Friedlander, *The Little Screens*, by Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco in 2001. See Anton, *Lee Friedlander. The Little Screens*: 53.

<sup>128</sup> Guido Guidi, *Christmas 1978*, series of four photographs, depicting the interior of his home in Ronta with the television set on next to the crib, appears in Cesare Colombo (ed.), *Tra sogno e bisogno*: 108.

<sup>129</sup> Evans and Friedlander, *The Little Screens*: 127.

<sup>130</sup> Anton, *Lee Friedlander. The Little Screens*: 17.

But in my work there is not so much a denunciation as a growing awareness, an attempt to touch things, to relate to the world, to understand it». <sup>131</sup>

As usual, his main reason remains his interest in every aspect of reality, in the so called, “social landscape”: the television was there, and thus it entered his pictures, just because of its existence. Though in this case, Guidi admits that he photographed the appliance because he disliked it, still his interest lay in the act of seeing not in judging. Third, Friedlander’s televisions inhabit middle class environments, whereas Guidi’s pictures usually portray a working-class context, since he belongs to it. <sup>132</sup> Fourth, in Guidi’s work the TV set often remains just a common appliance – like a refrigerator, a mixer or a washing machine – placed in a corner of the kitchen or the living-room and almost neglected. It belongs so much to everyday life, that no one is either watching it or paying attention to the images it broadcasts. Fifth, in Guidi’s pictures the images broadcasted by the television often cohabit the domestic space alongside *real* human beings, whereas in Friedlander’s *Little Screen* the individual on-screen usually inhabits alone the domestic space, becoming an uncanny presence like a monster or an alien, whose real body has been substituted by the television set. <sup>133</sup> Nevertheless, even the *mezzibusti* onscreen in Guidi’s photographs sometimes seem wishing to overcome their status of automaton and to blend into the real space, becoming quasi another member of the family.

For instance, in *Cesena, begin of the 1970s* (also dated 1 January 1976) [Plate i/49] the speaker on TV – according to Guidi the Italian journalist Ugo Zatterin – almost joins the real people seated at the table. But his presence is so unexceptional that he remains totally unperceived, and nobody cares about him, even if he is probably speaking. The democracy of the photographic space allows him to acquire the same visual value as the persons actually present in the room. Commenting these two pictures Arturo Carlo Quintavalle in 1977 wrote:

«Guidi’s culture, his subtle relationship with Friedlander on the one hand and with Duane Michals on the other, surfaces in the images of the kitchen, in the first one the

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<sup>131</sup> Quoted in Frongia, *Guido Guidi Interview*: 57. This statement by Guidi reminds of similar declaration by Walker Evans reported by Peter Galassi: «I photograph what’s in front of me and what attracts me. Half the time I can’t say why. I have been politicized by other people, not by myself» (Peter Galassi, *Walker Evans & Company*, ex. cat., New York: The Museum of Modern Art 2001: 29). Interviewed by Yale Alumni Magazine in 1974, Evans specified: «I cared to have certain things read into my work, but I really don’t intend to have my ideas and my work, and my vision used as political action. Since you raised the question of whether I’m a politically-minded artist or not, the answer is not, I’m not» (Walker Evans, *The Thing Itself Is Such a Secret and So Unapproachable*, in: “Yale Alumni Magazine”, no. 5, February 1974, 12-15, republished in: “ASX-American Suburb X”, 4 October 2011: online source).

<sup>132</sup> Even after his formative and working years at the university, Guidi remained attached to the working class and rural environment of his childhood.

<sup>133</sup> Anton, *Lee Friedlander. The Little Screens*: 19-23.

couple with the child, the television set in the middle; in the second the television once again, the same program, another moment, on the right the protagonist [Loris Zoffoli] absent in the previous picture, another time and the arm of the couple of before: the photographer marks the passage of time».<sup>134</sup>

Guidi has adopted such a long exposure, that the figures in the photographs result tear, blurry, overlapped, multiplied. These sought mistakes and apparent scarcity of accuracy lend an amateur note to the photographs, that I consider thoroughly in chapter 4 (*Mistake*).

Guidi here presents two photographs as a fake stereo pair, as it was his habit mostly in the 1970s. By combining the two pictures together we grasp a wider view of the room. We realize that there are four people seated around the table: three of them – two adults and a infant – are visible in the first picture, while a fourth person is visible in the second picture. He seats at the opposite side of the table and looks at the couple with the child. The arms of the woman and of the man from the first photograph jut into the second picture from its left edge, while a slice of the bottle of water, visible on the table in the second picture, runs along the right edge of the first picture. These parts of figures function as connectors between the two images, creating a unity of space and time, in which the television, the only element entirely visible in both photographs, functions as visual fulcrum, all the more because it goes on broadcasting the same image. Despite its central position, as if it were seated at the head of the table, nobody is looking at it, but everybody's attention is caught by the little baby held by the woman.

The presentation as diptych renders more evident not only the passage of time mentioned by Quintavalle, but most of all the importance of the edges for Guidi, as «technical-conceptual-poetic place of the possible and uncertain»,<sup>135</sup> because everything that stays on the borders makes constant reference to everything that remains outside the shot but *could* itself be photographed, or rather *become a photograph*, like in this case.<sup>136</sup> That is the absence, of which we know the presence, delineated by Stanley Cavell.<sup>137</sup> Looking at a photograph one might ask questions about objects adjacent or behind other objects visible in the photographic space, questions that have concrete answers in reality.

«The camera, being finite, crops a portion from an indefinitely larger field; continuous portions of that field could be included in the photograph in fact taken. [...]

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<sup>134</sup> Quintavalle, *Guido Guidi. Album 1969-1977*: 2318 (translation mine).

<sup>135</sup> Valtorta, *Guido Guidi in Milan and Other Places*: 143.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Cavell, *The World Viewed. Reflection on the Ontology of Film*: 23-24.

When a photograph is cropped the rest of the world, and its explicit rejection, are as essential in the experience of a photograph as what is explicitly present».<sup>138</sup>

That is due to the nature of the photographic cut, to its relationship of continuity with the real world not included in the view: an absence, of which we know the presence, but outside, cut out. An invisible presence.

But Guidi's attitude to avoid enlarging and cropping, preferring instead to print the entire exposed plate, even if that means that the edges of the picture are seldom neat – showing truncated parts of figures or buildings or features of landscape, that leave a shape belonging not to the subject –, calls to mind the behaviour of early photographers. These latter, as John Szarkowski beautifully describes,

«looked at the world as though it was a scroll painting, unrolled from hand to hand, exhibiting an infinite number of croppings – of compositions – as the frame moved onwards».<sup>139</sup>

That is why, Guidi dislikes to print his photographs edge to edge on a book page, because that would imply to cut away some millimetres from the original image by cropping and trimming.<sup>140</sup>

Another typical fake stereographic presentation, which provide us with a good example of the use of untidy edges is *Aldo Gattamorta, Cesena, 1970* [Plate i/50].<sup>141</sup> The two photographs are marked by a stark black and white contrast as well as by an accentuated perspectival cone, concretised in the distorted shape of the table, converging on the man seated at its head – Guidi's uncle Aldo Gattamorta indeed. The face of the woman to his left is caught grimacing, which makes her appear like a character of the farce theatre. Hands and arms of further bystanders jut inside, as though the photographic frame had sliced them not only visually, but also physically, from their bodies present in the off-space, incrementing the grotesque feeling of the scene. In a corner, behind the circle of faces, mugs and limbs gathered around the table, we see a television.<sup>142</sup> This is turned off, but the screen functions like a mirror, reflecting the image of Guidi photographing. His black silhouette is framed by the white bright rectangle of a door or a window, which in turn is

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<sup>138</sup> Ivi: 24.

<sup>139</sup> Szarkowski, *The Photographer's Eye*: 9.

<sup>140</sup> Conversation with the author, 14 April 2022.

<sup>141</sup> Zannier, *Dopo Krims*: 36.

<sup>142</sup> In this couple of photographs also the table functions as a framing device, that includes all the various objects, dishes, potteries and sweets placed on its Formica surface and cuts off all the people gathered around its edges.

framed by the dark screen of the television set: this way, an *old* frame is included inside a *new* frame.

Other times, like in *Cesena, 1970* [Plate i/52], Guidi instead plays with the variability of the screen inside an unchanging context. While inside the house nothing happens, on the screen everything is in constant change, as we can see thanks to the presentation of the two photographs in sequence as vertical diptych. We return to the analogy between television and window: a window open onto another world, a faraway off-space, that through the TV-window penetrates inside the house. The first of these two photographs, that displays a car on the television screen, represents the perfect synthesis of the themes I am treating in this chapter: television, automobile, and the act of framing. These photographs are more similar to Friedlander's *Little Screens*, because here the alien presence of the images on-screen inhabits alone the domestic space. For instance, both the car in Guidi's television and the policeman on a motorcycle in Friedlander's *Florida* (1963) [Plate i/51] make no sense in the real space. The frontal presentation, as if they were coming at us, heightened their incongruity, failing to harmonise the image space and the real space.<sup>143</sup>

In another diptych of circa the same time, *Cesena, 1969-71*, Guidi instead limits the visual weight of the television, relegated to the left margin of the photographic space, foreshortened and almost subdued by the body of the real woman standing in front of it. [Plate i/53] Since her head has been cut out from the photographic space, we can only guess, that she might be Guidi's wife, Marta. In exchange, every Italian born before 1980 will immediately recognise in the blurred facial features of the man on the TV, the anchorman Corrado. The identification is supported by the annotation written by Guidi on the print as it appears in the book *Fotografia e materialità in Italia* by Nicoletta Leonardi: *Canzonissima, 1970 Cesena (Forlì) / Zoffoli Claudio*.<sup>144</sup> The first note refers to the title of the popular TV-program of the period, hosted by Corrado, indeed; the latter identifies the other *real* person in the photographs, Marta's brother, seated at the right margin of the diptych. It is difficult to understand why to Guido seemed important to write down such an insignificant information, like the title of the transmission on-screen. From the pose and behaviour of Marta and Claudio, we can suppose the two pictures to be two snapshots of an ordinary uneventful domestic situation taken in sequence. Taking advantage from a defect in the advancement of the film, Guidi achieves a sort of panoramic view by mounting the two snapshots together thanks to a *controlled* exploitation of chance. The image is characterized by the wide-angle distortion – with which Guidi was experimenting extensively during that period – that, as Zannier wrote, confers to his photographs an

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<sup>143</sup> Anton, Lee Friedlander. *The Little Screens*: 24.

<sup>144</sup> Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*: 86-87.

unreal tone, that evokes Atget, a mysterious rather Kafkaesque atmosphere, and a caricatural trait à la Ben Shahn.<sup>145</sup> The television set here appears in its everydayness together with other kitchen's appliances, such as a gas stove and a small refrigerator. Looking at this setting, so far from the middle-class rooms we find in Friedlander's *Little Screens*, we understand the anthropological distance between their works. Rather, the kitchen setting and the vantage point from above recall some Walker Evans' photographs of interiors [Plate i/54].<sup>146</sup>

The curiosity for television and the passion for diptych montage were quite recurring in Guidi's work especially during the 70s, as confirmed by a further diptych *Cesena, 1975, interior with television set, chamber music*. [Plate i/55] The two photographs seem a homage to everyday life through few basic ordinary appliances: the television, the radio, an alarm clock, and the gas stove. Once again, Guidi registers the passage of time by photographing the same room twice, from approximately the same position: the temporal transition is attested both by the change of image on the TV screen as well as by the clock, whose minute hand has moved from 9:37 to 9:40. To avoid any possible doubt about the right order of the sequence, Guidi stamped the numbers "1" and "2" at the bottom of each picture. The usual descriptive title restates that Guidi, rather than in the television as institution, metaphor, or media, was interested in the *televisore* (television set) as everyday object – the electric cable, that turns around the wall to connect the device to the socket in the kitchen, looks eloquent in this sense. While in the first picture the screen frames a close-up view of the pianist's hand, in the second, we see the image of a musical score, as if the radio on the shelf below had "infected" the TV screen, that now broadcasts notes rather than images. As a matter of fact, Guidi complete caption says: *Cesena, interior with television set, chamber music*: such information hints at the photographic off-space, yet non in visual, but in acoustic terms. In Guidi's archive the two photographs are mounted on board as a horizontal diptych, but in an article of 1976, they appear as a vertical diptych and in reverse order, contradicting the chronology.<sup>147</sup> [Plate i/56]

Unfortunately, it is impossible to recollect and describe all Guidi's works featuring a TV set, but *Cesena, 1973 – Television set "Atlantic"* [Plate i/57] must be taken into account, because it provides an emblematic example of the act of framing and of the analogy between TV and window. Here Guidi photographs centrally and frontally the television screen displaying white fluffy clouds in the sky. The naturalness and wilderness of the clouds contrast with the geometry and artificiality of the device and the furniture. As the Italian writer Daniele Del Giudice writes: «A cloud was never quite what it was supposed

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<sup>145</sup> See Zannier, *Dopo Krims*: 37.

<sup>146</sup> See Walker Evans, *East 120th Street, New York City*, 1961, in Idem, *Message From the Interior*, New York: Eakins Press, 1966.

<sup>147</sup> Zannier, *L'avanguardia di Guido Guidi*: 23.

to be. [...] The cloud is neither an object nor a state but a constant transition».<sup>148</sup> If Philippe Dubois discerns an analogy between the cloud and photography, by virtue of being both without a predetermined form and both «authentiques machines à lumière»,<sup>149</sup> we can venture to include in the analogy the TV screen too, whose ever changing images are created through millions of luminous points.

This image by Guidi looks so iconic to seem almost an advertising picture, which is quite uncommon for him, who normally avoids such pop and easy visual statements. On another print of this same photograph, Guidi has added to the title: *end of broadcasting*. Remembering his essentiality in choosing titles, he has probably only annotated the moment of the shot: the image of the sky in fact was a standard one, broadcasted every night after the daily program was over. In the course of a recent conversation, he reminded me how words are unreliable. He explained that his annotations were not titles – although they have taken on this function – but just information not otherwise deducible from the picture. Sometimes he is not even sure about their accuracy, since he might have written them down by memory, years after the photograph was printed. For him the title is irrelevant. Occasionally, just as *divertissement*, he writes something, but right away deletes the words by swiping his finger, in order to make them illegible, because the title misleads, only the image counts.<sup>150</sup>

Remaining in the field of the history of photography – one of Guidi's favourite source of inspiration – it is well known that the first photographers were not able to photograph the cloud in the sky, which appeared just as a cloudless white surface. The sky in most nineteenth-century photographs looks pale and featureless, showing no clouds, because to expose for the land was to overexpose for the sky.<sup>151</sup> But representing clouds posed already a problem long before the invention of photography. Hubert Damisch advises us, that «according to Riegl, cloudy skies were never to be found in ancient art, and

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<sup>148</sup> Daniele Del Giudice, *Staccando l'ombra da terra*, Turin: Einaudi 1994, Eng. tr. Joseph Farrell, *Take-off*, London: Harvill Press 1996: 78-79.

<sup>149</sup> Dubois, *L'acte photographique*: 189.

<sup>150</sup> Conversation with the author, 26 January 2022.

<sup>151</sup> The literature on the technical limitation of wet-plates chemistry is immense and impossible to list entirely. See for instance Newhall, *The History of Photography*: 116. Since the early 1990s Herta Wolf has been interested in the matter of clouds representation, dedicating to the phenomenon various essays as well as a monographic course at the University of Cologne in the Summer Semester 2012. See in particular: Herta Wolf, *Wolken: Zum Beispiel*, in Tobias G. Natter and Franz Smola (eds.), *Wolken. Welt des Flüchtigen*, ex. cat. Leopold Museum Vienna, Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz 2013, 42-53; Eadem, *Wie man Wolken beobachtet*, in Stephan Kunz, Beat Wismer and Johannes Stückelberger (eds.), *Wolkenbilder. Die Erfindung des Himmels*, ex. cat. Kunstmuseum Aarau, Munich: Hirmer 2005, 74-83; Eadem, *Babylonisches Formengewirr: das Aufzeichnen von Wolken*, in Sven Spieker (ed.), *Bürokratische Leidenschaften. Kultur- und Mediengeschichte im Archiv*, Berlin: Kadmos Verlag 2004, 196-220; Eadem, *Wolken, Spiegel und Uhren. Eine Lektüre meteorologischer Fotografien*, in: "Fotogeschichte", no. 48, 1993, 3-18. (I thank my Ph.D. colleagues Clara Bolin, Carina Dauven and Mona Schubert for the bibliographic advice about Wolf's research on this topic).



it was not until the late Middle Ages that painting paid them any attention».<sup>152</sup> But it is especially the Quattrocento «*perspectiva artificialis* (the perspective of painters, as opposed to the *perspectiva naturalis* of medieval optics)» that falls apart confronted with the antipathy of clouds to any form outlined by a geometrically defined contour.

«Perspective only needs to “know” things that it can reduce to its own order, things that occupy a place and the contour of which can be defined by lines. But the sky does not occupy a place, and cannot be measured; and as for clouds, nor can their outlines be fixed or their shape analyzed in terms of surface. A cloud belongs to the class of “bodies without surface”, as Leonardo da Vinci was to put it».<sup>153</sup>

Guidi himself, likes to tell his students the story of the rebellious clouds, and of Brunelleschi's expedient to substitute the representation of the sky, in one of his paintings, with its presentation by means of a mirroring surface.<sup>154</sup> He particularly appreciates the book by Kenneth Clarke *Landscape into Art*, in which the British art historian explains that:

«The mathematically minded Florentines demanded, in the words of Luca Pacioli, that art should be concerned with *certezze*, not with *opinioni*; and they believed that such *certezze* could only be established by mathematics. Their definition of the real was that which could occupy a given position in space. The result of this thirst for certainty was scientific perspective [...]. Perspective achieved *certezze*. But there was one element in landscape which could not be brought under control: the sky. The continual flux of change in the sky can only be suggested from memory, not determined by mathematics».<sup>155</sup>

Incidentally, the never-ending mutability of the sky also offers a good metaphor of the endless stream of subjects provided by the TV screen. Although clouds cannot be depicted by means of geometry, they find a place in Brunelleschi's representation thanks to the mirror image, that «accommodates [them] by means of a supplementary duplicating ploy, as

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<sup>152</sup> Hubert Damisch, *Théorie du /nuage/*, Paris: Editions du Seuil 1972 (Eng. tr. Janet Lloyd, *A Theory of /Cloud/ Towards a History of Painting*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press 2002: 126).

<sup>153</sup> Damisch, *A Theory of /Cloud/ Towards a History of Painting*: 124.

<sup>154</sup> See Guidi, *Lunario 1968-99*: n.n. The account about Brunelleschi's mirror is reported, among others, in Damisch, *A Theory of /Cloud/ Towards a History of Painting*: 121-123. The rebellious nature of clouds suits just right Guidi's spirit, that not by chance was expelled by the Italian army for owing a copy of the book *L'obbedienza non è più una virtù* [*Obedience is not a virtue anymore*], written by Father Lorenzo Milani in 1965, in defence of conscientious objection (see Lorenzo Milani, *L'obbedienza non è più una virtù. Documenti del processo di don Milani*, Florence: Libreria Editrice Fiorentina 1965-66).

<sup>155</sup> Kenneth Clark, *Landscape into Art*, London: Penguin Books 1949 (1956): 34-35.

a reflection of a reflection».<sup>156</sup> Likewise in Guidi's photograph, the television screen accommodates the clouds, supplementing a direct picture of the sky. Nevertheless, if on the one hand the image of the sky on the TV introduces us to the infinite world outside the domestic space, on the other hand the TV set resembles a box, that entraps the sky and reduces it to a commensurable dimension.

Only one year after Guidi took these photographs, Luigi Ghirri would enterprise his project on sky, called "∞" *Infinito* (1974) [Plate i/58], in which he photographed the sky every day for a whole year, to confront himself with «the impossibility of translating natural phenomena». In the end, he indeed considered the sequence of 365 photographs insufficient to constitute an image of the sky. The work expresses the limits of photography, he explained, yet it is in this impossible delimitation of the physical world, of nature and of man, that photography acquires value and meaning.<sup>157</sup> Guidi, who visited Ghirri at home and saw the pictures as the project was still ongoing, confesses to have judged the operation a bit specious.<sup>158</sup> This short anecdote restates, how diverse approaches to photography they advocate. Although in both their works «the sky, the greatest thing we know, is shrunk, miniaturised, downsized to a postcard dimension»,<sup>159</sup> Guidi, faithful to his own immanent attitude, has not pointed his camera up, towards the sky – unlike Ghirri – but photographed it by taking advantage from its momentary descent at eye level inside the television set. His interest was concentrated on the television as device – as his handwritten notes on the margin of the picture proves: «television set "Atlantic"» – as to say, on the finite nature of the industrial product, rather than on the infinite nature of the sky: as a matter of fact, he did not photograph the sky, but a television set, that by chance was showing the image of the sky. If the sky in Ghirri does not refer to "Nature" but, inside the formalizing logic of the photographic language, refers only to itself, declaring the impossibility of comprehending nature into the order of the experience, then *Infinito* paradoxically situates Ghirri's premises into an idealistic, not to say romantic, conception of the dualism man-nature: the finite man in front of the incommensurable nature.<sup>160</sup> On the con-

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<sup>156</sup> Damisch, *A Theory of /Cloud/ Towards a History of Painting*: 127. About the issue of perspective to deal with the representation of incommensurable elements, see also Arasse, *L'Annonciation italienne*, cit.

<sup>157</sup> Luigi Ghirri, "∞" *Infinito* (1974), (Milan 1979), republished in Paolo Costantini and Giovanni Chiaramonte (eds.), *Luigi Ghirri. Niente di Antico Sotto il Sole. Scritti e immagini per un'autobiografia*, Turin: SEI - Società Editrice Internazionale 1997: 36.

<sup>158</sup> Conversation with the author, 25 October 2021.

<sup>159</sup> Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*: 121 (translation mine). Ghirri created a panel composed out of the 365 small format colour photographs, but without following the chronological order of the shots. Thus, the rationality of the original conceptual project results jeopardised by the introduction of casualty. See also Massimo Mussini, *Luigi Ghirri. Attraverso la fotografia*, in Idem, *Luigi Ghirri*, Milan: Federico Motta Editore, Milan 2001, 9-50: 24.

<sup>160</sup> Ennery Taramelli, *Natura – Antinatura*, in Piovani Alberto (ed.), *I grandi fotografi: Luigi Ghirri*, Milan: Gruppo Editoriale Fabbri 1983, 57-60: 59. Arturo Carlo Quintavalle underlines the influence on Ghirri's work of the visionary and upsetting images by Caspar David Friedrich. (Quintavalle, *Viag-*

trary, the sky photographed by Guidi inside the TV screen is already reified, and attests that his area of action is localised exclusively in the immanent and commensurable: for him to question the infinity does not even constitute an issue.

It does not surprise then, that Guidi is neither an admirer of Alfred Stieglitz's *Equivalents* (1925-1934) [Plate i/59]. As a matter of fact, he asserts that if a reference to the American master in his work exists, rather than as a homage, it should be intended as a mockery:<sup>161</sup> «Let's say that I am a Mediterranean person, I don't insist on the "spirit", or on the symbolism of clouds, as Stieglitz does».<sup>162</sup>

The clouds in Guidi's television are not «images without grounds» like in Stieglitz's *Equivalents*,<sup>163</sup> because the ordinary setting of the appliance in the living room anchors them to materiality, brings them down. Even if both Stieglitz's *Equivalents* and Guidi's *Cesena, 1973 – Television set "Atlantic"* present us with a reflection about photographic cut and framing, they proceed along diverging conceptional and ideological paths. Maybe, a better counterpart to Guidi's cloudy TV screen, rather than in the *Equivalents*, can be found in the early cloud photographs included by Stieglitz in *Sun Rays – Paula, Berlin* (1889),

«for they are images that create a kind of visual metonymy within the structure of the picture itself. Since they are pictures of weather in the environment, they become references to the world outside the room».<sup>164</sup>

Philipp Dubois defines Stieglitz's *Equivalents* as the quintessence of the photographic act, as photography par excellence, because they exemplarily pose the question of the space in photography:

«non seulement celle de la coupe et du hors-champ [...] mais aussi celle du cadrage et des effets de composition interne qui s'ensuivent nécessairement, et également celle du rapport entre l'espace photographique proprement dit et l'espace topologique du sujet percevant au moment de la contemplation de l'image».<sup>165</sup>

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*gi di ritorno*: 63).

<sup>161</sup> In a phone conversation (25 October 2021) Guidi confirmed to agree with Walker Evans, who «in seeking an alternative to what he regarded as the cloistered pretensions of the Stieglitz's school, [...] turned to photography's plainspoken vernacular» (see Galassi, *Walker Evans & Company*: 12).

<sup>162</sup> Guidi quoted in Frongia, *Guido Guidi Interview*: 55.

<sup>163</sup> Rosalind Krauss, *Stieglitz/Equivalents*, in: "October. Essays in Honor of Jay Leyda", vol. 11, Winter 1979, 129-140: 135.

<sup>164</sup> Diana Emery Hulick, *Alfred Stieglitz's Paula (1889). A Study in Equivalence*, in: "History of Photography", vol. 17, no. 1, Spring 1993, 90-94: 93.

<sup>165</sup> Dubois, *L'acte photographique*: 188.

Without the need of any visible dispositive, the photographic cut in the *Equivalents* is made evident by the simple act of interrupting something for its own nature infinite. But even more than the fact «that the sky is vast and the photograph is only a limited part of it», the fact «that the sky is essentially not composed»<sup>166</sup> explains why the *Equivalents* are equivalent also in the sense that each and every side of the photograph can assume whichever position in the topological space of the observer, since they bear no information about the original position of the photographer.<sup>167</sup>

On the contrary, the sky in Guidi's television looks finite and oriented. The edges of the photograph match almost precisely those of the television set, as if there were no off-space outside the screen. The black edges around the image confirm that Guidi has not cropped the negative but printed the picture respecting the original framing of the shot. Defining the space of representation according to a strictly orthogonal structure, that respects the orientation and disposition of the space represented (up-down; right-left; horizontal-vertical), the TV set imposes a precise orientation to the clouds, provides them with a ground. This last consists physically in the shelves of the little piece of furniture, which also accommodate some magazines, a book, an ashtray, and a jewellery box. Thus, here again the TV set, despite the image it broadcasts, counts just as a common item among other common items. Moreover, the lower shelf, that runs parallel and coincides with the lower edge of the photograph, provides a closure to the bottom of the image. In this way the photographic cut is not perceived as an interruption of an infinite space continuum, but acquires a painterly completeness, as if the image had been constructed centripetally from the edges towards the inside, occupying a given empty space, instead of being subtracted from an already existing whole, according to the basic principle of photographic practice.<sup>168</sup>

I would like to conclude this short selection of television-photographs by Guidi, with another example of sky entrapped in a TV screen from an untitled colour photograph of 1978. [Plate i/60] When Guidi took this picture, colour television was still quite a novelty in Italy.<sup>169</sup> He remembers that his parents bought quite late a colour television, and affirms that his own definitive turn to colour photography at the beginning of the 1980s

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<sup>166</sup> Krauss, *Stieglitz/Equivalents*: 134.

<sup>167</sup> Dubois, *L'acte photographique*: 193-194.

<sup>168</sup> «C'est à dire que le cadre pictural est un univers bouclé, qui se suffit à lui-même, sans ouverture – André Bazin, déjà, avait bien perçu cela: "le cadre [de peinture] polarise l'espace vers le dedans... il est centripète" –. Espace fermé, autonome, complet d'entrée de jeu» (Dubois, *L'acte photographique*: 169).

<sup>169</sup> Italian television did not officially start broadcasting in colour until 1st February 1977. Such incredible delay – in other countries TVs had been enjoying colour for at least ten years and the first colour broadcast in the United States dates back to 1951 – was due to a decision by Senator Ugo La Malfa, who feared that the introduction of colour could trigger consumerist and inflationary trends. Indeed, the advent of colour TV coincided with the birth of the first commercial networks (see Grasso, *Prima lezione sulla televisione*: 24-25).

coincided approximately with that event.<sup>170</sup> Actually in the late 1960s he already started to work with colour, using 35 mm slides, but then he stopped, because the rolls had to be sent to Milan to develop, and a couple of postal mishaps happened. In the mid-1970s he started using negative film, but he didn't use it much, because colour films and papers were mainly aimed at the commercial market, and their preservation was problematic.

«The results were disastrous from a technical point of view, but I couldn't afford dye-transfer prints. It wasn't until later, in the early 1980s, that I was able to work with Silvio Rossi, who had opened a professional laboratory in Castagnole, near Treviso».<sup>171</sup>

Going back to the picture, for the sake of precision, the TV set – model Polaris produced by Voxon – belonged not Guidi, but his cousin. The photograph seems a celebration of colour, in particular turquoise blue. As mentioned, the image on the screen displays again a sky, but this time the clouds do not satisfy our figurative expectations, but appear just as an area of faded colour, almost a flaw in the otherwise perfect all-over turquoise. The blue of the sky reveals itself as a particularly problematic colour to render both in painting and photography, as Guidi explains:

«For example, take the sky and Kodak blue. Even Lewis Baltz consoled me with the fact that Kodak blue was terrible. Sky isn't easy; it may be the most difficult part of a painting and a photograph too because the sky has this air of lightness, which isn't the same thing as Kodak blue. [In] colour photography, there's a risk that the blue of the sky becomes a sort of paint, a background colour that refers to nothing other than itself».<sup>172</sup>

As a matter of fact, rather than a sky, the blue TV screen resembles an abstract monochromatic painting, thus in a way supporting the thesis that in those years the television was «also encouraging new forms of abstraction»<sup>173</sup> where space, colours, shapes, and lines generated by electricity, substituted the various geometric configuration and effects achieved by applying paint to canvas. In fact, Guidi's clear-blue TV screen easy shows that «if TV is a ready source of representational images, it is source of ready-made abstract images as well».<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Conversation with the author, 25 October 2021.

<sup>171</sup> See Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro, 1976-81*: 120.

<sup>172</sup> Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro, 1976-81*: 122.

<sup>173</sup> Marc H. Miller, *Television's Impact on Contemporary Art*, in: "Aperture: Technology and Transformation", no. 106, Spring 1987, 65-69: 67-68.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

Once again, we confront us with an uncommon single picture, iconic and almost pop in its essentiality, in which the TV set as object is the only protagonist. In using ordinary commodities such as the TV set or the car (as I show in the next paragraphs) for their framing qualities, Guidi is not only introducing in the main photographic space a secondary frame, but also the biographies of these things.<sup>175</sup> De facto, every object inserts a narrative element in a picture, because it has its own biography as thing, in the same way as a person does. The biography of a thing might be told in term of ownership, but it «may also concentrate on innumerable other matters and events».<sup>176</sup> Just like people, things have not one but «many biographies – psychological, professional, political, familial, economic and so forth – each of which selects some aspects of the life history and discards others». These various overlapping and interconnecting biographies are those of the individual object (for instance this television owned by Guidi's cousin), of the product (this specific model produced by Voxson in the 70s), and of the generic technology (the advent of colour television).<sup>177</sup> «Biographies of things can make salient what might otherwise remain obscure».<sup>178</sup> In this sense every commodity includes a temporal clue in the photograph, that helps us to understand it as historically relevant.

### *The car as camera*<sup>179</sup>

In his essay *The Montage of Film Attraction* Sergei Eisenstein claimed that

«an object is photogenic when it corresponds most closely to the idea that it embodies. (A car is more photogenic than a cart because its whole structure corresponds more closely to its purpose of transportation, and so on)».<sup>180</sup>

Then, the analogy between objects and people does not involve only the biographic aspects, but even their attribute of being photogenic. According to Eisenstein, «photogenic

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<sup>175</sup> Not to mention that a photograph itself has its own biography as thing too.

<sup>176</sup> Igor Kopytoff, *The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process*, in Arjun Appadurai (ed.) *The social life of things. Commodities in cultural perspective*, New York: Cambridge University Press 2013 (1986), 64-94: 66.

<sup>177</sup> Silverstone, Hirsch, and Morley, *Information and communication technologies and the moral economy of the household*: 16. The Italian company Voxson counted among the leader of the market in Europe for TV and radio equipment until the failure in 1987 (See Wikipedia: online resource).

<sup>178</sup> Kopytoff, *The Cultural Biography of Things*: 67.

<sup>179</sup> «Yes, photographers do position themselves to take advantage of good fortune, sensing for instance when to stop the car...» (Robert Adams, *Colleagues*, in Idem, *Why People Photograph*, 13-19: 16).

<sup>180</sup> Sergei Eisenstein, *The Montage of Film Attraction (1924)*, in Richard Taylor (ed.), *The Eisenstein Reader*, London: British Film Institute 1998, 35-52: 51.

faces are those which first and foremost possess “character”». <sup>181</sup> As much as this idea is convincing, I personally do not agree about the fact that a cart would be less photogenic than a car, especially if we look at the photographs of carts taken by Atget, Evans or Guidi. [Plate i/61] By the way, Guidi, who often photographed not “photogenic” subjects, spouses a conception of beauty largely based on a functionalist idea of design and architecture, that he inherited from the lessons of Carlo Scarpa at the University in Venice in the late 1960s: «Architecture had to be necessary, not beautiful, just as nature is necessary and not beautiful. Therefore, anything that is unnecessary is ugly to me», states Guidi. <sup>182</sup>

If the car appears often as subject in his works, this is not by virtue of its “photogeny”, but because of the peculiar role it plays in his practice. A typical activity of Guidi’s everyday routine is the so called, *viaggetto* [brief journey] to photograph, once and again, the same familiar places, through brief but repeated short travels by car in the surroundings of his house – not to mention the funny coincidence that the word “Guido” in Italian means “I drive”. <sup>183</sup> No wonder, if it has always been important to him «to go around by car with the radio on, listening to music, but above all looking around, looking and looking». <sup>184</sup>

In this section I am concentrating on two specific aspects of his oeuvre related to the car – as to say, everyday life and the discourse about the framing – since they constitute the theoretical background of this chapter. Almost no need to say, that the car window can “function” as a “natural frame”. However, in comparison to the window, the car window possesses the quality of motion: it can move inside the landscape, while the window of a building has a fixed position, of course. In this sense, the car window is more similar to the camera lens than the window. What’s more, the act of seeing through can be multiplied, if we look through a sequence of car windows one after the other. [Plates i/63, 65]

Photographs of vehicles, in movement or parked, are very common in Guidi’s work – this does not surprise, since cars constitute a standard presence in our ordinary urban and suburban panorama. <sup>185</sup> [Plate i/62, 64] The automobile plays a triple role in

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Guidi quoted in Frongia and Moro, *Topography of the Landscape and of the Archive*: 104.

<sup>183</sup> The expression “viaggetto”, to describe to Guidi’s attitude in exploring his surroundings, appears in Vittorio Savi, *Waiting for Atlas*, in Provincia di Rimini (ed.), *Rimini Atlas: indagine sul paesaggio della provincia di Rimini per il nuovo PTCP-Piano Territoriale di Coordinamento Provinciale*, Milan: Federico Motta 2006, 18-23: 20.

<sup>184</sup> Guidi quoted in Frongia, *Quello che resta*: 161.

<sup>185</sup> Differently from Guidi, in 1969 the Italian photographer Paolo Monti, photographing the old town of Bologna, asked to remove all incongruous elements – such as cars and street signals – in order to recreate an ahistorical vision of the monuments in line with the Alinari’s tradition. One year after, Monti instead published a photo-book about Milan with a section titled *La città “garage”* [*The “garage” city*], in which he presented as diachronic diptychs the same view of the city, first invaded by cars and then liberated from the traffic thanks to a new urban plan (see Frongia, *Il luogo e*

Guidi's practice: first, it allows him to travel around freely; second, it often provides a subject for his photographs; and third, it functions as analogous to the camera, with regard to the possibility of motion and framing. As a matter of fact, since the end of the nineteenth century «photography, which immobilizes, has benefited from the automobile, which provides mobility».<sup>186</sup> The practice of photographing the car, or from the car, or by car binds together «a packed field of twentieth-century artists and photographers for whom the car would become something like a medium, or perhaps [...] a “technical support”».<sup>187</sup>

These artists, probably inspired by a romantic perception of automotive travel as the epitome of freedom, crystallized by Jack Kerouac's book *On the Road*, did not only use «cars to make work», but engaged with a variety of «aspects of automotive culture, from gas stations to car parks».<sup>188</sup> Among the many, who gave themselves to the freedom of the road, while attempting to redefine the relationship between the car and the camera, Robert Adams, William Eggleston, Walker Evans, Robert Frank, Lee Friedlander, Joel Meyerowitz, Stephen Shore and Henry Wessel Jr. represent, for one or the other aspect, a working reference for Guidi.

Describing his experience of travelling by car in Europe in 1966-1967, Joel Meyerowitz confessed: «I began to understand that the car window was the frame, and that in some way the car itself was the camera with me inside it».<sup>189</sup> These words, easily to be confused with a statement by Guidi, are important to make clear, that

«as such the car as a “technical support” for the artist bears a specific and close relationship to the photographic medium itself, which can likewise be characterized in relation to framing/composition, automatism, and seriality».<sup>190</sup>

Quite curiously, the Emilia-Romagna region has gained the nickname of *motor valley*, thanks to the fact, that some of the most famous automotive producers such as Ferrari, Lamborghini and Maserati, just to name the biggest ones, are based there.<sup>191</sup> At the same time, the region is the place of origin of the so called “Emilian school of photography”, that Walter Guadagnini defines as «the place of development of the relationship in which

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*la scena: la città come testo fotografico: 117-119).*

<sup>186</sup> Xavier Barral and Philippe Séclier, *Autophoto*, in Idem (eds.), *Autophoto. Cars & Photography, 1900 to Now*, ex. cat., Paris: Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain/Éditions Xavier Barral 2017, 8-94: 8.

<sup>187</sup> Simon Baker, *Drive-By Shooting*, in Barral and Séclier (eds.) *Autophoto*, 167-250: 168.

<sup>188</sup> Joel Meyerowitz, *Taking My Time*, vol. 1, New York: Phaidon 2012: 186.

<sup>189</sup> Joel Meyerowitz quoted in Baker, *Drive-By Shooting*: 169.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> See, for instance, Edmondo Berselli, *Quel gran pezzo dell'Emilia. Terra di comunisti, motori, musica, bel gioco, cucina grassa e italiani di classe*, Milan: Mondadori 2004: 73-85.



knowledge is handed down from one generation to another, principally by means of direct transmission and occasionally through external mediation». Although he avoids defining the school in strictly geographical terms, he nonetheless admits as a «first, irrefutable fact», the existence of a centres of creation comprising «Modena, Reggio Emilia and an area or Romagna the epicentre of which is Cesena».<sup>192</sup>

As Roberta Valtorta explains on the occasion of the photographic survey along the Emilia road, that took place in the two-years period 1999-2000 under the coordination of Linea di Confine and other local subjects, even if nowadays it is probably methodologically wrong to speak of a “school” on regional basis, undoubtedly the *via Emilia* took the role of symbolic axis, backbone – with a fulcrum between the provinces of Modena and Reggio Emilia – in the development of a national photographic culture, not only at local level, but for Italy as a whole. Since the 1970s, in photography – like in music, cinema or literature – the network of relationships, influences, and derivations has been in such constant growth, to go far beyond the regional borders. Nevertheless, especially the region Emilia-Romagna has become the cradle of a dense creative community, thanks to the teachings of figures such as Franco Vaccari, Luigi Ghirri, Guido Guidi, all born and active there. If there is a school, claims Valtorta, it is a tentacular one, interwoven with official schools, academies, and university, in a complex geography, that has attracted a variety of operators and activities in the regional territory. During the 1970s, the 1980s and the 1990s, some concomitant factors favoured the flourishing of productions and projects that from this region spread throughout the entire Peninsula. In terms of innovative quality of the productions and quantity of initiatives, it seems that the Emilian region benefited from the lucky intersection of three factors: the high intellectual level of the protagonists of that season of photography, the widespread attitude to share projects and create networks of communication and discussion, and the institutional vivacity – probably thanks to the progressive orientation of the region, ruled since the end of Second World War by the Communist Party. In a similar context, photography was appreciated as a new, dynamic, critical art, involved in the contradictions of reality and suitable for public initiatives. The practice of photography found positive resonance in the culture of a valley with a rural-industrial background, that led to the development of a tradition of consociation and experimentation with a collective imprint, in the principle of a positive competition, which historically gave start to communication, exchange and travelling. Moving fast in their scattered metropolitan territory – on a land where velocity means also passage from the country to the sea, from the yard to the beach, it means nightclubs, cars, motorcycles, Ferrari, Maserati, Ducati, Morini – thanks to their pragmatic mobility, the people of Emilia-

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<sup>192</sup> Walter Guadagnini, *Fragments for an introduction*, Eng. tr. Nancy Campanale Grilloni, in Idem (ed.), *La scuola Emiliana di fotografia*, ex. cat. Galleria Civica del Comune di Modena, Udine: Art& 1997, 11-16: 11-12.

Romagna are often compared to the Americans. The authors active in that area have promptly read those elements of innovation present in the experiences of the great American photographers of “reality” – from Walker Evans to Robert Frank and Lee Friedlander, from William Eggleston to Stephen Shore, Lewis Baltz and Robert Adams – including them in the issues of Italian photography, that mainly in the 1970s and the 1980s needed new inspiration. In photography, it has happened exactly the same – positively or negatively – as in the rest of the contemporary culture: a quick and complex passage from the dialect to the national language and then to the international one.<sup>193</sup>

The interrelationship between the photographic practice and its automotive “technical support” introduces such a founding theme for both the history of the medium (in general) and for Guidi’s practice (in particular), that it deserves to be treated more thoroughly.

«Both the car and the modern camera made their appearance during the Second Industrial Revolution, a revolution not of steel and steam but of electricity and gasoline».<sup>194</sup>

At the end of the 1880s a double revolution was underway: on the part of photography the possibility to capture a moving subject was gained, while on the part of automotive the four-stroke engine was developed. During the twentieth century, «automobile and photography progressed side by side».<sup>195</sup> The process would culminate in a democratization of transport and vision, with the introduction of respectively economy cars and hand cameras, that engendered a feeling of action and freedom.<sup>196</sup>

«The automobile profoundly transformed the twentieth century in terms of spatial, economic, and social organization. Film photography was the faithful witness of all these changes. The car generated new photographic themes, such as road infrastructures, the automobile industry, the development of the suburbs, and weekend trips. Moreover, the car influenced photographers’ approach to these themes and places, and subsequently their regard and sensibility, acquiring over time the role of a medium».<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> See Valtorta, *Viaggi Organizzati*: 17-21.

<sup>194</sup> Marc Desportes, *Photomobile Landscapes*, in Barral and Séclier (eds.), *Autophoto*, 95-100: 95.

<sup>195</sup> Barral and Séclier, *Autophoto*, in Idem (eds.), *Autophoto*, 8-11: 9.

<sup>196</sup> For the concept of «democratization of vision», see Kouwenhoven, *Living in a Snapshot World*, 106–108. For a concise parallel history of photography and automobile, see Barral and Séclier, *Autophoto*: 438-447 (chronology).

<sup>197</sup> Desportes, *Photomobile Landscapes*: 95.

Guidi reminds, that Stephen Shore once commented to him: «...what a beautiful project: you get up, take the car, head south and then stop as soon as you find “extraordinarily” common things».<sup>198</sup> Indeed the majority of Guidi’s projects arose by car. Among his most significant photo-books featuring pictures taken *on the road*, it is worth to remember: *In Sardegna* 1974-2011, *Per Strada* 1980-1994, *Cinque Paesaggi* 1983-1993, *In Veneto* 1984-1989, *Cinque Viaggi* 1990-1998, *In Between Cities* 1993-1996.<sup>199</sup> From all these publications, it becomes evident that for Guidi the car does not only mean an indispensable means of transport, but also a generator of imagines, counting almost as a counterpart of the camera, in term of framing possibilities.

As just short mentioned, Guidi’s teaching and working assignments in Ravenna, Venice and Preganziol obliged him to regularly commute by car. In 1970, thanks to the launch of the Urban Studies course at the University Institute of Architecture in Venice (IUAV), Guidi had the opportunity to work as a technician in the photography and cartography laboratory at the new campus in Preganziol, near Treviso. In 1979 Guidi made the acquaintance of the photographer Umberto Sartorello and was offered accommodation in his home in Treviso. Later, in 1990, he had to move to Mestre, because the faculty had been relocated to Venice again.<sup>200</sup> Therefore, it is not infrequent to bump into photographs of the landscape framed by the windscreen, or the side window, or the rear-view mirror, taken by Guidi during his commuting travels. Not by chance, among the photographic book, that Guidi is thinking to possibly release in the future, there is a selection of car window views.<sup>201</sup>

Let us now consider, for instance, the work *Treviso, 1980* [Plate i/65]. The photograph has been shot through the side car window, whose structure frames the body of the cream-white car traveling alongside. This is driven by a woman, who looks straight ahead of her, unaware of being photographed. In the early 1980s Henry Wessel too realised a similar kind of stolen photographs in traffic. Founding himself commuting from Richmond, California, to San Francisco in the morning rush hour, he exorcized the boredom of his alone, encapsulated wait, photographing his fellow commuters as they made their way through traffic.<sup>202</sup> [Plate i/66]. Sure enough, there are evident coincidences between Wessel’s and Guidi’s photographs of drivers. Both took advantage of a routine situation –

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<sup>198</sup> Guido Guidi in conversation with Roberto Masiero and Marco Zanta in Guido Guidi (ed.), *Nice to See You*, Linea di Confine Editore, Rubiera 2002: 4.

<sup>199</sup> The years indicate the periods of the photographic campaigns, not the year of printing of the photographs or of the book publication.

<sup>200</sup> See Stefania Rössl, *Patient Search. Guido Guidi and the Veneto Landscape*, Eng. tr. Gray Sutherland, in Stefania Rössl and Massimo Sordi (eds.), *Guido Guidi and Morgan Crowcroft-Brown (design), Guido Guidi – In Veneto, 1984-89*, ex. cat. Museo Casa Giorgione Castelfranco Veneto, London: Mack books 2019, 54-57: 55, 57.

<sup>201</sup> Conversation with the author, 14 April 2022.

<sup>202</sup> See Henry Wessel, *Traffic/Sunset Park/Continental Divide*, Göttingen: Steidl 2016.

their daily or weekly transfer from home to work – and turned it into an opportunity for photographing; both snapshot from inside their cars without being seen: they saw but were not seen, because the car provided them with a sort of *hunting blind* from which they could shoot disguised – as commuters among commuters – through the frame of their car windows.

Two further coeval examples are *Via Ravennate, Cesena, 1979* and *Cesena, 1980*. [Plates i/67, 68] Like the previous photograph, they were taken quickly from inside the car, in the midst of the traffic jam of a random rainy day. As a matter of fact, they could have been taken on the same day, rather than a year apart. Everything looks anonymous: the street, the buildings, the cars. In *Cesena 1980* the rear mirror provides a further frame, that introduces in the photographic space the off-space behind Guidi's back. Both photographs display blurred and out of focus areas, that contribute to convey the chaotic atmosphere of the traffic on a rainy day. To be sincere, these pictures leave a sense of perplexity about the reasons why Guidi made them. This is a typical trait of his practice that often floors the viewer in search of a clear sense for such choices. Neither the landscape nor the traffic or the weather truly interested Guidi, but rather the very act of shooting quickly, without having the time to think about it, but accepting photography as a form of automatic writing. He recognises, that the snapshot style, of these and other photographs of the 1970s and the 1980s «is connected to what the surrealists called automatic writing: writing in which the unconscious comes to the fore and the rational aspect is less evident».<sup>203</sup> He agrees with Jim Dine's assertions, to love photography because it allows to access the unconscious in a very immediate way.<sup>204</sup> Indeed, they were taken with a small-format camera, which provides them with a peculiar linguistic fluency and spontaneity. Guidi confirms that they result from the exercise of «spontaneity in seeking», and he considers them as «notes, jottings».<sup>205</sup> They probably belong to the kind of photographs, he was taking in those years, without even looking into the viewfinder, in his attempt to rely on chance. Surely, the photographs taken from the car had something to do with impatience, he says, but they were also a reflection about the importance of uncertainty on the outcome of his work.<sup>206</sup> He acknowledges to have been especially influenced by an encounter with Nathan Lyons, who in a workshop held in Venice in 1979, encouraged the participants to photograph by looking through the viewfinder and then without looking. Guidi compares this exercise to a test performed some-

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<sup>203</sup> Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'Altro, 1976-81*: 128.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> *Ivi*: 126.

<sup>206</sup> Perhaps, these experiments by Guidi have been also influenced by the ideas exposed in Franco Vaccari, *Fotografia e inconscio tecnologico*, Modena: Punto e virgola 1979 as suggested by Roberta Valtorta, who speaks of a "Vaccari's effect" experienced either directly or subliminally by many photographers especially in Emilia Romagna (Valtorta, *Viaggi organizzati*: 17).

times by Henri Matisse in order to prove his own mastery on the subject. After having spent a long time drawing a face, he drew it again on a piece of paper pinned on a door, but this time with his eyes closed.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> See Frongia, *Chance encounters*: 137.



## 2. Indexicality

### From icon to index

The exploration of Guidi's photographic grammar within everyday life continues by taking into account another of the basic conceptions of photography specificity, as to say the principle of indexicality, that involves the relationship of physical proximity and dependence that each photograph establishes with the object it represents. The theme – that can be subsumed in the notion of photography as *index* – has been treated thoroughly by some of the most influential theorists and critics, first and foremost, in the field of semiological studies, starting from the assumption that the fundamental peculiarity of the photographic medium resides in the fact that «the physical objects themselves print their image by means of the optical and chemical action of light», as Rudolf Arnheim put it.<sup>1</sup>

As Herta Wolf further explains – agreeing with the argumentations expressed by Philippe Dubois in *L'acte photographique* (1983) –, the photographic image adheres to its model, in the sense that in the photographic image, the object, captured and reproduced, conveys the model. Despite all the possible technical manipulations and retouches, referentiality is inherent to photographs.

«Es kann keine Fotografie ohne einen Referenten geben (was nicht bedeutet, daß dieser gegenständlich sein muß), und die spezifisch mediale Wiedergabe des Referenten konstituiert das Fotografische».<sup>2</sup>

Within the discourse of medium specificity, this means to conceive the referent not iconically but indexically: «Nicht ein primär ähnliches Bild des Modell zeigt das Fotobild, son-

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<sup>1</sup> Rudolf Arnheim, *On the Nature of Photography*, in: "Critical Inquiry", vol. 1, Sept. 1974, 149-161: 155.

<sup>2</sup> Wolf, *Vorwort*, in Dubois, *Der fotografische Akt*: 13.

dern ein primär durch Berührung, durch physikalischen Konnex entstandenes Bild».<sup>3</sup>

The following paragraphs deal with the indexical definition of photography, considered not only from a conceptual perspective, but first and foremost from a performative and pragmatic point of view, of course with specific attention to Guidi's practice. I will try to show how Guidi reasons on basic photographic theoretical questions, not through words, but through visual suggestions. As in the previous chapter, the theoretical discourse will be led on the basis of a selection of exemplar photographs, whose subjects (ranging from pointed fingers to casted shadows) make evident the adherence to the everyday background. But first, it might be useful to better contextualise Guidi's work within the widespread semiotic discourse during the 1960s-1970s.

### *The semiotic turn*

In the debate about the constitution of photographic meaning, we cannot forget the role played by semiotics and psychoanalysis, whose engagement brought to a key theoretical turn within the humanities.<sup>4</sup> Victor Burgin claims that «photography shares an attribute of language», due to its capacity of coining a free and familiar meaning «largely unremarked and untheorized by those amongst whom it circulates».<sup>5</sup> In the 1960s the «systematic investigation of forms of communication outside of natural language, [...] conducted from the standpoint of linguistic science» began, and radically reoriented the theory of photography. Burgin identifies an early phase of “structuralist” semiology, coeval with the publication in France of Roland Barthes' *Éléments de sémiologie* (1964). During that time, «close attention was paid to the analogy between “natural” language (the phenomenon of speech and writing) and visual “languages”».<sup>6</sup> It does not surprise then, if many visual experimentations of the late 1960s were characterised by

«a common concern to explore what possibilities existed in the idea of declaring, nominating, announcing, stating, claiming, identifying, reporting, that such and such a thing was a work of art».<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Derrick Price and Liz Wells, *Thinking about photography: debates, historically and now*, in Liz Wells (ed.), *Photography. A Critical Introduction*, London and New York: Routledge 2015 (5th edition), 9-74: 36.

<sup>5</sup> Victor Burgin, *Looking at Photographs*, in Idem (ed.), *Thinking Photography*, Houndmills and London: MacMillan Press 1982, 142-153: 142-143.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> David Green and Joanna Lowry, *From Presence to the Performative: Rethinking Photographic Indexicality*, in David Green (ed.), *Where is the Photograph?*, Brighton: Photowork/Photoforum 2002, 47-60: 53.



A similar approach turned the identity of the artist, like the identity of the art object, into an «entirely nominal» matter.<sup>8</sup>

Speaking of the Italian context, Roberta Valtorta considers the publication in 1962 of Umberto Eco's book *Open work* as the turning point in the studies of semiotic aesthetics.<sup>9</sup> Located within a general theory of signs, photography «began to be seen as a message; no longer the mimesis of reality, nor deliberately “art,” no longer document, it was understood as a more complex totality of signs».<sup>10</sup> To analyse all the different aspects of the photographic code, in 1970 Ugo Mulas started his *Verifiche* – photographs in which the theme was photography itself, its language.

«The *Verifiche* decoded the language of photography, which had until then been conceived according to a “realistic,” literal norm. These new works seemed to correspond to the concept of art as message, as expressed by Eco».<sup>11</sup>

Valtorta points out that between the mid-1970s and the early 1980s almost no artist or photographer could avoid dealing «with the complexity of the photographic code» and explore «the possibility that photography could examine its own methods». In the 1970s Guido Guidi too «began his linguistic experiments, basing [his] photographs in a conceptual matrix».<sup>12</sup>

### *Guidi and conceptual art*

Guidi's himself does not deny having been influenced, particularly in the late 1960s, by conceptual art, which he was following carefully. Although he dislikes labels, his habit to write beneath the photos and to present two paired photos, instead of just one, was considered conceptual. His aim was to show the nature of the process in his own work, and he traces back to the Bauhaus the root of such practices, which later came to be called *conceptual*. He claims to have inherited his modernist, scientific attitude from the lessons of the artist Luigi Veronesi, who was his teacher in Venice. He recalls:

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<sup>8</sup> «One of the most important strategies adopted by conceptual artists can be thought as a form of speech act» (ibid.).

<sup>9</sup> See Umberto Eco, *Opera aperta*, Milan: Bompiani 1962.

<sup>10</sup> Roberta Valtorta, *Poetica e Poesia. A Reading of Recent Italian Photography*, Eng. tr. Marguerite Shore, in: “Aperture”, Summer 1993, 26-48: 26.

<sup>11</sup> Ivi: 34.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.: «One such investigation was Franco Vaccari's famous *Esposizione in tempo reale* (Exhibition in real time) at the 1972 Venice Biennale». About the impact of semiotic studies on the Italian photographers of Guidi's generation see also Roberta Valtorta, *Introduzione*, in Franco Vaccari, *Fotografia e inconscio tecnologico*, edited by Roberta Valtorta, Turin: Einaudi 2011, I-XXXII.

«The school I attended was the Italian version of the Bauhaus. Luigi Veronesi was the only one in Italy to have been enrolled in Bauhaus, and sometimes he talked about Moholy-Nagy».<sup>13</sup>

He finds much of the neo-conceptual work of today boring, «sterile and academic».<sup>14</sup> As a matter of fact, he believes that all art has always been anachronistically conceptual, and considers phony to distinguish «between the retina, which records, and the brain, which reasons». On the contrary, conceptual art seems to him to be «often antithetical to looking, just as Duchamp was opposed to “retinal” art».<sup>15</sup> Once, Antonello Frongia asked Guidi if he felt the need to distinguish between conceptual photography, based on linguistic games and irony, and a photography which is intrinsically conceptual, because it stimulates a reflection about observation and representation. Guidi replied that photography in itself *thinks*, even without being explicitly conceptual.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless he recalls that he took a photograph in 1956, portraying a person, who was holding a sheet of paper, as a homage to Lee Friedlander.

«Friedlander later became for me a sort of mentor, because more than anyone else he has investigated the relationship between the experience of seeing and the writing, between the experience of seeing and that of putting into code. That photograph, already incorporated a reflection, that conceptual artists would have developed in Italy only afterwards».<sup>17</sup>

Regarding his semiotic approach to photography, Guidi says:

«Years ago, I would bore my friends every so often with certain theories that were based more on visual “evidence” rather than “scientific” philological analysis. I was trying to hone in on the origins of visual language by simply looking and making connections, like a prehistoric hunter identifying his prey by the traces left on the ground».<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Guidi quoted in Frongia, *Il paesaggio che guarda me*: 399-400 (translation mine). Guidi studied first Architecture and then Design at the University Institute of Architecture in Venice-IUAV (for biographical details see Appendix 1). The Milanese painter and photographer Luigi Veronesi (1908–1998) was one of the main representatives of Italian abstraction. See Roberto Mutti and Luciano Caramel, *Luigi Veronesi: lo spazio sensibile*, ex. cat. Bel Vedere Fotografia Milan: Mondadori Electa 2007: 117.

<sup>14</sup> Frongia, *Guido Guidi Interview*: 53-54.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> See Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>17</sup> See Frongia, *Il paesaggio che guarda me*: 396-397 (translation mine).

<sup>18</sup> Guido Guidi, *Appunti per una lezione/Notes for a lesson*, Eng. tr. Mark J. Newman, in Idem, *La figura*

It seems to me, that this statement by Guidi quotes between the lines the story about the origin of the concept of serendipity, told by Carlo Ginzburg in the book *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (1986), that Guidi appreciates and owns in his library.<sup>19</sup>

In the essay *Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm* – included in the book – Ginzburg reports a Medieval Persian fairy tale about

«three brothers who meet a man who has lost a camel or, in variant version, a horse. They describe it for him without hesitation [...] Then they have seen it? No, they have not. [...] Obviously the three brothers are repositories of some sort of venatic lore»<sup>20</sup>

which enables them to describe an animal they had never seen by deciphering tracks.

«The hunter would have been the first “to tell a story” because he alone was able to read, in the silent, nearly imperceptible tracks left by his prey, a coherent sequence of events».<sup>21</sup>

In the mid-sixteenth century the stories of the three brothers reappeared in Venice, with the title *The Three Princes of Serendip*,<sup>22</sup> and enjoyed such great success, that it led Horace Walpole in 1754 to coin the neologism *serendipity*, to designate the making of unexpected discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things you were not in quest of.<sup>23</sup>

Guidi’s reference to this tale is especially interesting for two reasons, linked both to his own practice in particular and to the theoretical reflection about photography medium specificity in general. The first reason is that it directly addresses the definition of photography as index, and the second that it suggests the connection between photography and chance.<sup>24</sup>

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*dell’Orante. Appunti per una lezione*, Lugo (RA): Edizioni del bradipo 2012, iv-vii: v.

<sup>19</sup> As a matter of fact, Antonello Frongia too describes Guidi as a «curious reader» of the writings by Svetlana Alpers, Carlo Ginzburg, and Daniel Arasse. He annotates that Guidi’s library includes Alpers, *The Art of Describing*, cit.; Carlo Ginzburg, *Miti, Emblemi, Spie. Morfologia e Storia*, Eng. tr. John Tedeschi and Anne C., *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1989; Daniel Arasse, *Le détail. Pour une histoire rapprochée de la peinture*, Paris: Flammarion 1992. See Antonello Frongia, *Appunti da una lezione/Notes from a lesson*, Eng. tr. Mark J. Newman, in Guidi, *La figura dell’Orante*, xii-xv: vxi-xv.

<sup>20</sup> Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*: 103.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Cristoforo Armeno, *Peregrinaggio di tre giovani figliuoli del re Serendippo*, Venice: Michele Tramezzino 1557.

<sup>23</sup> Ivi: 102, 116.

<sup>24</sup> About the relationship between photography and chance, with a special attention to the role of *serendipity* in relation to Guidi’s work, see chapter 4 (*Mistake*).

## *The definition of photography as index*

Setting apart for now the issue of chance, in this chapter we are considering Guidi's work in relation to the medium specificity of photography as index, as theorised most famously by Rosalind Krauss.<sup>25</sup> In summarising the impact of Krauss' definition of photography as index, Herta Wolf recalls the studies of Katia Schneller about the reception of the concept in the French jargon, demonstrating that between 1977 and 1990 the expressions "the art of index" and "*le photographique*" became not only synonymous «sondern, mehr noch, beide Begriffe ver- und bestärkten sich gegenseitig und instituierten damit ein neues Designat».<sup>26</sup>

In conceiving her famous equation of photography and index, Krauss explains that

«photography is an imprint or transfer of the real; it is a photochemically processed trace causally connected to that thing in the world to which it refers in a manner parallel to that of fingerprints or footprints or the rings of water that cold glasses leave on tables. The photograph is thus generically distinct from painting or sculpture or drawing. [...] For technically and semiologically speaking, drawings and paintings are icons, while photographs are indexes».<sup>27</sup>

Founding her argumentation on the linguistic theories first formulated by Charles Sanders Peirce (1895), and later restated by Roman Jakobson (1956), Krauss distinguishes indexes from symbols and icons by virtue of the physical relationship that they establish with their referents, in the formation of their meaning.

«They are the marks or traces of a particular cause, and that cause is the thing to which they refer, the object they signify. Into the category of index, we would place physical traces (like footprints)».<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> «Immer läßt sich für Rosalind Krauss der Index [...] als zentrales Spezifikum künstlerischer Verfahren seit der Moderne ausmachen» (Herta Wolf, *Vorwort*, in Rosalind E. Krauss, *Die Originalität der Avantgarde und andere Mythen der Moderne*, edited by Herta Wolf, Amsterdam/Dresden: Verlag der Kunst 2000, 9-38: 16). To deepen Rosalind Krauss' concept of *Index*, see Krauss, *Marcel Duchamp ou le champ imaginaire*, in Eadem, *Le Photographique. Pour une Théorie des Ecarts*, 71-88; as well as Krauss, *Notes on the Index: Part 1* and *Notes on the Index: Part 2*, originally both published in 1977 (respectively in: "October" no. 3, 68-81 and no. 4, 58-67), and both republished in Eadem, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*, 196-209 and 210-220. See also Wolf, *Greenbergs Schatten: Fotografische Medienspezifität oder Literarizität*: 346-348 and Wolf, *Vorwort*, in Krauss, *Die Originalität der Avantgarde*: 12, 16. For a short but comprehensive history of the indexical approach to photography see in particular Dubois, *L'acte photographique*: 40 ff.

<sup>26</sup> Wolf, *Greenbergs Schatten*: 346.

<sup>27</sup> Krauss, *The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism*: 110.

<sup>28</sup> Krauss, *Notes on the Index: Part 1*: 198, 203.

Thus, Krauss postulates that

«every photograph is the result of a physical imprint transferred by light onto a sensitive surface. The photograph is [...] a type of icon, or visual likeness, which bears an indexical relationship to its object».<sup>29</sup>

Krauss of course does not forget to quote André Bazin's famous statement that the photographic image

«cet objet lui-même, mais libéré des contingences temporelles. L'image peut être floue, déformée, décolorée, sans valeur documentaire, elle procède par sa genèse de l'ontologie du modèle; elle est le modèle».<sup>30</sup>

For the French film critic and theorist, «la photographie bénéficie d'un transfert de réalité de la chose sur sa reproduction».<sup>31</sup> As we have already learnt from Wolf's words, quoted in the opening lines of this chapter, the existence of the photographed object is linked to the existence of the model like «une empreinte digitale».<sup>32</sup>

In *L'acte photographique*, Philippe Dubois describes three different theoretical approaches to photography, that develop almost in parallel, each of them reducible to a specific concept – icon, symbol, index – according to Charles Sanders Peirce's terminology. Dubois calls the first theory «photographie comme miroir du réel», in the sense that photography is intended as an almost perfect imitation of reality. The mechanical photographic procedure consents the automatic apparition of an image without any human intervention. According to such an idea the photographic image represents a perfect mimetic reproduction of reality. This conception is based on the “verisimilitude” principle that considers a photograph as an *icon*.<sup>33</sup> On the contrary, the second approach, called by Dubois «photographie comme transformation du réel», assumes that «la chambre noire n'est pas neutre et innocente».<sup>34</sup> The photographic image represents an interpretation and transformation of reality, and must be seen as an ensemble of codes. Photography must thus be intended as a *symbol*.<sup>35</sup> Finally the third approach – slightly more recent – considers «photographie comme trace d'une réel» and comprises theories, that intend «la photo comme

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> André Bazin, *Ontologie de l'image Photographique* (1945), in Idem, *Qu'est ce que le cinéma?* (1958), Paris: Les Édition du Cerf, Collection le 7ème art 1990, 9-17: 14.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ivi: 16.

<sup>33</sup> Dubois, *L'acte photographique*: 21-31, 49.

<sup>34</sup> Ivi: 34.

<sup>35</sup> Ivi: 49.

procédant de l'ordre de l'index». <sup>36</sup> Dubois himself is inclined to agree with this last conception, in particular because Peirce himself, already in 1895, suggested «le statut indicial de la photographie». <sup>37</sup> According to this conception, each photographic image is inseparable from the referential experience of its own founding act. The reality of the photograph affirms the existence. The photograph as index might acquire afterwards verisimilitude and sense, it can become icon or symbol, but only *a posteriori*. Peirce claims that due to the technical process, every photograph cannot avoid corresponding point by point to its referent, that is why photographs belong to the class of signs that have a physical connection to their referent, as to say the indexes. <sup>38</sup>

Dubois explains that, thanks to his argumentations on the index, Peirce has opened the way to a true and proper investigation on the character of the photographic image. The semiological debate, developed during the 1970s and 1980s, was particularly intense and borrowed his jargon from Peirce. These were also the years of more fervent activity for Guidi. Dubois appreciates that Peirce's theory takes departure from the technical nature of the photographic process, as to say the elementary principle «de l'empreinte lumineuse régie par le lois de la physique et de la chimie». <sup>39</sup>

Still following Peirce's definition, the relation between indexical signs and their referential object is characterised by four principles: physical connection, singularity, designation, and attestation. Due to its indexical nature, the photographic image possesses a «dimension essentiellement pragmatique [...] (par opposition à la sémantique)». <sup>40</sup> Dubois acknowledges Peirce for the merit of overcoming the epistemological obstacle of the similitude between image and referent (photography as mimesis), by taking into account not only the message in itself, but also the process of production of the sign. After Peirce: «on ne peut pas penser la photographie en dehors de son inscription référentielle et de son efficace pragmatique». <sup>41</sup> The photograph as index states in front of our eyes the existence of what it represents, but it tells us nothing about the sense of such representation: «elle ne nous dit pas "cela veut dire ceci"». <sup>42</sup> The referent stays for the photograph as empirical reality, but "blank" so to say. «En tant qu'index, l'image photographique n'aurait d'autre sémantique que sa propre pragmatique». <sup>43</sup>

On the basis of similar considerations, it is interesting to note that when Guidi is asked what he does intend to say through his photographs, he replies that he does not aim

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<sup>36</sup> Ivi: 40.

<sup>37</sup> Ivi: 45.

<sup>38</sup> Ivi: 50.

<sup>39</sup> Ivi: 46.

<sup>40</sup> Ivi: 48.

<sup>41</sup> Ivi: 64.

<sup>42</sup> Ivi: 49.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

to say anything, because photography is not so much about communicating as it is about showing.<sup>44</sup>

«Over there, there is a house, or a bollard: I translate it in photography, and the fact that I have translated it is bewildering, nothing else. [...] In reality, I want to communicate to myself the bewilderment of the translation of that thing in another place, of transferring it elsewhere. What does it mean the transfer? It means nothing, it means just the transfer».<sup>45</sup>

On the same wavelength, Robert Adams affirms that «most photographers themselves cannot say for sure why they photograph» and warns against the risk of over interpenetration.<sup>46</sup>

## Index Finger

Jean-Marie Schaeffer too agrees that the photographic image in itself is not a message, and specifies that every description of the photographic dispositive must take into account the fact, that the photographic click is the result of a human action.<sup>47</sup> Such considerations echo Roland Barthes's statement, of just a few years earlier, that: «l'organe du photographe, ce n'est pas l'œil [...], c'est le doigt».<sup>48</sup> Thus the photographic image is the result of a *téchnē*, «d'un faire», rather than the expression of a message.<sup>49</sup> Also convinced of the indexical nature of photography, Schaeffer, like Dubois, confers importance to the semiotic categories inherited from Peirce, and states that photography is not reducible to the model of the camera obscura, and its pragmatic dimension must not be overlooked.<sup>50</sup> That's why, Schaeffer prefers the term *dispositif photographique* rather than photographic image.<sup>51</sup>

In their essay of 2003, photography theorists David Green and Joanna Lowry suggest precisely to reconsider the indexical properties of the photograph as a trace, by placing at the centre its performative character. Actually already Peirce «demonstrated that the indexical sign was less to do with its casual origins and more to do with the way in which

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<sup>44</sup> De Luigi, Frongia and Moro, *Guardare con insistenza*: online resource.

<sup>45</sup> Guidi quoted in Frongia, *Quello che resta*: 161 (translation mine).

<sup>46</sup> Robert Adams, *Civilizing Criticism*, in Idem, *Beauty in Photography*, 49-61: 54-55.

<sup>47</sup> Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *L'image précaire. Du dispositif photographique*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil 1987: 10.

<sup>48</sup> Roland Barthes, *La chambre claire. Note sur la photographie*, Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma/Gallimard/Seuil 1980: 32.

<sup>49</sup> Schaeffer, *L'image précaire*: 10.

<sup>50</sup> Ivi: 11.

<sup>51</sup> Ivi: 13.

it pointed to the event of its own inscription».<sup>52</sup> According to Green and Lowry photographs are not «indexical because light happened to be recorded in an instant on a piece of photosensitive film, but because, first and foremost, they were taken».<sup>53</sup> The photographic image is a kind of performative gesture, inasmuch as it «points to an event in the world». Photography thus derives its indexicality by drawing reality into the image field as «a form of designation».<sup>54</sup>

The act of pointing at something with the finger is the most simple and spontaneous way to call the visual attention of someone near us. «"This chair," "this table," or "this..." and we point to something lying on the desk. "Not that, *this*," we say».<sup>55</sup> Roman Jakobson, borrowing the category first introduced in 1923 by Otto Jespersen, labels the terms *this* and *that*, as well as the pronouns *I* and *you*, *shifters*.<sup>56</sup> «The general meaning of a shifter cannot be defined without a reference to the message».<sup>57</sup> Jakobson too calls into cause Peirce's classification of signs into symbols, indices, and icons, to conclude that shifters are *indexical symbols* because they combine both the function of the symbol and of the index.<sup>58</sup> According to Jakobson what distinguishes *shifters* «from all other constituents of the linguistic code [is] their compulsory reference to the given message».<sup>59</sup> This last definition of course cannot but reminds us about the indexicality of photography, adding the performative contingent component of the gesture to indicate, considered as *shifter* – in Jakobson's terms –, but also as constitutive of the photographic essence, in Roland Barthes's terms.

Barthes explains that the Buddhist name for reality is «*sunya*, le vide», the void, «mais encore mieux: *tathata*», the fact of being such, of being so, of being that. *Tat* in Sanskrit means *that*, and Barthes relates the sound to the gesture of the child, who indicates something with his little finger and says: «*Ta, Da, Ça!*». A photograph stays always on the threshold of this act of pointing «elle dit: *ça, c'est ça, c'est tel!*»<sup>60</sup> According to Barthes photography is nothing else but a constant call to "look", "look at that", "look here", «elle

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<sup>52</sup> Green and Lowry, *From Presence to the Performative*: 47-48.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Krauss, *Notes on the Index: Part 1*: 197.

<sup>56</sup> Monika Fludernik, *Jaspersen's Shifters. Reflections on Deixis and Subjectivity in Language*, in: "Klagenfurter Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft" 15/16, 1989-90, 97-116: 97; Roman Jakobson, *Shifters, Verbal Categories, and the Russian Verb*, in Idem, *Selected Writings II, Word and Language*, The Hague/Paris: Mouton 1971, 130-147: 131.

<sup>57</sup> Jakobson, *Shifters, Verbal Categories, and the Russian Verb*: 131.

<sup>58</sup> «According to Peirce, a symbol [...] is associated with the represented object by a conventional rule while an index (e.g., the act of pointing) is in existential relation with the object it represents» (ivi: 131-132).

<sup>59</sup> Ivi: 132.

<sup>60</sup> Barthes, *La chambre claire*: 15-16.



pointe du doigt un certain *vis-à-vis*, et ne peut sortir de ce pur langage déictique». <sup>61</sup> Barthes defines “réfèrent photographique” not simply the thing «*facultativement réelle*», to which an image or a sign might refer, but the thing «*nécessairement réelle*», that has been put in front of the camera, otherwise there could be no photograph at all. In seeing a photograph, you cannot deny that «*la chose été là*». Thus, for Barthes, «le nom du noème de la Photographie sera donc: “Ça a été”». <sup>62</sup>

### *The organ of photography is the finger*

Admittedly, as a child I was taught that it is not polite either to point the finger to indicate or to stare at someone. Guidi claims indeed that photography is a mischievous medium, because it indicates and stares, exactly what we are supposed to avoid. <sup>63</sup> In the essay *On the Nature of Photography* of 1974, Rudolf Arnheim observes that in the olden days «nobody felt spied upon or even observed» by a painter, who set up his easel to paint a picture in some public space, on the contrary «photography reaches into the world as an intruder, and therefore it also creates a disturbance». <sup>64</sup> Guidi himself confirms that photography can be a sort of provocation, a fact he became aware of around 1967-1968, as he was trying to shoot surreptitiously the sequence of photographs of a man reading the newspaper in the waiting room of the train station in Cesena. <sup>65</sup> [Plates ii/1-3] On that occasion, he reminds

«I understood that photography, in addition to being a piece of paper, could be understood as a performance, a social action in space and in time that can provoke a reaction on the part of the subject». <sup>66</sup>

To make it even clearer, Guidi affirms that informal painting, especially Action painting, had been a starting point for his work, probably because he needs a gestural, performative relationship with the space, rather than a mental one. <sup>67</sup>

As a matter of fact, Arnheim too defines photography as «a medium whose inextricable involvement with the settings and acts of practical behaviour is one of its principal characteristics». <sup>68</sup> Such definition shares with the other authors, mentioned in this

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<sup>61</sup> Ivi: 16.

<sup>62</sup> Ivi: 120.

<sup>63</sup> Conversation with the author, 14 April 2022.

<sup>64</sup> Arnheim, *On the Nature of Photography*: 151.

<sup>65</sup> See Frongia, *Guido Guidi Interview*: 54.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> See Quintavalle, *Muri di Carta*: 310.

<sup>68</sup> Arnheim, *On the Nature of Photography*: 149-150.

chapter, the idea that the performative character of photography is linked to its indexicality and medium specificity.

Now I present some photographs in which Guidi benevolently mocks the concept of index: «My photos about indexicality are a bit of a tease to semiologists, but also a way to show the process of my own making».<sup>69</sup> In his pictures pointing fingers, stretched arms and hands in the act of indicating, or other pointing elements like arrows appear often. [Plates ii/4-16] Actually the representation of pointing element to indicate has a long history not only in photography. In painting the stratagem of arms and hands to point at something – in order to urge the spectator to notice a detail or to lead the sight onto a precise point inside or outside the representation – became very popular in the fifteenth century, and was particularly appreciated during Baroque and Rococo.<sup>70</sup> Guidi takes a lot of photographs of indicating hands, but also of arrows, street signs and other pointers in the landscape.<sup>71</sup>

### *Case study 1: Preganziol, 1978-1979 [Plates ii/17, 18]*

About this diptych, Nicoletta Leonardi speaks of «playful images, taken in Preganziol in 1979», and she briefly sketches the back-history behind these weird pictures. One day, a student gave Guidi a portrait photograph of him (Guidi), that the student had taken. A bit later, Guidi accidentally met his good friend Paolo Costantini, put the picture of his own portrait between Costantini's right eye and glasses, and took a photograph of his friend in the act of indicating the portrait with the finger. In the other photograph instead, Guidi photographed only Constantini's hand pointing to the left, towards the outside of the photographic space.<sup>72</sup>

Let us shortly reason about the two pictures separately, starting with the portrait of Costantini. Actually, of Costantini and Guidi together, since Guidi's picture creates a situation of doubling, in which Guidi is at the same time in the picture indicated by Costantini, and in front of Costantini (outside the photographic space), taking the photograph. Guidi's portrait-picture consent him to enter the photographic space. This picture between Costantini's eye and his glasses inspires further interpretations too. For instance, it can be considered as a reference to supplemented vision: like the glasses supplement the defected sight of Costantini's eyes, so Guidi's portrait supplements our lack of vision, making us seeing what Costantini is indeed seeing in the off-space: namely Guidi in the

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<sup>69</sup> Conversation with the author, 12 August 2021 (translation mine).

<sup>70</sup> Falcinelli, *Figure: 207*.

<sup>71</sup> Sure enough, road signs are a common unavoidable presence of our conurbated landscape, but Guidi often adopts point of views that favour to notice them.

<sup>72</sup> See Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*: 104-105.

act of photographing him – the supplement has the power of providing an absent presence through its image.<sup>73</sup> However, at the same time, that it supplements our vision, the picture covers one of Costantini's eye, and thus hinders his vision, turning it into a monocular gaze, like that of the camera.<sup>74</sup>

In a conversation with Antonello Frongia, published in the book *Lunario*, Guidi explicitly agrees with Giulio Paolini's statement, that the maker is the first spectator of his own work.<sup>75</sup> Connecting such considerations to the photograph of Costantini I just discussed, I must think about a well-known photographic work by Paolini, *Young Man Looking at Lorenzo Lotto*, 1967, a photo emulsion on canvas reproducing the painting *Portrait of a Young Man* by Lorenzo Lotto in its original size. [Plate ii/19] Paolini describes it as the aim to let the contemporary spectator of the portrait occupy the same position as Lorenzo Lotto did in 1505, while he was painting it. Paolini was interested in the painting not merely as surface, as image, but as fact and act of observation that unites the painter, the sitter, and the actual spectator. The title *Young Man Looking at Lorenzo Lotto* makes clear the visual relationship between sitter and painter, thus rendering manifest what is implicit and obvious in every portrait painted in the presence of the subject, i.e., that the sitter was actually sitting in front of the artist and they shared their gazes.<sup>76</sup> Precisely the same happens in the photograph by Guidi, but here our attention is turned to the aforementioned relationship not by means of the title, but by a performative statement: the act of indicating Guidi's portrait. Nevertheless, to understand this fact it is necessary to know that the person in the little photograph indicated by Costantini is Guidi himself, otherwise we would not be able to make the connection. As this example shows, Guidi sometimes likes to make fun of conceptual art and of theoretical speculations. The comparison to Paolini's work proves nevertheless quite fitting, if we keep in mind these words by Guidi:

«Basically, the true content of a photograph might be expressed in other terms, such as showing the activity of the look. Not showing things, but showing looking, the exchange of looks. An exchange of looks, a look of understanding be-

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<sup>73</sup> See Jaques Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit 1967: 223.

<sup>74</sup> I return on the theme of the supplement later in the present chapter. The concept of "economy of the supplement", is adopted in photography theoretical discourse by Rosalind Krauss, who borrowed it from Jacques Derrida (see Rosalind E. Krauss, *Jump over the Bauhaus*, in: "October", no. 102, vol. 15, Winter 1980, 102-110; Eadem, *The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism*, 87-118; Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, cit.). However, in 1964 Marshall McLuhan already introduced the idea, that technological devices function as prosthesis of our body, enabling us to widen our access to time and space (see Marshall McLuhan *Understanding Media. The Extensions of Man* (1964), Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT Press 1994).

<sup>75</sup> See Guidi, *Lunario*: 101.

<sup>76</sup> See Giulio Paolini's *catalogue raisonné*, online resource.

tween the photographer, between you looking and the bollard which in turn looks at you». <sup>77</sup>

Let us now consider the other photograph, depicting only Costantini's hand in the act of pointing outside the space of representation. Reasoning about the act of pointing at something with the finger, Ludwig Wittgenstein raised doubts on the assumption «that it is self-evident that one should look in the direction going from wrist to finger-tip rather than the reverse», since there is no a priori reason to assume that everyone knows, that pointing is pointing in any direction at all. <sup>78</sup> Eventually he comes to the conclusion, that we understand the verse of pointing, *naturally*:

«Ich würde natürlich ein Mißverständnis hervorrufen, wenn ich ohne eine besondere Abmachung, jemandem einen Weg wiese, indem ich mit dem Finger nicht an der Richtung zeigte, in der er gehen soll. Es liegt in der menschlichen Natur, das Zeigen mit dem Finger *so* zu verstehen». <sup>79</sup>

Moreover, he noticed that this simple gesture of pointing «can never reduce a necessary uncertainty as to what exactly is being pointed out». <sup>80</sup>

Sure enough, to point at something makes sense only if there is a real physical referent to point at, while it remains an empty action, until it is not linked to a referential object, even if uncertain. Connected to the principle of attestation, the index is defined also by the principle of designation: the index directs our attention on its object as if under a blind impulse. As we already mentioned, the act of pointing can be considered a performative version of the deictic terms (that Jakobson calls *shifters*). These are pronouns and adjectives, mostly demonstrative (this, that), or presentative (there), or adverbs of place (here, there), or of time (now, before), that bear no full sense for themselves, but only depending on the context of enunciation in which they are employed. To use such terms implies each time the attribution of a specific referent, that changes from time to time. Their semantic depends on their praxis. Their sense is precisely to indicate, to show their unique relation within a determinate situation of reference. A deictic sign is thus provisional and contingent because it always needs a referent to acquire meaning. Thanks to those terms, as Dubois explains, we understand the difference between signifying and

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<sup>77</sup> Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>78</sup> See Geoffrey Bennington, *Index*, in Idem, *Legislations. The Politics of Deconstruction*, London and New York: Verso 1994, 274-295: 281-282.

<sup>79</sup> See Rush Rhees (ed.), *Ludwig Wittgenstein. Philosophische Grammatik*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1969: 94, § 52.

<sup>80</sup> Bennington, *Index*: 281-282.

designating: «leur signification en l'occurrence ne se constitue que de leur propre désignation».<sup>81</sup>

Yet, in the case of many of Guidi's photographs, the object indicated by the person in the picture remains outside the photographic space and the gesture of pointing with the finger seems incomplete. [Plates ii/4-9] We imagine that the portrayed person is referring at something he/she sees, but that we cannot see. The *shifter* remains empty, still waiting to be «filled with signification». To complete ideally the gesture, to fill the shifter, we suppose the existence of something outside the photographic space, in the off-space.

Considering more specifically the photograph of Costantini's index finger, if we accept the deictic nature of this gesture, we have at least two ways to interpret it, depending on which sphere of action and which type of space we consider. [Plate ii/17] With regard to the topological space of the observer, the act of indicating will still perform according to its "nature", as to say, acquiring a new sense from time to time and from space to space, indexing everything that happens to find itself next to the picture. On the contrary, confined within the photographic space, Costantini's gesture remains incomplete, as a deictic sign without any reference.<sup>82</sup> Like the idiot in the famous slogan of May 1968 – «Quand le doigt montre la lune, l'imbécile regarde le doigt» – we have no other choice but to look at the finger.<sup>83</sup>

In this – like in other similar photographs by Guidi [Plates ii/4-9] – the gesture actually indexes only itself, it points at itself pointing, it fulfils «itself presenting its own self-presentation, *index sui*».<sup>84</sup> Here lies the paradox of indexicality, as to say, the principle that «no index can index itself», because «an index is only an index to the extent that it points outside itself and not to itself».<sup>85</sup> We can claim that instead a photograph of an index functions as an index to an index, as if with our left index finger we were to indicate our right index finger in the act of indicating. While Dubois states that «par sa genèse, l'index photographique montre du doigt»,<sup>86</sup> the pointing finger pointing at something we cannot see calls indexicality into question: the absence of the real referent indicated by the finger seems to suggest that Guidi intends to short-circuit the theoretical reflection on photography indexicality, taking it literally and reducing it to a pre-indexical practice, where it is precisely what is immanent to the photographic space, index included, with or without referent, that counts. In those images, the index without referent is not an "indexical in-

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<sup>81</sup> Dubois, *L'acte photographique*: 73.

<sup>82</sup> Analysing the relation between index as deixis, Geoff Bennington observes, that deictic signs can only be described in terms of their function and sphere of operation (see Bennington, *Index*: 274).

<sup>83</sup> Ivi: 281.

<sup>84</sup> Ivi: 280.

<sup>85</sup> Ivi: 279. We will return on this paradox in the following paragraphs, dedicated to the indexicality of the projected shadow.

<sup>86</sup> Dubois, *L'acte photographique*: 73.

dex”, but only an immanent object among others in a context defined by the photographic space. Yet, Roberta Valtorta suggests a different interpretation: for her, in so doing, Guidi makes us understand that we must not expect to find life in a photograph, because the latter is just a fragment, or better said an index – if anything, the thing photographed indicates that life takes place elsewhere, in the off-space.<sup>87</sup>

### *Case study 2: Preganziol, 1980 [Plate ii/20]*

Another of those «playful images»,<sup>88</sup> taken by Guidi in Preganziol in 1980, shows in the foreground a hand miming the shape of a gun – thumb up, index finger stretched forward. The “gun barrel” points towards the eye of the barmaid in the background, while she covers her other eye with the hand.<sup>89</sup> Guidi’s words come immediately to my mind: «Arm the eye, but then, when you photograph, disarm it, leave it to chance. Work with your eyes closed».<sup>90</sup> If on the one hand Guidi here evokes the idea of photography as automatic writing, on the other hand his words and this picture recall the primal analogy between the photographic act and the hunt – as if the hand as gun might truly shoot the girl in the head. As a matter of fact, the verb “to shoot” is the same in both photographic and hunting jargon, not to mention the genesis of the term “snapshot”, that was imported into the photographic discourse from bird-hunting.<sup>91</sup> The photographer as hunter of images is a recurring analogy. For instance, Vilém Flusser compares the movements of someone with a camera to the «uralte pirschende Geste des paläolithischen Jägers in der Tundra».<sup>92</sup> While Hans Belting reports, that already in 1852 William Henry Fox Talbot declared his wish to achieve “snapshots” «um das Leben wie ein Jäger einzufangen».<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Roberta Valtorta, *Guido Guidi dice spesso che la fotografia comincia dai bordi*, in: “Margine magazine”, no. 12, Università degli Studi di Udine, Multiverso: online resource.

<sup>88</sup> Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*: 105.

<sup>89</sup> As in the portrait of Paolo Costantini, the monocular vision of the barmaid recalls the camera’s eye.

<sup>90</sup> Conversation with the author, 14 April 2022 (translation mine).

<sup>91</sup> See Kouwenhoven, *Living in a Snapshot World*, 106-107.

<sup>92</sup> Vilém Flusser, *Für eine Philosophie der Fotografie*, Göttingen: European Photography 1997: 31. The proximity between hunt and photography takes place also on the level of the *Indizienparadigma*, already suggested at the beginning of the present chapter by Guidi’s indirect reference to Ginzburg’s essay *Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm* (see Herta Wolf, *Einleitung*, in Eadem (ed.), *Zeigen und/oder Beweisen? Die Fotografie als Kulturtechnik und Medium des Wissens*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter 2016, VII-XXVII; Carlo Ginzburg, *Reflexionen über eine Hypothese, fünfundzwanzig Jahre danach*, in Wolf, *Zeigen und/oder Beweisen?*, 1-11).

<sup>93</sup> Hans Belting, *Bild-Anthropologie. Entwürfe für eine Bildwissenschaft*, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, Munich 2011 (2001): 186. About the connection between photography and hunting see also Veronica Liotti, *Tierische Anfänge der Fotografie. Die wissenschaftlich-technische Relevanz der Tiere im Zeitalter Darwins*, in Stefano Franchini, Gabriele Guerra and Thomas Ruster (eds.), *Vom Affen zum Übermenschen und zurück. Theoretische, historische und literarische Ansätze über Evolution und Regression*, wbg Academic, Darmstadt 2023, 111-130.

The metaphor of the photographer as hunter emerges also in another picture, that Guidi showed and commented during a lesson.<sup>94</sup> [Plate ii/21] It is a photograph of 1936 portraying a 12-year-old Robert Frank with his father at a carnival in Italy. We see the future photographer next to his father, who is holding a rifle pointed towards the camera. At the fun fair in Viareggio, the little Robert Frank was particularly attracted by the shooting gallery:

«You had to aim a rifle at a target, and if you hit the bull's-eye, a terrific flash went off. There was a camera that took your picture when your aim was right. I still remember the smell of the flash powder at the fair. If you won, then you had to wait, and you would get the photograph as a prize. I saved a picture of my father at the booth. I am barely visible, standing on my toes to watch him shooting».<sup>95</sup>

The mirrored play between the camera and the firearm – both pointing at each other (luckily, only the camera shot) – inspired Guidi to read the scene as a sort of premonition of the career waiting ahead of the young Frank.

During the lecture, Guidi showed this image paired with a photograph by Arnold H. Crane, that portrays Walker Evans smoking a cigar and pointing with his index finger to his own temple. [Plate ii/22] Guidi playfully told that it seems that Frank's father had just shot Evans in the head, and that Evans was indicating the entrance point of the bullet. I would like to add, that the trace of smoke, left behind by the bullet, recalls the definition of photography as trace and index (the smoke indeed is another example of indexical sign), while Evans pointing at his head recalls Guidi's statement that photography think, even without being explicitly conceptual.<sup>96</sup>

### *Unusual pointers*

Crane's portrait of Evans leads me to shortly consider the detail of the cigar: in the 1980s, still referring in a funny way to indexicality through the primal gesture of pointing, Guidi sometimes established an analogy between the index finger and the cigarette. Not only the cigarette resembles the finger, but it can even mimic the finger's action.<sup>97</sup> See for instance, *San Trovaso, 1980* [Plate ii/27], where the analogy between the finger and the cigarette is stressed by the bandage. Or *Cesena, 1981* [Plate ii/28], where the pointing finger

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<sup>94</sup> Guido Guidi, online lecture: Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna, Campus of Cesena, AFPG Lab-based Course on Photography I, 16 June 2020.

<sup>95</sup> Robert Frank quoted in Anne Tucker and Philip Brookman (eds.), *Robert Frank: New York to Nova Scotia*, New York: New York Graphic Society 1986: 82.

<sup>96</sup> Guido Guidi, online lecture, 16 June 2020.

<sup>97</sup> See Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro, 1976-81*: 42-45.

precisely indicates the cigarette. Or finally, the sequence *Via Roggia, Treviso, 1981* [Plates ii/25, 26] – published in the book *Tra l'altro* –, where the cigarette substitutes the finger in the act of pointing.<sup>98</sup> In the book, thanks to the sequence chosen by Guidi, the cigarette in plate ii/26 points back to plate ii/25, where the same cigarette indicates Diane Arbus's iconic photograph *Identical Twins, Roselle, NJ, 1966* (I return on this sequence in the next chapter).

As we have seen, Guidi is not new to this kind of jokes, through which, by means of rudimentary activities like pointing, juxtaposing, and sequencing, he investigates and theorises photography. Not by chance, Antonello Frongia describes his photography as «dialectic, verification, self-reflection», based on the assumption that «ideally there is no discontinuity between seeing and reviewing, between learning and teaching, to oneself or to others».<sup>99</sup> This kind of investigations on “photography by doing” recall a way of approaching the medium quite widespread during the 1970s. Such practice-based learning methods derive from the idea that photography cannot be taught, only learnt. In 1974 Walker Evans, for instance, declared in a interview that art cannot be taught, only stimulated.<sup>100</sup> Even so, Guidi has taught photography formally for more than twenty years, and informally to himself for more than fifty. When he teaches, Guidi invites

«[his] students to grasp the photographic language operatively, making personal experience of all its variables and reconsidering the same issue from different points of view».<sup>101</sup>

## Shadows

As anticipated at the beginning of the present chapter, I develop my discourse about photography indexicality considering two main subjects: the index finger (or other pointing devices) and the shadow. The first case study, I am proposing to introduce the subject of the shadow, functions like a bridge because it includes both themes – the pointer and the shadow.

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Frongia, *Notes from a lesson*: xii-xiii.

<sup>100</sup> Evans, *The Thing Itself Is Such a Secret and So Unapproachable*, 12-15, republished in: “ASX-American Suburb X”, 4 October 2011: online resource.

<sup>101</sup> Frongia, *Notes from a lesson*: xii-xiii.



### *Case study: Misinto, 1997 [Plates ii/27, 28]*

These two photographs – probably arranged in chronological order – appear one after the other, on two facing pages, in the book *Cinque Viaggi*.<sup>102</sup> Even though they were realised for a public commission, Guidi was left free to apply «his visual method of exploring».<sup>103</sup> As usual, he favoured unremarkable and not impressive corners, that you could find anywhere, and chose to trim the top of the buildings, according more space to the ground than to the sky. In the picture on the left, we see the cast shadow of Guidi's own forearm and hand in the act of releasing the shutter of his field camera, whose cast shadow looks like the profile of a big dog snout, which seems kept on a leash.

Near the left edge of the second image, we notice various road signs with arrows, pointing – apart from one – outside the photograph, as if indicating the previous picture. Both the arrow on the signs and Guidi's cast shadow bring us back to the discourse about indexicality: the arrows, of course, because of their analogy to the act of pointing with the finger, the cast shadow, instead, because of its constitutive affinity to photography as index. As a matter of fact, William Henry Fox Talbot himself was uncertain whether to call his invention writing of light or of shadow – in his process indeed natural light was employed to capture the shadows of bodies on a photosensitive paper surface.<sup>104</sup>

«The most transitory of things, a shadow, the proverbial emblem of all that is fleeting and momentary, may be fettered by the spells of our “natural magic”, and may be fixed for ever in the position which it seemed only destined for a single instant to occupy».<sup>105</sup>

Keeping these words in mind, and observing again *Misinto*, it seems that in this picture, Guidi is establishing a parallel between the fixity of his own position (and of his camera, as to say the fixity of photography) and the impermanence of the shadow (possible only

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<sup>102</sup> All 109 pictures in the book were taken by Guidi between 1987 and 1998 in the course of eight successive commissions received from the Province of Milan, focusing on several municipal areas around Milan as well as on the city itself (see Appendix 1). See also Frongia, *From archive to book, from book to city*, Eng. tr. Sarah Ponting, in Benigni et al. (eds.), *Guidi Guido, Cinque Viaggi (1990-1998)*, 145-149: 145; and Valtorta, *Guido Guidi in Milan and other places*: 139.

<sup>103</sup> «In terms of method, while the photographic campaigns were accompanied by numerous conferences, seminars, conventions, and exhibitions, the photographers were given just two guidelines for their work and were otherwise basically free to proceed as they saw fit. Firstly, they were asked to take into consideration the presence of the architectural and environmental heritage in the municipal areas assigned to them [...]. Secondly, they were asked to give preference to wide views capable of documenting the stratifications and close relationships that characterized the territory, while trying to avoid close-ups and details» (Valtorta, *Guido Guidi in Milan and Other Places*: 139-140).

<sup>104</sup> Belting, *Bild-Anthropologie*: 185.

<sup>105</sup> Henry Fox Talbot, *Some Account of the Art of Photogenic Drawing, or, the Process by Which Natural Objects May Be Made to Delineate Themselves, without the Aid of the Artist's Pencil* (1839), in Beaumont Newhall (ed.), *Photography: Essays & Images*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art 1980, 23-32: 25.

for a moment in a specific place): the cable of the shutter release, that enables the photographer to capture the fleeting shadow, is like the leash holding the dog.

### *Pliny's myth*

Before considering other works by Guidi, it seems necessary to shortly situate the role of the shadow in the history of art. Victor I. Stoichita notices, that curiously both myths regarding the origin of Western artistic and cognitive representation (respectively: Pliny's account of the Corinthian maid and Plato's allegory of the cave) are centred on the motif of projected shadows.<sup>106</sup> Although both parables are already very popular, it would do no harm to shortly summarise them here, paying particular attention to Pliny's story, for its significance in the frame of a semiotic reflection on photography. In the VII Book of Plato's *Republic*, the human condition is compared to that of prisoners chained in a cave, where they can only behold the wall opposite to the opening. Unable to turn around and look at the world outside the cave, they consider as reality the shadows of the external events cast on the wall.<sup>107</sup> In Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* (xxxv, 14), the narration about the origin of painting takes instead the form of a love story: the daughter of Butades, a potter of Sicyon, was in love with a young man, who was about to leave the country for a long time. To remember him, she took a piece of charcoal and traced the outline of her lover's shadow on the wall.

«We know very little about the birth of painting, said Pliny [...]. One thing, however, is certain: it was born the first time the human shadow was circumscribed by lines. It is of unquestionable significance that the birth of Western artistic representation was "in the negative". When painting first emerged, it was part of the absence/presence theme (absence of the body; presence of its projection)».<sup>108</sup>

Victor Burgin even links Pliny's myth of the Butades's daughter to the origin of a primal desire for photography: «viewed in terms of desire, the origin of photography is identical with the origin of painting, with the origin of every desire for the image».<sup>109</sup> Geoffrey Batchen notices that the myth of the Corinthian Maid was not much considered until 1770, but then it increased in popularity up to 1820s. Precisely at the same moment as a series of

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<sup>106</sup> Victor I. Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow*, London: Reaktion Books, 1999 (1997): 8.

<sup>107</sup> See Benjamin Jowett (ed. and Eng. tr.), *The Republic of Plato*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1888: Book VII 214-246; Pliny, *Natural History*, Volume IX: Books 33-35, Eng. tr. Harris Rackham, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press (Loeb Classical Library 394) 1952: 371-372.

<sup>108</sup> Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow*: 7.

<sup>109</sup> Quoted in Geoffrey Batchen, *For an Impossible Realism. An Interview with Victor Burgin*, in: "After-image", vol. 16, no. 7, February 1989, 4-9: 4.

technological inventions, whose aim was the creation of portraits automatically – such as the silhouette machine and the physionotrace – were being developed. It seems thus, that «the popularity of this theme coincided with the first conceptions of and experiments towards photography».<sup>110</sup>

Philippe Dubois does not disagree, since he suggests that the development of the so called «logique indiciaire» began well in advance to the discovery of photography chemistry, already at the moment of the origin of Western representation, or better said, in the mythic accounts on the birth of representation. The birth of painting is characterised by the question of the index, as to say, the matter of the presence and direct relation between representation and referential object. Thus, the theoretical devices of photography and painting come into contact as indexical praxis within the phantom of their birth. Their logic is the logic of the index, the trace, the imprint, the shadow, and the mirror.<sup>111</sup> Such idea leads Dubois, quoting Talbot, to claim: «La photo, c'est une ombre impressionnée et fixée».<sup>112</sup>

### *Shadows are indexes*

The cast shadow is, as Denis Hollier clearly illustrates,

«one of the clearest example of the category of sign that, since Peirce, the semiologists have called deictics. The index is a sign that is less the representation of an object than the effect of an event. Smoke is caused by fire; cast shadow by the sun».<sup>113</sup>

And he goes on specifying, «one must in fact distinguish two interventions of shadow in the visual arts: as a medium, shadow has the status of an index; as a motive, the status of an icon».<sup>114</sup> As index, the shadow suggests the existence of its referent. A cast shadow is an index that dissolves the virtuality of a work of art, because it reminds of the solidity of the object.<sup>115</sup>

Sure enough, as Leonardo famously stated, the shadow follows the body everywhere, but in the outline, it detaches from it.<sup>116</sup> Shadows and photographs are indexes be-

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<sup>110</sup> Batchen, *Burning with Desire*: 114.

<sup>111</sup> Dubois, *L'acte photographique*: 112-116.

<sup>112</sup> Ivi: 133.

<sup>113</sup> Denis Hollier, *Surrealist Precipitates: Shadows Don't Cast Shadows*, Eng. tr. Rosalind Krauss, in: "October", vol. 69, Summer 1994, 110-132: 115.

<sup>114</sup> Ivi: 115.

<sup>115</sup> Ivi: 124-126.

<sup>116</sup> About Leonardo's investigation on shadow see Part V "Dell'ombra e lume, e della prospettiva" in Leonardo da Vinci, *Trattato della pittura condotto sul cod. Vaticano Urbinate 1270*, edited by Gaetano Milanesi, Rome: Unione Cooperativa Editrice 1890, 179-257.

cause, in both, the principle of physical connection between sign and object takes place in space and time. The shadow, like the photograph is bound to contingency and states «ça est là».<sup>117</sup> Due to their constitutive process photographs are kin to signs such as smoke (index of fire), cast shadow (index of a presence), dust (sediment of time), scar (sign of injury) and so on.<sup>118</sup> Dubois clears that the central principle of Peirce's idea of index is the physical connection between indexical sign and its referent, which necessary implies that their relation is based of singularity, attestation and designation. Often, the link between the sign and its object is established by the laws of physics, such as for instance in the case of the combustion (smoke/fire) or of the projection (shadow/body).<sup>119</sup> According to Dubois photography was the trigger of the «logique indiciaire» applied to art, while he notices a radicalisation of such logic culminating in the key figure of Marcel Duchamp.<sup>120</sup> As a matter of fact, Herta Wolf points out, that in Rosalind Krauss' essay *Duchamp ou le champ imaginaire*

«der Schatten [wird] als irreduzibel indexikalisches Zeichen begriffen, das im Sinne von Pierce – solange man ihn nicht fixiert – einzig flüchtige Spuren wirft».<sup>121</sup>

In this text, as well in the already mentioned *Notes on the Index: Part 1*, Krauss employs Duchamp's work *Tu m'* of 1918 as a visual statement to demonstrate the affinity between shadow, deictic signs, and the principle of indexicality.<sup>122</sup> According to Arturo Schwarz, in this work Duchamp might have accomplished his project to realize a picture by means of «shadows cast by Readymades».<sup>123</sup> That is why Krauss describes Duchamp's *Tu m'* as a «panorama of the index», since it is only made out of the projections onto a canvas of the cast shadows of various readymades (a bicycle wheel, a corkscrew, a hat rack).<sup>124</sup> Each cast shadow counts as indexical trace left by a readymade, and to make the concept even clearer Duchamp requested a professional sign painter to paint a realistic hand with a pointed finger just in the middle of the canvas. The hand establishes the relation between the deictic term, or shifter, “this” and its real referent. The title *Tu m'* is all the same com-

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<sup>117</sup> Dubois, *L'acte photographique*: 120.

<sup>118</sup> Ivi: 59.

<sup>119</sup> Ivi: 60 ff.

<sup>120</sup> Ivi: 112-116.

<sup>121</sup> Wolf, *Greenbergs Schatten*: 339. See also Krauss, *Marcel Duchamp ou le champ imaginaire*: 80.

<sup>122</sup> See Krauss, *Notes on the Index: Part 1*: 198-199; Eadem, *Marcel Duchamp ou le champ imaginaire*: 80.

<sup>123</sup> Arturo Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp, Vol. 1 – The Text*, New York: Delano Greenidge Edition 2000: 223. Duchamp himself described the work as «a kind of inventory of all my preceding works, rather than a painting in itself» (ivi: 658).

<sup>124</sup> Krauss, *Notes on the Index: Part 1*: 198.

posed by shifters: the personal pronouns “you” and “me”, that as deictic terms, are like a kind of index.<sup>125</sup>

### *Shadows in Guidi's work*

Quite funnily the first photographic book bought by Guidi in 1966 was Bill Brandt's *Ombres d'une île*.<sup>126</sup> Guidi was attracted by «such scared photographs. Maybe they were easy», nevertheless, they impressed him for their «epidermic aspect, but in some sense, they were archaic photographs».<sup>127</sup> Shadows seem indeed another of his passions.

«It would be necessary to speak also about the light. In painting there is a lot of attention to light – I think for instance about the short essay on cast shadow by Gombrich – instead many photographers disregard its transformative potentialities, in homage to a modality closer to painting, where light is not direct, but diffused. [...] I found a bit of laziness in many photographers – above all Germans, but also Italians, who emulate the Germans – who give up the potentialities of light transformation as a tribute to a mystical, absolute, definitive light».<sup>128</sup>

In the book mentioned by Guidi – *Shadows. The depiction Of Cast Shadows In Western Art* –, E.H. Gombrich underlines indeed, that some of the greatest observers of nature, especially among the painters of the High Renaissance in Italy, studiously avoided inserting cast shadows, «as if they regarded them as a disturbing and distracting element in a otherwise coherent and harmonious composition».<sup>129</sup> The prejudice against the rendering of harsh shadows in strong sunlight was so widespread, that even Leonardo, who in his writings had studied meticulously the variety of shadows, did not embody them in his own paintings. In *A Treatise on Painting*, he explicitly warns *en plein air* painters, not to make their figures appear illuminated by the sun, but to contrive a certain amount of mist or of transparent cloud to be placed between the object and the sun, so that the outlines of the shadow will not clash with the outlines of the lights.<sup>130</sup> According to Gombrich such tendency of Leonardo's generation was a reaction to the hard-edged clarity of the Quattro-

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<sup>125</sup> See Krauss, *Marcel Duchamp ou le champ imaginaire*: 80 and Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*: 54, 225, 658.

<sup>126</sup> Guidi recalls, that at the beginning he did not photograph a lot but used to buy many books (see Guidi quoted in Quintavalle, *Muri di Carta*: 309).

<sup>127</sup> In Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>128</sup> See Frongia, *Il paesaggio che guarda me*: 413.

<sup>129</sup> E.H. Gombrich, *Shadows. The depiction Of Cast Shadows In Western Art*, London: The National Gallery 1995: 19.

<sup>130</sup> See Leonardo da Vinci, *Trattato della pittura*: 47 (Part 2, § 84 “Delle qualità del lume per ritrarre rilievi naturali o finti”).

cento paintings, and he identifies as a landmark Masaccio's fresco representing the miracle of Saint Peter's cast shadow healing the cripple.<sup>131</sup> If in Leonardo's thought the taste of the primitives was dead,<sup>132</sup> Guidi's admiration for the painters of the early Renaissance – especially Masaccio and Piero della Francesca – and for those linked to the tradition of the primitive might have influenced his fondness for harsh shadows.<sup>133</sup>

Roughly speaking, we might organize Guidi's shadow-photographs into three groups. The first one includes photographs of cast shadows of objects present and visible into the photographic space, as to say shadows of which we see the original "source". The second group comprehends photographs of, to assume Denis Hollier's terminology, «orphan shadows, shadows thrown by an invisible object», as to say, of an object not present inside the frame but only outside.<sup>134</sup> Finally, the third group features a specifically photographic type of orphan cast shadow: Guidi's own shadow, in the act of taking the picture. The following paragraphs display a selection of works, approximately distributed according to the aforementioned criterion. Of course, this is just a porous and not exhaustive classification, which only aims to develop an analytical path through Guidi's numerous pictures that thematise the shadow.

### *Shadow as double*

On 23 July 1980 Guidi took a sequence of photographs in his yard – *Ronta, 23 July 1980*. [Plates ii/29-31] They depict his daughter Anna bouncing a ball off the wall of their house. The height and brightness of the sun in the summer day depict sharp and solid black shadows. Thanks to their thickness, the dark silhouettes of the cast shadows acquire a sort of materiality, they look much like autonomous beings, rather than mere projections of bodies. Every one of us has made the experience of seeing the shadow of her/his own body projected onto the ground under the sunbeams. Hans Belting notices that, as expansion and projection of the body, the shadow wakes up the amazement of the child, that feels chased by it.<sup>135</sup> Looking at this pictures of little Anna, we cannot but agree with the narrations offered by writer such as Adelbert von Chamisso or James Matthew Barrie, in observing that actually the point of contact between shadow and owner is at the feet.<sup>136</sup> An-

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<sup>131</sup> Gombrich, *Shadows*: 20-21. The taboo on harsh shadow in painting was lifted in the seventeenth century. Then the device was practiced with realism in many context (see *ivi*: 41).

<sup>132</sup> See Lionello Venturi, *Il gusto dei primitivi*, Turin: Einaudi 1972: 78. With the expression «Italian primitives», Venturi defines a group of painters active during the thirteenth century through the end of the fifteenth century, between Cimabue and Botticelli, so to say (*ivi*: 14).

<sup>133</sup> This is also the thought of Frongia, "*At Least a Stone*": 97.

<sup>134</sup> Hollier, *Shadows Don't Cast Shadows*: 119.

<sup>135</sup> Belting, *Bild-Anthropologie*: 191.

<sup>136</sup> Adelbert von Chamisso, *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte*, in Peter Wersig (ed.), *Chamissos Werkw in Einem Band*, Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau Verlag 1974: 161: «Ich [sah] ihn meinen Schatten,

na's shadow looks like a double of her, attached to her feet. The little girl chases, at the same time, the ball, and her own projected double.

The shadow, intended as natural image of the body, has always inspired human figuration. It represents, at the same time, the guarantee and the robbery of the body, its index as well as its negation, because it takes its outlines and substance from the body.<sup>137</sup> With the conception of the shadow as proof of the solid body – «Treating a shadow as substantial thing [It. *come cosa salda*]»<sup>138</sup> – , Dante's *skiagraphia* enriched the European imagination and stimulated figurative theories.<sup>139</sup> As a matter of fact, as Dante and Virgil walk in the sun, the Florentine poet is surprised to see only his own shadow projected on the ground, and for a moment thinks that Virgil had left. Virgil is still there, but since he has lost his solid body, he casts no shadow.<sup>140</sup> On the contrary, Dante's solid body blocks the passage of the sunbeams coming from behind his back and projects a shadow:

«The sun, that in our rear was flaming red,  
Was broken in front of me into the figure  
Which had in me the stoppage of its rays;  
Unto one side I turned me, with the fear  
Of being left alone, when I beheld  
Only in front of me the ground obscured.  
"Why dost thou still mistrust?" my Comforter  
Began to say to me turned wholly round;  
[...]  
"Now if in front of me no shadow fall,  
Marvel not at it more than at the heavens,  
Because one ray impedeth not another"».<sup>141</sup>

The possibility to really entangle the body from its shadow aroused the creativity, in literature and visual arts. A man with no shadow looks as unnatural and unsettling as a lonely shadow with no body.<sup>142</sup> Photography possibly changes the status of the cast shadow, al-

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vom Kopf bis zu meinen Füßen, leise von dem Grase lösen, aufheben, zusammenrollen und falten und zuletzt einstecken». See also James Matthew Barry, *Peter Pan* (1911), London: Egmont 2015: 36-37: «"I shall sew it on for you, my little man," she said, though he was as tall as herself; and she got out her housewife, and sewed the shadow on to Peter's foot».

<sup>137</sup> Belting, *Bild-Anthropologie*: 194.

<sup>138</sup> Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia*, Eng. tr. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Divine Comedy*, Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company 1867: 318 (*Purgatory XXI*,136).

<sup>139</sup> Belting, *Bild-Anthropologie*: 197.

<sup>140</sup> «Lebende Körper werfen im Schlagschatten ihr eigenes Bild auf die Erde, während die körperlosen Toten schon deswegen keinen Schatten *werfen*, weil sie Schatten *sind*» (ivi: 195-197).

<sup>141</sup> Dante, *The Divine Comedy*: 255-256 (*Purgatory III*,16-30).

<sup>142</sup> For instance, popular superstition believes that vampires cast no shadow.

lowing it to gain iconic autonomy, to survive without its cause: thanks to photography «the cast shadow is separated and liberated from the object that caused it».<sup>143</sup>

In *Vicino a Cittadella*, 1984 [Plate ii/32] we notice the silhouette of a child projected onto a door: well-proportionated and without distortions, it stands upright and almost sets the feet on the ground. The detail of verticality is not secondary, if we think «of a whole early metaphysic on the shadow (particularly on the shadow recumbent on the earth) and of its links with death».<sup>144</sup> Although belonging to the child, who is standing on the wooden board as if on a balance beam, the cast shadow appears totally disentangled from him, if it were not for their perfect resemblance. Here, the physical connection at the feet between the body and its projection is lost – because the contact between the body and the ground is missing – and the shadow as double has acquired a life of its own, just like it had happened to Peter Pan, before Wendy sewed the shadow back onto his feet.<sup>145</sup> In the foreground we notice moreover the truncated shadow of a man bust, perhaps Guidi himself.

## *Laundry*

The opening sequence of the book *Tra l'Altro* displays three pictures of white laundry, hung out to dry in the sun and the wind on a terrace in the countryside – *Ronta*, 1979. [Plates ii/33-35] Even if the laundry is the main subject of the picture, the sheets are only partially and slightly visible, placed not at the centre of the photograph but along its edges. Clearly, the main subjects of the picture are not the sheets themselves, but their shadows projected onto the cement floor and parapet. Observing the cast shadows, we understand that there are three sheets, although the picture only shows a little portion of two of them, hanging down from the top margin of the frame, as if this latter were the clothesline. The presentation in sequence shows quite surprisingly that, even if the “real” sheets are fluttering in the wind, the movement provokes only a minimal variation in the shape of their cast shadows, as if these latter were less affected by the action of the air than their bodily counterparts.

Diverting for a moment from the topic of the shadow, I have notice, that laundry appears quite often in Guidi's repertoire – probably because it is such a typical and ordinary trait of Italian landscape. [Plates ii/6, 36-38] The same subject has been also treated by two photographers that Guidi observes and appreciates, such as Eugène Atget and Walker Evans, albeit in a different manner. Atget, *Ancienne Faculté de Médecine, Rue de l'hôtel Colbert* (1900) shows a line of clothes hung inside an ancient building. [Plate ii/39]

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<sup>143</sup> Hollier, *Shadows Don't Cast Shadows*: 118.

<sup>144</sup> Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow*: 15.

<sup>145</sup> Barry, *Peter Pan*: 16-37.



As in other cases, Atget has taken advantage of the existing window frame to frame the subject. In contrast to Guidi's laundry, the one depicted by Atget reminds of a still and solid marble sculpture, heavy anchored to the ground. The clothes seem heavier as normal, as if they had absorbed the stony character from the architectures around them. On the opposite, Walker Evans, *Wash Day*, 1930 represents a hymn to lightness and airiness. [Plate ii/40] The transparent clothes, alternated to empty clothes lines, create an almost abstract motive of full and empty stripes against the clear sky. As it was his tendency during the 1930s, Evans imposes the full frontality to the photograph, a habit that earned him the definition of «photographer of the plan».<sup>146</sup> Here, Evans' work shows almost affinities to the aesthetisation of common objects typical of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*. Through the point of view from below, and the isolation from the context, the laundry receives an elevation that from the visual winds up into the conceptual field. Unlike Guidi, Evans deletes the everyday environment of the terrace, the yard, or the street, and places his sheets straight in heaven.

Finally, the theme of «swaying windblown urban laundry hung out to dry» is also the subject of a well-known work by Man Ray: *Moving Sculpture* (1920), considered as the marking point of his exit from dada and entry into his surrealist period.<sup>147</sup> [Plate ii/41] The picture has appeared in different cropped versions every time it has been reproduced. Jane Livingston underlines, how the work is emblematic of the cogent reciprocity of content and name, because «*Moving Sculpture* activates the image by its caption».<sup>148</sup> Undoubtedly Guidi's *Ronta* and Man Ray's *Moving Sculpture* depict the same subject, and even without an activating title, the white sheets depicted by Guidi could recall moving sculptures, but there are some substantial differences. First of all, Guidi does not crop the image – he never does – and that makes all the difference. The framing of the published image always corresponds to what Guidi had seen in the camera. We must not forget, that the attitude towards cropping and framing marks one of the most substantial gap between documentary photography and Neorealism, on the one hand, and avant-garde on the other.<sup>149</sup> Second, if Man Ray's *Moving Sculpture* «prepares the way for Breton's surrealist convocation of arrested process, the stop-action mystique, the convulsive beauty residing in

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<sup>146</sup> Olivier Lugon, *Le style documentaire. D'August Sander à Walker Evans*, Paris: Macula 2001: 175.

<sup>147</sup> Jane Livingston, *Man Ray and Surrealist Photography*, in Rosalind Krauss and Jane Livingston (eds.), *L'Amour fou, photography & surrealism*, ex. cat. Hayward Gallery London: The Arts Council of Great Britain 1986, 115-152: 123. For instance, on the cover of the sixth issue of *La Révolution surréaliste*, 1 March 1926, *Moving Sculpture* is titled only *France*, «which immediately transforms the floating white sheets into ghostly shrouds, or into that symbol of patriotic honor, the national flag – but drooping, multiplied, and erased» (Livingston, op. cit.: 123).

<sup>148</sup> Interesting enough, most Man Ray's works during the surrealist period were instead generally indifferent to «the marriage of image and name» (Dawn Ades, *Photography and the Surrealist Text* in Krauss and Livingston (eds.), *L'Amour fou, photography & surrealism*, 153-192: 159).

<sup>149</sup> Lugon, *Le style documentaire*: 178, 180.

the extraordinary ordinary»,<sup>150</sup> Guidi's pictures, on the contrary, negate the evocation of Breton's concept of *explosante-fixé* because the presentation in sequence reactivates the consciousness of movement.<sup>151</sup> If «the very idea of stop-motion is intrinsically photographic», the photographic sequence, by allowing the confront between previous and subsequent moments, re-establishes, or at least, seems to re-establish, the space and time continuity.<sup>152</sup> The sequence of three pictures indeed creates a sort of movie in stop-motion – like in the sequence of the man reading the newspaper – *Cesena, 1967* – presented at the beginning of this chapter.<sup>153</sup> [Plates ii/1-3] Third, Guidi's use of titles is always strictly “documentary”. He only indicates the place and date of the photo. In case of a portrait, he gives the name of the person or a brief description, as self-evident as possible, of the subject (for example woman/man doing this or that). Even when he adds a sentence or a quotation to this topographic information, he always avoids any description or caption, that could influence the interpretation of what you see.

### *Orphan shadows*

Guidi himself has established a parallelism between his photograph *Forlì, 1971* and Walker Evans's *Cottage at Ossining Camp Woods, New York* of 1930. [Plates ii/42, 43] In both pictures the «orphan» shadow of a tree – not included in the photographic space – projects its shape onto the external walls of a wooden cabin. Describing Evans' photograph, Guidi draws our attention on the toothed shape formed by the shadow of the roof on the facade. To Guidi, that shape calls into mind the saw, that cut the tree used to build the cottage. Remembering that the word “saw” is also the past tense of the verb “to see”, Guidi suggests, that Evans perhaps wanted to tell us: «I saw this (with my eye)». <sup>154</sup> Guidi concludes that sometimes, while you are taking a photograph, you are actually seeing nothing. But later, you will see something, in the photograph itself. According to him, photography provides us with the means to see afterwards, not to see something we had already seen, but to see something that without the photograph, we could not have seen at all.<sup>155</sup> In photographs such as *Forlì, 1971* or *Dietro Casa 1979-1981*, the orphan shadows of absent trees are almost an overwhelming presence over the small cabins in the wood. [Plates ii/42, 44]

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<sup>150</sup> Livingston, *Man Ray and Surrealist Photography*: 123.

<sup>151</sup> «Breton's second example [of Convulsive Beauty] is the “expiration of movement” – the experience of something that should be in motion but has been stopped, derailed, or [...] “delayed”. [...] The convulsiveness, then, the arousal in front of the object, is to a perception of it detached from the continuum of its natural existence» (Krauss, *The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism*: 112).

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> I treat the theme of the photographic sequence below, in chapter 3 (*Repetition*).

<sup>154</sup> Guido Guidi, *Imparare dalla natura*, in Fabbri Cesare and Loddo Silvia (eds.), *Alberi – Guido Guidi & GF93*, Eng. tr. Daniele Zavalloni, Jesi, Italy: Skinnerbox 2017, 3-15: 12-13.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

Other times instead, the cast shadow is produced by a building, that darkens the facade of another building. [Plates ii/45-49] Victor Stoichita wonders which could be the reason for including in a painting the truncated (or orphan) shadow of an object external to the space of the representation. He considers that the Impressionism established a «new perception of the boundaries of the image and their function». <sup>156</sup> In such renewed context the truncated shadow inside the painting was «not just a “fragment” but a “messenger” of reality». <sup>157</sup> The same can be said about orphan shadows inside the photographic space, which, by pointing to their real referent in the off-space, remind us of reality space continuum. Still, sometimes it truly seems that Guidi intentionality chooses the most unfavourable position to take a photograph, rather than the most favourable. Borrowing the words spent by Robert Adams to describe Judith Joy Ross’s way of working, one suspects that occasionally the photographer arranges neither the subject nor him/herself. <sup>158</sup> [Plates ii/50-52]

### *Case study: Cogliate 1995 [Plates ii/53, 54]*

In these two pictures, published in *Cinque Viaggi*, we see a huge semi-circular shadow of unknown origin, probably caused by a building behind Guidi’s back. As it is his wont, he did not take an isolated single photograph, but repeated the same shot at least twice. In the first picture, printed in black and white, we see two boys standing in front of an ordinary residential building; in the second picture, printed in colour, the point of view has not changed, but the two boys are not there anymore. In both images, our attention is caught by the huge shadow, that occupies almost a half of the photographic space. In his text for the book, Antonello Frongia recognises in Guidi an interest for unstable materials, with the tendency to expand, dissolve or decay, such as *shadow*, smoke, snow. <sup>159</sup> Rather than the index to a referent that we cannot see, because present only in the off-space, the semi-circular shadow seems almost to possess its own autonomous “body”, as if it owned a corporeal weight, a physical mass. In its shadowiness, it encloses everything: buildings, objects, people. The alternating use of b/w and colour in depicting the same scene makes manifest, that this is no longer the same scene, even if it looks like it, because time has elapsed, and something has changed. According to Roberta Valtorta, through such alternation Guidi creates a bifurcation and challenges «the rules of photography and, at the same time, the mechanism of perception and the uniqueness of the photographic act, as if each photograph were just a trial». <sup>160</sup> Guidi himself explains that

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<sup>156</sup> Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow*: 104.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> See Robert Adams, *Judith Joy Ross*, in Idem, *Why People Photograph*, 102-104: 103.

<sup>159</sup> Frongia, *From archive to book, from book to city*: 146.

<sup>160</sup> Valtorta, *Guido Guidi in Milan and Other Places*: 143-144.

«two photographs on the same subject, taken one after the other, might be a tale: thesis and antithesis. A photograph which follows another either reassess it and retracts it, or on the contrary confirms it and assists it in a reciprocal relationship».<sup>161</sup>

Once there were two children, now they have disappeared, but the shadow is still there, as if it had swallowed them. If we stop for one moment to reason about the syntax of the photographic act, we cannot avoid establishing a sort of narration, in which the shadow is charged with a «shady, sinister side».<sup>162</sup> The shadow undergoes then a process of demonisation: as phantom without substance, it becomes metaphor of the imaginary enemy, it represents the suspicion, the obscure area of our soul, our guilty conscience, our negative reduplication.<sup>163</sup> Something similar happens in *Ronta, 1980* [Plates ii/55, 56], two colour photographs published in *Tra l'altro*. In the first picture we see Guidi's yard. The left part of the image is occupied by the structure of the garage. Although the door is wide open, the interior remains concealed into the darkness of the shadow. In the second picture appears Anna, wearing her good clothes (this detail might suggest that the photograph was taken on a holiday). Guidi portrays her as she stands exactly on the fringes of the shadow outlines, in the act of nonchalantly looking back, behind her shoulders, where the shadow seems to come from, as if quickly ascertaining to be in safe from a danger.

«I always pay great attention to the parts in shadow, which must be well structured – explains Guidi – if I know that that part of the negative won't register well, its area in the composition must be circumscribed. The photographs of my daughter Anna [...] are an example. They are also attempts to understand the rendering of shadows and the constraints of film».<sup>164</sup>

## *Shadow as sundial*

In other sequences instead, Guidi uses cast shadows as a sundial, to witness the passing of time through the movement of the sun, since of course in nature a shadow corresponds to a very precise moment in the day.<sup>165</sup> [Plates ii/57, 58] As the curator and writer Corrado Benigni underlines, sometimes Guidi's patient gaze is able to catch the language of the

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<sup>161</sup> Guido Guidi in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>162</sup> Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow*: 138.

<sup>163</sup> Ivi: 138 ff.

<sup>164</sup> Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Tra l'altro*: 122.

<sup>165</sup> Emblematic in this sense are Guidi's photographic sequences of Carlo Scarpa's Tomba Brion and IUAV portal (see Guidi, *Verum Ipsum Factum*, cit.). As well as the already discussed sequence of *Preganziol, 1983*.

shadows, that speak by growing larger or smaller on the facades of the buildings. Lights and shadows draw on the walls their alphabet of signs, that changes with the passing of the hours, the days, and the seasons. To follow and articulate this process, Guidi uses the form of the sequence, arranging images in line that function like a clock quadrant. The time flows through the photographs, while the projection of a figure changes. Observing the shadows in their imperceptible movement becomes a reflection on time:

«They are images in which nothing happens, no events occur and there are no forceful elements that capture our attention. A slight shift in everyday life is transformed into the fully-fledged mutation of an environment and, consequently, the perception that we may have of it. This way of looking at the landscape, far removed from the sensational and the exceptional, is the key to Guidi's entire oeuvre».<sup>166</sup>

The sequence of the river Savio provides a good example of Guidi's attention for the movement of shadows. [Plates ii/59-62] The Savio flows not far from Guidi's home, thus it is an ordinary presence in his everyday life. In such familiar setting, he recorded the changing proportions between light and shadow. The absolute contingency of the shadow is here all the more visually underlined by the form of the triangle created by the light and oriented in the same sense as the water currency, a sign that we might consider as «an allusion to time and to "time's arrow"».<sup>167</sup>

According to Antonello Frongia, Guidi can be considered, perhaps more than anyone else, a "Warburghian" photographer, for his acute perception of details, which allows him to recognise archetypal figures emerging inside the surface of the modern world as «fragments of representation in which deeper structures of seeing are inscribed».<sup>168</sup> Frongia makes nevertheless clear, that in Guidi's work, such figures, «applied to photography of the lived world», acquire the status neither of symbols nor of metaphors, if anything they declare «the non-naturalism of photography, its conceptual construction».<sup>169</sup> Let us have a look for instance at two photographs published in the book *Per Strada – Meldola, 1986*. [Plates ii/63, 64] There is a standing man in profile, there is a shadow forming the shape of a triangle, and there is a road sign also in the form of an upside-down triangle. The man is standing, and his figure is contained inside the cone formed by the shadow, as if the latter were the materialisation of his visual cone. In the second photograph the man is not present anymore, but the triangles of the shadow and of the road sign are still there. Should we read the scene as a visual statement about the primacy of the gaze? Guidi in-

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<sup>166</sup> Corrado Benigni, *La città nella città/The city within the city*, Eng. tr. Sarah Ponting, in Benigni et al. (eds.), *Guidi Guido, Cinque Viaggi (1990-1998)*, 133-138: 136.

<sup>167</sup> Guidi, *Notes for a lesson*: vi-vii.

<sup>168</sup> Ivi: xiv-xv.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

deed speaks of «visual thought», and regrets that too often the intelligence of the eye is disregarded in favour of verbal and cognitive intelligence, while for him «everything starts from the eyes, from the sight», as a picture from 1984 clearly and funnily shows.<sup>170</sup> [Plate ii/64] Frongia describes the recurrence of the themes of the triangle and the circle as subterranean manias in Guidi's work, and suggests the possibility that they might stay in direct relation to the eye and the photographing act. They represent reading possibilities intrinsic in the photograph, although not planned in advance.<sup>171</sup> [Plate ii/66] Reasoning about the frequent presence of diagonal shadows in Guidi's pictures, the historian of art and architecture Tiziana Serena observes that they underline the fact that Guidi refers to reality not in terms of abstraction, but as a necessity. The weight of the diagonal shadow, she explains, bears the profundity of the real as projection.<sup>172</sup> [Plates ii/67-69]

### *Guidi's cast shadow*

In Vasari's account about the origin of representation the shadow portrait of the beloved one described in Pliny's myth is substituted with a shadow self-portrait: a man in front of a fire sees his own shadow projected on the wall, and immediately traces its outlines with a charcoal. Dubois points out, that this version of the myth cannot avoid the paradox of the self portrait of the author: the fact that the self-portrait condenses into the same person two roles (the object represented, and the representing subject). For the sake of realism, the painter should depict himself in the act of painting. With a portrait of shadow, the problem of the paradoxical inclusion becomes insurmountable: the representation cannot be really completed due to the pure indexical nature (spatial and temporal) of the shadow. The drawing hand can never draw itself drawing. Practically speaking, you can never fully outline your own shadow. In order to achieve that, the process of transcription must be reduced to a unique gesture of outlining and fixing. As if the shadow were as sudden as a bolt of lightning, or a photographic shot. Photography made practically possible the impossible representation because it fixes on the photosensitive plate the image of the photographer and of his/her camera in the fraction of a second. Almost no influential photographer has renounced to make his/her own self portrait of shadow.<sup>173</sup> As it is well known, in the never-ending controversy about the legitimation of photography as art, the main argument *contra* regards the absence of the artist's hand. A circumstance that, on the other hand, was judged positively by the supporters of the medium objectivity, as this statement

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<sup>170</sup> Frongia and Moro, *Topography of the Landscape and of the Archive*: 101.

<sup>171</sup> Frongia, *Il paesaggio che guarda me*: 404.

<sup>172</sup> Tiziana Serena, *Finding as founding*, in Eadem (ed.), *Guido Guidi. PK TAV 139+500*, Rubiera: Linea di confine per la fotografia contemporanea 2006: n.n.

<sup>173</sup> Dubois, *L'acte photographique*: 122-126. Of course, there are further methods to realise a photographic self-portrait, like the use of a mirror or the long exposure.

by André Bazin reminds us: «Tous les arts sont fondés sur la présence de l'homme; dans la seule photographie, nous jouissons de son absence».<sup>174</sup> A circumstance that the appearance into the photographic space of the shadow-self-portrait of the photographer surely frustrated.

Stoichita reminds us that the Renaissance painter Cennino Cennini in his *Libro dell'Arte* recommended to prefer a diffused light when drawing, in order to avoid the cast shadow of the own hand projected onto the representation.<sup>175</sup> Sure enough, five centuries later a similar advice appears in the manuals for amateur photographers too. Clement Chéroux recalls, for instance, that in 1901 the magazine *Photo-Revue* dedicated its column *Les petites misères du photographe* – aimed at instructing the amateur photographer about the average causes of an unsuccessful shot – to the topic «Auto-ombromanie». Among the multitude of bad habits of the beginner, there is the practice of arranging the subject to face the light. In so doing, the photographer turns his back to the sun and forgets his own cast shadow that falls precisely between his camera and the subject, and thus it appears in the foreground of the photograph.<sup>176</sup> [Plates ii/27, 51, 54, 70, 71, 74-76, 78-83]

Though harmless and possibly funny, the presence of the photographer's shadow caused embarrassment, because it disclosed the process of production. It contradicted the idea that the photo, as image *sine manu facta*, «opère en l'absence du sujet».<sup>177</sup> We must wait for the avant-garde to overturn the role of the shadow and of the mistake in general in order to free photography from the orthodoxy of the manuals. From the 1920s onwards the cast shadow is fully reintegrated into the vocabulary of modern photography, as a sign that reclaims the presence of the author, but also of a technic that proudly displays itself.<sup>178</sup> Actually Stoichita sets the begin of this reconciliation already in 1908 with Lewis Hine, *Newsboy, Indianapolis*: the earliest known photograph to include, not accidentally, the shadow of the photographer with his camera on the tripod.<sup>179</sup> [Plate ii/77] No longer considered as an embarrassing mistake, «le défaut de l'auto-ombromanie a définitivement cédé la place à la pratique de l'autoportrait en ombre portée».<sup>180</sup>

Nevertheless, observes Stoichita, if the traditional definition of portrait (and self-portrait) demands the fulfilment of the principle of likeness,

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<sup>174</sup> Bazin, *Ontologie de l'image Photographique*: 13.

<sup>175</sup> Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow*: 89.

<sup>176</sup> Chéroux, *Fautographie*: 69. Quite curiously the term shadow is often used with the meaning of "dark spot", lack, mistake.

<sup>177</sup> Dubois, *L'acte photographique*: 26.

<sup>178</sup> Chéroux, *Fautographie*: 73.

<sup>179</sup> See Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow*: 111. However, not all photography historians agree with such interpretation. For instance Chéroux, *Fautographie*: 76 considers the cast shadow in the work by photographers preceding the avant-garde – such as Eugène Atget, Jacob Riis, or Lewis Hine – just as mere incidents.

<sup>180</sup> Ivi: 79.

«the representation of the shadow must take on the symbolic form of the profile, [...] because only in the profile of the outlined shadow could mimesis and index (likeness and physical connection) coexist».<sup>181</sup>

That is why, not simply the cast shadow, but the «profile's shadow became a form of self-representation» as for instance in the famous self-portrait by André Kertész of 1926.<sup>182</sup> Clement Chéroux correctly notices, that more than just a self-portrait, the photographers intended to achieve an «autoportrait en acte», in which they photographed themselves in the act of photographing: «le photographe semble ainsi faire corps avec sa machine».<sup>183</sup>

On the other hand, the experiments with the cast shadow followed another logic too, namely to substitute the canons inherited from painting with the rules of photography, as to say «les lois plus intimes du matériau».<sup>184</sup> For instance, Moholy-Nagy deliberately included his own cast shadow in his pictures to remind us, that a photograph does not result from the objective and spontaneous registration of a sort of omniscient eye, but on the contrary, it is the product of a technical device, operated by a man. All the reasons, that originally led to the suppression of the projected shadow of the author inside the image now speak up for it, with the aim of founding a new «grammaire visuelle».<sup>185</sup> To incorporate the silhouette of the photographer at the heart of the composition is equivalent to a statement about medium specificity. The cast shadow, primal form of projection, «recalls, per metonymy, that photography proceeds always from the geometric reduction of a space into a surface, of a volume into a plane».<sup>186</sup> Chéroux concludes that

«cette tache obscure, autrefois perçue comme une authentique malfaçon, apparaît désormais comme le révélateur providentiel des processus qui sont à l'œuvre dans la photographie. Les ombres de la photographie, ses défauts, deviennent ainsi le lieu privilégié d'une exploration du médium».<sup>187</sup>

The French historian identifies a sort of progeny of Moholy-Nagy, that since the 1950s had been following his experimental attitude, with the aim to question the characteristics of the medium by means of its own lacks. For instance, Ugo Mulas's series *Verifiche* – started

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<sup>181</sup> Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow*: 113.

<sup>182</sup> According to Stoichita «the artist responsible for this feat was [...] Pablo Picasso», with his painting entitled *Silhouette with Young Girl Crouching*, where his profile appears in the shape of a black shadow. (ivi: 114).

<sup>183</sup> Chéroux, *Fautographie*: 76.

<sup>184</sup> Ivi: 85.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ivi: 89.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.



in 1970 – represents a systematic application of such method.<sup>188</sup> The Italian photographer writes that, through the operations of his *Verifiche*, he tried to analyse the typical themes of a standard manual of photography but seen from the other way around, as to say, not from the point of view of the neophyte, but with the awareness of twenty years practical experience.<sup>189</sup> The second *Verifica* is a double self-portrait dedicated to Lee Friedlander, in which Mulas' image appears twice, once reflected in a small mirror and once as cast shadow.<sup>190</sup> [Plate ii/72] Mulas reveals, that actually in this work the main theme is not the photographer, but the camera. As a matter of fact, from the shape of his cast shadow, it is evident that he is photographing with the camera held before his face, and the action appears in the mirror too, where the tool conceals his face. Mulas believed that Friedlander, more than anyone else, attempted to overcome the barrier of the camera, which at the same time constitutes the photographer's means of work and knowledge. The *Verifica* comes from Mulas' recognition, that the camera is not part of him, but only just an added element, that excludes him exactly when he is most present.<sup>191</sup> In the course of a recent interview, Guidi has acknowledged the importance of Mulas' *Verifiche*, and in particular of Mulas' self-portrait dedicated to Friedlander, for his own practice.<sup>192</sup>

As a matter of fact, Friedlander is well known for his self-portraits collected and published in the photographic book entitled precisely *Self Portrait*, that Guidi immediately bought when it was released in 1970.<sup>193</sup> As the title declares, the book collects a series of photographs, that although not specifically conceived according to a plan, began as straight self-portraits. At times, Friedlander was finding himself inside the landscape of his photographs like an intruder. Each photograph was accepted as a new discovery, allowing Friedlander to see himself «as a character or an element that would shift presence as [his] work would change in direction».<sup>194</sup> The book features the whole variety of photographic self-portraits: Friedlander catches his own image by means of the self-timer, takes advantage of the reflecting properties of mirrors and other surfaces, and of course plays with the silhouette of his cast shadow, a practice that has become a real distinctive trait of his work.<sup>195</sup> In his afterword to the 2005 edition of *Self Portrait*, John Szarkowski suggests

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Mulas, *Le Verifiche*: 145.

<sup>190</sup> This specific picture appears on the cover of Mulas, *La Fotografia*, and included in Guidi's personal library.

<sup>191</sup> Ivi: 150.

<sup>192</sup> See Guido Guidi, *A tour of my bookshelves*, video interview, 29 July 2021: online resource.

<sup>193</sup> Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n. Guidi affirms that *Self Portrait* is the book by Friedlander he had looked at most. See Guido Guidi, *A tour of my bookshelves*, cit., and Lee Friedlander, *Self Portrait*, New City, New York: Haywire Press 1970.

<sup>194</sup> Friedlander, *Self Portrait*: n.n.

<sup>195</sup> In 2020 Friedlander published a photographic book featuring only his shadow-self-portraits, which span from 1963 to 2019 – practically his entire career (see Lee Friedlander, *The Shadow Knows*, Brooklyn, New York: SPQR Editions 2020).

«not to think of these pictures as portraits at all, but as landscapes, of a variety that Friedlander was perhaps the first to call – in an experimental, provisional way, in the mid-sixties – social landscapes».<sup>196</sup>

Rather than describing Friedlander's true character, they are like «sketches of tentative identities being tried out». Szarkowski explains them as attempts to construct a new personae «out of the very process of photography».<sup>197</sup> He compares them to

«a kind of identifying mark – something similar to a signature, or a fingerprint, or a royal seal that indicates that he, Friedlander, a reliable witness [...] was there».<sup>198</sup>

Contextualising the self-portrait genre within the history of art, Szarkowski recognises a sort of tendency (though rare) in some great masters – such as Rembrandt – who, at a certain point of their career, seem to lose interest in representing their own personality in a portrait, while start focusing on impersonal technical aspects of painting, such as the colour, shape and weight of the object they describe, and the way their «body occupies its space and accepts the light that falls on it». For Szarkowski, it is as if they were representing a useful object of no importance, like «an old work glove, or a pair of shoes».<sup>199</sup> According to him, Friedlander shares with those great painters a similar attitude of disinterest, when he looks at his own self.

In some sense, Guidi's attitude towards his own image in the photographs – not excluded his silhouette of shadow – is not dissimilar. Nevertheless, his disinterest for his own self is such, that he does not even consider his "intrusions" in the photographic space as self-portraits, but as mere visual incidents – particularly when the silhouette of his shadow appears in the photograph. His image, either reflected by a mirroring surface or projected as shadow, never acquires the status of self-presentation, but remains just a fortuitous event, possibly more comparable to Atget's than to Friedlander's presence in the space of the photograph. As a matter of fact, Szarkowski claims that, despite superficial analogies, the figures of Atget and Friedlander inside their photographs play completely different roles. Whereas if we were to conceal Atget's presence, this would not affect the general structure of the image, that would not be the case with Friedlander's self-portraits: «if we could remove Friedlander from these pictures we would have no picture at all» concludes Szarkowski.<sup>200</sup> With Guidi's own image inside his photographs we find ourselves in an analogous situation as with Atget because they both consider their own

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<sup>196</sup> John Szarkowski, *The Friedlander Self*, in Friedlander, *Self Portrait*: n.n. [2]

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ivi: n.n. [1].

<sup>200</sup> Ivi: n.n. [2].

presence not necessary, but accessory, accidentally. About the reasons of the presence of Atget's own image in his works, the historians still do not agree. On the one hand he is considered a true master of reflection effects.<sup>201</sup> On the other hand, the idea of Atget as primitive and naïve accounts them as unintentional error, resulting from a mix of negligence, luck, and chance. Man Ray once said: «He was a very simple man, he was almost naive... [...] I think he was an artist, not a perfectionist».<sup>202</sup>

In his book *The figure of the Orans*, Guidi juxtaposes the shadow-self-portrait by Lee Friedlander, *Canyon de Chelly, Arizona*, 1983, to a drawing – made by Guidi himself – of the Orans depicted in a third-century fresco of the Catacomb of Priscilla in Rome.<sup>203</sup> [Plate ii/73] Such unconventional comparison is included in a survey, of Warburghian spirit, about the recurrence of some archetypal forms in Western figuration. In particular, Guidi focuses his research path on the recognition of the signs: > V A W ω Δ in the most various ordinary details of paintings and photographs, such as: beards, collars, ice cream cones, road signs and so on. His starting point was the observation of an analogy between the position of the Orans' arms raised in prey – forming the Greek letter ω –, and the position of his own arms in the gesture of lifting the black cloth of the 8x10 camera to conceal his head underneath.<sup>204</sup> As Antonello Frongia explains,

«at the core of Guidi's reading of the Orans as the pivotal figure of the Western notion of space stands Leon Battista Alberti's idea of the visual pyramid: the triangle as a powerful marker in the visual economy of the picture and a carrier of the gaze».<sup>205</sup>

Without the need to spend words on Friedlander's picture, but favouring direct observation, Guidi calls our attention on the triangle, formed by the shadow of the photographer's arm – who is placing the camera to his eye –, simply by sketching the sign < on the image reproduced in the book.<sup>206</sup> As a matter of fact, Frongia reminds us that «the cam-

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<sup>201</sup> John Fraser for instance claims that «Atget did exactly what he wanted to do» (John Fraser, *Atget and the City*, in: "The Cambridge Quarterly", vol. 3, no. 3, Summer 1968, 199-233: 204).

<sup>202</sup> See Man Ray quoted in Chéroux, *Le contexte de spéculation*: 92.

<sup>203</sup> Lee Friedlander, *Canyon de Chelly, Arizona*, 1983 is published on the frontispiece of Szarkowski, *Photography Until Now*, cit., a book that Guidi appreciates as much as the picture. Not by chance, Guidi often shows this image by Friedlander during his lessons.

<sup>204</sup> Guidi, Notes for a lesson: v.

<sup>205</sup> Frongia, Notes from a lesson: xv.

<sup>206</sup> Further describing this image during a lesson, Guidi points out other details, like some shrubs, that seem actually to sprout from Friedlander's head, reminding of a portrait by Arcimboldo. (Guido Guidi, online lecture: Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna, Campus of Cesena, AFPD Lab-based Course on Photography I, 16 June 2020).

era's eye corresponds to the visual cone, which at the same time is an open gaze, a triangle and time's arrow».<sup>207</sup>

Guidi claims that the main difference between his and Friedlander's approach towards their projected silhouettes inside the photographic space is that Guidi himself does not seek them on purpose, they just happen, and he simply not avoids them. On the contrary, Friedlander intentionally pursues them, as a means to state his presence inside the landscape, to reminds us that he is also part of the landscape. In this sense, however, Guidi shares Friedlander's attitude of identification with the landscape, when he affirms: «I am the thing, that I am photographing in the moment I am photographing it. At least it is an attempt to be, even if imperfect».<sup>208</sup> Yet, he does not link the concept of landscape to contemplation because for him the relationship with reality has always meant to be inside the reality, without detachment, without irony.<sup>209</sup>

In *Cervia, 1979* [Plate ii/74], the shape of Guidi's cast shadow, slightly deformed by the position of the sun at the sunset, appears on the shore. We can deduce he is carrying a bag. In order to look into his Rolleiflex he has taken a little bowed position «as if in reverence», which calls into mind his statement to consider «photography as a form of prayer».<sup>210</sup> The greatest part of the image is occupied by the sandy ground of the beach. The sea is confined to a thin stripe in the background, while the sky disappears by blending into the white surface of the photographic paper. It all looks like a unique bi-dimensional surface with neither background nor foreground. Next to Guidi's shadow, the rests of a plastic object project a shadow too, that resembles the shape of ancient monumental ruins. The sand is marked by a myriad of footprints. To read the image not allegorically but *semiologically*, we notice that the shadow, the footprints, and the piece of trash are all traces, as to say all indexes. As a matter of fact, Frongia describes Guidi practice in the 1960s as «a research project concerning the land as a democratic accumulation of traces».<sup>211</sup>

Comparing this photograph with other pictures by Guidi, that include his cast shadow, we better understand his statement that the relationship of identity he wishes to have with the space is also the relationship between his body and the space.<sup>212</sup> What's more, we realize that from the different shapes of his silhouette, we are able to deduce which kind of camera he was using, since as he himself explains, the gesture he makes while taking a photograph are different if he uses one or the other camera. Accordingly, his silhouette looks: bowed, when he uses a 6x6, hung around his neck, because he must lower his head down to look into the waist-level viewfinder; standing straight with no-

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<sup>207</sup> Frongia, *Notes from a lesson*: xv.

<sup>208</sup> Guidi quoted in Frongia and Moro, *Topography of the Landscape and of the Archive*: 101.

<sup>209</sup> Ivi: 100.

<sup>210</sup> Guidi, *Notes for a lesson*: v; Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>211</sup> Frongia, "At Least a Stone": 96.

<sup>212</sup> Guidi, *Notes for a lesson*: v.

ticeable elbows, when he uses a 24x36, that he must lift at eye level to shoot; connected to another shadow through the cable release, when he operates the bulky 8x10 on tripod.<sup>213</sup> [Plates ii/70, 71, 74-76, 78-83] Guidi himself clarifies:

«If I use a camera with a waist-level viewfinder, like a Rollei, a Mamiya C330, or a Hasselblad, I'm forced to bow down to frame the shot, which I consider a respectful gesture. An 8x10 is even more theatrical, because you have to raise your arms to focus it: symbolically, it's like surrendering to receive the light».<sup>214</sup>

Guidi states that the camera helps him to see, it really helps him to know the world, to touch it like a prosthesis.<sup>215</sup> At the same time he explains, however, that since the very beginning, he has started to make use of the tripod, even with the small format camera, because he needed to detach himself from the instrument, to be outside the instrument but more inside the space that the camera was recording.<sup>216</sup> Guidi's silhouette with the camera reintroduces the matter of the double role of supplement and barrier played by the tool, raised for instance by the works of Mulas and Friedlander, and of course earlier anticipated by experiences carried out amidst the New Vision – that Rosalind Krauss subsumes in a well-known Umbo's self-portrait, with the face half obscured by the cast shadow of his camera.<sup>217</sup> The relationship between the camera and the photographer's eyes

«involves the interesting paradox of all supplementary devices, where the very thing that extends, displaces as well. In this image the camera that literally expands Umbo's vision, allowing him to see himself, also masks his eyes, nearly extinguishing them in shadow».<sup>218</sup>

Guidi claims that the place of the photographer should be in the shadow, concealed, or at least at the margin, in the periphery – meaning both at the edges of the image and of the city. To sustain his statement, he quotes the Epicurus' motto *λάθε βιώσας* (*látthe bíōsas*) – live in obscurity, as to say, live concealed – as well as the words by one of his favourite writers, Carlo Emilio Gadda: «Please, leave me in the shadows».<sup>219</sup> But to remain in the

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Tra l'altro*: 122.

<sup>215</sup> Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>216</sup> Guidi quoted in Quintavalle, *Muri di Carta*: 310.

<sup>217</sup> See Umbo, *Ohne Titel (Selbstporträt), um 1930*, in Inka Schube (ed.), *Umbo. Fotograf*, ex. cat. Sprengel Museum Hannover, Berlinische Galerie, Landesmuseum für moderne Kunst, Fotografie und Architektur, Cologne: Snoeck 2019: 89.

<sup>218</sup> Krauss, *The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism*: 117-118.

<sup>219</sup> Guido Guidi, *Lectio Magistralis*, Biarch Festival di Bari, 15 September 2021: online resource. Gadda's request became the title of a collection of interviews, see Carlo Emilia Gadda and Claudio Vela

shadow is not at all the same thing as to project a shadow. No doubt, on the contrary, that the cast shadow of the photographer makes visible the presence of the author and disturbs the pure fictionality of the representation, since it reminds you that the scene you are observing is a photograph taken by someone. A similar process is used in literature, when the writer breaks the continuity of the narration in a novel by directly addressing the reader or by commenting on his/her own previous words. For instance, the structure and language of both Carlo Emilio Gadda and Samuel Beckett are «permeated by a profound crisis of the mimetic principles of fiction». The unsettling effect of their writings «lies precisely in the exposure of [their] essentially fictional character [...] and the resulting frustration of the readers “need of concord”». <sup>220</sup> Precisely the same feeling we get by looking at some pictures by Guidi.

Here is a sequence of photographs taken in Ronta between 1979 and 1981 and published in the book *Dietro Casa*. [Plates ii/78-82] If we overlook the order of their appearance in the book, we can try to reconstruct the sequence according to a hypothetical chronological criterion, that shows Guidi photographing, while he moves closer to a low mound of unidentifiable materials in his yard. <sup>221</sup> More precisely, we see his cast shadow (in the act of photographing with a small hand camera) first projected on the ground and then on the mound. From the shape of his shadow, we can moreover deduce that it was a cold day, because he is wearing a heavy jacket. Since he photographed standing and directing his camera downwards, only the ground is included in the frame, but very little of the context and no portion of the sky. In the two images taken from afar the extremely inclined perspective distorts the shapes of the square made of paving stones, the only form respecting a regular geometry, apart from the shadow of the building on the left, that draws a black band, running from the foreground to the background, and halves the mound into a black and a white part. Next to Guidi's cast shadow, we notice another shadow projected by a bare small tree. Little by little, the shape of Guidi's shadow superimposes itself on the surface of the mound, that becomes a sort of screen for a shadow play. The relationship between Guidi's projected shape and the black cat – that indeed resemble a shadow – creates a funny situation, as it happens in another picture, also included in the book. [Plate 83] In the aforementioned sequence the shadow does not record the position of the sun, but the position of the photographer. It might be better understood, knowing that already in 1967, in the Industrial Design Course with Luigi Veronesi and especially with Italo Zannier, Guidi had started to carry out

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(ed.), «Per favore, mi lasci nell'ombra» *Interviste 1950-1972*, Milan: Adelphi 1993.

<sup>220</sup> Wehling-Giorgi, *Gadda and Beckett*: 5.

<sup>221</sup> The order of the pictures in the book was not established by Guidi, but by the editor. See Guidi Guido and Fulford Jason (ed.), *Dietro Casa*, Oakland, California: TBW Books 2018.

«very precise exercises with a camera on a tripod, operations which would have been described as conceptual, based on methodical iteration: for example, photographing an object from two metres, three metres, four metres and so on».<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.





# 3. Repetition

## Non-decisive moments

«Oh this is going to be another happy day!». <sup>1</sup> Winnie, the about fifty years old woman in Beckett's piece *Happy Days*, who lives embedded up to above her waist in the centre of a mound of earth, and wakes up every day repeating her echolalia, represents the quintessential reification of everyday humdrum.

«The cyclical nature of everyday life is often expressed as a deadening cycle of redundant repetition: the Parisian's "métro, boulot, dodo" (commute, work, sleep) or the anarchist slogan "eat, sleep, work, consume, die", formulate a list that is ongoing and never changing (apart from the final cessation of death)». <sup>2</sup>

In his master work dedicated to everyday life, Henri Lefebvre confers a crucial role to repetition, but he distinguishes two types of repeating actions:

«Nous savons que la vie quotidienne se constitue, pour une bonne part, d'actes stéréotypés et répétés. Cette praxis répétitive entretient le monde humain et contribue à le re-produire. [...] La répétition stéréotypée et mécanique, celle des gestes et des signaux, diffère du re-commencement rythmé et périodique des activités vitales». <sup>3</sup>

Thus, according to Lefebvre, everyday life cannot be defined only as repetitive «mais comme le lieu de rencontre et d'affrontement de la répétition et de la création». If, on the one hand, the «pratique répétitive» constitutes the unavoidable fundament of everyday life, on the other hand, the «pratique inventive (créatrice)» emerges from the repetitive

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Happy Days. A Play in Two Acts*, New York: Grove Press Inc. 1961: 15 et passim.

<sup>2</sup> Highmore, *Ordinary Lives*: 86.

<sup>3</sup> Lefebvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne II*: 241.

practice and is able to produce modifications.<sup>4</sup> Gilles Deleuze too notices this ambivalence, pointing out how both Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, who made of repetition the fundamental category of their philosophies of the future, considered repetition as the power that ties us down at the same time as it saves us: «si l'on meurt de la répétition, c'est elle aussi qui sauve et qui guérit».<sup>5</sup>

The concept of repetition acquires an ambivalent sense in photography too. Of course, in the photographic process, the matter of “repetition” connected to its «technische Reproduzierbarkeit» is alternately used either to belittle or to praise its value.<sup>6</sup> Olivier Lugon acknowledges that, especially in the 1920s, photography seriality gained appreciation thanks to a wave of enthusiasm towards the economic and aesthetic qualities of machine and technique: the cult of standardisation, the Fordist exaltation of systematisation and serial production, turned the mechanical nature of photography – its inborn fault – into its greatest merit. The *Serienprinzip* of photography was elevated to universal value and displayed as fundamental characteristic of nature (identical trunks in a coniferous forest), craft (stack of barrels), or architecture (colonnade). The value, conferred to the series, overcomes the simple considerations of functionality or economy to achieve artistic-metaphysical acknowledgement. The series elevates the individuality of the single element to a superior artistic reality, that worth more than the addition of its individual parts. In 1936 Moholy-Nagy recognises “seriality” as one of the characteristics of photography specificity and presents it as logical culmination of the medium as well as a way to free it from the canons of painting.<sup>7</sup>

Whereas at the end of the 1920s the myth of standardisation played a fundamental role in arousing the general interest of photography in the series, the photographic form that – according to Lugon – has most substantially assimilated the use of the series is undoubtedly the *documentary style*. While the maximum variety of subjects, points of view and formats exploded in narrative sequences and reportages, the *documentary style* privileged homogenisation and systematic cataloguing. August Sander, for instance, broke with the tradition of *Heimphotographie* – typical of the beginning of the century – and oriented his practice to the model of scientific, anthropologic and police photography, with the purpose to unify the form of his portraits – same frontal point of view, indirect light, uniform white background, same format. In his foreword to *Antlitz der Zeit* – the photo-

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<sup>4</sup> Ivi 244.

<sup>5</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et répétition* (1968), Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 2011: 12-13.

<sup>6</sup> See Walter Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* (1936), in Idem, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit. Drei Studien zur Kunstsoziologie*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 2014, 7-44.

<sup>7</sup> See Lugon, *Le style documentaire*: 241-293. Lugon, however, considers the idea of “medium specificity” as totally arbitrary, pointing out that the principle of “seriality” appears neither in the five points analysed by John Szarkowski in *The Photographer's Eye* in 1966, nor in a tardive essay about photography by Siegfried Kracauer (ivi: 246, note 1).

graphic book published by Sander in 1929 – Alfred Döblin speaks of “comparative photography”.<sup>8</sup> The modular systematisation of photography is not just a prerogative of Sander: on the other side of the Ocean, Walker Evans too appears quite attracted by standardisation. Some of his pictures clearly show the assimilation of this principle: for instance, the way he photographs small wooden chapels in the southern United States seems an attempt of “comparative photography”, where the systematisation of the framing and the type of light aims at revealing the repetition of a unique model at the same time as the richness of the variations it allows.<sup>9</sup>

The photographs of country huts taken by Guidi in the 70s – partially published in the books *Varianti*, *Veramente* and *Tra l'altro* – recall Evans' series of wooden chapels: Guidi like Evans has chosen a frontal view to render the facades as a two-dimensional structure, trying to imitate the flat anonymity and seriality of the products on a real estate catalogue.<sup>10</sup> [Plates iii/1-4] Antonello Frongia underlines how «Guidi's first series on the theme of the façade, which he saw both as a potentially two-dimensional screen and as the ordinary product of “low” vernacular culture», had been surely influenced by Evans. In particular, Guidi's

«dialectic of materiality and conceptualism was definitely a consequence of [his] encounter with the work of Walker Evans, made possible by the catalogue of MoMa's retrospective exhibition curated by John Szarkowski in 1971».<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, Guidi appears less “disciplined” or – I dare say – “wilder” than Evans. For instance, *Forlì, 1971* [Plate iii/1] introduces an evident exception to the “rule of frontality” followed by the other pictures: taken from the side, the little cabin does not conceal its cubical structure and even evokes a hint of drama, compromising – or maybe increasing by contrast – the uniformity of the group, which is already quite difficult to identify in its totality, since it has never been published entirely in a unique book.<sup>12</sup> A further element of discontinuity in seriality is the random alternation of colour and black-and-white photographs – as in the case of *Fosso Ghiaia, 1972* [Plates iii/3-4]. In this way, Guidi states his independency from fixed rules and preconceived schemas, remaining open to *variation in*

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<sup>8</sup> See Alfred Döblin, *Einleitung*, in August Sander, *Antlitz der Zeit. Sechzig Aufnahmen deutscher Menschen der 20. Jahrhunderts* (1929), Munich: Schirmer/Mosel 1983, 7-15: 14.

<sup>9</sup> Lugon, *Le style documentaire*: 267.

<sup>10</sup> As model for these photographs Guidi also recognises Walker Evans, *School with Separate Bell, Alabama* (1936). See Gasparini (ed.), *Walker Evans Italia*: 34.

<sup>11</sup> Frongia, *In Sardegna: 1974*, 2011: 14.

<sup>12</sup> The picture *Forlì, 1971* appears in the book *Varianti*, but another version of the same photograph was published in the catalogue accompanying the group exhibition *Viaggio in Italia* of 1984. There, it is dated one year later: *Mercato Saraceno, Forlì, 1972*. See Guidi, *Varianti*: 26 and Ghirri, Leone and Velati (eds.), *Viaggio in Italia*: 60.

*repetition*: when a blue sky substitutes the pale one, or when his own cast shadow accidentally appears inside the photographic space, the “neutrality”, demanded by straight documentary projects of “comparative photography”, is definitely broken.

But the principle of repetition acquires further connotations too. On the one hand, the automatic function of the camera is accused to compel the photographer to take one picture after the other, as if captured by a «Fotomanie der ewigen Wiederholung des Gleichen (oder sehr Ähnlichen)», that can even lead someone to feel blind without the camera: «Drogengewöhnung setzt ein».<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, in respect to photography *Wiederholungszwang*, Dubois noticed:

«La compulsion à la répétition est quelque chose d’essentiel à l’acte photographique: on ne prend pas une photo, sinon par frustration; on en prend toujours une série [...] répéter non pas tel ou tel sujet, mais répéter la prise de ce sujet, répéter l’acte lui-même, recommencer toujours. [...] Et à chaque coup qu’on fait, toutes les données peuvent être changées, tous les calculs doivent éventuellement être refaits. En photo, tout sera affaire de coup par coup. C’est la logique de l’acte: locale, transitoire, singulière. Toujours refaite, la photo, dans son principe, est de l’ordre du performatif».<sup>14</sup>

As even Guidi states, it is only the act of taking one photograph after the other, that enables you to look with insistence at that, which you would otherwise not be capable of seeing.<sup>15</sup>

If we consider just the negative aspect, as to say the routine downgrading of what is merely the everyday,

«everydayness is more or less exclusively associated with what is boring, habitual, mundane, uneventful, trivial, humdrum, repetitive, inauthentic, and unrewarding. At the everyday level, life is at its least interesting, in opposition to the ideal, the imaginary, the momentous».<sup>16</sup>

Between the repetitiveness of everyday life and the uniqueness of the extraordinary moment, there is the same relationship as between the photography of downtimes – appreciated by Guidi – and Bresson’s “decisive moment” – according to its most popular misunderstood meaning.

Around 1967-1968, Zannier during his lessons at the faculty of Industrial Design in Venice introduced Bresson’s book *Images à la sauvette* (1952) – literally “carefree images” –

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<sup>13</sup> Flusser, *Für eine Philosophie der Fotografie*: 53.

<sup>14</sup> Dubois, *L’acte photographique*: 154.

<sup>15</sup> Guidi and Simi (eds.): *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>16</sup> Sheringham, *Everyday Life*: 23.

that in the American translation was titled *The Decisive Moment*, leading to an astray interpretation and emphasis on Bresson's work.<sup>17</sup> The original French edition bore as exergue a motto by Cardinal de Retz «Il n'y a rien en ce monde qui n'ait un moment décisif», that can explain the choice of the title in the American version.<sup>18</sup> When Guidi was still a student in Venice, among his generation there was a polemic against the notion of “decisive moment” promoted by the amateur photographers who were followers of Cartier-Bresson – even if Cartier-Bresson later rejected the more ordinary interpretation of the concept. Guidi does not believe in the existence of the “decisive moment”, for him «time and transformation exist», thus he has always been interested in photographing

«not the most impressive moment, the climax, but time itself, dead time, obscure moments. Why try to seek only impressive phenomena and not also simple, everyday moments?»<sup>19</sup>

To take three or four photographs of the same subject was his way to benevolently sabotage the decisive moment, through a silent visual polemic: the decisive moment is equal to many moments, the point of view is equal to many points of view.<sup>20</sup> Guidi and Paolo Costantini shared a feeling of uncertainty about what to photograph, their only certainty was to make a lot of photographs, not just one, because one photograph would show off hubris, as if they wanted to demonstrate their own skill and ability to shoot quickly and capture precisely the decisive moment.<sup>21</sup> When Guidi photographs a sequence of images all equally “decisive” (i.e. non-decisive), in which nothing peculiar happens apart from the natural passing of time, he goes against the idea of the unique iconic picture of the spectacular moment. [Plate iii/5] In this sense he remains anchored to the concept of everydayness as repetition of uneventful instants. The repetition of a sequence of images in photography is equal to the repetition of a sequence of action in everyday life: both have the positive aspect of focusing the attention on minute variations.

«Repetition fosters a different sort of attention by numbing customary activities. Its temporality is that of progressive “tuning in” to a particular level of existence, a new mode of attention that is responsive to the uneventful, to what is initially hidden by habit».<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Decisive Moment*, New York: Simon & Schuster 1952.

<sup>18</sup> See Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Images à la Sauvette* (1952), Göttingen: Steidl 2014: n.n.

<sup>19</sup> Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>20</sup> See Zannier, *Dopo Krims*: 38.

<sup>21</sup> Guido Guidi, *Lectio Magistralis*, Biarch Festival, Bari, 15 September 2021: online resource.

<sup>22</sup> Sheringham, *Everyday Life*: 391.

Repetition (a repeated photographs, a repeated action) diverts the attention from the result «to the unresolved matter of what is still in process».<sup>23</sup> If the everydayness in its figurality is expressed by minimal variations of the same,<sup>24</sup> perhaps the everyday does not refer to an objective content, defined by a particular kind of (daily) activity,

«but it is best thought of in terms of such notions as rhythm, repetition, festivity, ordinariness, non-cumulation, seriality, the generic, the obvious, the given».<sup>25</sup>

Likewise, Guidi states that the hidden theme of photography is always echolalia.<sup>26</sup> He acknowledges, that he started to take double pictures in part under the influence of Pop-Art movement, that had reached Venice in 1964, not long before his formative years at the University with Italo Zannier.

«Of course, I really loved Jasper Johns amongst many others, but there was also Andy Warhol and maybe his work influenced me in the sense of its repetitive nature. Repetition is also the basis of minimalist music which I came into contact with not long after».<sup>27</sup>

## Sequences and series

Even if in photography often the terms “series” and “sequence” are used as synonymous, the structures they identify are not exactly the same, as Guidi made me aware of, in the course of a conversation in his studio: it is important to notice, that he preferably works with sequences, not with series.<sup>28</sup> As a matter of fact, in an article appeared in the first number of “European Photography” in 1980, Andreas Müller-Pohle stated about Guidi’s practice:

«Guido Guidi works almost exclusively with sequences and he leaves it to the viewers to combine their own interpretation with the points of culmination of spe-

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ivi: 369.

<sup>25</sup> Ivi: 14.

<sup>26</sup> Guido Guidi, *Una fotografia della “qualsiesità”*, in Valtorta (ed.), *Racconti dal paesaggio 1984-2004*: 180.

<sup>27</sup> Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>28</sup> Conversation with the author, 25 May 2023.

cific events he has captured. He belongs to the few authors who experiment with the perpendicular sequence».<sup>29</sup> [Plate iii/8]

Then, what is the difference between these two types of artistic production? Although the «term series is generally understood to be very broad and is partially used as the general opposite to the single image»,<sup>30</sup> a photographic series consists in a collection of images about a specific thematic and realised respecting given standards during the shooting and the printing to consent a comparative approach.

«The form of the series is therefore predominately suited to demonstrate specific object-ideas, in the most simple case to exemplify the variety of phenomena within a certain category of objects».<sup>31</sup>

To realise a photographic series, the photographer must work respecting a preconceived project to provide with thematic coherence the group of pictures which is going to be taken. A sequence, instead, does not necessarily need a preconceived project, and can be created extempore, as immediate reaction to the context – for instance to record the passage of time, or depict the same subject from various points of view. A sequence does not necessarily require that the pictures composing it respect specific formal standards, but their order of appearance is more important as in the series. While in a series

«the order of succession is more or less undetermined, the sequence may be characterized by the *inflexible and predetermined order* of its single elements. It thereby represents “a linear continuity of images that exemplifies a procedure or a development” (Uwe M. Schneede). The elements of a sequence can be arranged horizontally or vertically; if the narrative aspect is predominant the horizontal order is generally preferred to comply with [western] reading habits».<sup>32</sup>

Thus, in a sequence the relationship among the pictures plays a different role as in a series: while in a series the lack of one element might even remain unnoticed – like in an unfinished or still ongoing project –, in a sequence the lack of one element might compromise the reading of the entire row. Usually, a sequence is displayed according to a linear development – that allows to follow the passage from one image to the other –, whereas a series might contemplate other solutions, like the grid arrangement for instance. In short, I

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<sup>29</sup> Müller-Pohle, *Series-Cycle-Sequence-Tableau*: 7. Müller-Pohle uses the adjective “perpendicular” to say that the sequence follows a vertical development, instead of horizontal.

<sup>30</sup> *Ivi*: 6.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*.

would dare say, that a series is like a *collection*, whereas a sequence resembles a *concatenation*.

After those preliminary specifications, let's see in which sense Guidi's practice seems to favour sequences over series. As just mentioned, a series implies a precise choice of what to photograph a priori, an attitude alien to his method, based on loose projects, open to variations. To have a photographic project is important, he admits: the most essential project could be, for instance, to photograph all the type of breads baked in London, as someone did in the nineteenth century, or to catalogue German people according to social types – the intellectuals, the workers, the vagabonds and so on – like August Sander did during the *Weimarer Republik*. Although Guidi does not disdain similar operations, they do not conform to his approach, because he is too impatient. Perhaps he could even imagine a catalogue of all the things he has seen, however, he has not seen *all* the bollards, *all* the men, *all* the children, but just *a* bollard, *a* man, *a* child, from time to time. He recognises, that his catalogue of fragments might not be easy to follow – a viewer might lose orientation in such a rootless chaos –, nevertheless for him the problem is not to communicate an idea (the bread or the intellectuals), or to simplify the communication of an idea, but to increase our perceptive ability, to increase the perception of small details, of the signs that may reveal something.<sup>33</sup>

As Antonello Frongia points out, with respect to Guidi's practice, the medium of the photographic series must be understood «as a retrospective map of unplanned wanderings».<sup>34</sup> The presentation of the materials in his archive can take the form of the series only *a posteriori*, to develop visual themes through the association and juxtaposition of individual images, belonging to different localities, and periods of time. Guidi himself has applied this procedure to organise the pictures in his books to render manifest the repetition of signs, the hidden structures of reality, or the micro-historical changes of an apparently static landscape. To “construct” a series, the photographer's eye must start a silent reckoning: he multiplies his observations, mentally returns on his own steps, recollects images of the past and put side to side analogous evidence gathered in distant places. Especially *Varianti* [Variants] – his anthological book published in 1995 – shows «the evolution of a limited number of visual themes in a variety of places and situations».<sup>35</sup>

In general, neither series nor sequences should be too long for Guidi. When he gathers images together in groups, he creates short stories, like those written by Anton Chekhov – whose tales were fundamental for his formation. He cannot think about long concatenations or collections developing like novels or long stories. Two photographs

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<sup>33</sup> See Frongia, *Quello che resta*: 163.

<sup>34</sup> Antonello Frongia, *Note sul fotografo come cittadino e saggista/Notes on the Photographer as a Citizen and Essayist*, in Frongia and Venturi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. In Between Cities*, 162-164/175-177: 176.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*



next to each other are already a tale: thesis and antithesis. [Plates iii/3-4, 6-7] One photograph, following another, can debunk and negate it, or on the opposite can reaffirm it and support it in a reciprocal relationship. An individual frame, instead, looks codified and petrified in an unambiguous way: Guidi prefers *sequences* showing the passage of time through the movements of the light. [Plates iii/5, 9] He has always made horizontal sequences as homage to the painting of early Renaissance – the small panels by Beato Angelico, or Paolo Uccello, or Piero della Francesca – or to the medieval polyptychs with the stories developing horizontally beneath the main painting above. Polyptychs were a fundamental source of inspiration for him, less so the huge altarpieces of the fifteenth century or of the Baroque. The enormous altarpieces by Veronese or Titian remind him about the giant photographs of the Düsseldorf Schule. The gigantic single photograph bothers him, because it is alien to his cultural heritage.<sup>36</sup> Olivier Lugon underlines, that seen in a socio-political perspective, the passage to the methods of series and sequences, by dissolving the importance of the individual in favour of a valorisation of the collective, puts into question the bourgeois idea of tableau: the single artwork can thus be considered a symbol of egocentrism and of a capitalistic logic.<sup>37</sup> Not by chance Guidi compares huge altarpieces to a first form of advertising.<sup>38</sup>

### *The sequence Giorgio Villa walking up the stairs of his apartment, Cesena, 1969*

During Guidi's formative years at the University in Venice, a discussion about "montage" was going on. After having read Eisenstein he concluded, he did not want to edit isolated photographs. He still remembers what Antonioni did in *The Passenger* (1975), where in the final scene the editing is reduced to a minimum by means of the *plan-séquence*: the movie camera is in a room, it turns around, then, thanks to a mechanical ruse, it goes out the window, it enters the yard and films the yard. It is a sequence shot where the editor makes almost nothing, since, says Guidi, the sequence, like the photograph, makes itself. If – as already mentioned – «the very idea of stop-motion is intrinsically photographic»,<sup>39</sup> the use of photographic sequences, allowing to confront previous and subsequent moments, re-establishes the space and time continuity. In a sequence each image can be understood only in relation to both the preceding and the following one, and each image is equally im-

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<sup>36</sup> Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, however, the dissolution of the individual produced by seriality generates alienation. See Lugon, *Le style documentaire*: 245, 271.

<sup>38</sup> Conversation with the author, 14 April 2022.

<sup>39</sup> Krauss, *The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism*: 112.

portant to the comprehension of the whole sequence. Since none of them prevails upon the others, the images of a sequence respect a horizontal not hierarchical order.

«Leonardo da Vinci stated that in drawing the “edge” of a figure, you must ensure that the outline allows you to see beyond and behind it in some way – it must not be a closed outline. My photographs have a physical border, but it might be an edge which allows you to go beyond to another photograph, just as in a field, a ditch does not stop the hare from jumping across to another field. The slide from one photograph to another is just like in life where one look is followed by another».<sup>40</sup>

As example of sequence, I would briefly present a quite known early work by Guidi: *Giorgio Villa walking up the stairs of his apartment, Cesena, 1969*. [Plate iii/10] The four photographs are mounted next to each other on a cardboard, following a horizontal development from left to right in order to read them according to their correct chronology. At the bottom of each picture a little hand-written progressive numbering avoids any doubt about its position. The cardboard has been trimmed, so that it has acquired the form of a strip. Due to wear, the vertical divisions between each picture are now marked by real cracks. Visually, these vertical division are moreover underlined by the right wall of the stairwell, while the left wall remains outside the photographic space. The right and the back walls, together with the ceiling, construct a clean parallelepiped room, strongly characterised by the different gradations of light and shadow on each of the three surfaces. The emptiness of the room and the correspondence between its dimensions and those of each photographs make it appears as an abstract space, a pure geometric solid. Therefore, the man inhabiting it seems a bit like a doll inside a box or a statue in a niche. Guidi's short caption – written both on the top corner of the first image and on the backside of the cardboard – informs us that the man in the picture is Giorgio Villa, walking up the stairs of his apartment in Cesena. Nevertheless, neither the staircase nor Giorgio's legs are included in the representation – while the figure of the man is coming up from the bottom of the picture, his body maintains an almost static stance. Thus the “idea” of ascending movement is created only by the sequential vision of the same subject getting bigger inside the room, as the space between his head and the ceiling decreases, while he comes closer to the foreground. If the model of the sequence of rooms – through which the viewer can follow the development of a short story – has been inspired to Guidi by medieval polyptychs, the idea of capturing the body movements through a photographic sequence cannot but recall the pioneering experiences of chronophotography conducted between the 1870s and 1890s by Eadweard Muybridge or Étienne-Jules Marey. In the field of con-

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<sup>40</sup> Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

temporary art, instead the works *Nu descendant un escalier no 2* (1912) by Marcel Duchamp and *Ena (Akt auf einer Treppe)* of 1966 by Gerhard Richter come into mind as possible sources of inspiration of the theme – although probably as a parody.<sup>41</sup>

### *Fake stereographs*

Guidi's use of diptychs, temporal sequences and thematic series derives from his attempt to be more analytic, and explore the possibilities of representing the temporal dimension, in addition to the spatial one, recording his own perceptive movement in the world. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, he realises photographic sequences of two, four, or eight pictures of the same subject – in part solicited as assignment for the course held by Italo Zanier at the Faculty of Industrial Design. They mostly depicted domestic interiors, populated by ordinary objects of daily use, seen from non-orthogonal points of view: chairs, armchairs, television sets, refrigerators, dishes and various kitchen tools and furniture. Sporadic fragments of the human body (arms or legs) appear here and there occasionally. Some pictures were taken outdoor to include small portion of the landscape, paying attention to marginal phenomena and minimal unimportant details.<sup>42</sup>

From such experiments, Guidi developed a linear method of montage based on the inclusion of two images in the same photographic object – sometimes realised by pasting two photographs next to each other between two cardboards (as in a sandwich), where the upper layer, provided with two apertures, functioned as passepartout. Often he toned the pictures to imitate early photographs, and wrote on them short captions, or superposed stamps of the date, but then rendered them unreadable by rubbing them away with his finger, to suggest a contradictory and problematic reflection about the actuality of photography and its alleged documentary value.<sup>43</sup> Guidi explains that those fake nineteenth-century stereographs of the 1970s were also a homage to Jean-Luc Godard's movie *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (1967). He recalls, to have been particularly fascinated by a scene, where a guy takes pictures of a room using a Widelux panoramic camera, which enables to photograph at 180°. Since he could not afford such a dispositive, he simulated it using his Pentax SW: he took two pictures of each side of the room and then mounted them side by side, as if they were stereoscopic images.<sup>44</sup>

As example of "fake stereograph" I have chosen the funny *Portrait of Zoffoli Claudio with the cat, Cesena, 1970*. [Plate iii/11] This time the legs and the body of the subject are

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<sup>41</sup> Gerhard Richter painted *Ena (Akt auf einer Treppe)* as a reaction "against" Duchamp to demonstrate that the figurative tradition had not ended. See Dietmar Elger, *Gerhard Richter, Maler*, Cologne: DuMont 2002: 147.

<sup>42</sup> Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*: 89.

<sup>43</sup> Frongia, *Il luogo e la scena: la città come testo fotografico*: 161.

<sup>44</sup> Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*: 89.

included in the photographic space, not so his head, since Guidi cut the frame just above Claudio's shoulders. The stark view from above, that causes a deformed perspective, provokes a sense of vertigo despite the limited height from the floor. The latter acquires a strong visual relevance and its regular pattern of typical grit tiles contrast with the unquiet figure of Claudio, who seems to pantomime a dance step, carrying the cat underarm as a package. As in "real" stereo pictures, the same view has been photographed twice, moving the camera few centimetres between the first and the second exposure. Yet, Guidi has not truly achieved a stereograph – neither was his aim – because he has not recorded the same scene as it would appear if seen respectively only by the left and the right eye. Thus, instead of the promised tridimensionality, the two "fake stereo pictures" create a short sequence, showing that Claudio has moved – as proved by the blurred features of the cat, as well as by the changed position of Claudio's feet with respect to the grid of lines designed by the floor tiles. Remembering the above-mentioned reference to Muybridge's sequences about the movement of men and animals, with a little imaginative leap we can compare the tiled floor to the squared background of those early experiments.

## The assessment of Time

Guido Guidi's first monographic book, *Guido Guidi* (1983) contains only eight photographs – each presented full-page in square format plates respecting circa the original dimensions (18,3 × 18,5 cm) – all depicting an empty room. The photographs, dated between 1982 and 1983, were taken in three Italian locations: Pomposa, Cervia and Preganziol. Guidi – already applying a criterion, that would become his custom – presents the pictures without captions, thus creating a sort of visual continuum in which it is difficult at first sight to notice the change of place. Only the book layout, that displays the four photographs of the room located in Preganziol on a double gate fold, helps to recognise them as a unity, isolating them from the remaining four [Plate iii/12].<sup>45</sup> Guidi makes our eyes more sensitive to small things and minor details

«offering us a sequence of images capable of recording, in an instant, a blade of light that at a certain time, on a given day, in a precise place designed and lit up a space like any other».<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Guido Guido, *Guido Guidi*, Rimini: Comune di Rimini 1983. A longer version of the sequence *Preganziol*, 1983 is published in Roberta Valtorta (ed.), *Guido Guidi Preganziol 1983*, London: Mack books 2013.

<sup>46</sup> Beppe Finssi, *Apparent trifle*, in: "Inventario 06. Everything is a project", no. 6, 2013, n.n.

In *Preganziol* sequence, the same room was photographed repeatedly, without moving the camera from the chosen point of view: frontal and centred. The perfectly balanced composition and the tenuous shades of the surfaces, conveys a metaphysical atmosphere to the enclosed space of the room, protected and suspended in silent wait. The blade of light coming from the window and the pale blue of the walls evoke the quite devotion of a fifteenth-century *Annunciation*.

«I photographed the light entering in a room at different daytimes. The changing lights in a space deprived of its traditional holiness quotes Renaissance paintings in which an angel, not simple light, enters from the window. Nowadays we don't believe any longer in angels and what's left is light».<sup>47</sup>

Nothing changes in this still space of thoughtfulness, apart from the geometric forms designed by the light on the wall, the only clue of the passage of time. A dead leaf on the floor is the solely witness of these minimal visual mutations.

«Et ici, un chambre est vide, en effet, comme nue dans la lumière qui pénètre de biais par la fenêtre. Elle n'est pas seulement vide, elle est désertée. Ceux qui vivaient dans la maison, hier encore, sont partis, ailleurs ou nulle part, et de leur passage ne demeure que ce espace où le soleil réchauffe un peu le murs, s'accroche aux angles des cloisons, dessine sur le sol ses figures de géométrie plane».<sup>48</sup>

These beautiful words dedicated by the French poet Claude Esteban to Edward Hopper's painting *Sun in an Empty Room*, 1963 [Plate iii/13] seem written to describe this photographic sequence that, maybe not by chance, shows an incredible resemblance to the work by the American artist. Indeed, Guidi confirms to have always appreciated Hopper's painting, even when in Italy it was considered kitsch. In particular, he acknowledges, that this work – about the movement of light inside a room – was a homage to Italian painting tradition of the fifteenth century, but also to Hopper, whose work is near to photography because does not deny perspective. He reminds a group exhibition, he once saw at Museum Folkwang in Essen (Germany), dedicated to the relationship among Hopper's work and those by photographers such as Walker Evans, Stephen Shore, and William Eggleston.<sup>49</sup> Both Guidi and Hopper pay attention to a banal daily phenomenon: the diagonal drawn by the sunlight on the walls and the floor of an empty room. Guidi recalls that

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<sup>47</sup> Guidi quoted in Cestelli Guidi, *Guido Guidi, photographer*: online resource.

<sup>48</sup> Claude Esteban, *Soleil dans une pièce vide*, Paris: Flammarion 1991: 195.

<sup>49</sup> Conversation with the author, 9 June 2020. See Georg-W. Költzsch and Heinz Liesbrock (eds.), *Edward Hopper und die Fotografie: die Wahrheit des Sichtbaren*, ex. cat. Museum Folkwang Essen, Cologne: DuMont 1992.

Carlo Scarpa often used the diagonal, which is the symbol of time, of transition, or perhaps of prohibition and cancellation.<sup>50</sup>

Photographs like *Preganziol, 1983* were also taken by Guidi as a kind of homage to his mentor and teacher Italo Zannier, who photographed the interior of the houses of unknown common people in the Valcellina or in Friuli, using a camera Hasselbald Superwide. As soon as Guidi bought the same tool, he started to take photographs of cubical rooms, that were a sort of counterpart of the cubical camera itself. «I liked to play such an allusive game», he recalls.<sup>51</sup> Of course the rooms he photographed were not the same of Zannier, besides they were decrepit and abandoned. «I remember that I vaguely thought about Paolo Uccello too, or even better about Beato Angelico», specifies Guidi.

«On the one hand, in the photographed room there was no furniture, no bed anymore, and above all there was no Madonna anymore. Everything had vanished. But there was the light getting in through the window, and so, somehow, I imagined the event of the Annunciation transformed into pure light coming into the room. Over time, I reflected on this subject and reading the texts by Daniel Arasse, I thought about the rooms of Beato Angelico and of some other early Renaissance painters. The time when those paintings flourished was the time when the perspective was being born. Some argue that photography is a caricature of perspective, but in any case, the drawn perspective passed on the torch to photography, even because painters left it behind».<sup>52</sup>

Roberta Valtorta interprets *Preganziol* also as «an operation of measuring space-time through the factor that represents the very matrix of photography: light». The enclosed space of the room is intended as a container of light,

«a true place that exists and speaks of itself thanks to light. The outside world, glimpsed via the trees outside the window [...] alludes to the fact that the photographic frame is a fragment, beyond which [...] reality extends».

Valtorta compares the room to a “camera obscura”, suggesting a reference to the act of observation and to the birth of photography.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> In Guidi, *Verum Ipsum Factum*: n.n.

<sup>51</sup> See Mariano Andreani and Roberto Maggiori (eds.), *Guido Guidi, Italo Zannier. Un itinerario*, San Severino Marche, Italy: Editrice Quinlan 2021: 29-30.

<sup>52</sup> Guidi quoted in *ivi*: 30 (translation mine).

<sup>53</sup> Roberta Valtorta, *Spazio, Tempo, Vuoto/Space, Time, Void*, in Eadem (ed.), *Guido Guidi Preganziol 1983*: n.n.

Repetition constitutes a key concept in Guidi's production, that is often based on sequences including multiple photographs of the same subject, registering minimal, sometimes almost imperceptible, variations of light conditions, in order to document the flow of time. The only survived fragment from the writings by Anaximander, the Greek philosopher lived in the sixth century BCE, declares:

«the source of coming-to-be for existing things is that into which destruction, too, happens "according to necessity"; for they pay penalty and retribution to each other for their injustice according to the assessment of Time». <sup>54</sup>

Astronomy and physics developed following Anaximander's maxim: understanding how phenomena happen *according to the assessment of Time*. The word "time" derives from the Indo-European matrix *di* or *dai* that means dividing.<sup>55</sup> According to this principle, Guidi divides the unique image in multiple "copies" without an original.<sup>56</sup> Describing his approach, he says:

«First and foremost, [...] I started from the play of light on volumes, on rooms, on the matter. The point of view was the second element of consideration. I had made some sequences, sometimes shorter, other times longer, sometimes moving just a few inches. This is what I have always done, almost overthrowing the idea of decisive moment and of decisive point of view. It is a major concept that I adopted back in the sixties when we studied at "Corso superiore di disegno industriale" (Advanced course of Industrial Design), and Italo Zannier invited us to reflect on the method, to develop our analytical scientific mindset (as we called it back then), rather than searching for the exceptionality of a decisive moment. [...] Surely a photographic series cannot have the fluency of film, but it is the actual fragmentation of photography that allows to linger on single frames and to make comparisons by evoking a feeling of displacement. Cultivating repetition and dislocation is another way to further oneself from an ideal and timeless vision of the main focal point. [...] The light moves through time, and its movement is so fast that we normally cannot detect the difference between one light and another. We sense light in general, but not that light. For example, we do not perceive the astronomical movements. We

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<sup>54</sup> See G.S. Kirk and J.E. Raven (eds.), *The Presocratic Philosophers. A Critical History with a Selection of Texts*, London and New York: Cambridge University Press 1957: B 107.

<sup>55</sup> Carlo Rovelli, *L'ordine del tempo*, Milan: Adelphi 2017: 23.

<sup>56</sup> As Walter Benjamin demonstrated, in the process of mechanical reproduction the claim to the first-original loses any sense: «Von der photographischen Platte z. B. ist eine Vielheit von Abzügen möglich; die Frage nach dem echten Abzug hat keinen Sinn» (Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*: 17-18).

photograph a room, but in that room there is sun coming in, and the movement of the light brings you back to the cosmos, to time».<sup>57</sup>

## Guido... Guidi

Reflecting about the role of repetition in Guido Guidi's work, it is impossible not to notice, that his own name is already a repetition. This simple fact made me think about a funny parallelism with the name "Constantine Constantius", Kierkegaard's narrating persona, who in his bizarre, pseudonymous work, *Repetition. An Essay in Experimental Psychology* (1843), speculates about the meaning, the practical and the philosophical implications of repetition.<sup>58</sup> Guidi's and Constantius' duplicated name à la Renaissance produce and symbolise, already at lexical level, the movement of the difference inherent in the same not identical self: «Le même comme rapport à soi dans la différence d'avec soi, le même comme le non-identique».<sup>59</sup> In the name "Guido Guidi" the variation of the "i" – the smallest alphabet letter, just like the Greek *iōta* in the famous symbolical logion by Jesus preserved in the Gospel of Matthew 5,18 – is enough to prevent the perfectly identical duplication.

Leafing through Guidi's photographic books, his insistence on the repetition of apparently identical images stands out. Guidi conceives his books as autonomous works, rather than as a means of divulgation. Fascinated by the book's structure and the way it functions, he builds visual paths, based on the dialogue between photographs displayed on a double-page, or taking advantage of the connections among images published on not subsequent pages, which require the viewer either to activate mnemonic strategies or to leaf back and forth through the pages in order to recollect the sequence. Sometimes he elaborates minimal variants of the same scene, «or displays side by side photographs at first sight identical, which upon further scrutiny appear to portray different subjects».<sup>60</sup> In his books, Guidi tries to reconstruct the sequences – he sometimes could not number systematically during the fieldwork – by remembering the mental process through which he made them. He wishes, the photo-book could become almost a didactical operation, to

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<sup>57</sup> Guidi and Frongia, *Architecture that does not wish to self-destroy*: 110-111.

<sup>58</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Repetition and Philosophical Crumbs*, Eng. tr. M.G. Piety, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. In the preface to the English translation of 1946, the editor Walter Lowrie points out that *Repetition* was published the same date as Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*: «for these two works, dissimilar as they are, are in reality twins, conceived in Berlin sometime during the month of May 1843 and born (i.e. published) on October 16 of the same year in Copenhagen» (Kierkegaard Søren, *Repetition. An Essay in Experimental Psychology* (1843), English translation by Walter Lowrie, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1946: v).

<sup>59</sup> Derrida, *De la grammatologie*: 91.

<sup>60</sup> Frongia, *In Sardegna*: 1974, 2011: 16.



help both him and the viewer to reconstruct the automatism of the sequence, to trace back the time of the making, rather than simply showing the “marvellous sublime” shot.<sup>61</sup> In this way the photo-book consents to concretely visualise the analogy between repetition and recollection, predicated by Constantine Constantius:

«Repetition and recollection are the same movement, just in opposite directions, because what is recollected has already been and is thus repeated backwards, whereas genuine repetition is recollected forwards».<sup>62</sup>

As a matter of fact photographic sequencing can proceed in both directions at the same time, demonstrating that «if the labour of recollection consists in tracing the new back to the old (the oldness of the new), the task of repetition is that the old becomes new (the newness of the old)».<sup>63</sup>

### *Homo repetitivus?*

A strategy based on attention arouses the eye of the observer-photographer: «His operation, eternally renewed in the continuous series of images, thus in itself unlimited, is to *fix* in order to approach comprehension».<sup>64</sup> The verb to *fix*, in this declaration by Paolo Costantini, has to be intended in the double sense of staring at things attentively and securing their image, by means of the photographic procedure. The observer-photographer performs a methodical attention in order to perceive the differences in the uninterrupted flux of images. Costantini reminds how this behaviour connects the act of photographing to that of collecting, a practice fundamentally based on a *fixation*. The observer-photographer can be compared to the collector of sand described by Italo Calvino in his short story of 1974. The collector of sand

«travels the world, and as soon as he arrives to a marine beach, the banks of a river or a lake, in a desert, or a wasteland, he picks up a handful of sand and carries it with him».<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>62</sup> Kierkegaard, *Repetition and Philosophical Crumbs*: 3.

<sup>63</sup> Niels Nymann Eriksen, *Kierkegaard's Category of Repetition. A Reconstruction*, Berlin/New York: de Gruyter 2000: 13.

<sup>64</sup> Costantini, *Percepire le differenze*: 80.

<sup>65</sup> Italo Calvino, *Collezione di sabbia* (1974), in *Idem, Collezione di sabbia*, Milan: Garzanti 1984, 9-13: 9 (translation mine).

The collected sands, aligned on the shelves in hundreds of little identical bottles, side by side, display their chromatic and granular peculiarities. At first sight the eye catches only the most evident differences, but after a while the minimal differences between sand and sand obliges a more engaged observation, that absorbs the viewer into

«another dimension, in a world that has no further horizons outside these miniaturised dunes, where a beach of pink grains is never identical to another beach of pink grains».<sup>66</sup>

Like the collection of sands, the collection of images, in which Guidi registers the passage of lights and shadows on a wall, develops through both repetition and difference, and requests the viewer to exercise a careful observation in order to perceive the changes between an image and the following one. The fascination of a collection, says Calvino, stays in the little bit that it reveals as well as in the little bit that it conceals.<sup>67</sup> In a coarse-grained model, based on a simplified representation of a complex system, all things seem identical, all differences remain hidden because we moved our vision out of focus, renouncing to perceive each and every detail in order to foster a synthetical description. To perceive the differences we have to come back to an atomistic model of vision, maybe less efficient in term of ability to draw together, but able to catch the unique characteristics of every single element in the system.<sup>68</sup> Guidi's work seems imbued by an atomistic conception of photography, one that takes into account the unicity even of the most apparently insignificant detail like the passage of light and shadow on a tuft of grass. [Plate iii/9]

Calvino compares a collection to a diary about the obscure impulse that urges us to gather the collection or write the diary itself: as to say, the need to transform the flow of time in a series of objects by saving them from dispersion or, in the case of the photographer, a series of images crystallised outside the continuous flux of visions. Collecting implies not only the constancy of finding and selecting similar objects, but also of repeating the same gesture, time and again, like in a ritual: the compulsive gesture of bending over, picking up some sand, and filling a receptacle, finally turning around, and going away.<sup>69</sup>

The rituality of the collector finds a practical counterpart in Guidi's daily practice. Ritualised actions, unlike mere habits, provide meaning to everyday occupations.<sup>70</sup> If repeating an action configures a ritual, Guidi considers the act of photographing with a field

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<sup>66</sup> Ivi: 10.

<sup>67</sup> Ivi: 13.

<sup>68</sup> See Rovelli, *L'ordine del tempo*: 35, 184.

<sup>69</sup> See Calvino, *Collezione di sabbia*: 10.

<sup>70</sup> Sheringham, *Everyday Life*: 301.

camera in the first place as a fundamental ritual in itself, to the limit that he might even do not care about the results, because what matters is the sequence of actions to perform.

«At the base lies this gesture, that I repeat every time I am taking a photograph, focusing a large format camera. I repeat to myself a sort of performance. At the beginning I started photographing with the compact camera, small, but the ritual becomes neurotic, [...] it does not allow me to be as slow as with this big camera to carry around like a burden [...]. For me is important to have such slow times, for each photograph you have to go inside the sack, you have to raise your hands, that requires a long time, inevitably each photograph must be mediated, and that helps me to establish a contact with the world, with the space».<sup>71</sup>

This kind of thought echoes the teaching of Oriental philosophies, that Guidi assimilated through various readings, such as the cult-book *Zen in der Kunst des Bogenschießens* by Eugen Herrigel:

«Unter Bogenschießen im hergebrachten Sinn, das er als Kunst achtet und als Vermächtnis ehrt, versteht der Japaner nicht einen Sport, sondern, so sonderbar dies zunächst auch klingen mag, ein kultisches Geschehen. [...] Das Bogenschießen ist damit zu einer Zeremonie geworden».<sup>72</sup>

The Japanese lesson, valid for every art bound to tradition, recommends «Einüben, Wiederholen und Wiederholung des Wiederholten». In this kind of ceremonies the learner adheres precisely to the ritual, knowing that the preparatory phase has the same relevance as the work itself, because it accustoms him to the gesture.

«Er verdankt der besinnlichen Ruhe, in der er sie ausführt, jene entscheidende Lockerung und Ausgewogenheit aller seiner Kräfte, jene Sammlung und Geistesgegenwart, ohne welche kein rechtes Werk gelingt».<sup>73</sup>

Nicoletta Leonardi points out how Guidi's whole work is characterised by strong ritualistic and performative elements. Not only the "slow" photographs realized with the large format camera, but even the "fast" ones, realized with the hand-held camera, revolve

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<sup>71</sup> Guidi in Quintavalle, *Muri di Carta*: 309.

<sup>72</sup> Eugen Herrigel, *Zen in der Kunst des Bogenschießens* (1948), Munich: Barth Verlag 1987: 6. Of course, Guidi read the book in the Italian translation, It. tr. Gabriella Bemporad, *Lo Zen e il tiro con l'arco*, Milan: Adelphi 1975.

<sup>73</sup> Herrigel, *Zen in der Kunst des Bogenschießens*: 37, 38, 40.

around the situation of encounter between photographer, apparatus, and space.<sup>74</sup> The repetition of the photographic method as a ritual does not however turns Guidi into a *homo repetitivus* in the sense defined by Peter Sloterdijk of the «Menschen im Training». Guidi in fact does not repeat the photographic «Übung» in order to acquire perfection in performing this operation.<sup>75</sup> I dare suggest, that his behaviour, in compliance with the photographic ceremony, produces another effect: it brings back the «Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit» into the sphere of rituality, restoring so to say the origin of the artwork inside the ritual, from which the mechanical reproduction had cut loose it: «Der einzigartige Wert des "echten" Kunstwerks hat seine Fundierung im Ritual».<sup>76</sup> During the ritual of the photographic act, Guidi performs always the same gestures, but the outcome is slightly different every time: «If you take one road going up a mountain», he states, «the second time you take it, even though you know it, you take detours».<sup>77</sup> He explains, that he works with sequences, «not to provide a guise of conceptualism», but because he looks and photographs and he is not satisfied. So he tells himself «it could be done differently again».<sup>78</sup> Through this procedure he never reaches a final result, but just «some resemblance of a result».<sup>79</sup> Through repetition, he pursues not the aim of making identical, but rather of making *different*. In this sense, his photographic ritual is characterised by the virtuous relation between repetition and novelty typical of child games – the reiteration of the “same” led by the «Genie der Variante».<sup>80</sup> Every child performance aims indeed «nicht auf die “Ewigkeit” der Produkte, sondern auf den “Augenblick der Geste”»<sup>81</sup> – just like in the game Guidi used to play with his friend Giuliano Cosolo: walking down the street, they made bets such as, «I pretend to see something then, all of a sudden, I turn my head and I try to understand how I truly see it».<sup>82</sup> It is revelatory, that according to Walter Benjamin, «das Gesetz der Wiederholung» is the main law, which rules above the entire world of child games,<sup>83</sup> because nothing make children happier than the «noch einmal».<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*: 104-105.

<sup>75</sup> Peter Sloterdijk, *Du mußt dein Leben ändern*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 2009: 14, 24.

<sup>76</sup> Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*: 16.

<sup>77</sup> Frongia and Moro, *Cinque paesaggi*: 104.

<sup>78</sup> Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Benjamin Walter, *Programm eines proletarischen Kindertheaters* (1929), in Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (eds.), *Walter Benjamin Gesammelte Schriften, II/2*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 1991, 763-769: 767.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Guidi in Frongia, *Quello che resta*: 162.

<sup>83</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Spielzeug und Spielen* (1928), in Hella Tiedemann-Bartels (ed.), *Walter Benjamin Gesammelte Schriften III*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 1991, 127-132: 131.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. Here Benjamin recalls explicitly Sigmund Freud's famous essay *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (1920) and the formulation of the concept of “Wiederholungszwang”, first introduced by Freud in *Erinnern, Wiederholen und Durcharbeiten* (1914).

## *Almost twins*

Looking at the four photographs included in the sequence *Via Roggia, Treviso*, 1981, published in the book *Tra l'altro*, the presence of Diane Arbus's iconic photograph *Identical Twins, Roselle, NJ*, 1966 stands out, if nothing because the cigarette, held by the woman points at it – as discussed in the previous chapter (*Indexicality*). [Plates iii/14-17] Guidi's inclusion of this work by Arbus deserves some consideration for at least three reasons. First, even though Arbus is surely a photographer appreciated by him, she is not one he usually recalls among the most influential on his photographic approach, such as Walker Evans or Lee Friedlander for instance. Nevertheless, he still reminds the first time he has seen her work at the Venice Biennale of 1972 (a year after her death).<sup>85</sup> Second, this particular picture by Arbus has become, thanks to «its evocation in Stanley Kubrick's film *The Shining* and countless other reproductions, an image almost as iconic as Edvard Munch's *The Scream*»,<sup>86</sup> whereas Guidi tends to avoid any reference to this kind of over popularized iconography in his work. Finally, the subject of the twins conjures the theme of the copy, double and repetition – evoked also by the two Polaroids held by the man in the first picture of the sequence – that, as we have just seen, constitutes a fundamental matter with regard to both Guidi's practice and the reflection on the everyday. The two almost identical girls can be seen as a metaphor of photography's power to duplicate the world, acknowledges Guidi indeed.<sup>87</sup>

Of course, Guidi has not photographed the original print by Arbus, but just a common reproduction of the work: thus, he has made a copy of something which is already a copy. As Benjamin taught us, as soon as authenticity fails, even the authority of the thing vacillates, because the procedure of mechanical reproduction suppresses the whole matter of authenticity, whereas, on the other hand, it allows the reproduction of the original in contexts otherwise precluded to the original work of art.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Conversation with the author, 12 August 2021. The works by Arbus were featured in the American pavilion, curated by Walter Hopps, at the 36<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale (see Henry Martin, *Venice 1972: The Show of the Shows*, in: "Art International", no. 16, October 1972, 91-95: 94). In his review of Venice Biennale for New York Times, Hilton Kramer wrote: «By far the most audacious thing about Mr. Hopps's selection is the inclusion of Diane Arbus, who, as far as anyone can remember, is the first photographer to be exhibited at the biennale. Her 10 photographs, which concentrate on extreme oddities of personality and physique, have a power that nothing else in the American show – and very little else in the biennale as a whole – can match» (Hilton Kramer, *Venice Biennale Is Optimistic in Spirit*, in: "The New York Times", 12 June 1972, 45).

<sup>86</sup> Arthur Lobow, *Diane Arbus. Portrait of a Photographer*, New York: HarperCollins 2016, e-book version.

<sup>87</sup> Conversation with the author, 12 August 2021.

<sup>88</sup> Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*: 12-13.

«Im Endeffekt sind die mechanischen Reproduktionsmethoden eine Verkleinerungstechnik und verhelfen dem Menschen zu jenem Grad von Herrschaft über die Werke, ohne welchen sie gar nicht mehr zur Verwendung kommen».<sup>89</sup>

Arbus's work, hung on the wall with drawing pins, has become an ordinary object among other ordinary objects and, as such, part of the everyday experience. The dozens of images you surround yourself with – such as your own or your friends' photographs, postcards, torn pages from books, magazines and newspapers, child drawings, posters reproducing artworks, etc. – form a background visual noise, that you end up not noticing anymore, while it increments your unconscious iconographic collection.

In Arbus's photograph, originally titled *Identical Twins, Cathleen and Colleen, Members of a Twins Club in New Jersey*, 1966,<sup>90</sup> the repetition of the word twins in the caption underlines their duplicity. Arbus photographed the twins frontally against a blank wall. They are standing shoulder to shoulder, so close to each other that their bodies almost melt in indistinction; and they are wearing the same clothes, a fact that «makes them more publicly recognizable as twins».<sup>91</sup> Georg Simmel in his famous essay *Philosophie der Mode* (1905) describes how much the way we dress oscillates between our need of assimilation into a group and that of affirmation of our own individuality. In general, people wearing the same clothes tend to behave homogeneously, and recognise themselves as belonging together. Thanks to imitation the individual seeks the assurance of not being alone. Like the frame around a picture lets perceive the images inside of it as a unity, distinguished from all left outside, so the mode unites all the followers of a precise fashion style.<sup>92</sup>

How much being dressed the same makes perceive two people as twins or double, despite they are not, can be tested in a picture taken by Guidi in Sardegna in 1974, which seems a more ordinary and less arranged version of Arbus's twins. As a matter of fact, Guidi's like Friedlander's photography «is less obviously composed» than Arbus's, «and more engaged in the formal possibility of chance».<sup>93</sup> [Plate iii/18] Even if the girls in Guidi picture are not twins, they are wearing similar clothes (but not identical, since they are made from two different part of the same fabric), they are keeping the same pose and

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<sup>89</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Kleine Geschichte der Photographie* (1931), in Idem, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit. Drei Studien zur Kunstsoziologie*, 45-64: 61.

<sup>90</sup> Diane Arbus, *Five Photographs by Diane Arbus*, in: "Artforum", no. 9, 1971, 64-69: 69.

<sup>91</sup> Ivi: 80.

<sup>92</sup> «Die Mode bietet [...] gerade diese Kombination aufs glücklichste: einerseits ein Gebiet allgemeiner Nachahmung, ein Schwimmen im breitesten sozialen Fahrwasser, eine Entlastung des Individuums von der Verantwortlichkeit für seinen Geschmack und sein Tun – andererseits doch eine Auszeichnung, eine Betonung, eine individuelle Geschmücktheit der Persönlichkeit» (Georg Simmel, *Philosophie der Mode* (1905), in Michael Behr, Volkhard Krech, Gert Schmidt (eds.), *Georg Simmel. Gesamtausgabe Band 10*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 2012, 7-38: 22).

<sup>93</sup> Sandra S. Phillips, *The Question of Belief*, in Eadem, *Diane Arbus Revelations*, Munich: Schirmer-Mosel 2003, 50-6: 51.

have similar builds – all elements that contribute to perceive them as double. Like Arbus, Guidi photographed them frontally, but the rural setting and the rectangular format of his picture establish a different relationship among the subject, the photographer, and the viewer than the neutral background, and the square format of Arbus’s picture. The background in Guidi’s photo is not blank: the girls are leaning backwards against the window-sill, and the rectangle of the window functions as a unifying element, that frames their figures together as in a portrait. As explained in the first chapter (*Framing*) Guidi is taking advantage of a pre-existing frame, incorporating it inside the main photographic frame, thus creating a picture inside the picture.<sup>94</sup> As already said, the girls are not twins, and recognising their differences helps distinguish each of them as individual: one is taller, one is blond and the other black haired, one wears shorter socks, their shoes differ completely, and even if the fabric of their cloths is the same, the pattern of flowers is not identical. In the end, the only identical feature remains their pose, but if you do not pay enough attention, you see a duplication. A keen observer notices that even Arbus’s twins are not exactly the same, for example «they’re wearing stockings that are very, very similar, but different», and most of all their attitude is different: the one on the left is smiling, while the expression of the one on the right is slightly off, «her eyes are hooded and her mouth is pursed»<sup>95</sup>. As a matter of fact, Kierkegaard claims, that since «nature produces only similar, not identical cases. The meaning of repetition (if there is any) therefore belongs to the realm of spirit».<sup>96</sup> On the same wavelength Deleuze affirms that if repetition is possible, it rather belongs to miracle than to law.<sup>97</sup> In *Amphitryon*, the famous tragic comedy by Plautus, the creation of an identical double is indeed exclusive prerogative of the deities. Jupiter takes the resemblance of Amphitryon, leader of the Thebans, while Mercury turns himself into Amphitryon’s slave, named Sosia. The duplication is so perfect to deceive even Amphitryon’s wife Alcmena, who sleeps with Jupiter believing him to be her real husband. The play ends with Alcmena giving birth to twin boys. It is unknown from which Greek model Plautus was inspired. Sure enough, we owe the Roman writer the penetration into Italian common language of the word “sosia” to indicate the *Doppelgänger*.<sup>98</sup> Repetition, like transgression, questions the law: phenomena appear equal only if you substitute the order of similitude with that of equality. Repetition can happen just hypothetically by overlooking differences, it does not pertain to the law of nature, but to

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<sup>94</sup> The theme of “inside framing” is treated in depth in chapter 1 (*Framing*) since it constitutes a fundamental issue in Guidi’s practice.

<sup>95</sup> Lobow, *Diane Arbus. Portrait of a Photographer*: e-book.

<sup>96</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Selected Entries from Kierkegaard’s Journals and Papers Pertaining to Repetition*, in H. Hong and E. Hong (eds.), *Kierkegaard’s Writings. Volume 6: Fear and Trembling/Repetition*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1983, 274-330: 315-316.

<sup>97</sup> Deleuze, *Différence et répétition*: 8-12.

<sup>98</sup> Plautus, *Le Comédie*, edited by Carena Carlo, Turin: Giulio Einaudi Editore 1975: 5-6.

humour and irony or even to theology. As Deleuze correctly reminds us, the principle of difference leaves the greatest possible aperture to the perception of similarities: «la question "quelle différence y a-t-il?" peut toujours se transformer en: quelle ressemblance y a-t-il?».<sup>99</sup>

## Repetition en abyme

On other occasions, the principle the repetition is attained by Guidi through a more *conceptual* operation. See for instance the portrait of his daughter Anna, published twice in the book *Dietro Casa* (2018). The girl is carrying in her hands and showing a polaroid of her own portrait [Plates iii/19-20]. The polaroid is the same in both pictures, while Anna's expression has changed, but not her posture or her clothes – which are the same even in the polaroid. Since in the book the two pictures do not come one after the other, the first impression you get is that the picture has been mistakenly published twice. With regard to the montage of the images in this book Guidi himself expresses some doubts. Whereas he usually takes care in first person of the matter, this time he accepted the sequencing proposed by the editor, Jason Fullforth. Although he appreciates Fullforth's montage, he finds it a bit too modern, slightly "drunk". Guidi instead tends more to monotony, «aligning pictures as if they were toy soldiers».<sup>100</sup> He prefers to respect the chronological sequence made on the field, rather than organizing it a posteriori by means of an arranged montage. He conceives photography as a matter of questioning not as communication.<sup>101</sup>

Going back to the theme of the duplication in Anna's photographs, it is explored on various levels. Her polaroid-portrait creates a sort of twin sister of her, not existing in reality, but ideally present in the representation of second degree, as representation of a representation, thanks to the act of repetition. Following Derrida's famous interpretation of Husserl's phenomenology, we can consider Anna's main photographic portrait as simple presence and Anna's polaroid as its reproduction: the first one corresponds to presentation as *Vorstellung*, while the latter to re-presentation as *Vergegenwärtigung* – also in the sense of being present in lieu (or on behalf) of someone or something. On the possibility of the act of repetition depends the

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<sup>99</sup> Deleuze, *Différence et répétition*: 21.

<sup>100</sup> Conversation with the author, 14 April 2022.

<sup>101</sup> See Laura Gasparini, *Una conversazione / Guido Guidi. Prendere contatto con le cose*, in "Doppiozero", 8 November 2017 (online resource).



«idéauté, qui n'est que le nom de la permanence du même et la possibilité de sa répétition. [...] L'idéauté absolue est le corrélat d'une possibilité de répétition indéfinie».<sup>102</sup>

As «supplément d'origine», the polaroid-portrait functions as a substitute of the original, according to the structure «à la place de (*für etwas*)» – typical of all signs in general. Its addition supplies a lack, «une non-présence à soi originaire», which allows Anna to be present twice, and possibly consents the ideal endless repetition. The supplementation is an operation of «différance» in the double sense of differing and deferring the presence of the original.<sup>103</sup>

On Derrida's conceptions of *différance* and *espacement*<sup>104</sup> Rosalind Krauss founded her analysis of the use of doubling in surrealist photography:

«Doubling [...] elicits the notion that to an original has been added its copy. The double is the simulacrum, the second, the representative of the original. It comes after the first, and in this following, it can only exist as figure, or image. But in being seen in conjunction with the original, the double destroys the pure singularity of the first. Through duplication, it opens the original to the effect of difference, of deferral, of one-thing-after-another, or within another: of multiples burgeoning within the same».<sup>105</sup>

Ideally the chain of photographic portraits can continue ad infinitum creating a construction *en abyme*. The phrase *en abyme*, first introduced by André Gide in 1892, «describes any fragment of a text that reproduces in miniature the structure of the texts in its entirety».<sup>106</sup> A photograph is constructed *en abyme* when a image functions as a reduced, internal image of the photograph itself, and «tells us in a photograph what a photograph is». The representation of a representation is a form of *mise en abyme*, that opens a reflection about the specificity of the photographic processes. The effect of the abyss happens «when one can read a book within a book, an origin within an origin, a center within the center and, we might add, a photograph within a photograph».<sup>107</sup> This kind of “matryoshka doll” or “Chinese boxes” montage, realized through the most simple action of including inside the photographic portrait a previous photographic portrait of the portrayed person, finds

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<sup>102</sup> Jaques Derrida, *La voix et le phénomène* (1967), Paris: Presses universitaires de France 2016: 58-59.

<sup>103</sup> See Jaques Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit 1967: 441-445; and Derrida, *La voix et le phénomène*: 97-98.

<sup>104</sup> «Espacement (pause, blanc, ponctuation, intervalle en général, etc.) [...] (on remarquera que ce mot dit l'articulation de l'espace et du temps, le devenir-espace du temps et le devenir-temps de l'espace)» (Derrida, *De la grammatologie*: 99).

<sup>105</sup> Krauss, *The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism*: 109.

<sup>106</sup> André Gide quoted in Craig Owens, *Photography "en abyme"*, in: "October", no. 5, 1978, 73-88: 75.

<sup>107</sup> Craig Owens, *Photography "en abyme"*, in: "October", no. 5, 1978, 73-88: 77.

numerous applications in Guidi's work. For instance, in the photograph of his good friend *Maurizio P. growing a beard*, Maurizio with a short beard shows a portrait of himself shaved. [Plate iii/21] The underneath caption, handwritten and partially erased by Guidi, informs that the older picture was taken two months before. In Guidi's book *Varianti* (1995) the photo is published coupled with another portrait of Maurizio, taken in 1975 – as Guidi hand-noted on the picture – three years after the other portrait: Maurizio's beard has really grown! [Plate iii/22]

Two photographs of Maurizio's passport, showing his portrait first shaved and then bearded, are published in *Varianti* on the facing page, as counterpart to the portraits taken by Guidi. [Plate iii/23] Guidi describes the banal and ordinary event of growing a beard, while proposing a reflection on photography as a document. The comparison with the institutionalised identity documents asserts the truthfulness of the photographic image and its documentary value. In his pictures, Guidi has portrayed Maurizio as neutral as possible, and Maurizio himself is trying to convey no feeling through the expression of his face. The resulting photograph resembles a mugshot.<sup>108</sup> By the way Guidi confirms his interest in the identity card, in the description sheet, in the attempt to be more scientific.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Of course, the discussion about the value of photography as art or as document is a never-ending story, to which Walker Evans tried to put a full stop in 1971: «Documentary? That's a very sophisticated and misleading word» he answered to Leslie Katz, interviewing him. «The term should be documentary style. An example of a literal document would be a police photograph of a murder scene. You see, a document has use, whereas art is really useless. Therefore, art is never a document, though it certainly can adopt that style» (Walker Evans quoted in Leslie Katz, *Interview with Walker Evans*, in: "Art in America", March-April 1971, 82-89: 87).

<sup>109</sup> See Zannier, *Dopo Krims*: 38.

# 4. Mistake

## Photography lapsus

Sigmund Freud's *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens* of 1901 still remains such a milestone about the role of mistake in everyday life, that the expression "Freudian lapsus" or "Freudian slip" has been fully incorporated into the everyday jargon. «Fehlleistungen» like a slip of the tongue (*Versprechen*), misreading (*Verlesen*), mishearing (*Verhören*), forgetting (*Vergessen*), mislaying (*Verlegen*), and losing (*Verlieren*) are all very common and very familiar forms of error (*Irrtümer*), «fast alle von unwichtiger Natur, meist sehr flüchtigem Bestand, ohne viel Bedeutung im Leben der Menschen», defined them Freud in his second *Vorlesung zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*.<sup>1</sup> Freud came to the conclusion that all cases of failed and casual act are the expression of not fully suppressed psychological material, that «vom Bewußtsein abgedrängt, doch nicht jeder Fähigkeit, sich zu äußern, beraubt worden ist».<sup>2</sup> Therefore, parapraxes and other ordinary errors function like doors, that enable unconscious material to manifest itself into our quotidian life. Freud points out that such «Kleinigkeiten» are the «Beobachtungsstoff» of the psychoanalyse – precisely those inconspicuous events that are usually pushed aside as too secondary by other sciences, «sozusagen der Abhub der Erscheinungswelt».<sup>3</sup> On the contrary, he suggests not to underestimate such small indicators, which might provide us with «ein Zugang zum Studium der großen Probleme».<sup>4</sup>

If psychoanalysis can take advantage of everyday «Fehlleistungen» in order to reveal unconscious aspects of the individual, likewise photography can use «l'erreur photo-

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<sup>1</sup> See Sigmund Freud, *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens. (Über Vergessen, Versprechen, Vergreifen, Aberglaube und Irrtum)*, Berlin: Verlag von S. Karger 1917. Sigmund Freud, *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*, Leipzig/Vienna/Zurich: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag 1922: 13-14 points out that such occurrences show «innere Verwandtschaft durch die gleiche Bezeichnung mit der Vorsilbe ver».

<sup>2</sup> Freud, *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens*: 232.

<sup>3</sup> Freud, *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*: 15.

<sup>4</sup> Ivi: 15-16.

graphique comme outil cognitif».<sup>5</sup> Taking inspiration from the structure of the books *Es kommt der neue Fotograf!* (1929) by Werner Gräff and *Fautographie* (2003) by Clément Chéroux, I will adopt a method of analysis, which accept the idea of a “cognitive productivity” originated by the error, not intended as a mere deficit of the photographic practice, but as a “positivity”, to try to gain access to hidden characteristics of Guidi’s oeuvre, thanks to «les lapsus du médium».<sup>6</sup> Guidi himself affirms, that knowledge arises from misunderstanding.<sup>7</sup> Also Diane Arbus famously stated:

«It’s important to take bad pictures. It’s the bad ones that have to do with what you’ve never done before. They can make you recognize something you hadn’t seen in a way that will make you recognize it when you see it again».<sup>8</sup>

Referring to the ambit of analogue photography, Chéroux correctly observes, that «le registre des erreurs les plus communes n’a guère varié depuis Daguerre».<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless the frequency of photographic mistakes increases at the end of nineteenth century, *pari passu* with the development of amateur photography.<sup>10</sup> If on the one hand the technical progress solved some of the problems of the photographic process, on the other hand it introduced new kind of risks, so that, all in all, the photographic principle has not considerably changed. The palette of mistakes is limited:

«ce sont toujours les mêmes cous coupés, les cadrages extravagants, les déformations inélégantes, les superpositions indésirables ou les taches indéliques qui sont la cible des humoristes».<sup>11</sup>

That is why, since the debut of the medium, photographic manuals are still repeating the same list of «mises en garde» like a refrain.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Clément Chéroux, *Fautographie. Petite histoire de l’erreur photographique*, Paris: Éditions Yellow Now 2003: 16-17.

<sup>6</sup> Ivi: 17.

<sup>7</sup> Conversation with the author, 14 April 2022. Guidi is quoting Jacques Lacan, *L’Étourdit* (1972), in Idem, *Autres écrits*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil 2001, 449-495: 490 «Une langue entre autres n’est rien de plus que l’intégrale des équivoques que son histoire y a laissées persister». About the positive function of the error see also Lacan, *Télévision* (1973), in Idem, *Autres écrits*, 509-546.

<sup>8</sup> Diane Arbus quoted in Doon Arbus (ed.), *Diane Arbus: An Aperture Monograph*, Aperture, New York 1972, New York: Aperture 1972: 10.

<sup>9</sup> Chéroux, *Fautographie*: 28.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ivi: 29.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. For a concise overview of photography manuals in Italy from the end of nineteenth century onwards, see Italo Zannier, *Storia della fotografia italiana dalle origini agli anni ‘50*, Castel Maggiore (Bologna): Editrice Quinlan 2021: 109-113.

Clément Chéroux presents a list of the most typical photographic mistakes that, in part coincides with the collection of samples provided by Werner Gräff seventy years before: the scene to be photographed is unexpectedly disturbed; an object interposes between the subject and the photosensitive surface; the shutter was accidentally released; the film or the proof was covered, over or underexposed; the film or the proof is spotted, scratched, or distorted; several images were superimposed during the shooting or the printing process; the subject appears blurred, distorted, bad framed, or difficult to recognise, and so on.<sup>13</sup> Then, the French historian draws a comparison between literature and photography. Like in literature the three main causes of mistake are the form of work, the author, and the subject, so in photography they are the tool, the photographer, and the subject. Since a technique, an author, and a matter are the three constitutive elements of the photographic act, they are also the three principal causes of *mise en panne*.<sup>14</sup> Thus, Chéroux's book follows such causal tripartition: *défaillance technique, mauvaise manipulation, accident de prise de vue*, with the aim to understand, what the error does reveal about the technic, the operator, and the subject.

Sure enough, you can consider a photograph as mistaken only if you confront it with a convention. In this chapter, if I define a photograph by Guidi as "mistaken", I do not involve a judgment of value, but I am simply describing a picture outside the norm. Chéroux advises us, that photographic standards are usually decided by professionals, as to say: companies that produce photographic tools and materials, workshops that process photographs (development and printing), and agencies that sell photographs. All these subjects "pontificate" through the manuals for amateur photographers. The perception of errors varies with respect to time and space. "Space" means the place where the picture is shown, whose hands hold it and whose eyes look at it: of artists, professional or amateur photographers. The same image can be judged as mistaken by the amateur, as rubbish by the professional, but as intriguing by the artist. Nowadays a lot of contemporary artists as well as photographers reproduce on purpose a faulty aesthetic. On the other hand, a negative can be refused by a professional, but accepted by the amateur for its emotional value. The relativity of the error is proportional to the rarity of the image. Less pictures exist of a subject and more they are precious, thus it does not matter if they are not perfect. The same is true with regard to photographs taken for journalistic reportages or scoops. Especially in fashion photography, flawed images are becoming a trend under the motto of aesthetic of imperfection, trash tendency, anti-photography. Since the 1990s we have been witnessing an abolition of boundaries between the amateur and the professional, but also

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<sup>13</sup> Chéroux, *Fautographie*: 40. See also Werner Gräff, *Es kommt der neue Fotograf!* (1929), Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König 1978: 6 ff.

<sup>14</sup> From here onwards my argumentation follows Chéroux, *Fautographie*: 40-45.

between the artist and the professional. This led to a permeability of the tripartition and a levelling of the differences.<sup>15</sup>

As to the time factor, Chéroux reports the case of Jaques Henri Lartigue, whose today most famous photograph of the *Th. Schneider n° 6 of Maurice Croquet at full speed*, taken in 1913 at the Grand Prix de l'Automobile Club de France, exemplary demonstrates how the destiny of an image changes with the time. Errors of the past may become genial ideas in the present or in the future. That is why, it is important not to throw away even an apparently unsatisfactory photograph, because later, you might discover in it, aspects previously passed unnoticed or unappreciated. Lartigue notably declared:

«Les insuccès sont tout à fait naturels. Ils sont une bonne leçon. C'est pourquoi il faut aussi conserver les photographies peu satisfaisantes car dans trois, cinq ou dix ans on y découvrira peut-être quelque chose de ce qu'on avait éprouvé jadis».<sup>16</sup>

A picture considered wrong during an epoch can achieve the status of masterpiece during another age, because one criterion remains stable (the error), whereas the other one changes (its reception). Thus, taking into consideration only the observer's appreciation, as well as cultural and subjective fluctuating criteria, we cannot but agree with Chéroux and the artist Benjamin Vautier, called Ben, that: «Il n'y a pas de photos ratée».<sup>17</sup> Moreover, we must not forget our point of departure, as to say, the conception of the error as means of knowledge, which enable us to better comprehend photography constitutive elements: author, technic and subject. As a matter of fact, Chéroux reminds us that the word «tare» identifies both a defect and an instrument for weighting using a scale. In this sense: «la photographie *ratée* servira, précisément, à *tarer* la photographie».<sup>18</sup>

## Expertise in error

One of the novels most appreciated by Guidi is *Take-off* by Daniele Del Giudice.<sup>19</sup> The book is a collection of short stories on the theme of flight. Quite curiously, the first account is titled *All because of the Mistake*.<sup>20</sup> When Del Giudice explains the importance of knowledge for the pilot, his words recall Guidi's description of his photographic "discipline":

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<sup>15</sup> See Chéroux, *Fautographie*: 53.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in *ivi*: 60.

<sup>17</sup> *Ivi*: 62.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Conversation with the author, 14 April 2022. Daniele Del Giudice, *Staccando l'ombra da terra*, Turin: Einaudi 1994 (Eng. tr. Joseph Farrell, *Take-off*, London: Harvill Press 1996).

<sup>20</sup> Del Giudice, *All because of the Mistake*, in *Idem*, *Take-off*, 3-14.

«I have to adapt to the limits of the camera, but if I'm unaware of them, then I can't take photographs. Consequently I must practice, practice, practice until I become one with the instrument itself».<sup>21</sup>

The pilot, not differently from the photographer, must know everything, even more than everything, but in a way as to translate the knowledge into natural gestures, although not too instinctive. It is important neither to know too much nor being oversure of that knowledge because the mistake is always waiting for your cockiness, and it «is always ready to pounce».<sup>22</sup> The error, writes Del Giudice, «was the pilot's speciality, and your discipline and chosen subject. If there was one expertise reserved for the pilot, it was expertise in error».<sup>23</sup> Going back to Guidi's words:

«you have to find a way to go along with the camera, or if you will, to control it, like you would with a horse or a cat that you wish to tame. You can't understand the instrument if you go against its rules; you understand it by going in its direction».<sup>24</sup>

Then, paraphrasing Del Giudice, I dare say, that if there is a competence of the photographer – namely of Guidi –, it is the *expertise in error*.

Especially during the 1970s Guidi used to make “wrong” photographs, with dazzling flash, and blurred figures in foreground, with apparent haphazardness. [Plates iv/1-11] Antonello Frongia affirms that those pictures look exactly like the wrong photographs described by Chéroux, nevertheless they do not even provide you with the satisfaction to recognise the mistake as a “fake” error, which is part of art history and is included in the photographic language thanks to the avant-garde: «in Guidi's case the photographs are just ugly, intentionally ugly».<sup>25</sup> Guidi explains, that he made ugly photographs on purpose, because he did not want to seek consent: he made those snapshots truly on the fly, with the flash, without even looking in the viewfinder, to see afterwards what had happened. Many pictures were then printed casually, but the majority is still unprinted.<sup>26</sup>

Italo Zannier remembers that Guidi's photographs, submitted to the Bolaffi Award, were so “ugly” to horrify Madame Gernsheim, who was in the jury. But Zannier and other jurors “saved” Guidi from the exclusion and eventually he received a “men-

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<sup>21</sup> In Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro*: 124.

<sup>22</sup> Del Giudice, *Flight Manoeuvres*, in Idem, *Take-off*, 85-96: 85

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro*: 124.

<sup>25</sup> See Guidi Guido, Margherita Guccione, Antonello Frongia and Laura Moro in conversation, Museo MAXXI, Rome, July 2016: online resource.

<sup>26</sup> Guidi and Andreani, *Tra architetture e trasgressioni*: 30.

tion”.<sup>27</sup> His photographs went against the conventions of documentary photography by means of ironic transgressions, and intentional mistakes of perspective, of printing. «I have been following year after year the audacious path of Guido Guidi», affirms Zannier,

«convinced by his contrite photography ideology, that a few in Italy understand, and a lot “hate” [...]. All victims of manual aestheticism and of an idea of “beauty”, also technical, conventional, with the lifting of the licit, necessary “point of view”, perhaps to obtain a beautiful blue sky, clean up the landscape and so on».<sup>28</sup>

If Zannier speaks of transgressions, Guidi calls them «more modestly, infractions».<sup>29</sup> He claims, he has learnt to accept and appreciate mistakes from Zannier himself, who encouraged him to experiment.<sup>30</sup> «To unlearn is as fundamental as it is to make mistakes, errors, infractions», says Guidi. Maybe his «infractions should deserve some sanction», but he never aimed to subvert anything. He just

«wanted to go back to the early days of photography, of Talbot and O’Sullivan, to the early days of painting, of Giotto and Piero della Francesca, Bonventura Berlinghieri, and other painters of Italian Middle Ages or the painters of Galla Placidia, and Sant’ Apollinare in Classe in Ravenna».<sup>31</sup>

If we shift from photography grammar to the domain of language, we might establish an illuminating parallel. In his emphatic German letter of 1937, Samuel Beckett wrote that «Grammatik und Stil» seem to him to have become so decrepit «wie ein Biedermeier Badeanzug oder die Unerschüttlichkeit eines Gentlemans. Eine Larve». Thus, he truly hopes, that the time will come «wo die Sprache da am besten gebraucht wird, wo sie am tüchtigsten missbraucht wird».<sup>32</sup> In linguistic indeed, the Arabian legendary account about the birth of grammar links the elaboration of the grammar with the identification of mistakes.

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<sup>27</sup> Zannier here means Irene Gernsheim, the second wife of Helmut Gernsheim. The jury of the second edition of the “Premio Nazionale Bolaffi della fotografia” (1978) was composed by Carlo Bertelli, Helmut and Irene Gernsheim, Michele Ghigo, Daniela Palazzoli and Italo Zannier. The photographers Pino Dal Gal, Mario Giacomelli, Guido Guidi, Cesare Leonardi and Pepi Merisio were awarded a special mention, while the main prize was won by Salvatore Mancini (see Giuseppe Luigi Marini (ed.), *Catalogo nazionale Bolaffi della fotografia n. 2*, Turin, Giulio Bolaffi Editore 1977: VIII).

<sup>28</sup> Zannier and Maggiori, *Tra antropologia e ambiente*: 13 (translation mine).

<sup>29</sup> Guidi and Andreani, *Tra architetture e trasgressioni*: 28.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> See Marlon and Mariano Sartore, *Guido Guidi “Da Zero” – interview*, La Virreina Centre de la Imatge Barcelona, 19 November 2021: online resource (translation mine). Guidi reminds that as he was attending school, there was a desire to go back to such «primigenial or primitive quality», and he was impressed by the reading of Venturi, *Il gusto dei primitivi*, cit.

<sup>32</sup> Samuel Beckett, *German Letter of 1937 (9/7/37)*, in Cohn Ruby (ed.), *Disjecta. Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment by Samuel Beckett*, London: John Calder 1983, 51-54: 52.



Likewise, wrote Chéroux, Moholy-Nagy took conscience, that the mistakes of the photographic language offer the base for the new visual grammar, he was trying to establish. His aim was to substitute photography canons (still based on the pictorial model), with photography norms, as to say, the most intimate laws of the material.<sup>33</sup> In *Vision in Motion*, Moholy-Nagy states: «The enemy of photography is the convention, the fixed rules of the “how to do”». Thus, he suggests to save photography through experimenting, forgetting any preconceived idea about photography. The experimenter

«does not believe that photography is only as it is known today, the exact repetition and rendering of the customary vision. He does not think that the photographic mistakes should be avoided since they are usually “mistakes” only from the routine angle of the historic development. He dares to call “photography” all the results which can be achieved with photographic means with camera or without; all the reaction of the photo sensitive media to chemicals, to light, heat, cold, pressure, etc.».<sup>34</sup>

Not differently from Beckett, Moholy-Nagy found the mistake incredibly fruitful. He understood that the richness of photography lies in its own materials, is its matter. The feasibility of the material offers the key to access the richness of the medium. Each failure of the medium is a sign, that once amplified enable to decipher photography most intimate laws.<sup>35</sup> Guidi himself makes use of the photographic error to confirm the specificity of the medium, however he avoids the premeditation of the *New Vision*. He confesses to have

«spent much time working in the dark room, not as an alchemist, of course, but using chemistry in an approximate, not entirely scientific way, in the sense that [he] struggled to replicate the result. [...] The strength of a good photographer is to allow himself to be led and mastered by his instrument. Similarly, Galileo said, “the telescope tells me this”. If you master chemistry, you lead it to do what you want, which is not exactly what the instrument can do with its potential, which continues to elude us».<sup>36</sup>

Guidi’s attitude to favour moments of uncertainty in his work, leaving space to serendipity, presents analogies to the practice of photographers such as Robert Frank, who in the 1950s adopted an aesthetic of the badly done.<sup>37</sup> In constant questioning of the subject,

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<sup>33</sup> Chéroux, *Fautographie*: 85.

<sup>34</sup> Lázló Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion*, Chicago: Paul Theobald 1947 (3rd ed.): 197.

<sup>35</sup> Chéroux, *Fautographie*: 84-85.

<sup>36</sup> Guidi, *Lunario*: 102.

<sup>37</sup> As John Fraser correctly points out, «the brilliant technical “wrongness” of Frank’s works came from a couple of photographs» by Walker Evans, who was for sure greatly inspired by Atget’s

Frank did not disdain: *décadrage*, grain, wrong illumination, fortuitous snapshots, obstruction of the subjects and so on. Despite its importance in photography, this kind of approach remains still not well acknowledged, but Chéroux suggests to describe it as *photographie pauvre*, *foto povera*, *cheap photography*.<sup>38</sup> Guidi too does not care to minimise eventual factors of risk: he off-centres portraits and symmetrical objects, works slightly off-axis, shaves away a bit the edges of the subject, or cut completely away parts of it, does not avoid obstructions, under or over-exposures and superimpositions, does not mind to offer the majority of the foreground not to the real subject of the picture, is not disturbed by blurred or moved subjects, accepts imperfect prints (bleached or reddened or yellowed), and abruptly interrupted images, because the negatives were exposed to light at the beginning of the roll.<sup>39</sup> [Plates iv/12-15] Similarly to Giorgio Morandi, who «faded his oil colours by squeezing them out the tubes and allowing them to “mature” in the sun before using them, so that they were already somewhat aged», Guidi has sometimes stored boxes of negatives and printed «them after 35 or 40 years, once the film has deteriorated and the colours have already acquired a patina age».<sup>40</sup> It is difficult to establish how far Guidi calculates similar effects. Although he defines himself as eternal apprentice, he is of course not a novice, and often makes mention of “controlled errors”.<sup>41</sup> Indeed only if you master a technic, you are free to push it beyond its limits. For instance, Paolo Costantini points out how Guidi’s “transgression” of «tilting the view camera on the tripod», in a «measured, thoughtful, planned» way, does not deny but subverts the restraint of «an appliance that conventionally recalls the forced motionless of the frontal nineteenth-century vision».<sup>42</sup> [Plates iv/16, 17]

Even when Guidi is using a field camera on a tripod, its pictures maintain a characteristic aesthetic of the non-aesthetic mistaken, typical of the snapshots. As Lewis Baltz points out:

«The qualities that sophisticated observers appreciate in snapshots are usually the very qualities that make them dismal failures in the eyes of their anonymous authors. “Successful” snapshots don’t interest us very much: they too closely resemble the post cards, studio portraits, and magazine photos that they mimic. (So much for “the innocent eye”.) The failed snapshot, however, earns our patronizing admira-

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work. So, in the end, Atget is the force behind Frank, Evans and Guidi as well. See Fraser, *Atget and the City*: 216.

<sup>38</sup> Chéroux, *Fautographie*: 125.

<sup>39</sup> See Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l’altro*: 119-128.

<sup>40</sup> Ivi: 122.

<sup>41</sup> In Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>42</sup> Costantini (ed.), *Guido Guidi. Rubiera*: n.n.

tion by its surreal juxtapositions, touching clumsiness, and nostalgic content. That most snapshots “fail” is no mystery; exactly how they do is another matter». <sup>43</sup>

In the adoption of a kind of photography, «which often resembled snapshots in its seeming immediacy unexpected framing, and openness to “bad technique” (blasted highlights, blurred motion, centred subjects, intrusions of the photographer’s shadow or reflection, skewed horizons, etc.)», <sup>44</sup> Baltz recognises traces of Walker Evans’s influence on three generations of American «photographers: Robert Frank, Garry Winogrand, Lee Friedlander, Tod Papageorge, Henry Wessel Jr. and William Eggleston». <sup>45</sup> To the “tribe” of Evans’s followers, I would add the name of Guidi, who also embraces such kind of photography, sharing with all of them the «disdain for the conventions of the “fine photograph”». <sup>46</sup> Samuel Beckett describes similar tactics of renouncing on purpose a specific skill, which leads up to the deliberate cultivation of naivety and even bad taste, with the concept of *malfaçon créatrice voulue*. <sup>47</sup> Rather than as “cheap” photography, Chéroux suggests to define such practices as “errant” photography, with the double meaning of both making errors and wandering: «l’errance est la forme vagabonde de la sérendipité». <sup>48</sup>

## Chance domestiquée

Chéroux’s assumption of the relationship among errors, photography, and serendipity finds indeed support in the words of photographers such as Robert Adams, who claims that «each photograph that works is a revelation to its supposed creator». <sup>49</sup> Guidi himself confirms this statement, when he says, that another aspect of experimenting is «spontaneity in seeking». To him,

«a photograph is good when the initial idea has disappeared. What interests [him] is the path that you take – the process – and in some way the path is determined by chance». <sup>50</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Lewis Baltz, *Konsumerterror: Late-Industrial Alienation* in: “Aperture”, Fall 1984, 4-7, 76: 6.

<sup>44</sup> Lewis Baltz, *The Most American Photographer* (1994) in Idem, *Texts*, Göttingen: Steidl 2012, 23-32: 25-26.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ivi 28.

<sup>47</sup> Samuel Beckett, *La Peinture des van Velde ou le Monde et le Pantalon* (1945-1946), in Cohn Ruby (ed.), *Disjecta*, 118-132: 122. See also: Cornor Calville, *Samuel Beckett and the Visual Arts*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 2018: 156.

<sup>48</sup> Chéroux, *Fautographie*: 125.

<sup>49</sup> Adams, *Colleagues*: 16.

<sup>50</sup> Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l’altro*: 123.

Nicoletta Leonardi explains that Guidi uses both professional and rudimental cameras sometimes mounting recycled lenses, that he himself built.

«This is a very important aspect in Guidi's practice, that develops around the taste for the error in the vernacular and primitive photography of the nineteenth century, and around the creativity of an image, self-generated through happy accidents and successful failures».<sup>51</sup>

The whole of Guidi's production is characterised by «a sort of tepid experimentalism, made of infractions rather than radical transgressions» with the aim to test the camera behaviour.<sup>52</sup> He uses the cameras in a not appropriate manner, leaving space to accidents and errors: he releases the shutter without looking in the viewfinder, uses flashes with ultra-wide-angle lens, or wrong lenses that do not fully cover the format of the negative and vice-versa. Through these experiments, «Guidi digs into the medium to better comprehend its mechanisms and, by forcing a bit, he brings into light its instability».<sup>53</sup> Guidi's aim is not to propose innovation, but rather to put himself in the same position of wonder and expectation of the first photographers.

As briefly mentioned in chapter 2 (*Indexicality*), Guidi has certainly read the account about the origin of the term serendipity as reported by Carlo Ginzburg.<sup>54</sup> The neologism serendipity was coined in 1754 by Horace Walpole, inspired by «the oriental fable of three brothers who described an animal they had never seen by interpreting a series of clues».<sup>55</sup> With the term serendipity Walpole wanted to designate «accidental sagacity», as to say: to make «discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things which [you] were not in quest of».<sup>56</sup> Not very dissimilarly, Umberto Eco uses the expression *chance domestiquée* to define the ability «to recognize, at the heart of the "accidental" and the "fortuitous" that are the substance of a work, the signs of a craft or "discipline"» by virtue of which the artist is able to activate the forces of chance at the right moment.<sup>57</sup> Eco's considerations that action painting is not the record of a mere spontaneous expression, like «an unexpected telluric event», but rather «the record of a series of gestures, each of which left a trace with

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<sup>51</sup> Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*: 94 (translation mine).

<sup>52</sup> Leonardi, *La macchina maleducata*: 150 (translation mine).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*: 103.

<sup>55</sup> Ivi: 116. To the concept of "serendipity" is also connected the idea of *hasard objectif*, formulated by André Breton. See Chéroux, *Fautographie*: 109-113.

<sup>56</sup> Robin Kelsey, *Photography and the Art of Chance*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University 2015: 15. About the relationship between photography and chance, with a special attention to the role of serendipity in the history of photography, see ivi: 15-39.

<sup>57</sup> Eco, *Opera aperta*, Eng. tr. Anna Cancogni, *The Open Work*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press 1989: 102.

both a spatial and a temporal direction of which the painting is the only witness», can likewise describe the relationship to chance involved in the photographic act.<sup>58</sup>

Guidi confirms that the random is something he is very keen on: «I work as a photographer in order to put mechanisms in motion which go beyond rationality, beyond logic, pre-planning, prepared thoughts».<sup>59</sup> And he concludes quoting Vasari,

«who in *Lives* speaks about Beato Angelico: “He used never to touch up nor re-order any of his paintings but would always leave them the way they had turned out the first time, believing, according to what he said, that that was God’s will”».<sup>60</sup>

This reminds me of a short anecdote, reported by Beckett, about a painter, who to the question: «Que peignez-vous?», answered: «Ce qui sortira de mon pinceau».<sup>61</sup>

A good inventory of photographs, taken by Guidi following the principle of serendipity, is the recently published book *Di sguincio* (2023). [Plates iv/3-10] The pictures date back to the 1970s and represent a sort of exception in his subsequent working method. Whereas in the Eighties he would start to use mainly a large-format camera and colour film, «these are small-format black-and-white instant photographs, taken without a tripod».<sup>62</sup> The dynamic feeling they convey is the consequence of the working conditions in which they were made: Guidi shot from the moving car, or while approaching people, he often used the flash to freeze movements, gestures, and expressions. They are photographs he took in his day-to-day life for many years: at home, or among his closest relatives in Cesena, or on his weekly drives to Preganziol – where he had started to work – among his flatmates in Treviso, or among his work colleagues. Several pictures were also taken during a trip to Spain with his wife, Marta. Antonello Frongia notices that they reveal a very direct, straightforward, unclassical approach, «apparently without any concern for the aesthetic outcome». Guidi was interested «in exploiting the immediacy of photography – its “rude” nature and its ability to show things as they are, without taming them».

«These infractions were like unintentional, unplanned transgression. The transgression was the desire to see what could be done with the instrument, but also a juve-

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. Guidi is quoting from Giorgio Vasari, *Vita di Fra Giovanni da Fiesole dell’Ordine dei Frati Predicatori Pittore*, in Idem, *Le Vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori. Prima e seconda parte*, Florence: i Giunti 1568, 358-365: 363: «Haveva per costume non ritoccare, ne racconciar mai alcuna sua dipintura, ma lasciarle sempre in quel modo, che erano venute la prima volta; per creder (secondo, ch’egli diceva) che così fusse la volontà di Dio».

<sup>61</sup> Beckett, *La Peinture des van Velde*: 131.

<sup>62</sup> Frongia, *Chance encounters*: 135.

nile dismantling of the instrument, just as children take toys apart and are then unable to put the pieces together again». <sup>63</sup>

## Es kommt der neue Fotograf!

It might not be wrong to put Guidi, together with Beckett, «in the dismal category of those who, if they had to act in full awareness of what they were doing, would never act». <sup>64</sup> About Beckett it has been written that he did *mismake* on purpose, however not to denigrate himself, or his audience, «nor even to reconnect with a child or a savage within, but from the belief that such mismaking is in the interest of art, and will shape its future». <sup>65</sup> This might also well explain Guidi's approach to failure in photography. As Chéroux's book makes clear, if failure is freed from judgemental value, and conventions of representation are no longer the target, to embrace failure means «daring to go beyond normal practices and enter a realm of not-knowing», an act that can disclose new possibilities. <sup>66</sup> Breaking with the representative conventions might even introduce a pleasure in failure. By the way, «who has the right to claim the wrongness of an image?». <sup>67</sup> For instance Guidi recalls that for a long time he used to print «with a deliberate green bias because [he] couldn't stand warm red tones», knowing that over time, the hue of the prints would have veered towards magenta. «This is what happened, and so prints, which were fairly bland at the beginning, came back to life». <sup>68</sup>

«So nützlich fotografischen Lehrbücher sind, soweit sie Technik des Negativ- und Positivprozesses behandeln, so durchaus schädlich werden sie durch die Grenzsetzungen, die sich aus der üblichen Art der Darlegung ästhetischer oder künstlerischer Regeln ergeben». <sup>69</sup>

With these words by Werner Gräff begins the book *Es kommt der neue Fotograf!* (1929). Chéroux defines it a real photography manual «à l'envers, un abécédaire du contre-pied, la

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Beckett's letter of 17 February 1954 to the German translator Hans Naumann (See George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck (eds.), *The Letters of Samuel Beckett 1941-1956*, vol. 2, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press 2011: 464).

<sup>65</sup> Leland de la Durantaye, *Beckett's Art of Mismaking*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press 2016: 2.

<sup>66</sup> Lisa Le Feuvre, *Strive to Fail*, in Eadem (ed.) *Failure*, London, England/Cambridge, Massachusetts: Whitechapel Gallery/The MIT Press 2010, 12-21: 13.

<sup>67</sup> Ivi: 14.

<sup>68</sup> See Frongia, *The vestiges of what was*: 71.

<sup>69</sup> Gräff, *Es kommt der neue Fotograf!*: foreword, n.n.

bible de la subversion photographique». <sup>70</sup> By means of an out-and-out iconographic repertoire of the *Neues Sehen*, Gräff shows what happens to photography, if it abandons the rules inherited from the past and from painting, having the courage to overcome the imposed aesthetic boundaries. However, the “manual” does not aim to say anything against “normality”. Gräff admits, that there are good photographs that respect the canons. His point is, that respecting standards and rules is not the only way to make good pictures. On the other hand, this of course does not imply that all the photographs taken without respecting the canons are necessarily good!<sup>71</sup>

Thanks to the avant-gardes the photographic error was welcomed in the practice, as a means of subverting the status quo of aesthetics and of breaking with obsolete canons of representation. Although Guidi claims to have made only minor infractions in his practice, he never concealed his esteem for the photographers of the Bauhaus. Rules suit him, like them, tight. Sure enough, the new photographer, described by Gräff, does not tolerate any restrictive rule. Page after page, his “reversed manual” features a complete catalogue of the most typical photographic mistakes: blurring, tilting, off-centring, *décadrages*, obstructions, superimpositions, undesired reflections or cast shadows. Guidi himself confesses, that his photographs of the 1960s-70s were particularly polemical: «they were about doing the opposite of the norm, like [William] Klein and [Robert] Frank». <sup>72</sup> However, at some point Guidi «saw a sort of normalization of Klein’s and Frank’s rule-breaking attitudes», so he reacted by returning «to old ways, using anachronistic tools like the 8-by-10-format camera». Guidi admits he «was trigger-happy and producing a lot of unsatisfactory negatives». <sup>73</sup> Reconsidering his production on the basis of the examples proposed by Gräff’s anti-manual, I actually get the impression that, not differently from Beckett’s character Malone, every time Guidi is beginning again, «with a different aim, no longer in order to succeed, but in order to fail». <sup>74</sup> To make mistake on purpose, to aim at failing, means to exit from the authority of what is stated to be right. On the other hand, the introduction of the doubt of failure in a situation is an antidote to dogmatism and boredom. Not to mention, that often we can «only become truly attentive when something is indeed wrong». <sup>75</sup>

Here as follow the list of some paradigmatic photographic taboos, which the new photographer was allowed to break and that I am illustrating by means of Guidi’s pictures. The horizon should never stay in the middle of the image, in the “correct” photo-

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<sup>70</sup> Chéroux, *Fautographie*: 81.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Guidi quoted in Frongia, *Guido Guidi Interview*: 53.

<sup>73</sup> Ivi: 55.

<sup>74</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Malone Dies* (1956), in Idem, *Trilogy: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*, London: John Calder 1994, 179-292: 195.

<sup>75</sup> Le Feuvre, *Strive to Fail*: 14.

graphic image the horizon is perfectly horizontal and divides the image in a upper and lower part with the proportion of 1/3; neither shall the horizon be totally absent.<sup>76</sup> It is also wrong, to have a strong element parallel to the inferior edge of the image.<sup>77</sup> The horizon must not be tilted.<sup>78</sup> [Plates iv/18-21] Never photograph with a close-up view from above.<sup>79</sup> [Plates iv/22, 23] In a portrait, it is important to focus on the model's face and blurred the hands, not the opposite.<sup>80</sup> Avoid hands or legs stretched in the direction of the camera.<sup>81</sup> The head of the subject must look towards the centre of the image, otherwise the picture falls apart.<sup>82</sup> [Plates iv/9-11, 24, 25] Never photograph from too close fast moving objects, otherwise they will appear blurred.<sup>83</sup> [Plate iv/26] Pay attention to undesired reflections on mirroring surfaces.<sup>84</sup> [Plate iv/27] When photographing in full sunshine, mind your own cast shadow.<sup>85</sup> [Plates iv/28, 29, see also the plates of chapter 2 (*Indexicality*)] Lights and colours should respect the natural view as good as possible.<sup>86</sup> [Plate iv/14] Another flaw of the picture: shadows are too dark and lights too bright.<sup>87</sup> [Plates iv/30] The only limits imposed to photography are those of its materials, but the new photographer fears no limits:<sup>88</sup> some objects are perfectly in focus, while other completely out of focus;<sup>89</sup> more exposures are superposed on the same negative and so on.<sup>90</sup> [Plates iv/5, 9, 10, 28]

If we look more attentively at Guidi's photographs trying to unmask his most recurring "mistakes", on the basis of the categories proposed by Gräff, we eventually come to the same conclusion as John Szarkowski did about Garry Winogrand's way of working, as to say, that he (Szarkowski meant Winogrand, I mean Guidi) was trying to figure out what the camera

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<sup>76</sup> Gräff, *Es kommt der neue Fotograf!*: 6-7.

<sup>77</sup> Ivi: 9.

<sup>78</sup> Ivi: 11.

<sup>79</sup> Ivi: 16-19, 26.

<sup>80</sup> Ivi: 27.

<sup>81</sup> Ivi: 28.

<sup>82</sup> Ivi: 30.

<sup>83</sup> Ivi: 31.

<sup>84</sup> Ivi: 32.

<sup>85</sup> Ivi: 33. The theme of cast shadow in Guidi's practice is treated in chapter 2 (*Index*).

<sup>86</sup> Ivi: 34.

<sup>87</sup> Ivi: 40.

<sup>88</sup> Ivi: 47.

<sup>89</sup> Ivi: 50-51.

<sup>90</sup> Ivi: 64.



«will do by putting it to the most extreme tests under the greatest possible pressure. [...] He's like a materials testing laboratory and he's trying to figure out at what point his theory will absolutely, totally and finally fail».<sup>91</sup>

As a matter of fact, Szarkowski thought that «in photography the formalist approach is not concerned with neatness» but rather «with trying to explore the intrinsic or prejudicial capacities of the medium as it is understood at that moment».<sup>92</sup>

It might seem ventured to claim that Guidi's attitude had something in common with the behaviour of the "primitive" Middle Ages artist, but Lionello Venturi tells us, that the artist was left to himself, and when he had to work spiritually on the technical matter he had learnt, did not resort to the principles inherited from the Antiquity, but improvised without setting limits to his imagination: made mistakes, repeated, went beyond limits, and imprinted everywhere, even in error, an impulse full of life and faith. If according to an old adage art cannot be taught, Antiquity still insisted on teaching it, but the Middle Ages forfeited that, and decided to teach only the craft.<sup>93</sup>

## Ghosts and other incidents

Among some recurring photographic incidents in Guidi's production there is the appearance of ghostly figures. With the term "ghost", photography jargon describes the unexpected presence of a transparent figure, caused by various possible technical mistakes, such as: negative or plate not properly cleaned; unfortunate superimpositions; camera shakes; time of exposure longer as the permanence of the subject in front of the camera. Thanks to their undefined outline, their immaterial and transparent aspect, such accidental figures truly resemble the common iconography of ghosts, and their appearance in the photographic space brings a hint of whimsicality even in the most ordinary context. [Plates iv/5, 31-34] They are

«une source de poésie où le monde se transfigure en aspects bizarres et inquiets, révélateurs de figure inconnues sans pour cela jamais perdre sa réalité».<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> John Szarkowski in conversation with Jaren Liebling (see Maren Stange, *Photography and the Institution: Szarkowski at the Modern*, in "The Massachusetts Review", vol. 19, no. 4, Winter 1978, 693-709: 702).

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Venturi, *Il gusto dei primitivi*: 41.

<sup>94</sup> Rémy Duval quoted in Chéroux, *Fautographie*: 133.

All in all, the less an image resembles reality, the more the photograph is judged wrong. The mimesis criterium has always been one of the essential parameters to define a photograph *as photograph*. Nevertheless, according to Philippe Dubois, the main merit of Peirce's conception of photography as index was precisely to have bypassed the epistemological obstacle of the similitude between image and referent – as to say the mimetic quality of photography – by taking into consideration not only the message as such, but also the production process of the sign. After Peirce, claims Dubois, «on ne peut pas penser la photographie en dehors de son inscription référentielle et de son efficace pragmatique».<sup>95</sup> We have already seen in the previous chapters, how important the pragmatic aspect of the photographic act is for Guidi. Photography is essentially an index, but not necessarily an *analogon*. Even if photography technic may achieve the figurative analogy between image and referent, that must not be taken for granted.<sup>96</sup> Although the theory might have released photography from its bond to mimesis, Chéroux notices that the negation of the mimetic value of a photograph still seems to neutralise its photographic valence, because «la photographie est culturellement, et même faudrait-il dire “culturellement”, liée à la mimésis».<sup>97</sup> Thus, as soon as a photograph is not mimetic anymore, it ceases to be a photograph. If it is less mimetic, it is considered wrong. If the lack of mimesis appears as the worst of mistakes, the intent to deconstruct the mimetic quality of photography became «le cheval de bataille préféré des avant-gardes».<sup>98</sup> In the end, the relationship to mimesis lies at the origin of the definition of mistake in photography and imbues all the judgments about the correctness of an image. Since Guidi's photographs exclude the principle of mimesis as a criterion of judgment, they are considered wrong. Paradoxically, the more photography displays its medium specificity – since the error discloses the technique – the less mimetic it can be, and the more it is considered wrong. Guidi's adherence to the capacities of the medium reveals photography limitations and demonstrates that sometimes to be genuine means to appear wrong. As Guidi himself states:

«The problem is approaching the world with the camera, a coarse instrument that has its own laws and wants to do its own thing. [...] This coarseness allows us to take coarse photographs, ignoring the etiquette of the rules of aesthetics».<sup>99</sup>

We may call it an *ethic of imperfection*: a sort of legacy from Christian religion's love for the sinner (but also for the marginalised and the rejected), and acceptance of the imperfect

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<sup>95</sup> Dubois, *L'acte photographique*: 63-64.

<sup>96</sup> Ivi: 65-66.

<sup>97</sup> Chéroux, *Fautographie*: 176.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro*: 124.

disciple, as opposite to the ancient Greek idea of the coincidence between success and perfection.<sup>100</sup> By the way, both the *Septuagint* and *New Testament* use the Aristotelian term *hamártía* with the meaning of sin. However, in its original significance *hamártía* was a morally neutral non-normative word, meaning “to miss the mark”.<sup>101</sup> The Aristotelian *hamártía* is the fatal mistake or «great error» (*Poet.* 1453a), that leads to the downfall of the protagonist in a tragedy.<sup>102</sup> In this sense, as literary device, it activates the plot and consents the development of the story. The valorisation of the error is another way of giving value to the marginal, the waste, what is thrown away or simply overlooked. Shifting my argumentation from the layer of photography technical errors to that of the reality of the outside world, I notice that even in the choice of subjects, Guidi seems to never want to stop remembering, that lack and imperfection are integral part of the everyday life and landscape: purity gets stained, snow gets dirty, plaster flakes off. «While Duchamp dropped a wire in order to see what form it took on», says Guidi, «I let the plaster fall to see the patch disturbing the geometry».<sup>103</sup> Cesare Zavattini acknowledged too, that «the imagination ferment in flaws».<sup>104</sup> [Plates iv/35-37]

## To dare fail

History keeps us in the dark about individuals, on the contrary, art describes only the individual. Biographies of eminent persons usually omit details about their private everyday life, while focusing mostly on their greatest achievements. Of course, it is taken for granted, that only the life of outstanding figures may be of some interest.<sup>105</sup> According to Marcel Schwob, the true art of biography should confer equal attention to the life of an unknown actor as to Shakespeare’s life. It is necessary to report with the same concern «les existences uniques des hommes», no matter if they were divine, mediocre, or criminal.<sup>106</sup> Only the book that would describe «un homme en toutes ses anomalies serait une œuvre d’art», concludes Schwob.<sup>107</sup>

Schwob’s *Vies imaginaires* is one of Guidi’s favourite books, as proved also by a photograph he took of the pages 108 and 109 of the volume in the Italian translation.

<sup>100</sup> Joel Fisher, *Judgement and Purpose* (1987), in Le Feuvre (ed.), *Failure*, 116-121: 116.

<sup>101</sup> Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott and Sir Henry Stuart Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1996: 77.

<sup>102</sup> Aristotle, *Art of Poetry. A Greek View of Poetry and Drama*, edited by W. Hamilton Fyfe, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1940, 35.

<sup>103</sup> In Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>104</sup> Cesare Zavattini, *I Sogni migliori* (1940), in Mino Argentieri (ed.), *Cesare Zavattini. Neorealismo ecc.*, Milan: Bompiani 1979, 37-40: 37.

<sup>105</sup> Marcel Schwob, *Vies imaginaires* (1896), Paris: Éditions Flammarion 2004: 53-55.

<sup>106</sup> Ivi: 60.

<sup>107</sup> Ivi: 54.

[Plate iv/38] The passage displayed in the picture is taken from the imaginary biography of the painter *Paolo Uccello*. Towards the end of the second page, we read:

«Uccello termina son tableau à quatre-vingts ans. Il fit venir Donatello, et le découvrit pieusement devant lui. Et Donatello s'écria: "O Paolo, recouvre ton tableau !" L'Oiseau interrogea le grand sculpteur: mais il ne voulut dire autre chose. De sorte qu'Uccello connut qu'il avait accompli le miracle. Mais Donatello n'avait vu qu'un fouillis de lignes».<sup>108</sup>

Again, we are confronted with the theme of failure. In Schwob's description of the everyday life of Uccello, the Florentine artist appears as a fragile and fanatic man, so absorbed by the task of drawing lines and copying forms, that he does not even care to distinguish between life or death. Uccello becomes old and nobody can understand his paintings anymore. When, after a life of tireless work, he finally thinks to have achieved his masterpiece, he does not realise to have instead miserably failed. Failure in art is almost unavoidable, since it is impossible to fill the gap between intention and result.<sup>109</sup> For instance, Aby Warburg wrote that:

«Ein Kunstwerk, das einen dem menschlichen Leben entnommen Gegenstand oder Vorgang, wie er erscheint, darzustellen versucht, ist immer ein Compromißproduct (sic) zwischen der Unfähigkeit des Künstlers, dem künstlerischen Gebilde wirkliche Lebendigkeit zu verleihen einerseits und dessen Fähigkeit andererseits die Natur getreu nachzuahmen».<sup>110</sup>

Guidi indeed declares: «[the] attempt to depict the visible is always frustrated by failure, it's always a failure. As Flaiano would say, failure went to my head».<sup>111</sup> Or, to say it once again with Samuel Beckett's words: «To be an artist is to fail as no other dare fail».<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Ivi: 105. Of course, I am quoting from the original French text, whereas the book photographed by Guidi is in Italian (see It. ed. Fleur Jaeggy, *Vite immaginarie*, Milan: Adelphi 1972).

<sup>109</sup> The failure of the artist's work to meet intentions is famously narrated by Honoré de Balzac in his short story, *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu* (1831), followed by Émile Zola's novel *L'Œuvre* (1886).

<sup>110</sup> Aby Warburg, *Grundlegende Bruchstücke zu einer monistischen Kunstpsychologie 1888-1895*, in Ulrich Pfisterer and Hans Christian Hönes (eds.), *Aby Warburg. Fragmente zu Ausdruckskunde*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter 2015, 1-144: 6.

<sup>111</sup> In Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>112</sup> «Van Velde is the first to admit that to be an artist is to fail, as no other dare fail, that failure is his world and to shrink from it desertion, art and craft, good housekeeping, living» (Beckett, *La Peinture des van Velde*: 145).

## **SECOND PART**

### **“Looking down” as ethos**



Guido Guidi is born in a family of carpenters and at home they only had a few books, among which the Bible and Alessandro Manzoni's *The Betrothed*.<sup>1</sup> He reminds that, as he had to photograph Milan for the project *Archive of the Space*,<sup>2</sup> the adventures of Renzo Tramaglino in the city and its surroundings came into his mind, and he decided to work following Renzo's footsteps. Manzoni's description of Milan through Renzo's eyes, upon his first arrival, is directed downwards:

«The ground was rough and uneven with rubbish and broken earthenware scattered at random. [...] An open drain ran down the middle of the road to a point just short of the gate, dividing it into two narrow, winding ways, thick with dust or deep in mud according to the time of year. [Renzo] walked on, not knowing what to think, and saw long white lines of something soft and light on the ground, as if it were snow».<sup>3</sup>

Corrado Benigni, in his essay for the book *Guidi Guido, Cinque Viaggi (1990-1998)*, suggests that Renzo's gaze close to the ground foreshadows «the oblique views favoured by contemporary photographers».<sup>4</sup> Following Manzoni's example, Guidi

«shuns bird's-eye views and aerial perspectives defined by the coordinates of an ideologically stable view. Instead, places are mapped through the erratic movement of an eye at ground level».<sup>5</sup>

The importance of such preliminary remarks must be understood bearing in mind Pierre Bourdieu's statement, that although pictures are produced by the automatism of the cam-

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<sup>1</sup> Alessandro Manzoni, *I promessi sposi (1840-1842)*, Bari: Laterza 1933.

<sup>2</sup> About the project see Roberta Valtorta, *Il progetto Archivio dello spazio, 1987-1997: leggere l'architettura storica nel paesaggio contemporaneo*, in Maria Antonietta Crippa, Fernando Zanzottera (eds.) *Fotografia per l'architettura del XX secolo in Italia*, Cinisello Balsamo, Milan: Silvana Editoriale 2017, 380-395, and Achille Sacconi and Roberta Valtorta (eds.), *1987-97 Archivio dello spazio. Dieci anni di fotografia italiana sul territorio della provincia di Milano*, Udine: Art& 1997.

<sup>3</sup> Manzoni, *I promessi sposi*, Eng. tr. Bruce Penman, *The Betrothed*, London: Penguin Books 1972: 226.

<sup>4</sup> See Benigni, *The city within the city*: 134.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

era, the act of framing is a choice that engages both aesthetical and ethical values. Since «it is a “choice that praises”» photography can never be just the product of individual imagination but, via the mediation of the ethos, «the most trivial photograph expresses, apart from the explicit intentions of the photographer, the system of schemes of perception, thought and appreciation common to a whole group».<sup>6</sup> Despite its desperate claims of autonomy, the photographic aesthetic is always indissociable from the implicit system of values maintained by a class, profession or artistic coterie. Apart from the explicit intentions of the photographer, a photograph bears a «surplus of meaning which it betrays by being part of the symbolism of an age, a class or an artistic group».<sup>7</sup> Guidi – like everyone else – cannot avoid to inherit and express in his work (even unconsciously) the issues of his social class, to be influenced by the system of values, the history, and the popular culture of his region.

In the last two chapters of this dissertation, I am shifting the discourse from photography grammar to ethos. In other words, whereas the previous chapters were dealing with an analysis largely based on linguistic and medium specificity – aimed at comprehending Guidi’s method –, the following chapters propose a reflection about the frame of mind, which leads his practice. Once again, the reasoning will be drawn from a selection of Guidi’s pictures belonging to various contexts and periods. My working method remains essentially inductive, inspired by Carlo Ginzburg’s historiography, and anchored to the field of everyday life studies, bearing in mind Guidi’s main theoretical references, and my conversation with him.<sup>8</sup>

As already mentioned in the previous chapters, it must not be forgotten that each photograph is not just an image born out of nowhere, but rather a material object that establishes a physical connection both to the real context in which it has been taken, and the real context in which it will be seen once printed. This is an important aspect, because Guidi’s working conditions – as to say, how he relates himself to the camera and to the place, and how he relates the camera to the reality he is going to photograph – will also orient my argumentation. To try to understand his *ethos*, I will consider not only *which kind* of subjects Guidi decides to photograph, but also *how* he decides to photograph them, how he relates himself to them, so to say. I am choosing the term *ethos* for the pragmatic nuance it bears. By and large, it means behaviour, habitus, but also philosophy of life, way of life, *forma vitae*.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Pierre Bourdieu, *Un art moyen*, Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit 1965 (Eng. Tr. Shaun Whiteside, *Photography – A Middle-brow Art*, Cambridge (UK): Polity Press 1990, 6-7).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> See Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, cit., and Wolf, *Einleitung*, in Eadem (ed.), *Zeigen und/oder Beweisen?*, VII-XXVII. I treat the theme in my *Introduction*.

<sup>9</sup> The main theoretical references are: on Stoic ascetism, Pierre Hadot, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*, Paris: Études augustinienes 1981; on the notion of habitus, Pierre Bourdieu, *La Dis-*



As Nicoletta Leonardi very well explains, Guidi's conception of photography is not limited to representation, but it comprehends the group of material objects, which constitute it as "apparatus". Objects in the sense of tools and materials, which have their own social life and "personality": new and old ones, worn by use and time, showing their age – negatives, cameras, lenses, light meters, tripods, enlargers, sinks, dryers, chemical products for developing and printing, papers, and all the different ways to preserve and display negatives and photographic prints. Guidi's practice, marked by strong performative and ritual characteristic, arises from the encounter and the dialogue with the real, which includes both the author and his photographic tools. His work originates from interrogations and relationships with living beings and objects, from incessant returns, deferrals, and afterthoughts, that avoid either hierarchies or preconceived answers. His thought does not follow the path of the viewer placed outside the field of observation, but that of being inside the world, within things, among things and together with the things.<sup>10</sup>

Guidi does not abdicate the tactile relationship to things: he prefers small photographs he can grasp with one hand and one look. The photographic material should not be concealed, because photographs are not sacred object of cult but everyday things. He feels comfortable walking in the shoes of primitive photographers such as O'Sullivan or Atget, and appreciates and practices a photography, that does not forget the haptic and material aspects of the process but, faithful to its artisan origins, maintains a physical contact with the photographer.

An aspect I would like to consider is Guidi's relationships to the camera: as already mentioned, sometimes he uses a small-camera, that he can hold in the hand and lift to his eye, other times instead the camera is positioned on the tripod and he must bend down to the level of the instrument, in an act of respect, as he says. Any way, he never points the lens upwards, adopting the so called "worm's eye", because he doesn't want to adopt the typical fascist act, performed to achieve a heroic portrait of the Duce.<sup>11</sup>

«In Evans' work, people usually have great dignity. In Strand's photographs, whether it's a farmer or a mayor, they are heroes. It is not accident that Strand loved Piero della Francesca; the figures in Piero's paintings are regal. I have never photo-

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*inction. Critique sociale du jugement*, Paris: Minuit 1979; on the technologies of the self, Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité vol. 3: Le souci de soi*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard 1984; on living in training, Sloterdijk, *Du mußt dein Leben ändern*, op. cit.; and on the notion of *forma vitae*, Giorgio Agamben, *Altissima povertà. Regole monastiche e forma di vita*, Vicenza: Neri Pozza 2011 (Eng. tr. Adam Kotsko, *The highest poverty: monastic rules and form-of-life*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*: 81.

<sup>11</sup> Conversation with the author, 14 April 2022. As a matter of fact, Italo Zannier identifies the fascist style with the shot from below, although he advises that the practice was already part of the semantic repertoire of the constructivist photography (see Zannier, *Storia della fotografia italiana, dalle origini agli anni '50*: 243).

graphed heroes; my focus was always on people, not on types. I didn't make categories or taxonomies». <sup>12</sup>

If we take a look especially at his portraits of the 1970s [Plates II/1-2], we notice an insistence on close-up views from above. This causes a distortion of the figures, which appear shorter, more solid, and anchored to the ground. Guidi chooses this point of view, not in order to understate the subjects but because, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, he was conducting experiments on the point of view. Nevertheless, this photographic method stresses the immanency of the subject and could already provide evidence of his ethos. Similarly, he often photographs the base of an edifice, leaving a huge amount of foreground to the terrain, the ground, the asphalt, the soil. He points his camera downwards or at eyes level, and focus on parts of the building, usually overlooked by conventional architecture photographs while, as consequence, cuts out the top of the architecture. [Plate II/3] Especially in Italy, for instance, the traditional standard – derived from the so called “Alinari style” – demanded an elevated viewpoint, so that the horizon line usually passed through the middle of the image, and large part of the ground, the square, the street are excluded from the visual field (just the opposite of Guidi), so that the architecture or monument looks isolated from its surroundings. <sup>13</sup>

Even if in the book *Varianti* it is possible to follow a progressive elevation of the point of view, Guidi has never tilted the camera upwards: <sup>14</sup> you notice the passage from images consisting almost entirely of the ground to more panoramic views including various buildings, but rarely an entire building (from bottom to top). The sky never prevails over the ground: the soil – made of gravel, earth, sand, asphalt, puddles, grass – and the things (few people, houses, machines, road signs, walls, cars, waste) still occupy the most part of the photographic space. Solid matter (flash and bones, concrete, wood, stone, metal) prevails over the volatile, airy one. By the way, is it not solid matter the true “matter” of photography? That which has no visible body cannot be recorded (despite extravagant experiments in the field of ghost photography). <sup>15</sup> Paradoxically, as numbers of pictures show, photography can rather deprive the materiality from the body, making it transparent, blurred, vague as a ghost. <sup>16</sup> [Plates II/4-5]

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<sup>12</sup> Frongia, *Guido Guidi Interview*: 54-55.

<sup>13</sup> See Italo Zannier, *Storia e tecnica della fotografia*, Milan: Ulrico Hoepli Editore 2009: 103; and Idem, *Architettura e fotografia*, Rome and Bari: Laterza 1991.

<sup>14</sup> Conversation with the author, 14 April 2022.

<sup>15</sup> See Chéroux, *Fautographie*: 133-169; and Zannier, *Storia della fotografia italiana*: 232-236.

<sup>16</sup> On “photographic ghosts” see chapter 4 (*Mistake*). So called spirit photography precisely exploited these properties, these failures of the medium, taking advantage of common people’s ignorance about the technical aspects of photography. See for instance Enrico Imoda, *Fotografie di fantasmi*, Turin: Edizioni Fratelli Bocca 1912; and Anton Giulio Bragaglia, *I fantasmi dei vivi e dei morti*, in: “La Cultura moderna”, 1 November 1913, 756-764.

Guidi observes that in photography, like in painting, to make the presence visible you must make the house, the bollard, the trees visible at the same time as the wind. He recalls Leonardo's lesson that you can depict the wind only by means of the movement of the clouds.<sup>17</sup> The changing shape of the clouds reveals the otherwise invisible presence of the wind, while the perpetuity of the clouds contrasts with and shows the mutability of the human landscape.

«Eine Generation, die noch mit der Pferdebahn zur Schule gefahren war, stand unter freiem Himmel in einer Landschaft, in der nichts unverändert geblieben war als die Wolken, und in der Mitte, in einem Kraftfeld zerstörender Ströme und Explosionen, der winzige gebrechliche Menschenkörper».<sup>18</sup>

Even if Walter Benjamin was speaking of a period before Guidi's birth, his description of the fragility of the human body inside a changed landscape, that looks unrecognisable and makes you feel out of place and out of time, gives voice to the experience of estrangement lived by Guidi – and his generation – in the everyday landscape of the countryside where he grew up. A landscape, that has deeply changed and lost its identity in the passage from an agricultural economy to industrialisation and subsequent deindustrialisation. The theme that united Guidi and the other Italian photographers of the landscape was their attempt to show such unrecognisable, fragmentary, incoherent environment.

As Nicoletta Leonardi acknowledges and explains, Guidi belongs to a group of Italian photographers (such as Franco Vaccari, Mario Cresci, and Luigi Ghirri), who in their practice pay careful attention to the objects and the material contexts they inhabit. Photography inherited such materialist approach from two fundamental cultural phenomena developed in Italian artistic scene during the 1940s and the 1950s: Neorealism and Informel. Both movements, in fact, took into account the material contexts as elements, that crucially contribute to determine who we are as individuals (contexts which we belong to, being bodies made of matter – flesh and bones).<sup>19</sup> Italian Neorealism, sensitive to the American photography of the great master of reality, such as Strand and Evans,

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<sup>17</sup> Guido Guidi quoted in Fiore, *Ritorno alla realtà*: VIII. The possibility to depict the wind only by means of its effect on things reminded me about the photographs of *The Inert Gas Series* made by the American artist Robert Barry in 1969 (see Green and Lowry, *From Presence to the Performative*: 50-51).

<sup>18</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Erfahrung und Armut* (1933), in Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (eds.), *Walter Benjamin Gesammelte Schriften Band II/1*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 1991, 213-219: 214.

<sup>19</sup> See Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*: 7.

seems to offer to Italian photography of the 1980s a way of seeing with which it could harmonise.<sup>20</sup>

In Italy the theme of the lost landscape identity acquired centrality already during the 70s. The *Bel Paese*, so rich with history, art and beauties suffered deeply the injuries of a difficult and contradictory transformation: the turn from agricultural-industrial to industrial-agricultural country completely changed the aspect of a landscape, that once was ancestral and harmonious. After the economic boom of the 50s and the 60s, the violent and fast deindustrialisation of the 80s was followed by a chaotic territory exploitation that, breaking the balance between nature and culture, destroyed the identity of Italian landscape.<sup>21</sup> In this context a group of photographers – although they never officially constituted an organisation or gave themselves a name – starts reflecting about two main issues: the renewal of photography and the mutations of the landscape from domestic and familiar to unknown and stranger. Roberta Valtorta thinks that it is possible to comprehend the work of each of these authors only taking into account the reciprocal relationships and the path they walked together. The spontaneous collective identity that they acquired did not proceed from a predetermined program, but rather from the homogeneity and coherence of the projects about landscape in which they were more and more involved. They shared the same sensibility, were often friends and had mutual aims.<sup>22</sup> As the photographers and theorist Roberto Signorini explains, the protagonists of that season belong, culturally and from birth, to the generation that experienced the '68 as young people, and Luigi Ghirri was often the promoter and coordinator of their common initiatives up until his sudden death in 1992. This group became particularly visible in 1984 thanks to the project *Viaggio in Italia*,<sup>23</sup> that gathered the works of all of them: they addressed the ordinary quotidian landscape as elected place of interrogation, in order to overcome their disorientation in front of a changing reality difficult to understand. They worked on the lack, the absence, the empty spaces, the margins, the blurred territories of the urbanised and often abandoned countryside.<sup>24</sup>

What about the clouds, as to say, the sky then? Guidi has never photographed the sky as isolated subject. At the beginning he even worked with an orthochromatic film to erase the sky, like in the ancient photographs.

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<sup>20</sup> Valtorta, *In cerca dei luoghi*: 61.

<sup>21</sup> On this matter see for instance, Valerio Castronovo, *L'Italia del miracolo economico*, Rome/Bari: Laterza 2010; and Idem, *Storia economica d'Italia. Dall'Ottocento al 2020*, Turin: Einaudi 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Valtorta, *In cerca dei luoghi*: 12.

<sup>23</sup> For further details see above the paragraph "The experience of *Viaggio in Italia*" in the *Introduction*.

<sup>24</sup> See Roberto Signorini, *Nuovo paesaggio italiano: un clima culturale*, in Marisa Galbiati, Piero Pozzi, and Roberto Signorini (eds.), *Fotografia e paesaggio. La rappresentazione fotografica del territorio*, Milan: Guerini 1996, 11-34: 11-12.

«I have always preferred a white sky, as in the 19th-century photography where for technical reasons the sky disappeared altogether; It was as if it wasn't there, or it were indescribable. In actual fact each time it constitutes a doubt, a question: How can this sky be photographed? I don't know whether I can photograph it».<sup>25</sup>

He associates the representation of the sky to the technical problems of the early photographs and to the sense of deference it awakened in primitive painters, who do not dare to paint a subject so charged with theological meanings.<sup>26</sup> Eventually, he accepts the presence of the sky as unavoidable, but it interests him just as a physical phenomenon, not as symbol of transcendence. In his colour photographs «from the 1980s onwards the sky, the blue of the sky, is always present like a physical fact», observes Antonello Frongia, and Guidi specifies: [Plates II/6]

«The sky is that unknowable zone where the birds fly and beyond which lies the unreachable cosmos, where the saints, prophets and Olympian gods inhabit a mountaintop surrounded by clouds and cannot be seen. In the Middle Ages, the gods were the gold background, and the painters later used a blued ground. At first, they didn't dare paint the clouds; there was the sky with a low horizon, with a preponderance of sky. Then came the clouds on which the saints stood. I am still in some way hesitant to depict the sky, also in tribute to the 19th-century photographs that didn't record the variations of the skies, but today is impossible to ignore: the sky's part of our culture, it's a delicate subject, but why avoid it? We wouldn't be realists. I see it and I must account for it. I see that it changes, with the clouds and the rain, the atmospheric phenomenon is very interesting. Everything is a physical phenomenon [...]. But while it's a physical phenomenon, we are unable to stop ourselves from metaphorizing».<sup>27</sup>

In the next two chapters I consider two recurring subjects of Guidi's pictures: the waste and the soil. These two ordinary everyday materials will help me to explain what I am calling *Guidi's ethos of looking down*, an attitude that could be described through Daniele Del Giudice's words: «I had always walked a lot, almost always with my eyes fixed on the ground».<sup>28</sup> Although, as mentioned in the previous chapters, Guidi usually travels around the surroundings of his house by car. When he gets off, carrying his bulky field camera, he points the lens towards the ground, rather than the sky. He perhaps concentrates on a small neutral ground, pebbles, grass, maybe dirty snow drifts, paddles, rubbish, casual

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<sup>25</sup> Guidi, *Red Desert Now!*: 71.

<sup>26</sup> Conversation with the author, 22 April 2022.

<sup>27</sup> In Guidi, *Lunario*: 101.

<sup>28</sup> Del Giudice, *And Everything Else?*, in Idem, *Take-off*, 23-35: 23.

potholes in the road, the asphalt, or the tracks of the railway. Even when he is not looking down, he might be looking straight ahead of him, but not up. He recalls that the Tuscans too «looked at the ground» and that «Alberti's Renaissance perspective had no interest in the sky», because it was unsuitable to depict it.<sup>29</sup> As mentioned in chapter 1 (*Framing*), the main problem in the representation of the sky by means of geometrical methods were the clouds, because «a cloud has nothing to do with perspective, which is unable to account for it. Strictly speaking, if you use perspective, and thus photography, you can't depict clouds», as Guidi points out.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, towards the end of the nineteenth century, to the English pioneer meteorologist William Clement Ley, clouds still seemed such a vague, complicated, and intricate subject, that he defined their observation as an almost incommunicable art.<sup>31</sup>

Following these considerations, the question that I will try to answer is, if Guidi's avoidance of the sky as main subject of his photographs – in favour of trivial subjects like waste and soil – is still part of his immanent approach and materialist vision, that imbue his practice. This does not imply of course that Guidi feels attracted to objects and matter in a utilitarian sense, on the contrary, it testifies his necessity to remain close to concreteness. It reflects his attitude to accept failures and errors, the decay of the matter – especially of photographic materials –, the precariousness and the impossibility of perfection. [Plate II/6; see also the plates in chapter 4 (*Mistake*)]

Antonello Frongia claims, that the official “profile” of Guidi is photographer of landscape, or even better, “photographer of the marginal landscape”. During the 1970s he recognised himself in the spirit of the exhibitions *New Topographic* and *The Extended Document*, both organised at the George Eastman House in 1975.<sup>32</sup> Apart from situating Guidi inside the experience of the Italian landscape school of photography – an operation already successfully and thoroughly achieved by other Italian scholars such as Claudio Marra, Roberto Signorini, and Roberta Valtorta – my purpose is to underline how the choice to photograph elements of the landscape such as rubbish or earth is connected to those experience, in so far as it carries through that new way of looking at the landscape. The latter is no longer considered as a collection of postcards views, but as evidence of the traces and wounds inflicted by anthropisation, especially visible in the so called “marginal” territories, where the countryside undergoes urbanisation without being totally incorporated into the city, but remaining a spurious, unfinished object. In this sense, Roberto

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<sup>29</sup> Guidi, *Lunario*: 101.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> See Wolf, *Wie man Wolken beobachtet*: 79-80.

<sup>32</sup> Frongia, *Il paesaggio che guarda me*: 396 and 411. See William Jenkins (ed.), *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape*, ex. cat. Rochester New York: International Museum of Photography at the George Eastman House 1975; Idem (ed.), *The Extended Document*, ex. cat. Rochester New York: International Museum of Photography at the George Eastman House 1975.

Signorini speaks of a «weak landscape» establishing a connection between this kind of photography and the issues raised by the coeval philosophical positions of the *weak thought* grown in the 1960s and the 1970s as a reaction to the crisis of Marxism and of the great political and cultural utopias and historical narrations.<sup>33</sup> Two books very much appreciated by Italian landscape photographers are *Getting lost. The man without environment* by the anthropologist Franco La Cecla with a foreword by Gianni Vattimo of 1988 and the Italian edition of *Non-lieux* by Marc Augé appeared in 1993.<sup>34</sup>

Trying to find an explanation to this new development, Roberta Valtorta proposes an original as much as valid comparison between this kind of photography of places grown in a Protestant or a Catholic milieu. Without referring in any way to the private religiosity of the single photographer, Valtorta describes the first one – influenced by a “religion of the sin” – as bare, roughly documentary and almost austere, not totally open to aesthetically rescue the image of places devastated by the economic development; whereas the latter – arose under a “religion of forgiveness” – as more inclusive and sympathetic, inclined towards an aesthetic mediation in front of the inexorable disaster of the landscape. While photographers such as Lewis Baltz or Robert Adams, for instance, speak of the necessity to resort to a degree zero photography that must stubbornly tell the truth about a provisional, monotonous, and almost inhumane landscape, Italian documentary photography – according to Valtorta – is quite peculiar: it looks for the image depth, does not disdain a sort of epic of the ordinary, and all in all does not completely abdicate beauty.<sup>35</sup>

The gaze addressed by Italian photographers to the amorphous and orphan areas of the landscape is embedded in the modern tradition of the so called “aesthetics of ugliness” which begins – in a systematic way – with the famous essay by Karl Rosenkranz in 1853 and culminates with Theodor W. Adorno’s aesthetic theory. In the introduction of his book Rosenkranz admits that:

«Die Aesthetik des Häßlichen macht die Beschäftigung auch mit solchen Begriffen zur Pflicht, deren Besprechung oder auch nur Erwähnung, sonst wohl als ein Verstoß gegen den Guten Ton betrachtet werden kann. Wer eine Pathologie und Thera-

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<sup>33</sup> See Signorini, *Nuovo paesaggio italiano: un clima culturale*: 20-21. About the notion of “weak thought” coined in the 1980s see Pier Aldo Rovatti and Gianni Vattimo, *Premessa*, in Idem (eds.), *Il pensiero debole* (1983), Milan: Feltrinelli 1995, 7-11; and Gianni Vattimo, *Dialettica, differenza, pensiero debole*, in Rovatti and Vattimo (eds.), *Il pensiero debole*, 12-28.

<sup>34</sup> See Franco La Cecla, *Perdersi. L'uomo senza ambiente* (1988), Rome/Bari: Editori Laterza 1996, VII-XIV and Augé, *Non-lieux*, op. cit. (It. tr. Dominique Rolland and Carlo Milani, *Nonluoghi. Introduzione a una antropologia della surmodernità*, Milan: Elèuthera 1993). About the reception of these writings by Italian photographers see Valtorta, *In cerca dei luoghi*: 78.

<sup>35</sup> See Valtorta, *In cerca dei luoghi*: 75-77.

pie der Krankheiten in die Hand nimmt, macht sich auch auf das Ekelhafte gefaßt. Und so auch hier».<sup>36</sup>

Over one century later, politicising Rosenkranz's considerations about the category of the "ugly" Adorno preaches:

«Kunst muß das als häßlich Verfemte zu ihrer Sache machen. [...] Der neuen Kunst für das Ekelhafte und physisch Widerliche, dem die Apologeten des Bestehenden nichts Stärkeres entgegenzuhalten wissen, als daß das Bestehende schon häßlich genug sei und darum die Kunst zu eitel Schönheit verpflichtet, schlägt das kritisch materialistische Motiv durch, indem Kunst durch ihre autonomen Gestalten Herrschaft verklagt, auch die zum geistigen Prinzip sublimierte, und für das zeugt, was jene verdrängt und verleugnet. Noch als Schein bleibt es in der Gestalt, was es jenseits der Gestalt war».<sup>37</sup>

The aesthetics of ugliness has gained interest within the art of the twentieth century in parallel with the development of the industrial civilisation and the resulting devastation of nature.<sup>38</sup> Following Adorno's analysis the philosopher Remo Bodei speaks of an increasing refusal of beauty, considered unproblematic and taken for granted, that led art to introduce dissonances, in both its languages and themes, with the purpose to make the pain of the world be heard, like a kind of weeping.<sup>39</sup> Art, therefore, must care about what society has repressed and thrown away, to try to express the meaning of an increasingly chaotic world full of contradictions, to which it is difficult to relate. From this point of view, the contemporary landscape, plagued by mediocrity and destruction, can best represent such condition of rejection on a descriptive, conceptual, and symbolic level.<sup>40</sup>

All that is part of Guidi's ethos, because it defines what matters to him: the attention to marginal details, the overcoming of a resistance to look what nobody wants to see, accepting it because it is present and deserves the same attention reserved to the monument. In the choice of marginal and deprecated subjects like waste or soil it is impossible not to acknowledge the expression of a precise vision of the world, if not even a political statement. It is a kind of photography supported by a strong ethical-political sensibility, a vision that, in the attempt to unify the natural with the artificial, reads the landscape as a place to inhabit rather than appropriate. The aesthetical tension of the work must cooper-

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<sup>36</sup> Karl Rosenkranz, *Ästhetik des Häßlichen*, Königsberg: Verlag der Gebrüder Bornträger 1853, 6-7.

<sup>37</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie* (1970, posthumous), edited by Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 1998: 78-79.

<sup>38</sup> See Valtorta, *In cerca dei luoghi*: 75-77.

<sup>39</sup> See Remo Bodei, *Le forme del bello* (1995), Bologna: il Mulino 2017: 168-169.

<sup>40</sup> Valtorta, *In cerca dei luoghi*: 77.



ate in harmony with the ethical issue, as already stated by the protagonists of the Neorealism season, that lies behind Italian landscape photography. As already mentioned, this awareness was shared by the American photographers of the new topographic movement, such as Robert Adams, who confirms that is not possible to represent the landscape in a neutral manner:

«There is always a subjective aspect in landscape art, something in the picture that tells us as much about who is behind the camera as about what is in front of it. Pictures are never so tautological as, say Gertrude Stein's description of a rose. For one thing the subject is too big: a normal lens, though it can cover a rose, can never cover a whole landscape, just as when without a camera we stand in the middle of a field and after turning full circle must decide what part of the horizon to face».<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Robert Adams, *Truth and Landscape*, in Idem, *Beauty in Photography*, 11-20: 15.



# 5. Waste<sup>1</sup>

«The photographer has learned to deal with what he has, to face it for what it is, and to render it in its own environment with dignity and seriousness. Another artist would have found nothing to picture».<sup>2</sup>

## Hasard objectif and ephemerality

It is an elemental fact that photographs are things: whereas the prevailing tendency – under the influence of a post-modern approach – mostly ignores the material aspects of photography, considering it substantially as a visual phenomenon, photographs are indeed objects with a “social life”, that involves material aspects.<sup>3</sup> A photograph is indeed a three-dimensional thing, not just a two-dimensional image.

«As such, photographs exist materially in the world, as chemical deposits on paper, as image mounted on a multitude of different sized, shaped, coloured and decorated cards, as subject to additions to their surface or as drawing their meaning from

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<sup>1</sup>I am choosing the word “waste” because it signifies not only garbage, but also desert (wasteland), spoilage and imbalance. «The word “waste” in Old and Middle English originally referred to a land or an environment that was unsuitable to sustain human habitation, but as the Middle English lexicon expanded to replace this older sense of the term with equivalents like “wilderness” and “desert”, new uses of waste emerged that began to indicate moral censure» (John Scanlan, *On Garbage*, London: Reaktion Books 2005: 22.

<sup>2</sup> Gerald Norland, *Frederick Sommer. An Exhibition of Photographs at Philadelphia College of Art*, ex. cat. Philadelphia: Philadelphia College of Art 1968: 6.

<sup>3</sup> See Elisabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, *Introduction: photographs as objects*, in Idem (eds.), *Photographs Objects Histories. On the materiality of images*, London and New York: Routledge 2005: 1-15. About the concept of “social life of objects” see Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things* (1986), New York: Cambridge University Press 2013.

presentational forms such as frames and albums. Photographs [...] have “volume, opacity, tactility and physical presence in the world”». <sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, we normally tend to see what a photograph *is* in term of what a photograph *depicts*, suppressing our consciousness of what the photograph is in *material* terms. «Materiality translates the abstract and representational “photography” into “photographs” as objects that exist in time and space». <sup>5</sup>

Guidi never stops remembering us the materiality of the photographs, by writing or stamping on their margins, pasting them on cardboards, showing the vignette of the masking or the black edges of the contact prints, and so on. [Plates v/1-7] In his conception, a photograph must stop pretending not to be a photograph, an object made of paper and acids, that might eventually deteriorate, fade or take on new tonalities: greener, yellower, bluer or redder. As a matter of fact, Italo Zannier writes, that Guidi sometimes uses: «acids, often spoiled, even oxidised, but sometimes complicit of otherwise impossible results». <sup>6</sup> This acceptance allows him to play with what André Breton has called *hasard objectif*, a concept that Claude Lévi-Strauss recalls with regard to the result obtained through the work of the bricoleur, a result that arises always from a compromise between the structure of the instrumental ensemble and that of the original project. <sup>7</sup> If the concrete realisation inevitably shifts from the initial intention, it is precisely this effect of imponderable approximation, this «consécration de l'accident au service de l'exécution» that, according to Lévi-Strauss, confers vitality to «les arts archaïques, les arts primitifs, et les périodes 'primitives' des arts savants, [...] les seuls qui ne vieillissent pas». <sup>8</sup>

Guidi seems to apply this principle to his own practice, and coherently affirms that a photograph could never be a finished work, because time and chances will always operate on its materiality, changing it and leaving traces of their passage on it. For instance, if an error during the development produces some stains on the negatives, he keeps them, nonetheless. Following the logic of the machine and the chemistry, he accepts the stains as evidence of the process, conscious that in photographic production, ephemerality is an unavoidable part of the creative process. <sup>9</sup> [Plate iv/15 in chapter 4 (*Mistake*)] As a matter of fact, Roland Barthes wrote, with a bit of brutality, that a photograph

«a communément le sort du papier (périssable), mais, même si elle est fixée sur des supports plus durs, elle n'en est pas moins mortelle: comme un organisme vivant,

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<sup>4</sup> See Edwards and Hart, *Introduction: photographs as objects*: 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ivi: 2.

<sup>6</sup> Zannier, *Guido Guidi. La Lunga Posa*: 10.

<sup>7</sup> André Breton, *L'amour fou*, Paris: Gallimard, 1937, 26-127.

<sup>8</sup> Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée Sauvage*: 43. On this matter see also chapter 4 (*Mistake*) of the present work.

<sup>9</sup> Guidi and Frongia, *Architecture that does not wish to self-destroy*: 112.

elle naît à même les grains d'argent qui germent, elle s'épanouit un moment, puis vieillit. Attaquée par la lumière, l'humidité, elle pâlit, s'exténue, disparaît».<sup>10</sup>

Eventually, Barthes came to the conclusion that «Je ne puis transformer la Photo qu'en déchet: ou le tiroir ou la corbeille».<sup>11</sup> Guidi, instead, looks forward to these changes that to him do not diminish the value of a photograph, but they *au contraire* bestow to the photograph – both intended as the image and as the concrete object – its peculiarity. A similar idea is not new in photography, if already Susan Sontag in the 1970s wrote:

«Photographs, when they get scrofulous, tarnished, stained, cracked, fade still look good; do often look better. [...] The photographer is willy-nilly engaged in the enterprise of antiquing reality, and photographs are themselves instant antiques. [...] The contingency of photographs confirms that everything is perishable».<sup>12</sup>

Not to mention, that Siegfried Kracauer too defined photography «als ein Gemenge, das sich zum Teil aus Abfällen zusammensetzt».<sup>13</sup> As a matter of fact in our affluent society images and waste are two of the main products of the everyday life.<sup>14</sup>

## Everyday waste

In his book about waste and consumerism Guido Viale argues that the garbage constitutes a world symmetrical to that of commodities: a world that shows us the real nature of the products, that populate our everyday life. Indeed, sooner or later, all manufactured goods are doomed to become rubbish (nature, on the other hand, does not produce rubbish). One day – if it has not already happened – the amount of garbage will exceed that of circulating wares. Despite its centrality inside the life cycle of goods, the issue of garbage has found relatively scarce resonance in economic studies while, in exchange, has stimulated the sensibility of visual artists and writers.<sup>15</sup>

Already in the 1970s the problem of waste production as counterpart to the production of goods, was there for all to see. In those years the concept of artmaking with

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<sup>10</sup> Barthes, *La chambre claire*: 145-146.

<sup>11</sup> Ivi: 145-146.

<sup>12</sup> Sontag, *On Photography*: 71.

<sup>13</sup> Kracauer, *Die Photographie*: 86.

<sup>14</sup> «Photography has become the quintessential art of affluent, wasteful, restless societies» (Sontag, *On Photography*: 63). On the concept of "affluent society" see John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, Boston/New York: Houghton Mifflin 1958.

<sup>15</sup> See Guido Viale, *Un mondo usa e getta. La civiltà dei rifiuti e i rifiuti della civiltà* (1994), Milan: Feltrinelli 2000: 7-19.

garbage grew as emblematic expression of the human condition within a disposable world, under the influence of consumerism.<sup>16</sup> In 1972 Italo Calvino published *Invisible cities*, a work dominated by the uncontrolled advance of the garbage.<sup>17</sup> The invisible city of Leonia provides the perfect example of the relationship between consumerism and garbage. In Leonia everything is new every day, while outside the city borders the waste accumulates in huge heaps.

«The city of Leonia refashions itself every day: every morning the people wake between fresh sheets, wash with just-unwrapped cakes of soap, wear brand-new clothing, take from the latest model refrigerator still unopened tins. [...] On the sidewalks, encased in spotless plastic bags, the remains of yesterday's Leonia await the garbage truck. [...] Nobody wonders where, each day, they carry their load of refuse. Outside the city, surely...».<sup>18</sup>

Leonia's opulence can be measured, not so much by the things that each day are manufactured, but rather by the things that each day are thrown away to make room for the new.

«The more Leonia's talent for making new materials excels, the more the rubbish improves in quality, resists time, the elements, fermentations, combustions. A fortress of indestructible leftovers surrounds Leonia, dominating it on every side, like a chain of mountains. [...] A tin can, an old tire, an unravelled wine flask, if it rolls towards Leonia, is enough to bring with it an avalanche of unmated shoes, calendars of bygone years, withered flowers, submerging the city in its own past, which it had tried in vain to reject. [...] A cataclysm will flatten the sordid mountain range, cancelling every trace of the metropolis always dressed in new clothes».<sup>19</sup>

Of course, the Leonians prefer to ignore the existence of those mountains of rubbish, even when the smell reaches their fresh spick-and-span homes. If they had to see those mountains, they would be horrified.

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<sup>16</sup> Ave Appiano, *Estetica del rottame: consumo del mito e miti del consumo nell'arte*, Rome: Meltemi 1999: 135.

<sup>17</sup> Italo Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, Turin: Einaudi 1972. See also Alessandro Zaccuri, *Non è tutto da buttare. Arte e racconto della spazzatura*, Milan: Editrice La Scuola 2016: 42.

<sup>18</sup> Italo Calvino, *Le città invisibili* (1972), Eng. tr. William Weaver, *Invisible Cities*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1974: 114.

<sup>19</sup> Calvino, *Invisible Cities*: 115-116.

«They would abhor the mountains' ugliness and detest them for blotting the landscape – for being foul, unsavoury, offending and altogether revolting, for harbouring dangers they know and dangers unlike anything they knew before».<sup>20</sup>

Once something has been cast off, nobody wants to think about or to see it any longer.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, as Lewis Baltz wrote in conclusion of his essay, emblematic titled *Konsumerterror*:

«One of the difficulties of being “in the world” is that one must, finally, “be” in all of it, perhaps especially those parts of it that habit, or fear, or distaste have banished to the frontiers of our consciousness».<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand, in a text almost coeval to Calvino's book, Gianni Celati observed that it is precisely in those spaces, marginalised or simply forgotten by memory and tradition, that we can find the otherness, the difference, without which History becomes tautology.<sup>23</sup> Guidi's «liberated gaze»<sup>24</sup> seems especially attracted by such marginal, neglected, abandoned places, as Roberta Valtorta confirms too:

«for Guidi, there are no fragments of the world, as “empty” or banal as they may seem, that are absent in meaning, and above all, it is not man's role to identify superior hierarchies of importance that establish definitive and absolute meanings».<sup>25</sup>  
[Plates v/5-12]

## *The garbage in art*

In the text for the catalogue published on the occasion of a popular exhibition of the 1990s – *When trash becomes art* – Lea Vergine rhetorically asks whether the use of dross should be considered as a symptom of social desertion from rules, good habits and conscience. The

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<sup>20</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Wasted Lives. Modernity and its Outcasts*, Cambridge and Oxford (UK): Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2004: 2.

<sup>21</sup> Calvino, *Invisible Cities*: 114.

<sup>22</sup> Baltz, *Konsumerterror*: 76.

<sup>23</sup> Gianni Celati, *Il bazar archeologico* (1975) in Idem, *Finzioni occidentali: fabulazione, comicità e scrittura*, Turin: Einaudi 1986, 185-215: 209. Celati's text arose from a project for a magazine, conceived together with Italo Calvino, Carlo Ginzburg, Enzo Melandri and Guido Neri. The aim was to develop a series of topics concerning the concepts of trace, residual, fragment. All these elements define a region of archaeology or of *the other side* of history, that constitutes the background of the infinite heterogeneous traces of the modern city (ivi: 212-213).

<sup>24</sup> Costantini, *L'insistenza dello sguardo*, in Costantini and Zannier, *L'insistenza dello sguardo*, 11-15: 12.

<sup>25</sup> Roberta Valtorta, Guido Guidi's Open Photography, in Frongia and Venturi (eds.), Guido Guidi. In Between Cities: 173.

artist, she wrote, is a flexible figure: he/she is the one who brings about utopia, desire, dream, play, mockery. Socially, the artist personifies the error, because if you deal with rubbish, you never walk away clean, you cannot remain immune. Rubbish is unpredictable, threatening, and ambiguous.<sup>26</sup> Even from a linguistic perspective, the garbage stands in the way of any unambiguous definition. The specific nomenclature is so various, to appear almost endless: rubbish, garbage, refuse, waste, filth, muck, grime, dirt, trash, scrap, reject, junk, rottenness, remaining, leftover, residual, and so on... A difficulty of nomination and classification, that betrays the fear of the unspeakable.<sup>27</sup>

The garbage is the tragic face of the goods, that in the work of art acquires a language, turns into visual culture.<sup>28</sup> During the twentieth century, the visual art developed an "anti-figurative" aesthetics, that accepts ruins, rags, debris, and recycled materials as objects of creativity. To give form to their ideas, the artists, who refuse the noble materials, equip themselves with fragments, debris, garbage, junks, that they find, select, and collect in the marginal and uncontrolled places of everyday life. In the hands of the artist, all these obsolete, dusty, shattered, smelly objects undergo a transformation (are adapted, assembled, frayed, welded, pasted, tied) and are assigned the precise limits of a structure (set down, hung, embedded).<sup>29</sup>

From the break caused by the twentieth century avant-gardes up to the new artistic tendencies, new relationships with the ordinary object have come into play, and the garbage-god has been welcomed into art, acquiring more and more stratified and complex sociological and anthropological meanings, that allow to express insignificance, indifference, imperfection.<sup>30</sup> From the Futurists to Kurt Schwitters, from Pablo Picasso to Marcel Duchamp, the intention was to prove that even with torn paper, ropes, strings, scraps and used travel tickets – i.e. with materials considered vile – it was possible to create artefacts with an aesthetic value, just like using noble and traditional materials. At the time, it was an act of protest and provocation. Later on, in the course of the 1960s and 1970s, an ironical and nostalgic use of the garbage was endorsed to denounce consumerism and manifest social critique – as in movements such as Fluxus, Poesia Visiva, Nouveau Réalisme, Pop Art. In the 1980s and 1990s instead, the poetic appropriation of discarded, expired objects acquired a sarcastic character, «revealing the sense of an apotropaic ritual, a sort of exorcism against our ulcerous end-of-the-century distresses».<sup>31</sup> With the aim to explore

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<sup>26</sup> Lea Vergine, *Quando i rifiuti diventano arte*, in Eadem (ed.), *Trash. Quando i rifiuti diventano arte*, ex. cat., Palazzo delle Albere Trento, and Archivio del '900 Rovereto, Milan: Electa 1997, 19-27: 23.

<sup>27</sup> See Zaccuri, *Non è tutto da buttare*: 12.

<sup>28</sup> See Vergine, *Quando i rifiuti diventano arte*: 20.

<sup>29</sup> See Appiano, *Estetica del rottame*: 16-18.

<sup>30</sup> Ivi: 10.

<sup>31</sup> See Vergine, *Quando i rifiuti diventano arte*: 21.



and expose the banal, the ordinary, the everyday – as to say the background noise of our life – nothing deserves to remain excluded from the “fence” of the art-work.<sup>32</sup>

### *The photographer as ragpicker*

In the visual art, it seems that especially photography has established, since its origin, a close relationship to everything discarded, marginalised, rejected, and despised. For instance, in the late 1920s, photography’s indexical quality attracted George Bataille, by virtue of its intrinsic anti-aesthetic characteristics. According to John Roberts, the presentational strength of photographs as “base evidence” supported Bataille’s elaboration of base materialism, as to say, the theory of the revolutionary power of the abject, by which he meant all those forms of transgression or low behaviour that unsettled prevailing hierarchies and systems.

«Photography strength lies in its ignoble appeal, the fact that its powers of resemblance are in a privileged position to bear witness to the “lowest of the low” and the abjectness of the world».<sup>33</sup>

Half a century later, Susan Sontag restated the proximity between photography and rejected materials by comparing the activity of the photographer – epitomised in the figure of Eugène Atget in the Parisian streets – to that of the ragpicker, described by Baudelaire as alter-ego of the modern poet, and appropriated by Walter Benjamin to metaphorise the historian. Sontag observes, that from the start, the photographers set themselves the task of recording a disappearing world, animated by a passion that, even when it appears to be for the present, is linked to a sense of the past. In principle, photography «evinced an inveterate fondness for trash, eyesores, rejects, peeling surfaces, odd stuff, kitsch».<sup>34</sup> From the idea that a photograph is essentially «an affirmation of the subject’s thereness», derives the adoption of «an uncompromisingly egalitarian attitude towards subject matter».<sup>35</sup>

«The Surrealist ragpicker’s acuity was directed to finding beautiful what other people found ugly or without interest and relevance – bric-a-brac, naïve or pop objects, urban debris. [...] Photographs themselves satisfy many of the criteria for Surrealist approbation, being ubiquitous, cheap, unprepossessing objects. A painting is com-

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<sup>32</sup> Ivi: 20-23.

<sup>33</sup> Roberts, *The Art of Interruption*: 103.

<sup>34</sup> Sontag, *On Photography*: 70.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

missioned or bought; a photograph is found (in album or drawers), cut out (of newspaper and magazines), or easily taken oneself».<sup>36</sup>

A similar conception about photography was expressed a few years earlier by Pierre Bourdieu, who paraphrasing Hegel suggested, that no other art is so exposed to such degree of scorn, like the one, that everybody could assume to master without ado.<sup>37</sup> On this point Guidi claims to agree with Walker Evans, that there is actually quite a delight in working with a disdained medium, mostly despised.<sup>38</sup> Actually Evans even confessed, that as he started to make his first photographs, he felt almost ashamed, because he thought «a “photographer” was a figure held in great disdain» and photographing «a minor thing to be doing».<sup>39</sup>

Never ashamed of the medium he chose and faithful to the definition of photographer as ragpicker, Guidi collects images of waste, loads of garbage, debris... an attitude that earned him the nickname of «photographer of the *rovinassi* [“debris” in Venetian dialect]». <sup>40</sup> He points his lens – in the 1970s just like today – on marginal places and details, that nobody wants to see, even less capture and fix on paper. Antonello Frongia underlines, that especially during the years 1983-1984, Guidi operated a true iconographic revolution, including in the visual field subjects still not accepted by the Italian tradition. He treated scrapped materials with the same descriptive precision usually accorded to historical subjects: the abhorred, formless things lying on the ground turned into the focal point of the image.<sup>41</sup> [Plates v/13-16].

Although Guidi’s unconventional choice of subjects was a novelty for Italy – that opened up a new dimensions especially for younger generations – on the international scene, his was not an isolated voice.<sup>42</sup> In his careful observation of the overseas practice, he was particularly interested in the works by photographers «of the frontier industrial/natural» such as Lewis Baltz.<sup>43</sup> The bleak, blasted and chaotic aspect of the «landscapes of disorder» depicted in series like *Park City* (1978-1980) or *San Quentin Point* (1981-1983) surely affected the aesthetic aspect of his pictures of «endsites», although he never embraced the manifest political engagement of his American colleague.<sup>44</sup> They both contem-

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<sup>36</sup> Ivi: 71.

<sup>37</sup> Bourdieu, *Photography. A Middle-Brow Art*: 5.

<sup>38</sup> See Katz, *Interview with Walker Evans*: 88; and Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi, Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>39</sup> See Katz, *Interview with Walker Evans*: 84.

<sup>40</sup> Dahó, *Through the empty room*: n.n. About Guidi’s interest for neglected things see also the *Introduction*.

<sup>41</sup> Antonello Frongia, “*At Least a Stone*”: 98.

<sup>42</sup> Benigni, *The city within the city*: 133.

<sup>43</sup> See Lewis Baltz, *(Non) simulacri*, in Marisa Galbiati (ed.), *Lo sguardo discreto – habitat e fotografia*, Milan: Trachida Editori 1991, 145-154: 150.

<sup>44</sup> However, in his criticism against “concerned photography” Baltz himself affirmed that to influ-

plate the abyss of the ordinary landscape, where nature is «what is left over after every other demand has been satisfied»; they both prefer sequences, rather than individual photographs, to avoid the risk of giving «a very limited and tendentious view of external reality»; they both usually title their picture with the exact location; they both invite the observer not to forget, that «much significant information is about what take place outside the borders of the image».<sup>45</sup> [Plates v/17, 18] However, while Baltz's attempt is to explicitly denounce the burgeoning exploitation of the land for futile leisure purposes, Guidi – despite sharing similar principles – does not wilfully aim at raising ethical or political issues, but simply accepts that his photographs automatically record the forms and events of the phenomenal world for what they are – the land holds *volens nolens* visible evidences, traces, vestiges of its use. Undeniably, his stance cannot avoid being implicitly political, nevertheless not as deliberate outcome of a project, but as a natural consequence of his ethos. The advice by Lewis Baltz about the appropriacy and the risk of choosing to photograph those kinds of subjects deserves to be mentioned:

«If photographs [...] have a special power to confront us with aspects of our collective experience that we would otherwise prefer remain hidden, [their] mere existence affirms some hope that something of dignity can be rescued from the bleakest and least promising of circumstances. [...] (It is a positive quality only in moderation and only when exercised with some moral restraint. Taken to its extremes it would become obscenity, an excuse for anything that offered some photographic possibility)».<sup>46</sup>

Guidi considers corroded objects as more authentic, more real, than brand new ones, without imperfections.

«In this I have perhaps been inspired by Piero di Cosimo: Vasari noted that Piero “sometimes stopped to contemplate a wall where sick people spat at length...”<sup>47</sup>

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ence social or political issues, images are no substitute for direct political struggle (Lewis Baltz, *American Photography in the 1970s: Too Old to Rock, Too Young to Die* (1985), in Idem, *Texts*, Göttingen: Steidl 2012, 47-75: 63).

<sup>45</sup> See Lewis Baltz (*Non*) *simulacri*: 150; and Lewis Baltz, *Notes on Park City*, in Idem, *Texts*, 39-46. Baltz worked most extensively around Park City – a suburb near Salt Lake City – between 1978 and 1979. The photographic book appeared in 1980.

<sup>46</sup> Baltz, *Konsumerterror*: 76.

<sup>47</sup> Giorgio Vasari, *Vita di Piero di Cosimo pittor Fiorentino*, in Idem, *Delle Vite de' più eccellenti Pittori Scultori et Architettori. Terza parte*, Florence: i Giunti 1568, 20-26: 21: «Fermavasi tallhora a considerare un muro, dove lungamente fusse stato sputato da persone malate, et ne cavava le battaglie de' cavagli, et le più fantastiche città, et più gran paesi, che si vedesse mai; simil faceva de' nuvoli de l'aria».

Without reaching this point, I have always been attracted by corrosion, by shattered walls, by stains». <sup>48</sup>

Besides garbage, he does not disdain to photograph stains, drippings, rust and sings of deterioration on walls. [Plates v/19, 20] In appreciating the corroded object, what remains, the ruins, Guidi follows the example of two key figures of his formation: Carlo Scarpa – who was his teacher at the faculty of Architecture in Venice – and Michelangelo Antonioni – whose work he first met in 1963, during his university years in Venice, thanks to a lecture by Bruno Zevi (admittedly rather critical towards the director) –. Guidi reminds that even Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologiae* speaks of *vestigium*, of traces, of the ashes from a fire. <sup>49</sup> The rust, the cracks in the concrete, the crumbling walls «are all traces of what has been». <sup>50</sup> Perhaps it would not be wrong to associate Guidi's interest in garbage to his interest in time, since time «fundamentally conditions the creation of garbage in that it provides the framework within which things become corruptible and useless». <sup>51</sup>

## Is the “scarto” just a useless material?

Every time something is distinguished, separated from something else that stands apart from, or in opposition to it, this operation always originates a leftover. Actually «garbage arrives at its fate because it either suffers or effects some disconnection – it is the separation of one part from some greater whole». <sup>52</sup> Yet, it is interesting to notice that in Italian the verb “scartare” does not only mean to separate, reject, throw away, discard – what is considered useless or old –, but also *to swerve*. The “scarto” is a sudden and unexpected lateral movement, that can put a horse in a vantage position during a race, for example. The swerve provides a change of position and of vision, that allows to advance and expands the gaze. The move of the “scarto”, the deviation, the change in direction provokes an overturn of values. <sup>53</sup> In 1989 Paolo Costantini precisely used the word “scarto”, with such an acceptance of “swerve”, to describe Guidi's approach to «the semantic structure of an artistic product». For Costantini, the way Guidi uses the camera – like for instance the “move” of tilting the horizon relinquishing the orthogonality of the frame – is comparable to the discontinuous move of the knight in the game of chess, in the sense, that it

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<sup>48</sup> Guidi and Frongia, *Architecture that does not wish to self-destroy*: 112.

<sup>49</sup> The reflection about the fire appears in Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (1265-1274), Pt. I, Q. 43, Art. 7.

<sup>50</sup> Guidi quoted in Antonello Frongia, *The vestiges of what was*: 71.

<sup>51</sup> Scanlan, *On Garbage*: 37.

<sup>52</sup> Ivi: 40-41.

<sup>53</sup> Zaccuri, *Non è tutto da buttare*: 6.

provokes «a “swerve” (scarto) with respect to the real». And as just mentioned above, it is indeed the “scarto” as swerve, but also as otherness, which can give start to «a process of “estrangement” to try to renew our sense of sight».<sup>54</sup>

In the chapter about the error (chapter 4), I compared the photographic mistake to the Freudian lapsus (the error made in everyday life). Now I suggest the possibility to consider the waste (the “scarto” in its double meaning of lateral move and rejected object) as another of the forms of everyday mistakes. Sure enough, we produce waste on daily basis, even if we prefer to ignore it, conceal it, like an error which we feel ashamed of. Nevertheless, from the analysis of the garbage produced by a person, it is possible to understand a lot about his/her everyday life habits, manias, and routines, just like from the lapsus linguae or the photographic lapsus (more or less, unintentional). People might forget, omit, or lie, but their rubbish always says the truth.

A small piece of rubbish, an empty can of sardines floating on the sea is the focus of a famous essay on vision by Jacques Lacan.<sup>55</sup> The can is noticed, because it breaks the perfection of the sea water surface: the “scarto” (*waste*) provokes the “scarto” (*swerve*). The sun rays strike the can and make it shine. But the can in the sea is an alien element, evidence of the industrial food industry. In some sense, the piece of garbage in Lacan’s account can be compared to Barthes’ punctum: the detail, that breaking the uniformity of the photographic space catches all the attention.<sup>56</sup> Petit-Jean sees the can of sardines and exclaims: «Tu vois, cette boîte? Tu la vois? Eh bien, elle, elle te voit pas!» Lacan explains that this funny episode is quite instructive. If Petit-Jean claims that the can does not see me, it is because «en un certain sens, tout de même, elle me regarde».<sup>57</sup> If I see the can, the can sees me. Although he never mentions Lacan but rather Merleau-Ponty,<sup>58</sup> Guidi has often repeated that when he sees an object through the ground glass, that same object looks back at him, establishing an exchange of gazes between him photographing and the subject of his photograph.<sup>59</sup>

The Lacanian can of sardines reminds me about a series of close-up diptychs of small refuses made by Guidi mostly during the 1970s: a crumpled newspaper, an empty

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<sup>54</sup> See Costantini, *Guido Guidi. Rubiera*: n.n.

<sup>55</sup> Jaques Lacan, *Le séminaire de Jaques-Lacan. Livre XI. Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse 1964*, edited by Jaques-Alain Miller, Paris: Éditions du Seuil 1973.

<sup>56</sup> As it is well known, Barthes distinguishes between *studium* and *punctum*, two opposite but complementary ways of reading the content of a photograph. The *studium* is the sum of all the cultural, historical, and social information that we can deduce from a photograph. The *punctum* instead derives from a spontaneous and subjective reaction to a detail in the photograph; it is that element in the picture that instinctively catches our attention, even if it is not the main subject (see Barthes, *La chambre claire*: 47-51).

<sup>57</sup> Lacan, *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*: 88-89.

<sup>58</sup> One of Guidi’s references is Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sens et non-sens*, Paris: Nagel 1948 (It. tr. Paolo Caruso, *Senso e non senso*, Milan: Il Saggiatore 1962).

<sup>59</sup> In Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

packet of cigarettes, an empty packet of condoms, a fragment of torn paper with the image of a little hand, a box of matches with the picture of an architectonic monument, seen through the frame of an archway, that recalls the black vignette, framing the photographic space of many of his photographs. [Plates v/21-25] Perhaps they were just photographic exercises because each of the couple shows the same object seen from the same point of view, but with a different zoom. Still today, Guidi would sometimes indulge on such narrow close-ups, from which the context is almost excluded, to record «the tiny yet relevant existence» of ordinary small things casually found on the ground. Valtorta defines those kind of pictures as random still-life in the landscape, as *objets trouvés*.<sup>60</sup> The close observation of the worn out object, the fragment, the waste isolated from its context, detached from its original purpose – to behold its scratches, dents, patina, and rust – is a practice, that links Guidi's approach to Dada and Surrealism, but also to Art Informel, intended not only as a private and introspective phenomenon, but rather as a moment of immediate contact with the world, valuing contingent and unexpected facts within a primal and elemental anthropological condition.<sup>61</sup> Following the rituality of the *chiffonnier*, Guidi looks down, at the ground, in order to find and rescue all sort of junk, relics of various origins and fragments of old objects, already transformed by time and weather. Still recalling the metaphor of the ragpicker, we can adopt Benjamin's words on his own working method as historian, to describe Guidi's behaviour with the garbage:

«Ich habe nichts zu sagen. Nur zu zeigen. Ich werde nichts Wertvolles entwenden und mir keine geistvollen Formulierungen aneignen. Aber die Lumpen, den Abfall: die will ich nicht inventarisieren sondern sie auf die einzig mögliche Weise zu ihrem Rechte kommen lassen: sie verwenden».<sup>62</sup>

The image of the little hand impressed on the torn piece of paper reminded me about a more recent photograph, *Calais, France, 1996*, where a red glove abandoned on the ground appears. [Plates v/26-27] This time Guidi does not present a close-up of the *objet trouvé*, but a wide view of the landscape, where the glove lies quietly near the margin of the photographic space. Despite its eccentric position the glove, like Lacan's can of sardines, owns the attractive power of Barthes punctum: «Le punctum d'une photo, c'est ce hasard qui, en elle, me point (mais aussi me meurtrit, me poigne)».<sup>63</sup> Anything can function as punctum, no matter how small or insignificant it is, the punctum is also: puncture, small hole,

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<sup>60</sup> Valtorta, *Guido Guidi a Milano e in altri luoghi/Guido Guidi in Milan and Other Places*: 140.

<sup>61</sup> See Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*: 11-13.

<sup>62</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk. Aufzeichnungen und Materialien*, in Rolf Tiedemann (ed.), *Gesammelte Schriften V/1*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 1982: 574 (Fragment N I a, 8).

<sup>63</sup> Barthes, *La chambre claire*: 49.

small stain, small cut.<sup>64</sup> It catches the attention in an instinctive and unexpected way. It is not the main subject of the picture and usually its presence is not intentional.

«Il se trouve dans le champ de la chose photographiée comme un supplément à la fois inévitable et gracieux [...] il dit seulement ou bien que le photographe se trouvait là, ou bien, plus pauvrement encore, qu'il ne pouvait pas ne pas photographier l'objet partiel en même temps que l'objet total».<sup>65</sup>

Despite being just a detail, the punctum changes the way we look at an image, because it suddenly transforms our relationship to the picture. Due to the punctum a photo acquires a special significance: «Ce quelque chose a fait tilt, il a provoqué en moi un petit ébranlement, un *satori*, le passage d'un vide (peu importe que le référent en soit dérisoire)».<sup>66</sup> The reading of the punctum in a photograph is quick and active, «on devrait parler d'une immobilité vive: liée à un détail (à un détonateur), une explosion fait une petite étoile à la vitre [...] de la photo»<sup>67</sup>.

Looking at Guidi's red glove on the ground of the deserted road, I wonder whether perhaps the effect of the punctum is not similar to the effect of the *scarto*, in the sense that both shift our gaze with a quick move and subvert the hierarchies of what is worth of attention. The presence of the rejected red glove near the edge of the photographic space demands our attention and solicits the search for an explanation. Just as rhetoric exercise, I would compare it to the naked reel, that prompted Salvador Dali to write his paranoic-critical essay *Non-Euclidean psychology of a photograph* (1935).<sup>68</sup> Analysing a photograph of a man and two women standing on the threshold of a Parisian building, Dali solicits the viewer to address the attention not towards the centre of the picture – as to say the three faces – but towards the lower left-hand corner of the image. [Plate v/28]

«Car là, juste au-dessus du trottoir, vous pourrez observer avec stupeur, toute nue, toute pâle, toute pelée, immensément inconsciente, propre, solitaire, minuscule, cosmique, non euclidienne, un bobine sans fil».<sup>69</sup>

The presence of the bobbin, like that of the red glove, urges an explanation, because, such “exhibitionist” objects, due to their usually invisible character, are the most appropriate to

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ivi: 80.

<sup>66</sup> Ivi: 81.

<sup>67</sup> Ivi: 82.

<sup>68</sup> Salvador Dali, *Psychologie non euclidienne d'une photographie*, in: “Minotaure”, no. 7, 1 January 1935, 56-57 (also published in Idem, *Oui 2. L'archangélisme scientifique*, Paris: Denoël/Gonthier 1971, 49-54).

<sup>69</sup> Ivi: 56.

cause the irruption of an «apparition paranoïaque». Once we have included their former insignificant and invisible presence into our field of vision, they cry out for a logical solution of the puzzling mystery they raise.

«Ce sont exactement ces bobines sans fil, ces objet déplorables d'insignifiance qui, en ce moment, nous font perdre à nous, surréalistes, le plus et le meilleur de notre temps, e le plus et le meilleur de notre espace, car nos œuvres et nos maisons sont la preuve matérielle et tangible de l'encombrement envahissant de tels objets et de la multiplication des sollicitations stridentes de ceux-ci, car ils réclament à coup de trompette, de leur situation inaperçue, leur évidente réalité physique».<sup>70</sup>

However eccentric, Dali's analysis tries to answer the same question posed by Daniel Arasse with regard to the curious presence of a snail painted in the foreground of an *Annunciazione* by Francesco del Cossa, that «a d'ailleurs tout fait pour attirer notre attention sur lui, pour que nous nous interroignons sur sa présence».<sup>71</sup> [Plate v/29] As it is the case with either Dali's empty bobbin or Guidi's red glove, the snail it's the only thing we see, the only thing we can think about, it urges us to ask «qu'est-ce qu'il fait là?»<sup>72</sup>

## *Archaeology of us*

By photographing rubbish, Guidi unconsciously works as an archaeologist of the contemporary past, an archaeologist *of us*. Since the 1960s, archaeology has stopped to be considered «as a discipline defined by a particular time period», usually the distant past, and the attention has shifted from the question of periodisation to that of the discipline methods. Having comprehended the fact that archaeologists are primarily concerned with material culture, made «the whole issue of how recent the subject matter of archaeology should be» irrelevant. During the 1970s, the archaeology of modern or contemporary material culture begins to produce projects.<sup>73</sup> Among them, William Rathje's Garbage project of 1973 became one of the most popular in the field of the so called *archaeology of us*. The first question, that the discipline tries to answer, is: *what if?* – «what if archaeologist were to dig our remains in a thousand year, what would tell them about us?».<sup>74</sup> Rathje's "Garbology" has

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<sup>70</sup> Ivi: 57.

<sup>71</sup> Daniel Arasse, *On n'y voit rien: Descriptions*, Paris: Denoël 2005: 35. Painting: Francesco del Cossa, *L'Annunciazione*, ca. 1470-1472, Gemäldegalerie, Dresden.

<sup>72</sup> Ivi: 27.

<sup>73</sup> Victor Buchli and Gavin Lucas, *The absent present: archaeologies of the contemporary past*, in Idem (eds.), *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past*, London and New York: Routledge 2001, 3-18: 3.

<sup>74</sup> Ivi: 5.



focused its investigation on “fresh” garbage.<sup>75</sup> The project analysed «consumer behaviours directly from the material realities they [left] behind rather than from self-conscious self-reports», because, as a matter of fact, it emerged often a discrepancy «in what people said or thought they did and what they actually did»,<sup>76</sup> while the garbage never lies.

At this point however, it seems necessary to consider that garbage in Guidi’s pictures is never a private fact, but always a public matter. In his pictures the rubbish lies in the landscape not in the dwelling. Guidi finds garbage, rubbish, refusals, organic remains, ruins in the public, but not in the private space. The house is always decent. In his pictures the garbage seems to belong to nobody, it has already lost the connection to its producer. We don’t know how it ended up in the landscape, either who brought it there or why. The rubbish became already an attribute of the landscape, like a road, a puddle, a bollard... The garbage we see in his photographs has already passed from the private into the public sphere. The garbage is a threshold, because it shows the private in public, it brings outside what was once inside, in the house, part of someone’s everyday routine (as proved by Rathje’s “Garbology”). Nevertheless, Guidi does not record private miseries – unlike the Neorealists, for instance. For him rubbish belongs to the landscape. As a matter of fact, he is engaged neither in an anthropological investigation nor in a social critique, but simply in the description of the landscape he encounters. Antonello Frongia notices that Guidi

«[has] developed a special language with the use of wide angle views which tend to include without any censorship everything in front of [him], even more than the eye would tend to select».<sup>77</sup>

Sometimes, «what at first sight appears to be a rural and even picturesque scene» dissolves and brusquely transforms itself into its opposite, revealing traces «of a “third landscape”, where nature seems to struggle to survive on the fringes of an infrastructural belt and an illegal dump».<sup>78</sup> [Plate v/17]

### *Nothing worth seeing?*

Should still come as a surprise to find so much garbage and waste as subject of Guidi’s pictures? To the question «why picture that?», Robert Adams, for instance, answers pro-

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ivi: 6.

<sup>77</sup> In Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>78</sup> Frongia, *From archive to book, from book to city*: 146. About the notion of “third landscape” see Gilles Clément, *Manifeste du Tiers Paysage*, online open-source document, 2004.

vocatively with a rhetoric question: «why open our eyes anywhere but in undamaged places like national parks?»<sup>79</sup> Indeed, photography's dissociation from «lyrical subjects», and the exploration of «plain, tawdry, or even vapid material» began already in the 1920s. «Photography», claimed Susan Sontag in the 1970s, «has succeeded in somewhat revising, for everybody the definition of what is beautiful and ugly».<sup>80</sup> Guidi himself does not conceal his scarce propension for the aesthetic dimension for its own sake. Adopting a folk etymology, he reasons that if the Latin *bellum* means “war”, maybe the Italian adjective *bello* (beautiful), has to do with fighting, rather than with that, which has been codified as beautiful, as it is usually the case. Although the etymology is incorrect – *bellum* is the diminutive of *bonus*<sup>81</sup> – the phonetic assonance allows him to establish a connection between the two terms. Without hiding his annoyance, he recalls, that frequently when he is about to take a photograph of a small neutral ground in the middle of the street or at a crossroads, it happens that someone gets off the car and recommend him not to waste his time with such weed, because a few miles ahead there is a wonderful landscape, truly worth photographing. Guidi recognises that,

«unfortunately, the standard consumer of photography is a close-minded observer, who only wish to see photographs of flowering fields and rocky mountains. I have indeed photographed flowering fields too», he continues, «but as a challenge, to understand whether it would be possible today to photograph a flowering field as Beato Angelico could have done».<sup>82</sup>

Already Pierre Bourdieu pointed out that for the “popular aesthetics”, the beautiful image is nothing else as the image of a beautiful thing, or more rarely, the beautiful image of a beautiful thing. Photography must find justification in the object photographed, in the choice to photograph it, which excludes as useless, perverse or bourgeoisie to photograph for the sake of photographing, because that means to waste film. If it is legitimate for a painter to indulge on a still life – because to successfully imitate reality is a proof of mastery – that is not allowed to photographers.<sup>83</sup>

«One does not photograph simply anything, or, perhaps, not everything is suitable to be photographed; this is the thesis which, implicitly present in all the judgements,

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<sup>79</sup> Robert Adams, *The New West. Landscapes Along the Colorado Front Range* (1974), Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König 2000: xiii.

<sup>80</sup> Sontag, *On Photography*: 26.

<sup>81</sup> See Alfred Ernout, Alfred Meillet and Jacques André (eds.), *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine. Histoire des mots*, Paris: Klincksieck 2001: 73.

<sup>82</sup> Guidi and Andreani, *Tra architetture e trasgressioni*: 30.

<sup>83</sup> Bourdieu, *Photography. A Middle-Brow Art*: 84.

provides proof that aesthetic opinions are not simply arbitrary but, like the practice, obey cultural models. “It’s not something you’d take a picture of”, “That’s not a photograph” – these judgments, peremptory and clear-cut, often accompanied by scandalized gestures, negatively express something immediately self-evident. The fact that the contravention of a rule may be apparent without the rule being perceived or, even less, formulated as such, does not rule out the possibility that the key to aesthetic judgements, applied to a particular case, lies in a system of implicit principle and rules which it betrays more than it states». <sup>84</sup>

In her afterword to Guidi’s book *Veramente*, Agnès Sire concludes that Guidi’s freedom expresses itself in «conscientiously bringing into light a shifting reality which we do not wish to see, where we think there is nothing to see». <sup>85</sup> Guidi’s choice to look «in the “opposite direction” to the dictates of the canons», provokes surprise and consternation even in his colleagues. <sup>86</sup> «The “barbarous taste”», goes on Bourdieu, «strongly rejects images of the meaningless (*insignificant*), or, which amounts to the same thing in terms of this logic, the meaninglessness of the image». <sup>87</sup> The most common exclamation in front of the bleak views, framed by Guidi’s lens, is not dissimilar from the one addressed to the American photographer Frederick Sommer as response to his *Arizona landscapes* (from 1941): «There is nothing to see, nothing featured; what’s the matter with you?» <sup>88</sup>

## Four dead rabbits

The just mentioned analogy prompts me to try a comparison between Guidi’s and Sommer’s interest in rejected materials, based on a disturbing picture they both took: the corpse of a rabbit smashed on the street. «Sages and Saints across all the skies of time nod of approval at these images which disturb us and make us face our individual death or ultimate terror», commented Minor White in the text accompanying the first publication of Sommer’s pictures in “Aperture” in 1962. <sup>89</sup> The same subject has been photographed moreover by Edward Weston and Robert Adams, who are both linked to Sommer and Guidi some way. Thus, my comparison will include their pictures as well. <sup>90</sup> [Plates v/30-33]

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<sup>84</sup> Ivi: 85.

<sup>85</sup> Sire, *Afterword*: n.n.

<sup>86</sup> Dahó, *Through the empty room*: n.n.

<sup>87</sup> Bourdieu, *Photography. A Middle-Brow Art*: 90.

<sup>88</sup> See Kelsey, *Photography and the Art of Chance*: 244; and Dahó, *Through the empty room*: n.n.

<sup>89</sup> Minor White (ed.), Frederick Sommer: 1939-1962 *Photographs: Words not spent today buy smaller images tomorrow*, in: “Aperture”, vol. 10, no. 4, 1962, n.n.

<sup>90</sup> Sommer met Weston in 1936. «Weston’s photography was a revelation to Sommer [...]. The ex-

I will begin by shortly remember that Weston was a sort of mentor to Sommer, who was circa twenty years younger. Their friendship lasted lifelong, although with the time Sommer's style detached itself from Weston's teachings.<sup>91</sup>

«[Sommer's] photographs of carcasses, chicken parts, and desert landscapes refused or inverted the aesthetic program of the most celebrated American photography of his time. They negated the privileged conditions of completeness, purity, independence, singularity, timelessness and exaltation that practitioners such as Ansel Adams and Edward Weston pursued».<sup>92</sup>

Guidi and Adams, on the other hand, belong to a younger generation and are acquaintances. Guidi watched carefully the works by both Adams and Weston, and although later on he took distance from them, they were both important for his formation.<sup>93</sup> Instead, it was Stephen Shore, who introduced Guidi to Frederick Sommer's work.<sup>94</sup> In a recent video-interview Guidi accompanies us in a "tour of his library", showing the books, that have left a trace in his practice, shaping his idea of photography (there are monographs about single artists or photographers, exhibition catalogues, volumes about photography theory and history, magazines and so on).<sup>95</sup> Among the volumes, commented on this occasion, there are Weston's *Daybooks*, various books by Adams (however for Guidi the most significant one was *The New West*, because it made him discover Robert Adams's work in 1974)<sup>96</sup>, as well as two monographs about Frederick Sommer's work. By chance, while Guidi leafs through the pages, he stops precisely on the reproduction of Sommer's *Jack Rabbit* (1939).<sup>97</sup> [Plate v/32]

Despite the generation gap, and the many differences among the four of them – differences that will become clearer through the analysis of their pictures – they all share the conception of a photography, which avoids any preconceived idea, and allows no manipulation, after the shutter has been released. If we had to find their common credo, that

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ample of Weston, his equipment, and his attitude couldn't help from having an influence» (Norland, *Frederick Sommer*: 5).

<sup>91</sup> Ivi: 5, 9.

<sup>92</sup> Kelsey, *Photography and the Art of Chance*: 248.

<sup>93</sup> See Frongia, *Quello che resta*: 160.

<sup>94</sup> Guidi and Shore are good acquaintances. Guidi was included in Stephen Shore, *The Nature of Photographs*, London/New York: Phaidon Press 2007, 95. Quite curiously both Guidi and Sommer are trained in architecture and drawing.

<sup>95</sup> Guidi, *A tour of my bookshelves*: online resource.

<sup>96</sup> Conversation with the author, 14 June 2019. See Adams, *The New West*, cit.

<sup>97</sup> See Guidi, *A tour of my bookshelves*: online resource. See John Weiss (ed.), *Venus, Jupiter and Mars: The Photographs of Frederick Sommer*, ex. cat., Wilmington: Delaware Art Museum, 1980; and Constance W. Glenn and Jane K. Bledsoe (eds.), *Frederick Sommer at Seventy-Five: A Retrospective*, touring exhibition catalogue, Long Beach, California: The Art Museum and Galleries, Cal State University 1980.

could perhaps be, as stated by Weston: «[photography] is a way of seeing, not a matter of technique». <sup>98</sup> Nevertheless, their approach to image composition, aesthetic principles, and the space left to chance within the photographic act diverges, at the same time as it overlaps. <sup>99</sup>

Weston's *Dead Rabbit, Arizona*, 1938 and Sommer's *Jack Rabbit*, 1939 are coeval. The first noticeable difference between their pictures and those by Adams and Guidi is already in the title: neither Adams nor Guidi include the word "rabbit" in theirs. Adams's picture is titled *On Interstate 25* (1973), while Guidi's *Gronowo, Poland, August 1994*. They both do not concentrate on the subject but on topography: the corpse is just an attribute of the landscape, not differently from a tuft of grass, a crumpled newspaper left on the ground or a bollard. In comparison to Sommer and Weston, Guidi and Adams leave more space to the terrain around the body, and do not occupy the whole frame with the dead animal, a choice that confirms the non-priority of the subject over the landscape. As a matter of fact, Guidi reminds that «an object is part of a space, of a context and it springs out of it, it is not outside of it». <sup>100</sup> Weston on the contrary had the tendency to isolate the subject in a sort of privileged condition, that – even in the case of decaying matter – establishes a stable boundary between object and background. Weston's rabbit shows just a few signs of decomposition, that do not affect the integrity of its form. We immediately recognise the original tenderness and softness of the animal. Although, the position of the paws looks unnatural, the rest of the figure appears almost intact. Commenting another photograph by Weston from 1945, depicting «a pelican floating dead in kelp and lumber», Adams wrote that it is «unforgettable because it is true. It records accurately a mystery at the end of every terror – the survival of Form». <sup>101</sup> If Weston's rabbit has lost neither his original form nor his materiality, on the other hand, Sommer's rabbit has turned into a bidimensional form – a sort of caricature rabbit – without matter. The animal body is a flat skin without fur, flesh, or bones, a surface that melts into the ground, like a sort of prelude to the aesthetics of "flat pancake" adopted by Jean Dubuffet in works such as *Olympia* (1950). <sup>102</sup> In Guidi's picture, instead, the decay process has already robbed the rabbit of its original form, but not yet of its materiality. If the presence of still well shaped ears and tail conferred to the carcass of Adams's rabbit its characteristic traits as "rabbit" – although

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<sup>98</sup> See Nancy Newhall (ed.), *The Daybooks of Edward Weston*, New York and Rochester: Horizon Press in collaboration with The George Eastman House 1961, 156.

<sup>99</sup> Indeed, Sommer initiated a «struggle by drawing upon but also pushing against the precedent set by his friend [...] Weston» (Kelsey, *Photography and the Art of Chance*: 214).

<sup>100</sup> Frongia and Moro, *Topography of the Landscape and of the Archive*: 104.

<sup>101</sup> Adams, *Truth and Landscape*: 16. Robert Adams' description concerns the photograph by Edward Weston, *Tidepool*, 1945.

<sup>102</sup> I borrow the comparison between the flatness of Dubuffet's painting and the pancake from Yve-Alain Bois, *The Use Value of "Formless"*, in Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, *Formless. A User's Guide*, ex. cat. Centre Georges Pompidou Paris, New York: Zone Books 1997, 13-42: 15, plate 1.

photographed, so to say, “upside down” (with the ears downwards and the paws upwards) –, the remains photographed by Guidi have completely lost their original “rabbit” shape: we can distinguish only the forepaws, the head, but neither the ears nor the tail. In the end it could even be the body of a cat. What is the most real for Guidi is not form, but matter, the brute materiality of the external world. His pictures celebrate the imperfection of matter and do not fear the dissolution of the form into formless. The acceptance of the primacy of matter over sign connects his practice to the experience of Italian Informel, as theorised by Francesco Arcangeli in his fundamental essay, *The last naturalists*, appeared in the magazine *Paragone* in 1954.<sup>103</sup> Informel is the last development of naturalism, not only chronologically, but above all in the sense that it reflects a world in which it is not possible to represent nature from afar anymore, in which the artist is a body involved in the materiality of existence within an encounter, that does not envisage any pre-conceived plan. In Italy, the phenomenological reading of existentialism, which leads to the re-evaluation of materiality, converges with the aesthetical issues of Marxism. Renato Barilli underlines that during the first years after the Second World War the intellectuals felt the need to reconsider within an existential frame the thoughts of their masters from the early nineteenth century. Especially Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty succeeded in merging Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology in a bath of “mundanity”, rooting it in the perceptive, gestural, tactile, affective relationship with things, with the “flesh of the world”, the thickness of objects.<sup>104</sup> In Italy the philosopher Enzo Paci became the interpreter of those instances with his relationalism (also defined by Nicola Abbagnano as positive existentialism).<sup>105</sup> During the 1940s and 1950s a relationship of transition and interpenetration between man and environment preached a subjectivity anchored in the body that expanded to connect with the context, the circumstances.<sup>106</sup> The landscape provided

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<sup>103</sup> See Francesco Arcangeli, *Gli ultimi naturalisti*, in: “Paragone”, no. 59, November 1954, 29-43. About the impact of Informel in Italy, see also in particular Luciano Anceschi (ed.), *L’Informale*, monographic number of “Il Verri. Rivista di Letteratura”, no. 3, year V, June 1961. Guidi’s proximity to the movement of Informel has been asserted by both Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*: 11-13, and Valtorta, *In cerca dei luoghi*: 72.

<sup>104</sup> Renato Barilli, *La forza e i limiti dell’informale storico*, in Renato Barilli and Franco Solmi (eds.), *L’informale in Italia. Mostra dedicata a Francesco Arcangeli*, ex. cat. Comune di Bologna - Galleria d’arte moderna, Milan: Mazzotta 1983, 11-22: 14.

<sup>105</sup> Paci conceives existentialism in a positive sense, as the need to overcome the pain, the suffering, and the consequences of negative historical events. For him the fundamental issue lies in the relationship between men and the totality of possible relationships, from the logical to the cosmological ones, within a humanistic conception of philosophy and science. Relationism considers all types of relationships and introduces the idea that humans are essentially centres of relationships (see Enzo Paci, *Dall’esistenzialismo al relazionismo*, Messina/Florence: Casa Editrice G. D’Anna 1957). About the theorisation of positive existentialism as alternative to Martin Heidegger’s and Karl Jaspers’ essentially “negative” existentialism see Nicola Abbagnano, *La struttura dell’esistenza*, Turin: Paravia 1939 and Idem, *Esistenzialismo positivo*, Turin: Taylor 1948. About the development of the concept see moreover Giuseppe Semerari, *Da Schelling a Merleau-Ponty. Studi sulla filosofia contemporanea*, Bologna: Cappelli 1962: 197-244.

<sup>106</sup> Barilli, *La forza e i limiti dell’informale storico*: 14.

an excellent chance to engage skin to skin encounters, close conflicts with the other, to ascertain the mysterious presence of physicality, achieving explosions, frays, disseminations.<sup>107</sup> In the 1970s phenomenology and positive existentialism become established. Death itself is nothing more than the retreat into the eternal resistance of matter, as Albert Camus' *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* teaches us.<sup>108</sup> The being is like a stone, and the Informel painters base their practice on this laic concept of matter and nature. In Italy, the Informel is rethought according to this secular conception of matter, founded on an idea of worldliness, understood as the abolition of all metaphysics. With the adjective worldly, Barilli indicates everything that can contribute to make our world "the world" in its fullest sense: something hard, opaque, resistant.<sup>109</sup> With regard to his relationship to Informel, Guidi states:

«Informel is closer to photography than one thinks, precisely because of the rapid action. In both, there is the pleasure of the material, but there is also a refusal to take time to think about things. You do it and it catches you by surprise, because you don't know what you are doing until after is done. For me, execution is important; if there is a reasoning process, it is amalgamated, mixed in with the material».<sup>110</sup>

There is a further evident difference between his picture and those by his other three colleagues: colour. Of course, Guidi's photograph has been taken in the 1990s, when the polemic around the use of colour in photography placated and colour stopped to be considered as a taboo. Still in the late 1960s colour was considered vulgar, if not even morally questionable to depict tragical facts (like death or war).<sup>111</sup> In 1969 even Walker Evans vehemently wrote: «color tends to corrupt photography and absolute color corrupts it absolutely».<sup>112</sup> Quite curiously though, some of the most appreciated colour photographers, such as «Stephen Shore, William Eggleston and Joel Meyerowitz all share in Evans' legacy to one extent or another».<sup>113</sup> Considering the subjects and the use of colour, I suggest to add Guidi's work to the legacy too. In *William Eggleston's Guide*, John Szarkowski claimed that the «most radical and suggestive color photography», that was acquiring legitimation during the 1970s, derived «much of its vigor from commonplace models», and did not deny a clear resemblance between the colour pictures by Eggleston and others and «the

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<sup>107</sup> Ivi: 17.

<sup>108</sup> Albert Camus, *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, Paris: Gallimard 1942.

<sup>109</sup> Barilli, *La forza e i limiti dell'informale storico*: 127-128.

<sup>110</sup> Guidi in Frongia, *Guido Guidi Interview*: 54.

<sup>111</sup> See Arthur Rothstein et al., *Color vs. black and white. Panel discussion, 1968*, in R. Smith Schuneman (ed.), *Photographic Communication. Principles, Problems and Challenges of Photojournalism*, New York: Hastings House 1972, 85-90.

<sup>112</sup> Walker Evans, *Photography*, in Louis Kronenberger (ed.), *Quality. Its Image in the Arts*, New York: Balance House 1969, 169-211: 208.

<sup>113</sup> Carol Squiers, *Color photography: the Walker Evans legacy and the commercial tradition*, in: "Artforum", November 1978, 64-67: 65.

Kodachrome slides of the ubiquitous amateur next door».<sup>114</sup> In short, colour renders the subject more ordinary, while at the same time, more attractive for the popular taste. As a matter of fact, Bourdieu pointed out, that among all the intrinsic properties of an image, only colour can help to suspend the rejection of photographs of trivial things:

«judgement passed on the photographs most strongly rejected because of their uselessness [...] almost always ends up with the reservation that “in colour, that could be pretty”».<sup>115</sup>

It could be inferred, that by choosing colour, Guidi is indeed once again demonstrating a non-elitist conception of photography, intended as an everyday activity rather than as an art, that accepts even the colour of rubbish, without trying any expedient to distance himself from it. The dark brown tonality of the fur accentuates its hairiness and contrasts with the white and blue shades of the ground. The colour contributes to increase the materiality of the body, whereas the black-and-white favours a process of abstraction. Since colour film has become a technical standard, the choice of black-and-white cannot escape «a presumptive controlling artificiality, a rhetoric of contrasts that opposes itself, on a symbolic plane, to the gauche factuality of life».<sup>116</sup> In this sense, the choice of the colour film may be considered as another way to stay immanent, closer to things, without trying to conceptualise or idealise. In this respect, Lewis Baltz – who in 1972 asserted, he had never seen a successful colour photograph<sup>117</sup> – claimed that: «if color suggests here and now and someday, black-and-white always seems to suggest then and there».<sup>118</sup> In black-and-white photographs, the presence is less immediate, because they convey «the drama of a moment rescued from history». Colour photographs, on the contrary, recall a very recent past, «and few things are more disturbing than images of the recent past».<sup>119</sup> By the way, Guidi’s colour is not the brilliant “Kodak” colour type of the new things – à la [Giorgio] De Chirico –, but rather a bleached colour of the things «that fade away with time, seen in the moment of their disappearance» – à la Giorgio Morandi.<sup>120</sup> Indeed colour is a very unstable variable of the photographic production: on the one hand a negative stored many years before being printed may deteriorate and lend the colours a patina of age, or the colour of a print may fade away or change with time and exposure to light; on the other

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<sup>114</sup> John Szarkowski, *William Eggleston’s Guide* (1976), New York: The Museum of Modern Art 2002: 9-10.

<sup>115</sup> Bourdieu, *Photography. A Middle-Brow Art*: 92.

<sup>116</sup> Max Kozloff, *Photography: the coming to age of color*, in: “Artforum”, January 1975, 31-35: 34.

<sup>117</sup> See Duncan Forbes (ed.), *An Interview with Lewis Baltz (Winter 1972)*, London: Mack 2020: 73.

<sup>118</sup> Baltz, *Konsumterror*: 7.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Frongia, *The vestiges of what was*: 71.



hand, colour is mendacious: despite all the technical improvements, colour still remains one of the most difficult characteristic of reality to render with exactitude in the photographic image.<sup>121</sup> In some sense, the incertitude and instability of colour mirrors the transience of matter, as reminded by the image of the decomposing rabbit corpse.

In the end, the main idea shared by all the four photographers is the recognition of nature's metabolic refusal of eternal form. To photograph a dead decomposing body means to fix a precise moment of a degenerative process, through which an organism becomes a formless, indefinite mass of repulsive matter. A body, once provided with shape and function, becomes a junk, a waste, a chaotic putrefying matter. Despite their differences, all these pictures propose a conception of photography less interested in depicting the proverbial decisive moment, rather than gradual, slow processes such as decomposition and desiccation. The trouble that is being stirred by such photographs is that they lengthen the moment of attention. «And when you lengthen the moment of attention of a person – this is a very impolite thing to do», admits Sommer.<sup>122</sup> Reasoning about the relationship between photography and stillness, Lewis Baltz goes even further and speaks of

«a facility and literalness bordering on the perverse, for what could be more intrinsic to still photography than stillness itself (a quality that usually goes unremarked except in its most blatant instances, “the decisive moment” when time and movement have been frozen – have collapsed – into a graphically coherent pictorial arrangement)? [...] The innate quietism of the still photograph could echo and reinforce the immobility of certain subjects, giving them a heightened fixity and permanence, an iconic stature that would both epitomize and transcend their literalness».<sup>123</sup>

As we had chance to see in the previous chapters, Guidi is well aware and even counts on photography impoliteness. Coherently he confirms, that for him «the decisive moment does not exist: time and transformation exist». He is interested in photographing «not the most impressive moment, the climax, but time itself, dead time, obscure moments».<sup>124</sup> Antonello Frongia recognises in some of his pictures a deep archaism, with subjects rich in symbolic allusions, that seem to celebrate the relationship between life and death, animated and inert.<sup>125</sup> Guidi says that «it's a matter of time as *chronos*, the corrosion of time».<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> On the theme of colour mendacity, see for instance Art Kane, *Color is a liar* (1961), in Smith Schuneman (ed.), *Photographic Communication*, 82-85.

<sup>122</sup> Quoted in Kelsey, *Photography and the Art of Chance*: 227.

<sup>123</sup> Baltz, *Konsumerterror*: 7.

<sup>124</sup> In Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>125</sup> See Frongia, “*At Least a Stone*”: 98.

<sup>126</sup> Guidi quoted in Frongia, *The vestiges of what was*: 71.

As a matter of fact, the consideration of time in the mythical thought is not univocal. A creative power, that bears inside the mystery of regeneration (the Iranian Aion – divine principle of inexhaustible creativity) is opposed by a Time-God destructive and insatiable, who devours everything he has created, even his own children. The latter seems to govern the destiny of humanity, leading it to decay.<sup>127</sup>

«Indeed, time is the primary agent of obsolescence where garbage correspondingly becomes (to the extent that it is visible, or an object of experience) the evidence of our failure to escape “natural” time. Deteriorating matter embodies [...] a time that exists beyond our rational time: in this shadow world, time is always running matter down, breaking things into pieces, or removing the sheen of a glossy surface and, therefore, the principal methods of dealing with material waste throughout most of human history [...] are simply ways of ensuring that this fact does not intrude too far into everyday experience».<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> See Appiano, *Estetica del rottame*: 13.

<sup>128</sup> Scanlan, *On Garbage*: 33-34.

# 6. Humus

«Ich beschwöre euch, meine Brüder, *bleibt der Erde treu und glaubt Denen nicht, welche euch von überirdischer Hoffnung reden!*»<sup>1</sup>

## The call of the earth

Confronted with the leftovers, wastes, and remains photographed by Guidi, the viewer might feel threatened or irritated just like the young Socrates – in Plato's *Parmenides* – who cannot accept that things such as hair, mud and dirt have a separate Idea. «These things are just what we see them to be: it would be too absurd to suppose that something is a character in them», states Socrates.<sup>2</sup> But Parmenides, explains him, that there are indeed Ideas for all the things. Socrates is despising those worthless and trivial things because he is still young and influenced by the common-sense. As soon as philosophy will take hold of him, he will stop neglecting those things.<sup>3</sup> To admit the existence of Ideas for each and every thing, it means that the world of Ideas is not fixed in its unity and perfection, as Socrates thinks, but it comes close to the everyday world. As in the Republic, each faculty of the soul and each social class had a precise function, so nothing in the sensible reality must be despised, because everything can be organised according to an Idea. If there is an Idea of beauty, there must be an Idea of mud too.<sup>4</sup> If for Plato, to everything, which in real-

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra. Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen*, in Idem, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe Band 4*, edited by Colli Giorgio and Montinari Mazzino, Munich/New York/Berlin: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag/de Gruyter 1999: 15.

<sup>2</sup> R.E. Allen (Eng. tr. and ed.), *Plato's Parmenides*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1997: 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> See Enzo Paci, *Il significato del Parmenide nella filosofia di Platone*, Messina/Milan: Casa Editrice Giuseppe Principato 1938: 94.

ity can be seen as positivity, belongs an ideal value, than even the mud, as Parmenides says, must have its own Idea, and thus the mud has its positive value too.<sup>5</sup> [Plate vi/1]

«The earth and the snow are the archaic, primitive site, the place of childhood, of the defenceless eye, nonliterary»,<sup>6</sup> says Guidi. [Plates vi/1-4] When it comes to transcendence, he is always very careful, convinced that we learnt from nature «our thrust towards infinity, towards the sky». <sup>7</sup> In the introduction to Carlo Emilio Gadda's *Acquainted With Grief*, Gianfranco Contini mentions an indelible call of the earth.<sup>8</sup> I would like to hand the floor over to Gadda.

«At intervals, suspended beyond any resolution, two notes came from the silence, as if from abstract space and time, long notes and deep, like the knowledge of grief: immanent in the earth, when lights and shadows migrated there. And, softly, coming to him from the remote source of the countryside, the desperate sob died away».<sup>9</sup>

Maybe this is the element in the novel which unconsciously attracted Guidi, who a bit proudly states: «Perhaps sometimes re-emerges in my photographs a sort of primitive element, typical of a country kid».<sup>10</sup> [Plates vi/5-6] It is also important to mention, that Gadda's literary style has been compared to Informel, for its resemblance to a primigenial magma, a condensed matter. That kind of materiality – so prized by both Informel and Guidi – that unites the subject to reality, can be perceived in the vertiginous design of his way of writing, always exposed to the impossibility of a figurative fulfilment, intimately “Informel” in its terminological exorcisms and in the lexical rapture in which an almost murky matter seems often to transpire: the deviated anatomy of things.<sup>11</sup> The words used by Antonello Frongia to describe Guidi's approach to landscape do not differ a lot:

«the verticalness of geology, of nature and of human constructions seems to flake away in the elementary and shapeless materials – fibre, liquid, mineral, light, of which the photograph itself is made up of – that get deposited and

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<sup>5</sup> Ivi: 125.

<sup>6</sup> Guidi quoted in Frongia, *Guido Guidi Interview*: 56.

<sup>7</sup> Guidi quoted in Fabbri and Loddo (eds.), *Alberi*: 9.

<sup>8</sup> See Gianfranco Contini, *Nota introduttiva*, in Carlo Emilio Gadda, *La cognizione del dolore* (1963), Turin: Einaudi 1982 (7th ed.), V-XX: XII.

<sup>9</sup> Carlo Emilio Gadda, *La cognizione del dolore* (1963), Eng. tr. William Weaver, *Acquainted With Grief*, New York: George Braziller 1969: 208.

<sup>10</sup> See Frongia, *Il paesaggio che guarda me*: 407 (translation mine).

<sup>11</sup> Stefano Calabrese, *Il titolo come emblema – Sul rapporto tra parola e immagine*, in Barilli and Solmi (ed.), *L'informale in Italia*, 130-135: 133-134.

amalgamates entropically in unplanned and thus all the more fascinating figures». <sup>12</sup> [Plates vi/2-4, 7-10, 12, 19, 30, 33, 50]

Both the writer and the photographer seem to feel the need to anchor themselves to the earth, to merge with it, forgetting the dream. <sup>13</sup> In a funny self-portrait of 1980, Guidi even literally sinks into the ground, as if some arcane forces of the earth were swallowing him up. [Plate vi/11]

At this point, it becomes crucial to emphasise that in Guidi's attitude the expression "call of the earth" has absolutely nothing to do with reactionary, ultraconservative, and racist positions of *Blut und Boden* slogans of Nazism and Lega Nord. The object of his interest is not the *Boden* intended as *tellus*, namely a territory that bears the essential roots of the individuum and his/her community, as to say, what Heidegger defined as *Bodenständigkeit* (groundedness, autochthony, rootedness in the soil) symbolised by his *Hütte* in Todtnauberg. For Guidi it is rather a matter of *Erde* as *humus*, *lutum*, *limus* – precisely the earth in its lively materiality. <sup>14</sup> Interesting enough, from the word "humus" (earth, ground, soil) derives etymologically "humble", that comes from Latin *humilem* (low, base, humble) and literally means "on the ground". <sup>15</sup> Knowing that, and remembering that Guidi practices a «photography of humble things» <sup>16</sup> his connection to earth appears suddenly obvious. It is also important to underline, that his attention for the land, soil, earth, mud does not aim at describing either a bucolic landscape or lost Arcadia. The terrains included in his frames are agricultural fields, portions of land turned over by industrial machineries, construction sites or sources of raw materials for the construction industry. Sometimes, they are mere remnants of neutral ground among the lanes of a motorway, belonging to those fragments of neglected areas, that Gilles Clément would call "third landscape". <sup>17</sup> [Plates vi/1-9, 12-21]

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<sup>12</sup> Frongia, *At Least a Stone*: 99.

<sup>13</sup> See Calabrese, *Il titolo come emblema*: 133-134.

<sup>14</sup> See for example Martin Heidegger, *Liebeserklärung an die Provence* (20. März 1958), in Idem, *Gesamtausgabe. I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1910-1976. Band 16: Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges 1910-1976*, Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann 2000: 551: «Ich [bin] überzeugt, daß es kein wesentliches Werk des Geistes gibt, das nicht seine Wurzel hat in einer ursprünglichen Bodenständigkeit hat». See also Martin Heidegger, *Gelassenheit* (30. Oktober 1955), in Idem, *Gesamtausgabe. I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1910-1976. Band 16: 521* («Gehört nicht zu jedem Gedeihen eines gediegenen Werkes die Verwurzelung im Boden einer Heimat? [...] Die Bodenständigkeit des heutigen Menschen ist im Innersten bedroht. Mehr noch: Der Verlust der Bodenständigkeit ist nicht nur durch äußere Umstände und Schicksale verursacht [...]. Der Verlust der Bodenständigkeit kommt aus dem Geist des Zeitalters, in das wir alle hineingeboren sind»).

<sup>15</sup> See Ernest Klein, *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, Amsterdam: Elsevier Science B.V. 1971: 356.

<sup>16</sup> Zannier, *Guido Guidi. La Lunga Posa*: 6. The quotes by Zannier are taken from Ernesto Ascione, *Mezzetinte. Appunti di fotografia d'Arte*, Naples: Edizioni Realtà 1957.

<sup>17</sup> «Fragment indécidé du jardin planétaire, le Tiers paysage est constitué de l'ensemble des lieux délaissés par l'homme» (Clément, *Manifeste du Tiers Paysage*: 1).

The land observed by Guidi is the land of the urbanised countryside, of the suburbs, the land of his backyard, or of the surroundings of his house. It is not wilderness, but a leftover, a remain of nature – perhaps just a temporary one, on which a new construction (a house, a supermarket, a new highway) will soon be built. Soon it will be probably covered with asphalt or concrete and even that off-cut of nature will disappear. Antonello Frongia has pointed out, that the element of originality developed by photographers such as Luigi Ghirri, Guido Guidi, Mario Cresci, Giovanni Chiaramonte and Olivo Barbieri lies in the identification of an interstitial space: a palimpsest in which rests of domesticated nature and modern relics – often seized in their premature decline – fuse together. Through a stratified visual culture – spanning from Early Renaissance up to twentieth-century painting and the movies by Michelangelo Antonioni – their images acknowledge the new figures elaborated by the international debate between the end of the 1970s and the 1990s – *terrain-vague*, *non-lieu*, *no-man's-land*, *urban hybridisation*.<sup>18</sup>

An opinion shared by Italo Zannier, who already in 1978 described Guidi's photographs as records of the domestic world of the rural periphery, where the contradiction between two realities in transit – the farming and the industrial reality, with its polluting totems – is perceived more intensely. On such incongruous landscape, Guidi directs his candid benevolent eye, to try a comment, a presentation rather than an accusation.<sup>19</sup> Avoiding any moralising, or educational, or melancholic attitude, he photographs the landscape he sees, trying to express no judgement. The main judgment is already expressed in the choice of what to frame, where to put the camera, at which level to point the lens. In Bourdieu's words

«Even when the production of the pictures is entirely delivered over to the automatism of the camera, the taking of the pictures is still a choice involving aesthetic and

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<sup>18</sup> Frongia, *Il luogo e la scena: la città come testo fotografico*: 110-111. About each of these specific concepts see also: Lucius Burckhardt, *No-Man's-Land* (1980), in Idem, *Who Plans the Planning? Architecture, Politics, and Mankind*, Eng. ed. by Jesko Fezer and Martin Schmitz, Basel: Birkhäuser 2020, 291-292; Marc Augé, *Non-lieux. Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité*, Paris: Seuil 1992; Ignasi de Solà-Morales Rubió, *Terrain Vague*, in Cynthia Davidson (ed.), *Anyplace*, Cambridge Massachusetts: The MIT Press 1995, 118-123; Mirko Zardini (ed.), *Paesaggi ibridi*, Milan: Skira 1996; Fabrizio Zanni, *Urban hybridization*, Santarcangelo di Romagna: Maggioli 2012; Manuela Mariani and Patrick Barron (eds.), *Terrain Vague: Interstices at the Edge of the Pale*, London: Routledge 2014; Jacqueline Maria Broich and Daniel Ritter (eds.), *Die Stadtbrache als »terrain vague«*. *Geschichte und Theorie eines unbestimmten Zwischenraums in Literatur, Kino und Architektur*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2017; Wolfgang Kemp, *Festrede zur Öffentlichen Jahressitzung am 4. Juli 2019: Terrain vague, The Waste Land, Nicht-Orte. Zur Topologie von Moderne und Übermoderne*, in: *Jahrbuch Bayerische Akademie der Schönen Künste*, vol. 33/2019, 13-26.

<sup>19</sup> See Zannier, *70 anni di fotografia in Italia*: 163.

ethical value. [...] In Nietzsche's words, "The artist chooses his subjects. It is his way of praising"». <sup>20</sup>

To direct the lens downwards, or at eye level, gives a lot of space to the ground, whereas it excludes the sky. In a sense, it praises the earth by excluding the transcendent, the high. Guidi's attempt «has always been to escape from the idea of romantic infinity, to return to physical reality». <sup>21</sup> He stays on earth, with his feet and those of his tripod well anchored to the ground.

«Like a blind man with a cane, it's the camera that allows me to touch the world. You touch the world with the prosthesis, which puts you in contact with the ground, with the earth. It helps you to interpret the world». <sup>22</sup>

Roberta Valtorta likewise notices that in a lot of Guidi's photographs «the sky remains invisible», while all the things are observed «in their profoundly terrestrial, primitive essence». <sup>23</sup> His gaze does not look upwards, because he does not seek an escape, but accepts his position, the immanent terrestrial being here.

## Archaic mounds

Antonello Frongia suggests that Guidi's choice to avoid any form of visual rhetoric was first inspired by Walker Evans' "puritan" approach to the America of the Thirties – likewise marked by a rigorous praxis of direct confrontation with the world of the forms and the attitude to seized their deepest, archaic, and even animistic sense. <sup>24</sup> Describing the work realised by Guidi in Naples in 1982, <sup>25</sup> Frongia suggests the idea of a sort of widened eye, which by including the ground of the contemporary landscape implies also to pay attention to heaps of junks, rejected scraps, stones, and fluids – which find a provisional shape in the stain, before evaporating with the time. For Guidi, to photograph meant to broaden the circle of attention to include the fleeting, marginal, urban subconscious. <sup>26</sup> Co-

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<sup>20</sup> Bourdieu, *Photography. A Middle-Brow Art*: 6.

<sup>21</sup> See Frongia, *Guido Guidi Interview*, in: "Aperture": 56.

<sup>22</sup> In Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro*: 126.

<sup>23</sup> Valtorta, *Guido Guidi in Milan and Other Places*: 144.

<sup>24</sup> Frongia, *Il luogo e la scena: la città come testo fotografico*: 161.

<sup>25</sup> See Cesare De Seta (ed.), *Napoli '82, città sul mare con porto*, ex. cat. Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, December 1982-February 1983 and Palazzo Fortuny, February-March 1983, Milan: Electa 1982. The group exhibition featured works by Gabriele Basilico, Roberto Bossaglia, Guido Guidi, Paul den Hollander, Lee Friedlander, Lello Mazzacane, Claude Nori, and Charles Traub. Guidi's photographs are published *ivi*: 92-103.

<sup>26</sup> Frongia, *Il luogo e la scena: la città come testo fotografico*: 163.

herently with the adoption of a wide-angle gaze – able to expand the perception of the space – he refuses the hectic rhythms of the city in favour of a photographic act open to expectation. According to Frongia, the image, that more than any other, illustrates this lack of coordination with the times of the city, depicts a mound of sand resembling an archaic mountain, and cut through by a cast shadow. [Plate vi/22] Apart from quoting straightforwardly a 1936 photograph taken by Walker Evans in Moundville (Alabama) [Plate vi/23], the picture at once renders the instantaneous time of light as projection and the geological time as metaphor. In another picture, published on the facing page in the book dedicated to the project, the same form of the heap appears upside-down in the perspectival view of a grid of lines, drawn on the pavement of a square, where the movement of people in the dim light creates a motif of streaks and evanescent figures.<sup>27</sup> [Plate vi/24]

The picture described by Frongia is no exception in Guidi's work. Indeed, mounds of sand, earth, gravel, or of any other raw material for the industry of construction represent a recurring subject. [Plates vi/25-33] Depending on their constituent materials, they come in a variety of colours – red, white, grey, brown, deep black – of sizes – from few centimetres to metres height – and of shapes (more or less, regular) – conical, truncated-pyramidal, double-humped, with a rounded, flat, or pointed peak. Sometimes they create a primitive landscape of hills of different tonalities, like a new frontier of (fake) wilderness; other times they loom over their surroundings like silent, sleeping beasts, their presence appearing alien to the environment; eventually, their perfectly shaped cone – either total white or full black – establishes a chromatic and formal relationship with another element of the construction site – for instance the red parallelepiped of a container – calling into mind a contemporary site specific installation with great scale sculptures, such as those by Anish Kapoor. [See in particular plate vi/28]

Among the many pictures of mounds, one has particularly caught my attention – *Rimini Nord, October 1991* – in which Guidi treats even the materials of an ordinary construction site with the same dignity as geological elements in a natural unexploited landscape. Despite manifest differences, this image brought to my mind an iconic work of the history of photography: Timothy H. O'Sullivan, *Tufa Domes, Pyramid Lake, Nevada, 1867*. [Plates vi/33-34] Although it might seem audacious to compare these two images, I believe that their juxtaposition can show that Guidi, who has often expressed his admiration for "primitive" American photographers, shares with O'Sullivan the inclination to understand «nature first as architecture».<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ivi: 164.

<sup>28</sup> See Robert Adams, *In The Nineteenth-Century West* (1983), in Idem, *Why People Photograph*, 133-154: 149. Adams compares O'Sullivan to Cézanne, defining him as «an artist/geologist, in love with light and rock» (ibid.) For a comprehensive monograph about O'Sullivan's work see Joel Snyder, *American Frontiers. The Photographs of Timothy H. O'Sullivan, 1867-1874*, New York: Aperture 1981.



As it is well known, this «celebrated» image by O'Sullivan is the focus of Rosalind Krauss' famous essay, *Photography's Discursive Spaces*, by virtue of its relevance in «the art-historical construction of nineteenth-century landscape photography».<sup>29</sup> I would avoid embarking on a long and complex theoretical speculation, and rather confront the two images mainly on the basis of visual evidence. Of course, it cannot be denied, that at first sight Guidi's image conveys a less mysterious and dreamlike atmosphere than the one by O'Sullivan. This is however not surprising, if we consider the constitutional lack of appeal of a site as banal and unattractive as the construction site of some infrastructure on the outskirts of a provincial town. Nevertheless, if seen next to each other, Guidi's and O'Sullivan's photographs display the same disposition of elements – respectively, two mounds of earth, and three rocks – «deployed on a kind of [...] chessboard, marking by their separate positions a retreating trajectory into depth».<sup>30</sup> The plain, clean, transparent and almost abstract water surface of the lake has been substituted in Guidi's image by a less poetic and more chaotic expanse of grey and beige clay ground, marked by traces of tyres, scattered pieces of wood, pebbles, and a formless area of residual snow in the middle. If in O'Sullivan the mountain chain of the shore in front of us designed an almost indistinguishable band stretched upon the water horizon, in Guidi, the green vegetation on the background stands out between the dark tones of the mounds and the flatness of the pale sky. A white cloud of dust, or smoke, that raising from the ground of the construction site, veils the view of the trees, before vanishing in the sky, conveys a suspended atmosphere to the scene, bestowing it that bit of indefiniteness, that bring it closer to the ethereal space of the *Pyramid Lake*. Both photographers render with incredible descriptive clarity the details of the geological elements. If in the rocks depicted by O'Sullivan «each crevice, each granular trace of the original volcanic heat finds its record», likewise the sharpness accuracy, that Guidi dedicates to the ground and the mounds, lets us perceive almost haptically the different granularity, texture, and moisture degree of the materials: the terrain of the ground is cold, dry, and hard – each pebble, stone, piece of wood is distinguishable – the first brown mounds is made of a soft, wetter, fat clay, while the taller mound is made of a dry, fine, dark sand, perhaps bitumen – the two substances create different undulation in the dunes. Paraphrasing John Szarkowski's words, we may suggest that Guidi shares with O'Sullivan a true approach to the essential character of the medium, with the primary aim «not to philosophize about nature, but to describe the terrain».<sup>31</sup> Paradoxically, it could be said, that their works belong to the two opposite extremities of a universal historical path of land exploitation: while the pioneering American photographer records the

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<sup>29</sup> Rosalind Krauss, *Photography's Discursive Spaces*, in Eadem, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, 131-150: 131.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> John Szarkowski (ed.), *The Photographer and the American Landscape*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art 1963: 3.

world *before*, his Italian counterpart describes the so called “day *after*” – the remains of a post-industrial landscape in continuous change, that struggles to recognise its own identity.<sup>32</sup>

Another fundamental point of contact between them lies in an extended conception of landscape – very different from the vision proposed by the tradition of the landscape painting –, as can be inferred from the objects they include in their pictures. While certain photographs, produced by O’Sullivan during King’s geological survey «may have made appeal as landscape art, the category proves limiting».<sup>33</sup> Actually, a lot of them – unlike *Tufa Domes* – do not depict untouched, virgin, isolated wild natural settings, but rather the survey project itself.

«O’Sullivan’s views often show survey team at work, taking measurements, making their marks. Often the same pictures will include pieces of the photographic apparatus: dark clothes, plate holders, portable darkrooms, even cameras – deliberate signs of the Industrial Age invading nature’s domain».<sup>34</sup>

Likewise, Guidi includes in his pictures all kind of tools and machineries such as tractors, trucks, lorries, cement mixers, bulldozers and so on (not to mention his own camera, or the profile of his own cast shadow). They are machine used either in agriculture or in the constructions industry – but always connected to the earth – they move, turn over or transform the soil, in so doing they change the form of the landscape, and influence the balance of the environment. Guidi encounters them everywhere during his short journeys by car in the surroundings of his house, or his longer travels on-the-road across Italy and Europe. [Plates vi/35-38] He affirms to appreciate the equipment, that respects a criterion of necessity in its design.

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<sup>32</sup> Actually, O’Sullivan’s photographs «contributed to the federal government’s policy of supplying fundamental needs of industrialization, needs for reliable data concerning raw materials, and promoted a public willingness to support government policy of conquest, settlement, and exploitation. [...] The logic of events of the 1870’s and 1880’s disclosed [...] not an agrarian but an industrial scenario. Penetrating the West with government encouragement, the railroad and the telegraph opened the vast space to production» (Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America*, New York: Hill and Wang 1982 (2007): 20).

<sup>33</sup> Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs. Images as History. Mathew Brady to Walker Evans*, New York: Hill and Wang 1990: 130. From 1867 to 1869 O’Sullivan was the official photographer of Clarence King’s United States Geological Exploration of the 40th Parallel, taking photos of mines and geologic sites.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

«There's the bulldozer, which is a man-made product, well designed as Carlo Scarpa would say, it's not styling but design; so even the bulldozer or the lorry are objects worthy of attention, that are worth looking at».<sup>35</sup>

## A hole in the ground

Especially in the pictures published in the third volume of the book *Per Strada*, there is a recurrence of construction sites, bulldozers turning over the land, roads being built. Frongia observes, that even if Guidi does «not set out to be an environmental photographer», the landscapes he depicts «seem to be suffering».<sup>36</sup> Guidi, who actually defines himself as an environmentalist, traces back his interest in these kind of subjects to two episodes both linked to his childhood: first as he was 15 or 16, the construction of a freeway on the field, where he and his friends used to nick watermelons in the night; and later the construction of a motorway only a hundred metres away from the house, where his parents had just moved in, and where he is still living today. These facts left a sour taste in his mouth, like every time he witnesses the erosion and the destruction of the soil.<sup>37</sup> Guidi shows a respectful feeling of closeness to places, says Roberta Valtorta, for him to photograph means “to take care of”: it is a moment of comprehension not of ostentation, without traits either of spectacularity or narcissism. Precisely these elements confer to his photographs, its quality of candid simplicity and sense of genuine humanity.<sup>38</sup>

Even if over thirty years separate the picture taken by Guidi from the terrible Belice earthquake, that destroyed western Sicily between 14 and 15 January 1968, the image of the lacerated land depicted in *Gibellina, November 1989* is shocking despite the actual ordinariness of the location.<sup>39</sup> It is the topographic detail, provided by the title, that charges emotionally the view of an otherwise banal industrial area under construction. [Plate vi/39] After our vision has been re-programmed by the textual information, we notice some visual elements, that contribute to increase the dramatic power of the scene: the

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<sup>35</sup> In Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n. Besides, his curiosity for manufactured objects probably derives from the fact, that his father and grandfather were both carpenters, and as a child he loved to build things, using some little tools – a small hammer and a saw – they had adapted for him (see Frongia, *Quello che resta*: 160).

<sup>36</sup> In Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> See Valtorta, *In cerca dei luoghi*: 73.

<sup>39</sup> The Belice valley lies among the provinces of Trapani, Agrigento e Palermo. Gibellina, in the province of Trapani, was one of the most damaged towns. The new city, Gibellina Nuova, was rebuilt some 11 kilometres from the old one. The old town remained just as it was after the earthquake, like a ghost town until 1985. In that year the Italian artist Alberto Burri began the project of the *Cretto*, covering old Gibellina's ruins in concrete, while preserving the streetscape.

tilted horizon, the smoke in the background, but most of all the predominance of the ground, with a huge irregular indented crack, that from the foreground stretches into the depth of the photographic space. Inside the crack the darkness concentrates: this is the black place of the shadow, that recalls metaphorically the mythological entrance to the Hades – the white ladder at the end seems an invitation to descend. Rethinking about Guidi's affinity to Informel, it comes to mind a possible homage to Alberto Burri's *Cretto* (1984-2015), the great landscape artwork that covers the rests of the old city of Gibellina.

The theme of the cracked land appears again in other photographs, such as for instance *Via dei Mulinelli, San Vittore di Cesena, 1991*. [Plates vi/40] This time though, we experience no emotional shock but are confronted with the normal banality of some not well-defined work at underground infrastructures. Once again, Guidi places the crack in the foreground: it is a rectangular hole, with clean edges marked by the typical red and white striped band of the roadworks. Inside the hole there is a machinery, while some pipes lie on the road, and the earth, produced by the excavation, forms a huge mound next to the hole. The position of the hole and the mounds at the "entrance" of the photographic space creates a barrier, that from the visual field is virtually able to extend its effects on our perception of the physical space: we are blocked on one side of the road and cannot reach the other side, we cannot walk along the tree-lined country road, that stretches beyond the hole. Knowing Guidi's respect for the work by Robert Adams, it does not seem strange to recognise a resemblance between *Via dei Mulinelli* and *Basement for a tract house, Colorado Springs, 1969*. [Plate vi/41] Even if Guidi does not agree with a certain romantic tendency he glimpses in Adams's work, Adams's books were fundamental for his own formation, in particular: *The New West* (1974), *Denver* (1977), *From the Missouri West* (1980), *Los Angeles Spring* (1986), without forgetting *Summer Nights* (1985).<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, at first sight, it seems that after many years, the photographs by the "American topographer" are still impressed in his mind: the shape and size of the hole, its position and orientation, the mounds of earth on the side, the height of the viewpoint, the unspectacular context, the huge amount of space left to the ground, and the sharpness rendering of the geologic elements – these are all characteristics in common with Adams. Not to mention, that both of them acknowledge O'Sullivan as their antecedent.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, bearing in mind the considerations proposed by Roberta Valtorta about how the religious background at large might influence the photographic practice, we can better understand why Guidi claims to recognise an element of moralism, of blame in Robert Adams's approach, alien to his own. In Adams's work there is always some mystical trait, says Guidi.

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<sup>40</sup> In Guidi, *Lunario 1968-99*: 100.

<sup>41</sup> See Lewis Baltz, *The New West* (1975), in Idem, *Texts*, 33-37: 33.

«In the landscapes he photographs everything is described with accuracy. Here and there you see a bulldozer, a tool: they are just few things, few clues, there to suggest the sense of the transformation. Adams wants to communicate his dismay towards the destruction of the landscape, but what reaches me is a profoundly dramatic approach, concerning the spectre, the death, no more the things he has in front. [...] Robert Adams is not interested in the manmade object, but in the suspended sky, dazzled. In his photographs everything is precarious».<sup>42</sup>

Although the two images depict the same subject – a hole in the ground in a rural suburban area – the American photographer still seems to be looking for beauty in nature – albeit no longer pristine – almost following the tradition of the great sublime views à la Ansel Adams: with the vast expanse of desert ground culminating in the mountain chain on the horizon imbued with a coarse, harsh, pitiless light. In his essay coeval to the publication of *The New West*, Lewis Baltz noticed that,

«for Adams the redeeming quality of the western landscape is its light, falling equally on mountaintop and used car lot, a tarnished metaphor of divine grace. [...] In spite of all evidence to the contrary, there is a pure and glacial beauty that still resides in our wounded landscape».<sup>43</sup>

Frongia points out, that Adams indeed believes in a metaphorical layer in landscape photography, beyond the geographical one.<sup>44</sup> On the contrary Guidi is interested in a more difficult, elusive kind of beauty. The landscape he photographs looks more domestic and controllable, lacking that hint of sublime of the Colorado's high plains. Of course, we must not forget, that Adams' was photographing in the 1970s, when the construction of suburban housing developments, although inexorable, was just at the beginning. The title of his picture leaves no doubt about the purpose of the hole – soon a new tract house would be built there, and it would not be the last one. About the scope of the roadworks depicted by Guidi we have less clue – the presence of the pipes suggests that it might concern some maintenance work to the underground infrastructure. After the hole would be closed, the road would probably show almost no trace of the inflicted wound, but the changes imposed to the landscape would remain, albeit hidden underground. As already observed in the case of the dead rabbits' pictures, Guidi's choice of colour renders the image less abstract and conveys warmth to it – the warm brown of the earth. A flat, pale

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<sup>42</sup> Guido Guidi quoted in Frongia, *Quello che resta*: 159-160 (translation mine).

<sup>43</sup> See Baltz, *The New West*: 35, 37.

<sup>44</sup> See Frongia, *Quello che resta*: 159.

cloudless sky is his homage to early photography.<sup>45</sup> By the way, also in the photographs of the New Topographers the sky is usually a silent presence. Both Guidi's and Adams' picture confront us with a situation of apparent stillness. In Adams, although a man – of whom we see only the shoulders and the head covered by a hat – is probably digging inside the hole, we cannot perceive any dynamic actions being performed. In Guidi, the human presence is only conjured by the objects left on the spot. The turned off machine inside the hole recalls the image of the locomotive abandoned in the forest, that André Breton evoked to describe his idea of “the expiration of movement” – one of the forms of «beauté convulsive».<sup>46</sup> Actually the *earth*, even metaphorically, suggests the idea of immobility, permanence, long-term stability: it is the human intervention that quickly modifies the land, while the work of nature needs centuries, ages, to perform noticeable changes – except in the case of catastrophic events such as an earthquake. A hole in the ground causes indeed a violent modification of the terrain conformation. Guidi's and Adams' photographs of the mechanical produced hole confront us with the lack of coordination between human and geological time.

## Geological time

Olivier Lugon notices that geology constitutes a decisive element especially in the field of the documentary landscape photography: «On peut parler d'une véritable vague “géologiste” autour de 1930» – August Sander called it *exakte Landschaftsfotografie*.<sup>47</sup> In 1934 Sander dedicates his small book *Das Siebengebirge* to the geological history of the region, realising incredible close-ups of rocks and devoting many of his landscapes to quarries or rock formations.<sup>48</sup> In the same period Albert Renger-Patzsch made similar views, taking advantage of the quarries and cracks made in the Ruhrgebiet landscape to inspect its subsoil.<sup>49</sup> A geological motive of particular success inside the documentary photography was the “cross-section”, mainly for its metaphorical power to visually represent the structure of the society. An emblematic example of the link between documentary photography and geology is an episode in the life of Dorothea Lange. In the early months of their acquaintance, her future husband – the progressive agricultural economist Paul S. Taylor – brought her a transcript of a 1902 speech by Charles R. Van Hise, a leading American geologist. Taylor was trying to convince her of the importance of documentary photography in his

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<sup>45</sup> Frongia, *The vestiges of what was*: 69 (It.), 71 (Eng.).

<sup>46</sup> Breton, *L'amour fou*: 15. See also Krauss, *The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism*: 112.

<sup>47</sup> Lugon, *Le style documentaire*: 229.

<sup>48</sup> August Sander, *Das Siebengebirge*, Bad Rotherfelde: Holzwarth Verlag 1934.

<sup>49</sup> See the posthumous publication of these works in Ann and Jürgen Wilde (eds.), *Albert Renger-Patzsch: Ruhrgebiet-Landschaften 1927-1935*, Cologne: DuMont 1982.

own field. Faced with a stark reality, insignificant to the layman, photographers, like experienced geologists faced with a complex geological phenomenon, must be able to understand what is important and what is irrelevant, to extract the meaning from what they observe, and to make a story readable where others see only stones. In his talk Van Hise was describing the correct training of a geologist and Taylor proposed: «just take out the word “geologist” and write the word “photographer”». Dorothea Lange found it so meaningful for her that «later she would use it in her own teaching of photography».<sup>50</sup>

As in the works depicting waste Guidi was confronting photography – the medium of immediacy, that however generates fixity – with the slow but inexorable time of decay, so in the pictures of stones, rocks, earth, soil, mud, he is facing the long-time of geology. The slowness of the natural geological modifications is confronted with the short, fast time of the technique, not only the photographic one, but also that of human construction – or better said destruction. What nature modifies in ages, man alters in months, weeks, days, minutes – the blink of an eye. You can photograph time only through the changes that have a visual impact – before and after the construction of a motorway, for example – but photographing the natural changes of geological time is not a task that can be fulfilled during an individual’s lifetime. “Before” and “after” can be measured only in generations. For instance, if with the purpose to trace the *natural* geological development of the site, we consider Guidi’s photographs of the Monte Grappa, [Plates vi/42, 43], we should confront them with pictures taken so many ages before, that they escape the young age of the medium: everything would look the same, even if we go back to the beginning of photography history. On the contrary, landscape photography would document the accelerated alterations provoked by human actions – for instance, the tragic devastation of the Great War in the theatre of the Monte Grappa, together with the more aggressive practices of over-exploitation in the area.<sup>51</sup>

In the end, the main concern of Guidi remains the *Kulturlandschaft*, as to say, the primitive territory (*Urlandschaft*) after it has been modified by the man.<sup>52</sup> There is a “group” of pictures in which the relationship between the stability of the geological element and the precariousness of the manmade environment emerges in a striking manner. [Plates vi/44, 45, 47] They are photographs belonging to different locations and periods, but they all show the presence of a geological element as an alien body inside the most ordinary context. I suspect that O’Sullivan’s work might have been a source of inspiration in this case too. [Plate vi/47] In *Romano D’Ezzellino, 1985*, a boy is painting white some poles marking the roadside. [Plate vi/44] Since the poles are short, he has to work squat-

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<sup>50</sup> Milton Meltzer, *Dorothea Lange. A Photographer’s Life*, New York: Farrar Straus Giroux 1978: 89.

<sup>51</sup> See Frongia, “*At Least a Stone*”: 98.

<sup>52</sup> About the concept of *Kulturlandschaft* see Norbert Krebs, *Natur und Kulturlandschaft. Vortrag gehalten auf der Festsitzung am 5. Mai 1923*, in: “*Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin*”, 1923, 81-94; and Lugon, *Le style documentaire*: 232-233.

ted on the ground – a position that reminds us about the origin of the word humble. Two small utility cars – both Fiat brand – are parked alongside. Their cream-white and beige colours merge with the prevailing hues of the landscape, but their materiality betrays their industrial origin. All the manmade objects share the same smooth and regular surface – not only the metal of the cars, but also the concrete of the wall and of the pavement – while by contrast, the naturalness of the rock emerges with its rough materiality. Yet, the apparent “perfection” of the industrial materials cannot hide its fragility and precariousness in comparison to the sense of solid stability conveyed by the rock. It may not be wrong to think, that the main theme of this picture is indeed time: the geological time of the rock, calculable in ages; the incomparable shorter life time of the cars, subjected to the usual obsolescence of the products, that sooner or later will become waste, ending up in the wrecking yard; the routine time of everyday life, the painting work carried on without haste but systematically by the boy; and finally the boy’s own time, the human life time. He is working with patience, painting one pole after the other. In the picture we see he has already completed four of them and just started the fifth one, but we know his job will soon be finished. The contemporary presence of the already painted poles together with the still unpainted ones lets us visually perceive the passing of time. On the contrary, the mountain reminds us about a time we cannot experience directly but only imagine, because it extends beyond the duration of our life. As Antonello Frongia well summarises, the unifying principle of Guidi’s works «seems to be the perception of the landscape as a measurement of time».<sup>53</sup>

## The domestication of the world

The glimpse of the geological presence on the threshold of a urban settlement makes evident «the illusory character of every domestication of the world».<sup>54</sup> Franco La Cecla in his aforementioned book, *Getting lost. The man without environment*, tells that when the pioneers reach an inhabited place, they find a land that appears chaotic to them. They must recognise the power of the land, either look for it or avoid it, fortifying or weakening it, but in any case, they must domesticate the space to distinguish the place as locality. The founder is somebody, who possess the ability to draw his own order into the wild world. To ingratiate himself the chaos, he must predict intentions. This is the task of the foundation science called “geomancy”, as to say the science of the “augurs”, of divination, of the prediction of a good or bad future for the settlement. It means to recognise the sings of the

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<sup>53</sup> Frongia, “*At Least a Stone*”: 99.

<sup>54</sup> Figli del Deserto (ed.), *Traversate nel deserto*, ex. cat., Fusignano, Ravenna: Essegi 1986: 9 (translation mine).



place in the entrails of sacrificed animals, or in their position in dying, or in the number of birds passing at a given moment. The act performed by Romulo's plough or by Constantine the Great was to circumscribe, to cut a spot, so that it become an inhabited place, a locality, by establishing a difference between this place and all undomesticated rest. It means to outline a circle, a square, an enclosure of ground... inhabited is opposed to "uninhabitable". Nevertheless, every inhabited place risks to fall back into being uninhabited, to go back to the indifference of infinite possibilities, the unknown power of the deserted places.<sup>55</sup> La Cecla's description has called into my mind one last group of work – although incoherent either chronologically or geographically –, dedicated to the circle and the act of circumscribing the ground (some of them are included in the book *Lunario*). [Plates vi/47-50] The most emblematic image seems to me, *Cervia, 1973*: a child, kneeling on the beach shore, is digging a groove into the sand, and drawing a circle on the ground – probably to play marbles. This simple gesture metaphorically links together the act performed by the founder (described by La Cecla) and the photographic basic act of framing. As Guidi himself confirms:

«Photography circumscribes things and the relationships among them. The lens is circular, it circumscribes a circular image. Then the mask (used to resize the picture) translates it into a square or rectangular shape. At the base there is a circular image, like the 0. The haruspex drawn with a stick a circle in the sky or on the ground. Then they wrote out how many eagles or vultures or swallows passed through, and which direction they followed. The haruspicy was enclosed into this *templum* – the rectangle or the square drawn on the ground – from which later derived the word temple».<sup>56</sup>

To conclude this selection of works dedicated to Guidi's humble vocation for the ground and his ethos of looking down, I would like to propose a triptych of the 1970s. [Plate vi/51] The three images, mounted on cardboard as vertical sequence, depict Guidi's mother making homemade tagliatelle. To respect the most logical and chronologically correct order, we must read the sequence from bottom to top. The first picture shows the mound of flour on the wood pastry board; in the second picture the dough has already been stretched very thin and it circumscribes a circular area on the board; in the last pictures the woman is bent down the table and with her arm slides the tagliatelle from the board into the plate. In a certain sense, it might be suggested, that the triptych distills all the main themes treated in this chapter: the archaic mound of raw material, the circum-

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<sup>55</sup> La Cecla, *Perdersi. L'uomo senza ambiente*: 18-20.

<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Marlon and Mariano Sartore, *Guido Guidi "Da Zero", interview*, La Virreina Centre de la Imatge, Barcelona, Spain, of 19 November 2021: online resource available on YouTube (transcription and translation mine).

scribed space created by the human action, and finally, the humble gesture of bowing down (to concrete things) which subsumes the ethos of looking down.

My short description of this photographic sequence cannot fail to mention a funny story, recalled by Guidi in the opening statement of his book *Varianti*: «Einstein told a housewife, who had asked him to explain the general relativity, that it was impossible just as it is impossible to explain the recipe for tagliatelle to someone who has no idea what flour and water are».<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Guidi, *Varianti*: n.n.

# Conclusion

Claude Lemagny once described Guidi as a «"très rare" type of conceptual photographer, but naïve.»<sup>1</sup> Guidi still recalls this definition with a bit of pride, and confirms that he considers important to maintain this aspect of naïveté in his work. Undoubtedly in his photographs endures a trait of naïveté, derived from his working method that, has already mentioned in the previous chapters, accepts serendipity as the basic characteristic of photography, thus it remains open to whichever mishap might happen and leave a trace on the image.<sup>2</sup>

But could we really define Guidi as a conceptual photographer? What does this mean after all? As once Antonello Frongia, in conversation with him, suggested the possibility to distinguish «between conceptual photography bound up in linguistic games and irony, and a photograph that is inherently conceptual because it invites the viewer to reflect upon observation and representation»,<sup>3</sup> Guidi did not disagree. Nonetheless he specified, that there is actually no need to define photography as conceptual, because photography *thinks per se*, «in the same way as the camera thinks, the film thinks, the emulsion thinks», and he, Guidi, thinks but only «afterwards through the emulsion, through the camera».<sup>4</sup> The conceptual aspect eventually comes out, but only provided that you have taken «a photograph after another». Such statement confirms once again that for him the photographic act is bound in repetition, it implies rituality and accumulation: photography is a sort of liturgical act you must repeat, all the more so if, as he specifies, it «is an act, you cannot correct».<sup>5</sup>

Returning to Lemagny's concise description, I am wondering: is Guidi truly so *naïf* as he himself claims to be? Even if he continues to define himself as eternal beginner, he can neither deny nor erase over a half century working experience in photography.<sup>6</sup> Be-

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<sup>1</sup> Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>2</sup> On Guidi's approach to serendipity see chapter 4 (*Mistake*).

<sup>3</sup> Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Frongia and Moro, *Topography of the Landscape and of the Archive*: 101.

<sup>6</sup> Guidi states: «I considered myself (and still do) to be an apprentice, or a beginner, as the poet Mario Luzi would have said, who spoke of the poetry of the complete beginner» (Guidi and Simi

sides, can you truly forget the things you have learnt? How do you unlearn?<sup>7</sup> He affirms to stop performing any activity, as soon as he realises, he has become too experienced. «I remember that I learned to draw too well at art school», recalls Guidi, «I emphasise the word “too”, as in too skilfully, and I wanted to go beyond this skill, unlearning in order to start afresh».<sup>8</sup> He wanted to avoid to remain «trapped by the limits of technical skills», since, as René Daumal reminds us, «l’automatisme» can be at the same time «maître ou serviteur».<sup>9</sup> That is why Guidi left technical drawing as soon as he felt to master «the rules of the game», and began to study Architecture, with the purpose to lose a little the control over the results, relying on the idea that a building is a more complex structure than a painting. «Architecture was a way of starting again from scratch. Then there was photography which was a way of starting again».<sup>10</sup> Photography for him was a way «to “depict” in freehand»,<sup>11</sup> conscious that, as Walter Benjamin noticed with a bit of regret in *Berliner Kindheit*, once you have learnt how to perform an action, you cannot learn it again: «Nun kann ich gehen; gehen lernen nicht mehr».<sup>12</sup>

In this sense, we can better understand Guidi’s choice to photograph using the bulky field camera on a tripod. As Antonello Frongia observes:

«the recouping of a “primitive” instrument had nothing really to do with a nostalgic return to slowness or to descriptive calligraphy, but instead embodied a very 20th-century gesture, aimed at destabilizing the figure of the “author” and his supposed mastering of technique, [...] accepting the language and problems posed by the photographic process».<sup>13</sup>

Guidi confirms that each time he starts afresh so that he will not fall into the habit of doing either the things he already did, or the things he already knows how to do.<sup>14</sup>

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(eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.).

<sup>7</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche noticed that, differently from adults, children can play the «Spiele des Schaffens» because «Unschuld ist das Kind und Vergessen» (Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*: 31), and he praises «die Kraft zu vergessen» of children and animals (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen. Zweites Stück: Vom Nutzen und Nachteile der Historie für das Leben* (1874), in Idem, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe 1*, edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Munich/New York/Berlin: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag/de Gruyter 1999, 245-334: 250).

<sup>8</sup>Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l’altro*: 123.

<sup>9</sup>Daumal, *Le Mont Analogue*: 204.

<sup>10</sup>Guidi and Simi (eds.) *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*: n.n.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Benjamin, *Berliner Kindheit*: 267.

<sup>13</sup> Frongia, “*At Least a Stone*”: 97 (tr. modified).

<sup>14</sup> Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l’altro*: 123.

## A Serious Game

Undoubtedly a trait of naiveté in his work derives from the avoidance of irony, a characteristic that distinguishes his approach from the postmodern philosophy in vogue during the years of his artistic maturation. He agrees with Robert Adams about the «need to re-discover a non-ironic world», and admires the fact that children are still not aware of irony.<sup>15</sup> Even when they play, they take the game very seriously. It must briefly be reminded that “the play” is not just a mere child’s occupation, since, according to Johan Huizinga, «menschliche Kultur im Spiel – als Spiel – aufkommt und sich entfaltet».<sup>16</sup> Guidi admits, that sometimes he might have indulged in a formal game, nonetheless he would never photograph with the idea to make fun of the subject.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps this is not the only point of contact between his approach to photography and infancy, especially if we think that one of his most beloved artists is Paul Klee, who dedicated great part of his career to the investigation of child’s art.<sup>18</sup> Guidi has confirmed his fondness for both the artistic and the theoretical work of Klee on various occasions.<sup>19</sup> To him, Klee’s painting has been important already since his university years. On his bookshelves, the two volumes of the Italian translation of *Das bildnerische Denken* count among his favourite books.<sup>20</sup>

Another admirer of Klee, Walter Benjamin,<sup>21</sup> recognised that a secret understanding seems to link children and artists: an understanding based on images, which allows a comprehension aside from verbal language.<sup>22</sup> As we know, Guidi himself believes in the

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<sup>15</sup> Frongia and Moro, *Topography of the Landscape and of the Archive*: 100. Interesting enough, another photographer, often associated with naiveté, is Eugène Atget, whose work shows likewise no trace of irony (See Fraser Atget *and the City*: 216).

<sup>16</sup> Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens. Vom Ursprung der Kultur im Spiel* (1938), Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag 2013: 7.

<sup>17</sup> Frongia and Moro, *Topography of the Landscape and of the Archive*: 100.

<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Fineberg, *Reawakening the Beginnings: The Art of Paul Klee*, in Idem, *The Innocent Eye. Children’s Art and the Modern Artist*, Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1997, 82-119: 84.

<sup>19</sup> Conversation with the author, 12 August 2021. See also: Guido Guidi, *A tour of my bookshelves*, video interview, 29 July 2021, online resource.

<sup>20</sup> See Jürg Spiller (ed.), *Paul Klee. Das bildnerische Denken*, Basel/Stuttgart: Benno Schwabe & Co 1956 (It. tr. Mario Spagnol and Francesco Saba Sardi, *Paul Klee. Teoria della forma e della figurazione*, Milan: Feltrinelli 1959).

<sup>21</sup> With the words: «Es gibt ein Bild von Klee, das Angelus Novus heißt» Benjamin opens his best-known Thesis IX in Walter Benjamin, *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* (1942), in Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (eds.), *Walter Benjamin Gesammelte Schriften I/1*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 1991, 691-704: 697). Towards Klee’s painting Angelus Novus – he had purchased in Munich in 1921 – Benjamin developed a lifelong «innige Beziehung», testified moreover by the fact, that he wished to name after it his projected but never appeared magazine (see Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (eds.), *Walter Benjamin Gesammelte Schriften II/1*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M. 1991: 982).

<sup>22</sup> See for instance, Walter Benjamin, *Alte vergessene Kinderbücher* (1924), in Hella Tiedemann-Bartels (ed.), *Walter Benjamin Gesammelte Schriften III*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 1991, 14-22: 17. We have just mentioned Paul Klee’s fundamental collection of Bauhaus lectures, entitled *Das bildnerische Denken* (literally “the pictorial thinking”). In 1912 Klee compared the artistic abilities of children to

importance of visual thinking over verbal and cognitive intelligence, since for him «everything starts from the eyes, from the sight».<sup>23</sup> Frongia confirms that many of the visual themes, confronted by Guidi in the eighties derived from a long meditation through images.<sup>24</sup> On the same wave length, Marta Dahó underlines that Guidi's photographic language tests «the possibility and the challenge of developing a way of thinking through images that goes directly against the traditional opposition between the visual and the verbal realms».<sup>25</sup> Guidi remembers that in secondary school the teacher of literature encouraged him to write, so he began to write a sort of novel. However, he was too impatient for words, and felt visual elements more akin to him: «I felt with more urgency the need to record directly the experience of looking» he admits.<sup>26</sup> Guidi's confession recall an analogous statement by Italo Calvino who, remembering his own childhood, told:

«As I learnt to read, the benefit I gained was minimal. [...] In any case, I preferred to ignore the written lines and continue in my favourite occupation of daydreaming *inside* the figures and their succession...».<sup>27</sup>

## Portraying the world

As declared in the introduction, my narration too has been built on images, connected through a «montage of attractions», based neither on chronological nor on geographical order, but on a thematic division, structured upon categories drawn from the combination of medium specificity and the everyday theories.<sup>28</sup> Despite unavoidable lacks and approximations, hopefully Guidi's portrait – which comes out by combining all the pictures I have been collecting and displaying here, page after page, like the tiles of a mosaic – would be enough resembling, as far as it comprises the multitude of objects, seen by him once, and once again, after the camera had fixed them on the photosensitive surface.

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«noch Uranfänge von Kunst, wie man sie eher in ethnographischen Sammlungen findet» (Paul Klee, *Tagebücher 1898-1918*, Stuttgart/Teufen: Verlag Gerd Hatje/Verlag Arthur Niggli 1988, entry 905, 320-322: 322). About Klee's fondness for child's drawings, see also Fineberg, *Reawakening the Beginnings*: 82-119.

<sup>23</sup> Frongia and Moro, *Topography of the Landscape and of the Archive*: 101.

<sup>24</sup> Frongia, "At Least a Stone": 97.

<sup>25</sup> Dahó, *Through the Empty Room*: n.n.

<sup>26</sup> See Frongia, *Il paesaggio che guarda me*: 397 (translation mine). This is not the only time, that Guidi confirms, that his formation has been based pretty much on *visual* rather than on *literary* material (See also Frongia, *Quello che resta*: 161).

<sup>27</sup> Italo Calvino, *Lezioni americane. Sei proposte per il prossimo millennio* (1988), Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore 1993: 105 (translation mine).

<sup>28</sup> The expression «montage of attractions» is borrowed from Sergei Eisenstein, *Montage of Attractions*. For "Enough Stupidity in Every Wiseman", Eng. tr. Daniel Gerould in: "The Drama Review: TDR", vol. 18, no. 1, March 1974, 77-85.

Guidi however warns us, that for him a «catalogue of all the things seen» could not mean a comprehensive collection of a specific subject carried on according to a predetermined project – à la August Sander, to be clear –, because he [Guidi] is too impatient. Therefore, his catalogue includes not «all the bollards: but a bollard, a man, a child, from time to time».<sup>29</sup> He defines it a «catalogue of fragments», a «rootless chaos», that might even disorient the observer.<sup>30</sup>

Jorge Luis Borges' short story of a man, who set himself the task to «dibujar el mundo», comes to my mind. Guidi makes reference to this passage by Borges, when he recalls how he once disagreed with Ghirri about the idea of taking a unique comprehensive photograph of the whole world. Guidi found the idea too ambitious, opposite to his own idea of photography, based on accumulation of many images in sequence, rather than on the selection of the unique “frame”, turned into a masterpiece.<sup>31</sup> Borges describes how year after year, the man peoples a space with images of provinces, kingdoms, mountains, bays, ships, islands, fishes, rooms, instruments, stars, horses and people, only to realise in the end that «ese paciente laberinto de líneas traza la imagen de su cara».<sup>32</sup>

My research has started from the assumption that Guidi's practice is linked to the everyday in different ways: as daily work, that follows a precise rituality, is performed in an ordinary, domestic context – close to home, without going too far –, and deals with ordinary objects of the everyday: furniture, and other domestic stuff such as doors, windows, electronic devices, and so on, but also nearby people, relatives, friends, neighbours, who inhabit the everyday of the photographer. Finally, in the sense that, even when Guidi photographs outside his own everydayness, he employs an everyday gaze, that prefers what is marginal, inconspicuous, defective, normally left out precisely because considered too ordinary.

The everyday became the key to explore and present Guidi's oeuvre, avoiding to close it inside a conceptual cage, but simply offering a possible interpretation, translated through the categories of photography specificity, which enabled me to position Guidi's work within a more general theoretic discourse. The majority of the textual and visual sources used date to the 1970s and first 1980s because in that moment Guidi was developing his most mature formation in the field of photography theory after the university years. Moreover, to that period belong the most influential writings for the definition and identification of photography specificity. To each topic I dedicated a chapter, in which I presented paradigmatic works by Guidi, in relation to the specific theme, in order to de-

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<sup>29</sup> See Frongia, *Quello che resta*: 163 (translation mine).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> See Frongia, *Il paesaggio che guarda me*: 406-407. Susan Sontag too opens her famous *On Photography*, claiming that «to collect photographs is to collect the world» (Sontag, *On Photography*: 3).

<sup>32</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, *Obras Completas: El Hacedor*, Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores 1960: 109.

velop a sort of Guidi's photographic grammar of the everyday. The first chapter (*Framing*) took into account works focused on the use of objects already present in the everyday landscape as spontaneous generators of photographic framing. I divided the objects into two groups: traditional ones (doors, windows, mirrors), and newer ones (the television screen and the car window). Already this first chapter reveals a certain playful attitude on Guidi's part, even if not ironic, as well as his ability to recognise correspondences and compositions naturally created by common objects. The second chapter (*Indexicality*) clarifies all the more this tendency. From the selection of images, it emerges that Guidi plays with photography specificity and with the most popular studies inside the semiotic field, kindly making fun of the categories that the photographic jargon has borrowed from Charles Sanders Peirce's theories. In the end, it becomes clear that in Guidi's works, fingers and other pointing objects turn out to be pointers of themselves, short circuiting indexicality itself. At the same time the shadow, which likewise belongs to the category of indexes, not only unmasks the semiotic theory, but also the "transparency" of photography, by revealing the presence of the real world, personified in the projected shadow of the photographer, as to say the author, who does not remain hidden, as required on the contrary by the good praxis of mimetic representation. The third chapter (*Repetition*) sheds light on Guidi's concern for details, and his attitude to pay attention to common, unspectacular moments and situations, epitomised by his "refusal" of the concept of decisive moment, and his preference for the accumulation of sequence of images. He repeats the same act as a ritual, and the same frame with minimal variations, with the aim to record the passage of time. The passage of time, testified in the everyday by the movement of light in the space, is shown by means of photographic sequences, without a clear subject and in which apparently nothing is happening: empty rooms, bare walls, forgotten corners of asphalt, portions of wasteland or tufts of grass, illuminated by a blade of sunshine. Other times, instead, the repetition is used as means to unmask the character of photography as representation, through the *mise en abyme* created by photographing a subject together with his/her own picture – an operation somewhat close to conceptual art, although always carried out lightly, without taking things too seriously, without making fun of the subject either, but only of a certain tendency towards over-conceptualisation. The chapter about the mistake, that concludes the first part, brings the unmasking of the photographic process even more into light. Guidi stretches the limits of the medium to the extreme, to comprehend the impact of each factor on the result, not to forget, that photography is above all an ordinary object among others, based on procedures, techniques, and tools that have been the same since the nineteenth century. An everyday process, accessible to anyone, but easily influenced by casual variables not totally manageable by the operator. The photographic error, similarly to the *lapsus linguae*, leads to reflect about photography intended as automatic writing, but also about the role of chance and the level of



control left to the photographer. Guidi's controlled use of the mistake, to test the potentialities of the medium, does not exclude, but on the opposite accepts with gratitude even the appearance of unexpected errors, of the accident as a further source of knowledge, as well as peculiar detail, which makes every image unique and unrepeatable – you can repeat the correct gesture, but not exactly the same mistake. The issue of the error as deviation from the rule, as *scarto* (in the sense of swerve), which allows to see things differently, is treated further in chapter 5 (*Waste*), the first chapter of the second part that switches my argumentation from photography grammar to photography ethos. The last two chapters show Guidi's inclination towards low, humble things such as waste and humus. Curiosity and humility characterise his behaviour in bowing under the black cloth to check the image on the ground glass, the choice of the subjects – common, unspectacular, rejected, marginalised – and the choice of the frame, addressed downwards, towards the earth rather than the sky, towards concrete, worldly things rather than celestial, metaphysical ones. As already underlined in the first part, the second part confirms Guidi's concern for materials, for photography as a processual act, and for the photograph as a perishable, imperfect object. His attention catches imperfections as traces of the passage of time, represented by the slow natural corrosion of artefacts, confronted with the fast artificial devastation produced in the landscape by industrial machineries.

Retracing the path built by the pictures and the topics presented in the various chapters, it surfaces a sort of obsession with time on Guidi's part, and with the recording of its passage either through the movements of the light, or through the decay of surfaces – especially in chapter 6 (*Humus*), where the disproportion between human and geological time is manifest. If photography aspires to monumentalise, to eternalise the subject in a continuous present, Guidi's photography achieves the opposite: his photographs capture the provisional, fleeting, ultimately mortal element of our everyday reality. Saying that, I do not mean to evoke a proximity between Guidi's pictures and Roland Barthes' idea that each photograph always contains the imperious sign of our future death,<sup>33</sup> but rather propose to read them as a visual translation of the Kantian motto: «Die Zeit verläuft sich nicht, sondern in ihr verläuft sich das Dasein des Wandelbaren».<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> See Barthes, *La chambre claire*: 151.

<sup>34</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, edited by Theodor Valentiner in Idem, *Sämtliche Werke, vol. 1*, edited by O. Buek et al., Leipzig: Verlag von Felix Meiner 1919: 187 (A 183, *Transscendentale Elementarlehre, Zweiter Theil, Erste Abtheilung, Zweites Buch, 1. Hauptstück: Von dem Schematismus der reinen Verstandesbegriffe*).



# APPENDICES



# 1. Chronology of life and main projects

*1940*

On 26 December Guido Guidi is born in San Mauro in Valle (Cesena), however his birth is not registered in the local civil registry until the 1 January 1941. Lives in San Mauro with his parents until 1953, then moves to Ravenna.

*1955-1959*

His uncle gives him as gift a 6x6 camera, and Guidi starts photographing using a tripod. From 1954 to 1959 he attends the liceo artistico [arts high school] in Ravenna, where his teacher of geometrical drawing, Alberto Fabbri, encourages him to study architecture. During these years he visits Florence, Urbino, Venice, Trieste, and Aquileia. He lives in Ravenna until 1959, then he moves to Venice. The first known photograph by Guido is dated 1956: a frontal portrait of his friends, standing on a road in the countryside of San Mauro in Valle, next to a structure of wooden poles, in the form of a triangle, which recalls the perspectival triangle marked by the white road, running ad infinitum.

*1959-1964*

He studies architecture at the IUAV-Istituto Universitario di Architettura in Venice [University Institute of Architecture]. To finance his studies, he works as tutor at the Boarding school Artigianelli – a sort of ante litteram vocational school, run by religious and usually attended by children of poor origins – in the neighbourhood Zattere in Venice, where he lives for two years, until the opening of the student housing. Meanwhile, in 1963, his parents move to the country house in Ronta, where Guidi lives today. During the university years, he learns to use photography as a tool to read architecture and trains his attitude to pay attention to apparently marginal details. His interest in vernacular architecture arises especially from attending the lessons held by Carlo Scarpa and Bruno Zevi.

1965-1966

He begins focusing only on photography. In November 1965 enters the military service in Trento. Reads Don Milani's book *L'obbedienza non è più una virtù* (released in October 1965), but since such writing is not allowed by the army, his promotion from sergeant to non-commissioned officer is denied, and he is transferred to Rovereto. In the last months of the military service, he works in the darkroom of the barracks, learns to print, and takes some photographs with the Leica III G of the army. During a leave, he finds in a bookshop in Rovereto two books by Bill Brandt (one of them is *Ombres d'une île*). These books are his first encounter with "cultured" photography.

1967-1968

Returns to Venice and although he is not a student, lives with his friends at the Casa dello Studente [Student Housing]. His friend, Cono Terranova, suggests him to enrol in the Corso Superiore di Disegno Industriale [Higher Course of Industrial Design] at IUAV in Venice. Guidi passes the entry test, and receives a scholarship, but then loses it, because he skips classes and attends only Italo Zannier's photography course. Following a suggestion of Zannier, he subscribes to *Camera* magazine. He is also a member of George Eastman House and receives the magazine *Image*. He regularly buys books via mail-order from *Photo Eye* and other bookshops, like *A Photographer's Place*, in New York. In 1968 he takes part in his first group exhibition *Arte Contemporanea in Emilia Romagna* [Contemporary Art in Emilia Romagna], at Museo Civico in Bologna (with catalogue).

1970-1972

Is appointed as lab technician at IUAV-Faculty of City Planning in Venice. Buys the photo-book *Self Portrait* by Lee Friedlander, a fundamental reference for his following practice. Takes part in his first international group exhibition *Intercamera* in Prague (with catalogue). In 1971, he is probably among the first in Italy to buy the catalogue of Walker Evans' retrospective *American Photograph*, curated by John Szarkowski at MoMA. Between 1971 and 1972, inspired by this book, he takes a series of photographs about the spontaneous architecture in East-Romagna. In 1971-1972, after a time in a temporary premises at Palazzo Civran in Venice (near Rialto), IUAV faculty of City Planning is transferred to Villa Albrizzi Franchetti in San Trovaso, a district of Preganziol in the Province of Treviso. Until 1975, Guidi commutes almost daily for work from Venice to Preganziol.

1974

In May he marries Marta Zoffoli. Their honeymoon in Sardinia becomes an important occasion of growth in the practice of photography. Together with their friend Maurizio

Predasso, they load up a Fiat 127 with crates of peaches and apricots to eat during the low-budget journey, and head for Civitavecchia, to catch the ferry to Olbia. Guidi is at the wheel, Maurizio in the passenger seat and Marta on the back seat. At night Guido and Marta sleep in the car, while Maurizio sleeps outdoors, on a sort of camp bed. By photographing, Guidi is impressed by the strength of the land and its people; the names of the places he encounters fascinate him. The black-and-white photographs taken during that adventurous trip on the road, together with newer colour pictures taken in the course of two later travels (2011) will be exposed many years later (2019) in a solo exhibition at MAN in Nuoro, and featured in a three-volumes catalogue, published by Mack books London. That same year Guidi makes two important photographic “encounters”: the book *The New West* by Robert Adams and the work by Lewis Baltz, that he discovers in the magazine “Image” of June 1974 (vol. 17, no. 2).

#### 1975-1977

In 1975 Guidi and Marta move to Treviso. From that time until 1990, he takes a series of photographs of the landscape along the Strada Romea. In 1976 their daughter Anna is born. During the 1980s she will be the subject of a lot of photographs (until approximately her 15<sup>th</sup> birthday). Leafing through the pages of the magazine “House” (November 1976), Guidi discovers William Eggleston’s work, a further fundamental reference for his own approach, especially with regard to colour photography and everyday subjects. His photographs are exposed in two solo exhibitions at Galleria Nadar in Pisa and at Il Diaframma in Milan. On 15 January 1977, at the Galleria Palazzo Galvani in Bologna, opens the double solo show with Mario Cresci, *Due aspetti dell’attuale ricerca fotografica [Two aspects of the current photographic research]*, curated by a young Vittorio Sgarbi (who was Zannier’s assistant at DAMS) – Guidi still keeps the flyer of the exhibition, containing Sgarbi’s text and a selection of images. On this occasion, he meets for the first time Luigi Ghirri, who is visiting the show. He increases his knowledge of American photography, discovering the work by Stephen Shore in the magazine “House” of January 1977. Despite the language gap, Guidi and Shore will become friends and share various projects over the years. His photographs receive a special mention at the second edition of the Bolaffi Prize of Photography (1978).

#### 1978-1979

Participates in two international group exhibitions: *Fotografia Italiana [Italian Photography]* in Arles and *Festival Harze*. In 1979, he finds accommodation in the house of the photographer Umberto Sartorello in Treviso. He has important occasions of exposition, such as the now legendary *Biennale Venezia '79 La Fotografia* as well as the group exhibitions *The Italian*

*Eye*, at Alternative Centre for International Arts in New York, and *19 Fotografos Italianos Contemporaneos* at Museo de Arte Camillo Gil in Ciudad de México. He takes part in the group exhibition (with catalogue) *Iconicitta/1*, curated by Luigi Ghirri at the Padiglione d'arte contemporanea Palazzo Massari in Ferrara. At the same time, he has solo exhibitions in various Italian cities, such as Modena, Treviso, Alessandria, and Fusignano. On the occasion of the Biennale he attends various workshop held by Lee Friedlander, Nathan Lyons, Duane Michals, and Romeo Martinez.

#### 1980-1982

His exhibition activity continues to develop, with further solo shows in Milan, Cesena, Treviso, Prato and Alessandria. Without forgetting two group exhibitions with catalogue: *Fotografia e immagine dell'architettura* and *Paesaggio immagine e realtà*, Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Bologna; and *Fotomedia due*, Loggetta lombardesa, Ravenna and Galleria Il Milione, Milan. He and Marta travel to Spain – some of the photographs, taken during the journey are later published in *Di sguincio* (London: Mack books 2023). In 1982, a further important occasion of exchange with international photographers – such as Lee Friedlander – comes from the participation in the group exhibition *Napoli città sul mare con porto*, Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples; Palazzo Fortuny, Venice; and Calcografia Nazionale, Rome.

#### 1982-1984

In 1982-1983 begins a new phase of his work, with the passage to large format equipment, after fifteen years dedicated to the language of the snapshots. Between 1983 and 1984, he moves from Treviso, first to Mestre and then to Venice, where he lives – changing various accommodations – until he leaves the teaching at IUAV in 2015. To reach the Faculty, still in Preganziol, he commutes by car. 1983 turns out as a very prolific year. In Summer (26 June–23 July), at the Galleria dell'immagine, Palazzo Gambalunga in Rimini opens Guidi's solo exhibition curated by Italo Zannier, and the first monographic book is published (with a text by Zannier). The small book features eight contact colour prints from 6x6 negative, made with the Hasselblad, printed respecting their original dimensions. Further solo shows take place in Treviso and Fusignano, and he is involved in various group exhibitions in Italy, Austria, and France. He realises a series of stage photographs of the silent piece *Lo Spazio della Quiete*, played by Valdoca Theatre, the company founded by Cesare Ronconi and Mariangela Gualtieri. From 1983 through 1997 he takes a series of photographs of the industrial areas in Porto Marghera and Ravenna.



1984

Is invited by Ghirri to join the project *Viaggio in Italia* (travelling group exhibition and catalogue). Although, at the time, the event receives almost no attention, a posteriori it is ideally considered by Italian historian of photography as the founding moment of the Italian landscape school. That same year, Guidi and Ghirri accept an assignment to photograph the Bonci Theatre in Cesena. A selection of their pictures is shown in an exhibition at Palazzo del Ridotto and published in a catalogue, with a text by Roberta Valtorta. The format of the catalogue and the cover are designed by Guidi himself on the model of the catalogue of the American exhibition *New Topographic* (George Eastman House, Rochester, New York, 1975). Further solo exhibitions are organised in different location in Italy and in Rotterdam.

1986-1989

Together with Ghirri and other photographers of *Viaggio in Italia*, he is involved in another group exhibition, on the theme of landscape representation, *Esplorazioni sulla via Emilia [Explorations along the Emilia way]*, Ex Caserma Zucchi, Reggio Emilia; Palazzo dei Congressi, Bologna and Chiostrri di San Romana, Ferrara (with catalogue). The “twin” group exhibition *Via Emilia/Italy* travels to various Italian Cultural Institutes in Utrecht, Edinburgh, Moscow, Heidelberg, Hamburg, Munich, Brussels, Strasburg and Paris. Is invited to give lectures, seminars, and workshops by different Italian Universities (in Venice, Milan, Lecce and Bari), as well as by various public and private institutions (Milan Superintendence for Cultural and Environmental Heritage, CRAF-Centro di Ricerca e Archiviazione della Fotografia of Spilimbergo, Marangoni Foundation in Florence and others). Further solo exhibitions in Genoa, Parma, Udine, Turin, Venice and Vienna. Among the numerous group exhibitions, it is important to mention: *Trouver Trieste, Visages, Paysages hier et aujourd'hui*, Paris (with catalogue); *Traversate del deserto*, Fusignano, Ravenna (with catalogue); *Tra sogno e bisogno. 306 fotografie sull'evoluzione dei consumi in Italia 1940-1986*, curated by Cesare Colombo, with a text by Arturo Carlo Quintavalle, Milan (with catalogue). In 1989, he starts his assignment as Professor of Photography at the Academy of Fine Arts in Ravenna. Together with Paolo Costantini and William Guerrieri, he founds in Rubiera the association *Linea di Confine per la Fotografia Contemporanea*, that is engaged in a research on photography and landscape, by means of workshops with international authors (for instance in 1993 Guidi, Guerrieri and Costantini invite Stephen Shore in Luzzara for a workshop), and collaborative projects with public institutions on Italian landscape. The occasions of solo and group exhibitions multiply in Italy and Europe: *L'insistenza dello sguardo: fotografie italiane 1839-1989*, Palazzo Fortuny, Venice and Museo Alinari, Florence (with catalogue); *L'invention d'un Art*, curated by A. Sayag and J. C. Lemagny, Centre

Georges Pompidou, Paris (with catalogue); *L'Europe des createurs. Utopies 1989*, Grand Palais, Paris; *Mit dem "Roten Blitz" in die schöne West Steiermark*, Haus der Architektur, Graz; and *Wasteland: Landscape From Now On*, Fotografie Biënnale Rotterdam (with catalogue). Between 1987 and 1998, he receives eight successive commissions from the province of Milan to realise a photographic survey on several municipal areas around Milan, as well as on the city itself, for two projects entitled *Archivio dello spazio [Archive of the space]* and *Milano senza confini [Milan without boundaries]*, that involves 58 Italian and 2 foreign photographers of landscape. The entire corpus of photographs is conserved in the archive of the Museum of Contemporary Photography (MUFOCO). A selection of Guidi's pictures is published in 2021 in the photo-book *Guido Guidi Cinque Viaggi (1990-98)* (Mack books, London).

#### 1990s

In 1990, the Faculty relocates from Preganziol back to Venice, by that time Guidi is already based in Mestre. During the 1990s, from Antwerp to Dortmund, from Florence to Milan and Venice, solo exhibitions do not lack. Among the many group exhibitions of this period, it is worth remembering: 1993 *Muri di carta*, curated by Arturo Carlo Quintavalle, Italian Pavilion, Venice Biennale (with catalogue); 1994 *The Italian Metamorphosis. 1943-1968*, Guggenheim Museum, New York (with catalogue); 1993-1994 *Linea di confine della Provincia di Reggio Emilia, Rubiera*, Haus der Architektur, Graz, then Venice and Paris; 1996 *Obiettivi/Soggettivi*, Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa, Venice; 1997 *L'officina del contemporaneo. Venezia '50-'60*, Palazzo Fortuny, Venice (with catalogue). In 1991-1992 he takes a series of photographs of construction sites, industrial areas and abandoned buildings in the suburbs of Rimini. The pictures are published in the photo-book *Rimini Nord*, with a text by Paolo Costantini, and displayed in a solo exhibition. In 1992, one of those pictures together with one taken in Cesena in 1989 are featured in *Wasteland*, Biennial of Photography, Rotterdam (with catalogue) – Guidi and Basilico are the only Italian photographers invited. Between 1993 and 1996, he takes a series of photographs of the marginal landscapes along the Napoleonic way, that ideally connects St. Petersburg to Fisterra. To cover the entire length (from Russia to Spain) Guidi needs five trips: the first two in Germany and Italy in 1993; the third in Russia and Poland in August 1994; then Spain in 1995; and the last one in France and Belgium in the Spring of 1996. The project arises from an idea of Guidi and Marco Venturi, who accompanies him in 1993 and 1996. In 2003, a selection of the pictures is published in the photo-book *In Between Cities* (Electa), with texts by Louise Désy, Antonello Frongia, Roberta Valtorta and Marco Venturi. In 1995 he publishes his first retrospective book, *Varianti*, that one year later is awarded the Oscar Goldoni prize for the best photo-book. Villa Savorgnan in Lestans, Udine and AR/GE Kunst in Bozen

dedicated him a solo exhibition of the same title. He is involved in further exhibit projects, such as *L'io e il suo doppio. Un secolo di ritratto fotografico in Italia 1895-1995*, curated by Italo Zannier, Italian Pavilion, Venice Biennale (with catalogue); *Il Po del '900*, curated by Italo Zannier, Castello Estense, Mesola; *Tredici fotografi per un itinerario pasoliniano*, Villa Savorgnan di Lestans, Udine; *Gardenia*, curated by Paolo Costantini and William Guerrieri, Reggio Emilia (with catalogue).

#### 1997-1999

From 1997 to 2009, under commission from the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal, he starts photographing Carlo Scarpa's Brion cemetery in San Vito di Altivole, capturing with an 8-by-10-inch Deardorff camera the light variations on the architectures and water surfaces in different hours of the day and seasons – the project will engage him discontinuously for over 10 years, yielding over 600 colour photographs. In 1998 he takes photographs in Ayaş (Turkey) during the excavations of the ruins (the invitation to photograph the process was made by an archaeologist who had previously participated in Guidi's workshops). Following an assignment from the CCA-Canadian Centre for Architecture, takes photographs for the book *Carlo Scarpa Architect: Intervening With History*, published in 1999, on the occasion of a group exhibition of the same title. That same year, the CCA hosts the group exhibition *Venezia-Marghera*, with works by Guidi among others. In Mantua he has the chance to expose in a double show with Stephen Shore. Between May and September 1999, he realises over 200 photographs of the working-class neighbourhoods built in the 1950s by INA-Casa plan. The pictures are an assignment for the project *1949/1999 Cinquant'anni dal piano INA-casa [Fifty years from INA-housing plan]*, that includes exhibitions, conferences, a cycle of films and other initiatives. The group exhibition is articulated in five appointments, and the first one is dedicated to Guidi. His photographs are published in the monographic book *Guido Guidi. Sequenze di paesaggi urbani. Un itinerario tra i quartieri INA-casa*, Linea di Confine (Rubiera). His work is included in the group exhibition *Il Rosso e il Nero. Figure e ideologie in Italia 1945-1980* curated by CSAC, Sala delle Scuderie in Pilotta, Parma (with catalogue).

#### 2000s

In 2001, another assignment from the CCA of Montréal brings him back to the States to photograph Mies van der Rohe's architectures. His pictures are published in an extensive catalogue and featured in the group exhibition *Mies in America*, at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York and at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montréal. That same year, he assumes the teaching of Photography in the Master of Visual Arts at IUAV in Venice. In 2002 he curates two group exhibitions (both with catalogue) of the works re-

alised by his students of the photography courses, he holds respectively at IUAV in Venice and at Academy of Fine Arts in Ravenna. The photographer Marco Zanta invites him, on behalf of Arci Treviso Permanent Education, to produce a series of pictures in the territories around Treviso, in the frame of a multi-years programme, involving the participation of Italian and foreign authors. Almost at the same time Marco Torres, of IUAV (City Planning Department), proposes Guidi to contribute with a photographic survey to his own research about the urban phenomena of the market-roads. Thus, in April Guidi travels along the market-road Strada Ovest [West road] of Treviso and takes a series of pictures, that become the subject of a solo show and a photo-book (*Strada ovest 04.02*). In September 2002, is among the photographers invited to join the competition launched by DARC (General direction for contemporary architecture and art), aimed at representing Italian contemporary landscape. A selection of the over 500 photographs produced by the invited authors is featured in the group exhibition *Le collezioni: Atlante italiano 003 per MAXXI architettura*, held in 2003 at MAXXI-Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo, Rome. The activity intensifies further: in addition to many national exhibitions, he exposes in solo shows at the Yancey Richardson Gallery in New York (2001) and at the Kate MacGarry Gallery in London (2004); as well as in group exhibitions: *Straight Photography*, Kunstpavillon, Innsbruck (2003); group exhibition, The University of New Mexico Art Museum, Albuquerque, New Mexico (2003); *Italy: Spaces and Places*, Robert Mann Gallery, New York (2004); *Trans Emilia*, Fotomuseum Winterthur, Switzerland (with catalogue) (2005).

#### 2003-2004

Realises a series of photographs of Le Corbusier's architectures to illustrate the book *Le Corbusier Scritti* edited by Rosa Tamborrino for the publishing house Einaudi. Guidi's photographs depict lesser-known works by Le Corbusier, revealing some of them nearly for the first time, such as the Duval factory in Saint-Dié-des-Vosges. In 2004 the pictures are exposed in a solo exhibition at Alessandro De March Gallery in Milan and Kate MacGarry Gallery in London. Further group and solo exhibitions follow: 2013 group ex. *The Constructed image. Le Corbusier and photography*, curated by Sophie Vantieghem, Musée des beaux-arts, La Chaux-De-Fonds (CH) and CIVA, Brussels; 2017 solo ex. *Le Corbusier – 5 architectures*, curated by Andrea Simi, Italian Cultural Institute, Paris and Unosonuve Gallery, Rome; 2018 solo ex. *Le Corbusier. 5 Architectures*, curated by Andrea Simi, Kehrer Galerie, Berlin. On 3rd and 4th May 2003 Guidi realises a series of photographs for a workshop organised by the municipalities of Atri, Roseto and Sivi, that are published in a photo-book, and displayed in a solo exhibition in Bolzano. In 2004, eleven of his photographs of Mies van der Rohe's architectures – that Guidi defines as «trap for light» – are exposed in the section *In Praise of Shadows*, Italian Pavillion, curated by Nanni Baltzer at *Metamorph* –

9. International exhibition of Architecture, Venice Biennale. The gallery San Fedele Arte of Milan dedicates him a little retrospective exhibition and the publication of the photo-book *Guido Guidi, 1969-2004*, featuring works from 1969 to 2004.

#### 2005-2006

2005 is a very busy year. In Springs he takes pictures of the construction sites number 28, located north-west of Rubiera, at a distance of 139 Km and 500 m from the start of the Bologna-Milan high-speed railroad track. At the same time he holds a 2 weeks workshop, inviting the students to work on the same area. A selection of his pictures is published in the photo-book *PK TAV 139+500* (2006), and displayed in solo and group exhibitions. He teaches at the Faculty of Architecture in Venice in the course "Tools of Representation, Intensified Visions: Technique and the Art of Photography" for the European Postgraduate Master in Urbanism (EMU), organised by IUAV in Venice in collaboration with Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC), of Barcelona, Technische Universiteit Delft (TUD) and Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KUL). He photographs the structures of the *Atlantikwall* in the frame of a research project launched by the Politecnico of Milan together with the Ecole d'Architecture de Versailles, the RLICC (Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation) in Leuven, and the IUAV in Venice, as part of the EU programme "Culture 2000". His pictures document the architectural and cultural landscape left by the over 10,000 heavy concrete bunkers of the defence line, built by German occupation forces in the period 1939-1944 along the coasts of France, Channel Islands, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, Denmark and Norway. The photographs are presented in a solo exhibition and a photo-book (Milan: Electa 2006). From the collaboration with the writer Vitaliano Trevisan originates in 2006 the limited edition book in 100 signed copies *Vol. 1*, accompanied by an exhibition of 48 photographs (curated by Antonello Frongia), and a reading at Jarach Gallery in Venice. Italo Zannier dedicates to his work the book and exhibition *Guido Guidi. La lunga posa – fotografie dall'Archivio di Italo Zannier*, Castello di Spilimbergo, Pordenone. In addition, he participates to numerous group exhibitions, among which: *Trans Emilia, La collezione Linea di Confine: una ricognizione territoriale dell'Emilia Romagna*, curated by Urs Sthael, Fotomuseum Winterthur in collaboration with SK Stiftung Kultur, Cologne; and *MAXXI. Cantiere d'autore – Workscape*, curated by Margherita Guccione, 10. International Exhibition of Architecture, Giardini della Biennale, Venice (catalogue *MAXXI. Cantiere d'autore. Fotografie 2003/06*).

#### 2007-2010

During this time he has numerous occasions to take part in projects of international resonance, such as the solo exhibitions: *Guido Guidi Orte und Räume/Luoghi e Spazi*, curated by

Susanne Pflieger, Stadtische Galerie Wolfsburg, Germany; and *Guido Guidi Vol. 1*, MK Galerie, Berlin; as well as the group exhibitions: *Im Untergrund, Below Ground Level*, curated by Sylvia Rüttimann, Haus für Kunst URI, Altdorf (CH) (with catalogue); *Ereditare il paesaggio*, curated by Giovanna Calvenzi and Maddalena d'Alfonso, Museo dell'Ara Pacis, Rome; Museo del Territorio Biellese, Biella; *Omaggio a Paolo Costantini. Venezia-Marghera Fotografia e trasformazioni nella città contemporanea*, Centro Culturale Candiani, Venice; *Bi6 Biennale dell'immagine*, Centro Culturale, Chiasso (CH) (with catalogue). In 2009 he starts teaching photography at the ISIA-Istituto Superiore per le Industrie Artistiche of Urbino. The pictures of the Brion cemetery, he has been taking since 1997, are presented in a solo exhibition held at the CCA Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal, Canada. Two years later, appears the book *Carlo Scarpa's Tomba Brion*, published by Hatje Cantz. In 2010 he is invited to the second edition of *Cavallino-Treporti Photography*, and during the year he realises a survey of the territory. The pictures taken are shown in a solo exhibition and published in the photo-book *Due giorni. Cavallino-Treporti, 22-23 settembre 2010*. The Malvina Menegaz Foundation dedicates a solo exhibition and the first volume of its new series of art-books to a selection of pictures of the Savio river taken by Guidi between May and July 2007 – *Guido Guidi. Fiume*, Milan: Fantombooks. Further solo exhibitions dedicated to these and other pictures of Scarpa's architectures follow in: 2011 at Si Fest in Savignano; 2012 at MAXXI Museum in Rome; 2013 at Museo Casa Giorgione in Castelfranco Veneto, Treviso and at the Architecture Academy of Mendrisio; 2014 at CCB-Centro Cultural de Blém in Lisbon; 2015 at Viasaterna Contemporary Art in Milan (with artist's talk); 2016 at Tolentini IUAV in Venice.

#### 2011-2012

During 2011 and 2012 he participates in numerous projects of international relevance, such as: 2011 *Zyklus 6.0 Ausstellung: Zeitgenössische Kunst aus Mitteleuropa*, Dormitorium, Stift Lilienfeld in Vienna; *On Horizons – Set 8 from the Collection of the Fotomuseum Winterthur*, Fotomuseum Winterthur (with catalogue); *IllumiNazioni-IllumiNations, 54. Venice Biennale*, Fondamenta dell'Arsenale, Venice (with catalogue); *Architecture in Uniform: Designing and Building for the Second World War*, curated by Jean-Louis Cohen, CCA Montreal and Nederlands Architectuurinstituut NAI, Rotterdam (with catalogue). 2012 *With the eyes, the heart and the mind. Photographs from the Trevisan Collection*, curated by Walter Guadagnini and Veronica Caciolli, Mart, Rovereto; *Peripheral Visions: Italian Photography in Context, 1950s – Present*, curated by Maria Antonella Pelizzari, Leubsdorf Art Gallery, Hunter College, New York; *Photographic Mission Transgenic Landscape*, INCM, EAUM, Fundação Citade de Guimarães (with catalogue); *I Mille scatti per una storia d'Italia*, curated by CSAC, Palazzo del Governatore, Parma (with catalogue). His friend, the American

photographer John Gossage, edits the monographic volume, *A New Map of Italy: The Photographs of Guido Guidi* (Washington: Loosestrife Editions). In the afterword text, Gerry Badger compares the image of Italy transpiring from Guidi's pictures to that of America conveyed by Walker Evans' *American Photographs*. In 2018 follows the solo show *A New Map of Italy*, curated by Alessandro Ruggera, Italian Cultural Institute in Toronto. In 2012 he publishes the book *La figura dell'Orante. Appunti per una lezione [The figure of the Orans. Notes for a lesson]*, conceived as the first notebook of a series (still not completed), which collects textual and visual annotations of his own lectures held since 1989 at the Fine Arts Academy of Ravenna, at the Faculty of Design and Arts at IUAV in Venice, and at the Superior Institute for Artistic Industries (ISIA) of Urbino. His photographs of Sardinia are juxtaposed to texts by the writer Mariangela Gualtieri in the book *A Seneghe*, published by Perda Sonadora Imprintas. The Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Max-Planck Institut invites him to photograph in Florence Palazzo Capponi-Incontri (institute and library) and Palazzo Grifoni (photo library). In 2018 the pictures taken in the course of three appointments (20 November 2012, 9 November 2015 and 29 November 2016) are presented in the volume *K – h. I. guido guidi*, published by Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, as well as in the solo exhibition *Appuntamento a Firenze*, curated by Costanza Caraffa, at Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence.

#### 2013-2014

Publishes the photo-book *Preganziol 1983*, edited by Roberta Valtorta. It displays all the sixteen pictures of two empty cubical rooms, that he took in a little abandoned house inside the park of the Villa Albrizzi, Franchetti in Preganziol (premises of IUAV Faculty of City Planning). Some of those pictures appeared already in 1983 in his first monographic photo-book, entitled *Guido Guidi* (see record above). *Preganziol* book marks the beginning of a long-lasting collaboration (still on-going) with the publishing house Mack books of London, that will bring to the publication of around 20 monographic photo-books, usually released on the occasion of solo exhibitions, in various locations. The Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione-ICCD of Rome, together with the School of Architecture at the University of Bologna, organises a retrospective exhibition dedicated to a particular phase of Guidi's work: photographs of the countryside around Cesena, taken between 1983 and 1993 with a field camera, reminiscent of nineteenth-century tradition. The idea comes from Antonello Frongia, who curates the exhibition and edits the catalogue with Laura Moro. *Guido Guidi. Cinque paesaggi 1983-1993* is hosted at ICCD in Rome; at the Church of Spirito Santo in Cesena; and at the Photographica Fineart Gallery in Lugano. Among the group exhibitions of this year, it is worth remembering: *Foto/Industria*, Bologna Biennale 01, MAST, Bologna (with catalogue); *Vacatio, Fotografia – Festival Internazionale di*

*Roma XII ed.*, Rome; *Vice Versa*, curated by Bartolomeo Pietromarchi, Italian Pavilion, 55. Biennale, Venice (with catalogue); *Concrete: Photography and Architecture*, curated by Thomas Seelig, Fotomuseum, Winterthur (with catalogue). Wins the *PixSea Award*, International Foto Festival, Knokke-Heist, Belgium. On 15 January 2014, at the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson in Paris, opens *Veramente*, curated by Marta Dahó and Agnès Sire – until that moment the major retrospective exhibition dedicated to his work. After Paris, the exhibition travels to Huis Marseille Museum voor Fotografie, Amsterdam (14 June – 7 September 2014) and Mar-Museo d'Arte della città di Ravenna (11 October 2014 – 11 January 2015). The event is accompanied by a book published by Mack books, London. In the same year, he takes part in the group exhibitions *Industrial Worlds 014*, curated by Urs Stahel at MAST in Bologna (with catalogue); and *Il vento folle della fotografia*, curated by Italo Zannier at Casa dei Tre Oci in Venice. Between 2014 and 2015 he retires from the teaching at IUAV and moves with Marta to Ronta in the country home, inherited from his parents, where he still lives today.

#### 2015-2017

Takes part in numerous solo and group exhibition, such as: *From the interior*, Large Glass Gallery, London; *Milano a fior d'acqua*, promoted by Triennale of Milan, Museum of Contemporary Photography (MUFOCO), and Navigli Lombardi, with the collaboration of the Civico Archivio Fotografico of Milan Municipality, in the frame of the project "Brand Milano"; *Italia inside out. I fotografi italiani*, curated by Giovanna Calvenzi, Palazzo della Regione, Milan (with catalogue); *Antonio Canova. L'arte violata nella Grande Guerra*, curated by Alberto Prandi and Mario Guderzo, Museo Gipsoteca Canova, Possagno, Treviso (with catalogue); *Edra. Tutta l'Italia è silenziosa*, Real Academia de España, Rome. Starts his collaboration with the art galleries Large Glass in London and Viasaterna in Milan. In 2016 opens the solo exhibition *Col tempo*, curated by Jean-Paul Derrider at Fondation A Stichting, Brussels, and in 2018 at Fotohof, Salzburg. The title [*With time*] has been inspired by one of Guidi's lessons, «in which he weaves, among others, links between a portrait of Giorgione (*La Vecchia*, 1506) and photographs of the vernacular culture that Walker Evans cherished so much». The exhibition presents for the first time a large number of small contact prints, dating from the 1970s and 80s, made using a 8x10 view camera. On the occasion, the Fondation A Stichting and Toluca Editions, Paris release the artist's book, *Guido Guidi, 8x10*, in a limited edition of 16 copies. Further solo and group exhibitions take place: *Facciate/Facades*, curated by Charlotte Schepke and accompanied by a newly commissioned text by the writer Ali Smith, Large Glass Gallery, London; *1986. Esplorazioni sulla via Emilia*, curated by Laura Gasparini, Chiostrì di San Pietro, Fotografia Europea, Reggio Emilia; *Via Emilia*, curated by William Guerrieri, Fotografia Europea, Ospitale, Rubiera



(with catalogue); *Ceramica, Latte, Macchine e Logistica. Fotografie dell'Emilia Romagna al lavoro*, curated by Urs Stahel, MAST, Bologna (with catalogue); *Abitare sociale, un'indagine fotografica a Bologna*, curated by William Guerrieri, Urban Center, Bologna; and *Qualsiasi*, curated by Alessandro Dandini da Sylva, Malaspina Palace, Ascoli Piceno. In 2017 he publishes the photo-book *Verum ipsum factum: Carlo Scarpa's gate to the IUAV*, collecting a sequence of pictures, made on 16 October 2006 (except one of 1984). Ideally continuing the work made at Brion Cemetery, his camera records the variations produced by the light in different times of the day, and the moving shapes drawn by the shadows on architectonic elements, that cast altered geometries onto the ground. He starts his working collaboration with the gallery Sage in Paris and takes part in some group exhibitions in Italy.

#### 2018-2019

In 2018 Kehrer Verlag publishes the monographic volume *Le Corbusier. 5 Architectures – Guido Guidi* which presents a wide selection of photographs taken in 2003, depicting Le Corbusier's lesser-known buildings in France: Maison la Roche (1925), Maison Planeix (1928), Ville Savoye (1931), Cité de Refuge (1933) and Usine Duval (1951). In addition to gallery exhibitions in Italy, France, and England, he is involved in the project *Red Desert Now! The Legacy of Antonioni in Contemporary Italian Photography*, curated by Antonello Frongia and William Guerrieri, that takes the form of a catalogue and two group exhibitions – at L'Ospitale di Rubiera (2017) and, in a new version with a slightly modified title, at Die Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur, Cologne (2018). The three volumes photo-book *Per Strada 1980 – 1994* is published by Mack books London. The publication comes after the solo exhibition *Per Strada* curated by Antonello Frongia, on the occasion of the festival Fotografia Europea 016, at L'Ospitale, in Rubiera (2016); and is followed by another solo show with the same title, curated by Charlotte Schepke at Large Glass Gallery in London (2018). The volumes of *Per Strada [Out on the streets]* feature 285 photographs, spanning from 1980s to 90s, and taken by Guidi in and around his home region (Emilia Romagna), as well as along the via Romea in the North-East of Italy, in the industrial zone of Porto Marghera, the urban sprawl between Padua and Treviso, and the Carso mountains theatre of 1WW battles. In 2019 numerous solo exhibitions take place: *Guido Guidi. In Sardegna 1974-2011*, curated by Irina Zucca Alessandrelli, MAN Museum Nuoro (Sardinia); *Guido Guidi. In Veneto 1984-89*, curated by Stefania Rössl, Museo Casa Giorgione, Castelfranco Veneto (TV) and Palazzo del Capitano, Cesena; *Caçador de Sombras*, curated by Paula Pinto and Joaquim Moreno, Escola das Artes, Porto; *Altre Storie*, curated by Paola Nicolin and Marco de Michelis, Viasaterna Contemporary Art, Milan; *Photographic Visions of Modernist Architecture*, curated by Sabine Gamper, Foto-Forum Südtiroler Gesellschaft für Fotografie, Bolzano. Moreover, he takes part in the group exhibitions

*LOCALS, collettiva sul ritratto fotografico*, Museo della città, Rimini; and *Paisajes Enmarcados, Misiones fotogràficas europeas, 1984-2019*, Fundación ICO, Madrid. The publication of the photo-book *Lunario 1968-99* by Mack books London is followed in 2020 by the solo exhibitions *Lunario*, curated by Andrea Simi, Fotografia Europea 020, L'Ospitale, Rubiera; *Moon-faces*, curated by Charlotte Schepke, Large Glass Gallery, London; and in 2021 *Lunario*, curated by Andrea Simi and Stefania Rossl, Galleria del Ridotto, Cesena.

#### 2020-2023

In 2020 he is awarded the *Hemingway Prize* for photography. The cataloguing and digitisation process of his archive begins, under the direction of Antonello Frongia and with financial support from Ibacn (Institute for the Artistic, Cultural and Natural Heritage of the Emilia Romagna Region in Bologna) together with Cesena Municipality. Exposes in the solo exhibition *De las cosas, dalle cose*, curated by Irene Crocco, Italian Cultural Institute, Madrid; and in the double show *Diachronie, Guido Guidi and Gerry Johansson*, Galerie Wouter van Leewen, Amsterdam. In 2021 he has further occasions of exhibition: *Da zero*, curated by Marta Dahò, La Virreina Centre De La Imatge, Barcelona; *Une décennie de photographie couleur 1976-1986*, Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie d'Aurillac, France and *Italia inattesa. 12 racconti fotografici*, curated by Margherita Guccione, Palazzo Barberini, Rome. In Portugal opens *Archigraphies. Guido Guidi and Alvaro Siza*, curated by Joaquim Moreno and Paula Pinto, Casa da Arquitectura Matosinhos – the exhibition features 97 images, depicting eight projects by Álvaro Siza, in Lisbon, Porto and Matosinhos. This is the first series, dedicated to the oeuvre of a contemporary architect, that Guidi realises on his own initiative and not on commission. It is also the first time, that he has the chance to meet the architect (although, only once in Porto, in 2018) and to show him his pictures. Already in 2014 – during the exhibition *Guido Guidi. Carlo Scarpa: Tomb Brion* at Garagem Sul, Centro Cultural de Belém – Guidi shared with the curators (the same of both shows), his wish to photograph Siza's architectures. The photographs were taken between 10 and 16 October 2018. In 2022 he is awarded the *Malatesta Novello Prize* (Cesena). On 12 October 2022, the director of MAMbo (Contemporary Art Museum of Bologna), Lorenzo Balbi, announces, that the museum is among the winners of *Photography Strategy 2022* call for proposals, launched by the General Directorate for Contemporary Creativity of the Ministry of Culture, aimed at the acquisition, conservation, and valorisation of Italian photographic patrimony. In the frame of a project about the rural architecture in Emilia Romagna, in collaboration with prof. Maura Savini of the University of Bologna, MAMbo supports the production of six new photographic works by Guidi. The total budget of 65.500 Euro covers the production of the works – that will enter in the museum collection – as well as a solo exhibition (planned in September 2023) in which Guidi's pictures will dialogue with

a selection of materials from the archive of the museum (such as maps, drawings, models, photographs and recent sketches for rural houses, dovecote towers, villas and aggregated settlements, collective places, sluices, hydraulic artefacts and bridges), a publication, and a public program featuring talks and a one-day studies (planned on 27 October 2023). The Istituto Centrale per la Grafica in Rome purchases the complete sequence of black-and-white photographs *Preganziol, 1983*, never entirely printed before. In 2023, the publication of the photo-book *Di sguincio* (London: Mack books), is followed by a solo exhibition at Large Glass gallery, London (3 February – 11 March). The book is the first of a trilogy entitled *Album*, which will include over a hundred black-and-white images made with small-format cameras between 1969 and 1981. In May and June, he takes photographs of a dovecote tower in Minerbio, near Bologna, for his upcoming exhibition at MAMbo. Moreover, works by Guidi are on view in the group exhibitions: *L'Italia è un desiderio. Fotografie, paesaggi e visioni*, Alinari and Mufoco Collections, at Scuderie del Quirinale, Rome, 1 June – 3 September 2023; and *Main International Exhibition* of the DongGang International Photo Festival 2023, Yeongwol, South Korea, 21 July – 24 September 2023.



## 2. Cameras

1956 His first camera was a gift from his uncle, a Nettax 6x6 format on 120 roll film. He uses it until approximately 1966.

1966 During the military service, with his earnings as sergeant, he buys an Asahi Pentax SV 24x36 cm with three different lenses (some photographs published in *Tra l'altro* were made with this camera), a Durst M300 enlarger (that he still owns), and all the other necessary tools to equip a darkroom. Short after that, before enrolling at the Industrial Design Faculty in Venice, he also purchases a Mamiya C330 – the same camera used by Diane Arbus – that he uses with three lenses: 65 mm, 80 mm and 135 mm.

1971-1972 Starts to work as lab technician at the IUAV, first in Venice and then in Preganziol. From the faculty he can borrow a Rolleiflex, that he uses for instance to take some photographs of his *casette* [little houses] series in Emilia Romagna countryside. At the faculty he finds also: a large format process camera on rails, that makes 50x60 cm photomechanical reproductions, and a Linhof 6x9, that he later buys himself. With his first earnings, still fascinated by the vision of *Blow up*, he buys a Nikon F, like the one used by the film protagonist.

1970s buys the Hasselblad Super Wide, that he uses for instance to realise the sequence *Preganziol*, 1983.

1975 His friend Giuliano Cosolo gives him as gift a Lupa 13x18 cm – a very low budget camera of the Fascist period, produced for the African market. He uses it with a 300 mm lens, but although he likes the large format, the optic is too poor, and he gives it to his grandson. Around the same year he purchases further cameras: a Rolleiflex with flash, that he uses for instance to take the photographs recently published in *Di sguincio*; a Leica M4; and a Polaroid SX-70 – like the one used by Walker Evans – that he did not use a lot, because the film is too expensive. Later he also got a Polaroid 8x10, and sometimes he

has used a Polaroid Type 55 (that yields both a positive print and a negative) – his polaroid prints are all unpublished and mostly deteriorated.

*1970s-1980s* Builds various camera prototypes: the first is a 50x60 cm camera equipped with a lens recovered from a photocopy machine and used with either photographic paper or a continuous colour orthochromatic film (1x10 m roll, he got from the process camera of the faculty).

*1983* After having seen works by Joel Meyerowitz, Stephen Shore and William Christenberry, builds a 20x25 plywood camera using a Voigtländer Apo-Skopar lens 1:9/300 mm with no shutter and a Schneider Angulon 1:6,8/120 mm. Until 1985 he works with improper lenses.

*1985-1986* Buys the Deardorff equipped with modern lenses of 300, 240 and 210 mm, which he still uses today. In the past, he sometimes used a 300 mm with detached lenses, that engendered Newton's rings in the colour prints.

*1990s* Acquires a Plaubel Makina 67. With this camera he takes, for instance, the photographs in Russia and Poland, later published in *In Between*.

*From 2000* He owns a couple of digital cameras – first a Canon, now a Sony – that he occasionally uses (some pictures made in Sardegna in 2011, for instance). In general, he is not fond of digital cameras, because they work too fast, pushing him to conform to their hectic rhythm.

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Guido Guidi  
Photography as Everyday Life

*Volume 2*  
*Plates*

Inaugural dissertation  
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presented by  
Veronica Liotti

born on 15.02.1976  
in Novara, Italy

Rome, 11 August 2023



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**Everyday life as key concept**





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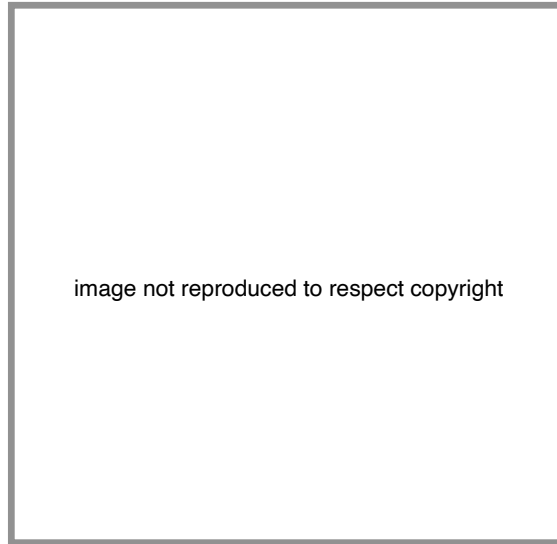


Plate 4: Robert Adams, *Colorado*, 1973-1974

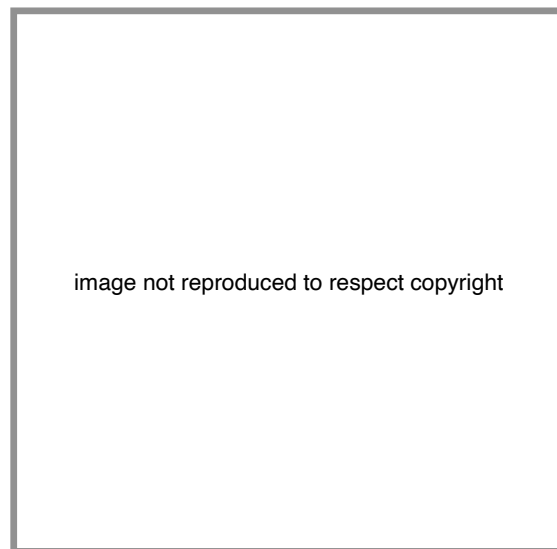


Plate 5: Robert Adams, *Colorado*, 1973-1974

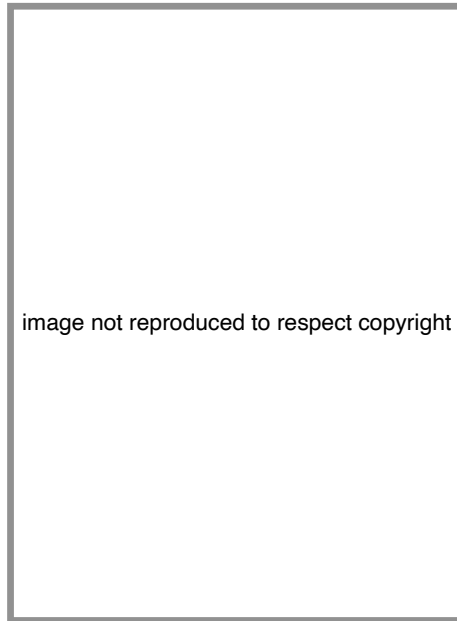


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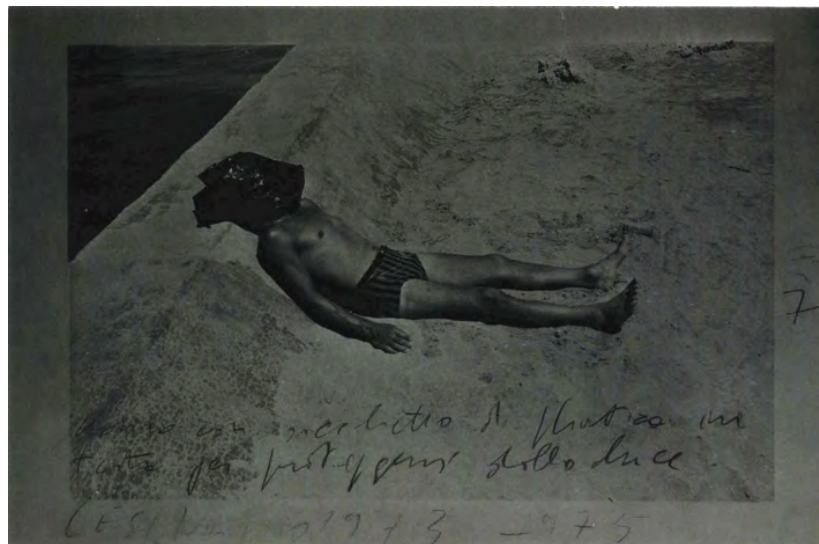


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Plate 10: Fra' Beato Angelico, *Christus am Kreuz*, c. 1430



# **FIRST PART**

## **An Everyday Grammar of Photography**



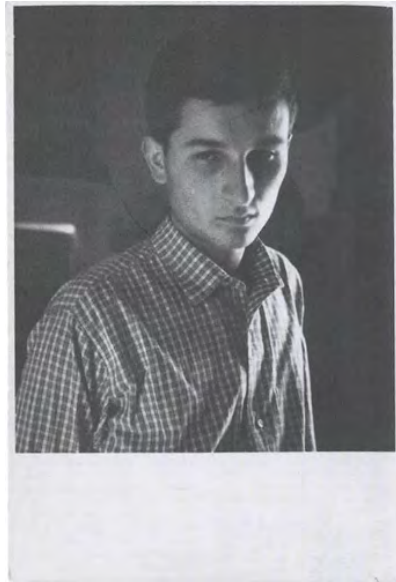


Plate I/1: Guido Guidi, *Self-portrait, San Mauro in Valle, 1957*



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Plate i/2: Guido Guidi, *Botanic garden*, Naples, 1982



Plate i/3: Guido Guidi, *Corso Comandini, Cesena, 1984*



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Plate i/9: Guido Guidi, *My aunt, Cesena, 1969*



Plate i/10: Guido Guidi, *Ronta di Cesena 1981*

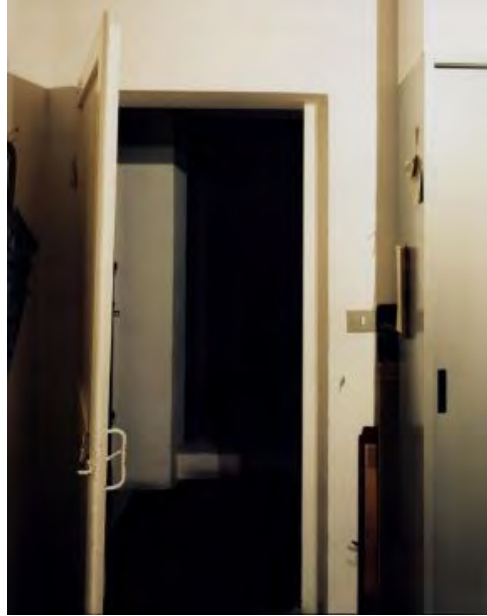


Plate i/11: Guido Guidi, *Ronta, Cesena*, 2015



Plate i/12: Guido Guidi, *Preganziol, Treviso*, 1982



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Plate i/15: Guido Guidi, *Via Montanari, Cesena, 1980*



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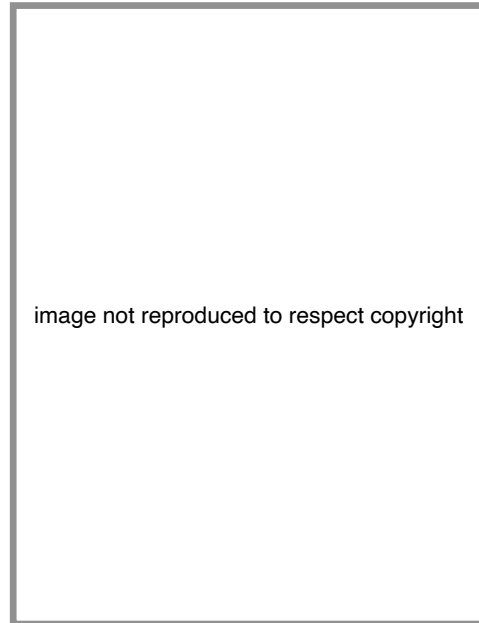


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1979 TV

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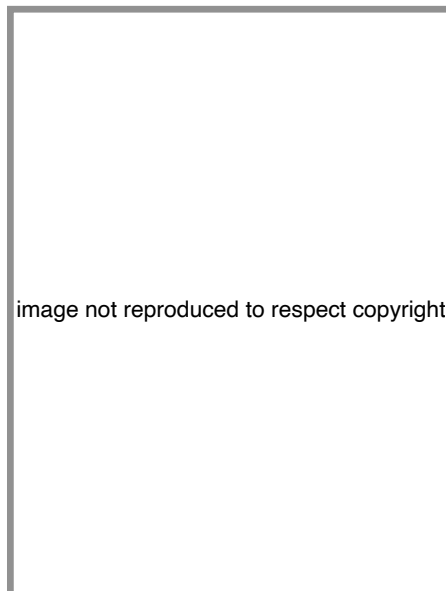


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Plate i/25: Guido Guidi, *Preganziol*, 1983



Plate i/26: Guido Guidi, *Preganziol*, 1983



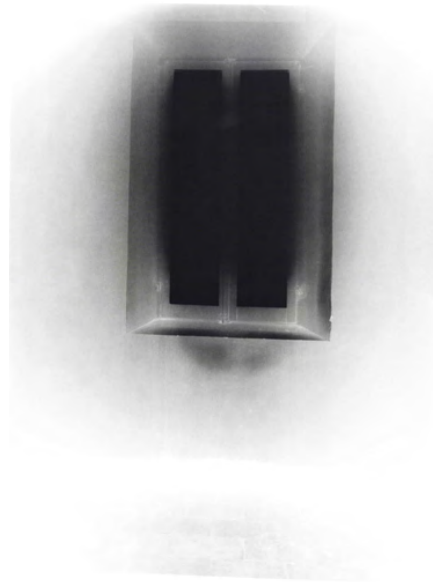
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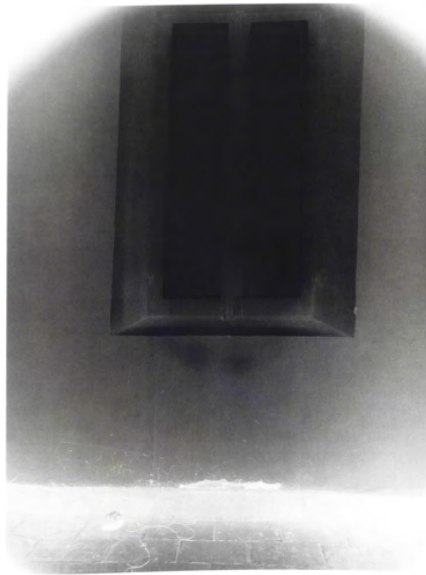


Plate i/28: Guido Guidi, *Pinarella di Cervia*, 1977



Plate i/29: Guido Guidi, *Pinarella di Cervia*, 1977





Plates i/30, 31: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, 19 May 1981

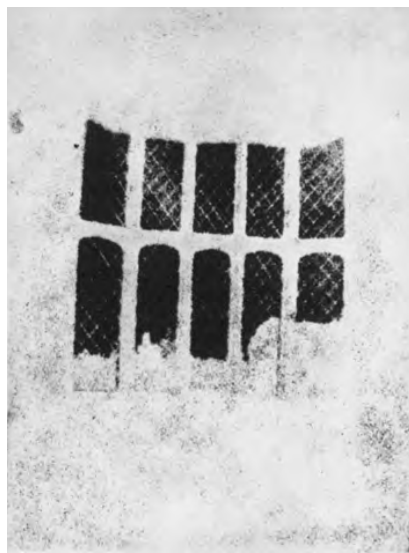


Plate i/32: William Henry Fox Talbot, *Latticed window in Lacock Abbey*, August 1835

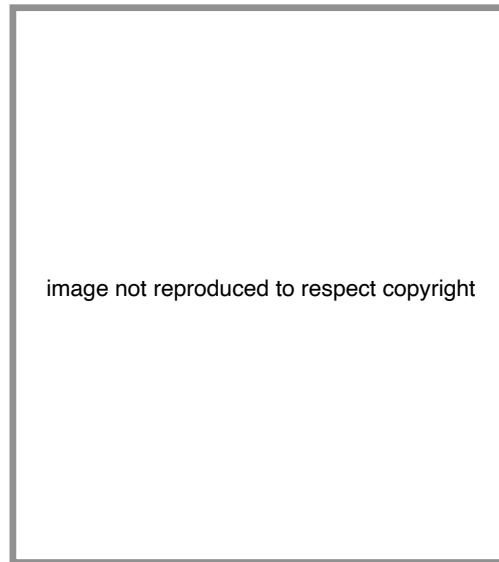


Plate i/33: Marcel Duchamp, *Fresh Widow*, 1920



Plate i/34: Guido Guidi, *Ronta, Italy*, 9 September 1981

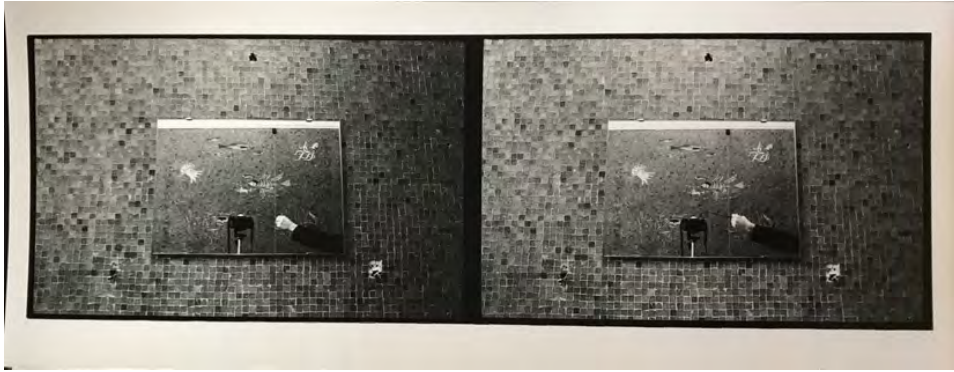


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Plate i/36: Guido Guidi, *Treviso*, 1980 (*Piazza dei Signori, Summer, Night, Rollei 35 + Flash*)





Plate i/37: Guido Guidi, *Treviso-Venezia, Train*, 1979



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Plate i/41: Guido Guidi, *Cesena*, 1971-1972



Plate i/42: Guido Guidi, *SP 29, Piavola, 1984*



Plate i/43: Guido Guidi, *Viale Mazzoni, Cesena, 26 June 1985*

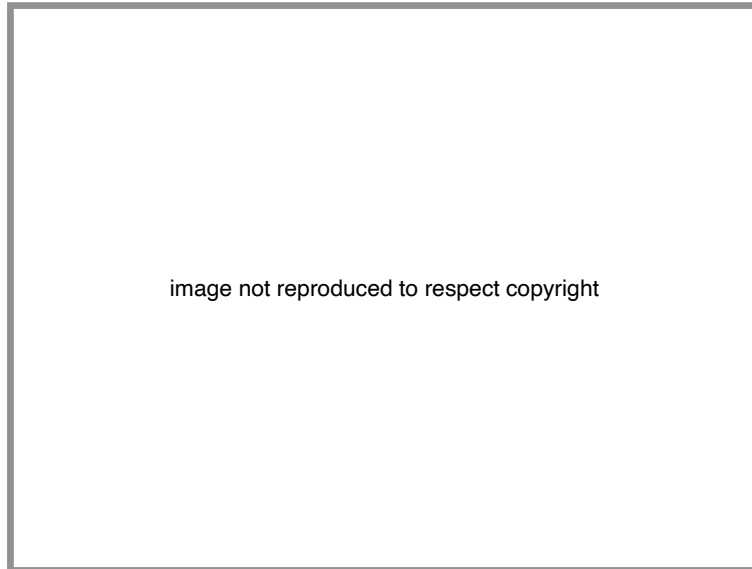


Plate i/44: Eugène Atget, *Moulin Rouge*, 1926



Plate i/45: Guido Guidi, *Treviso (Dario)*, 1980

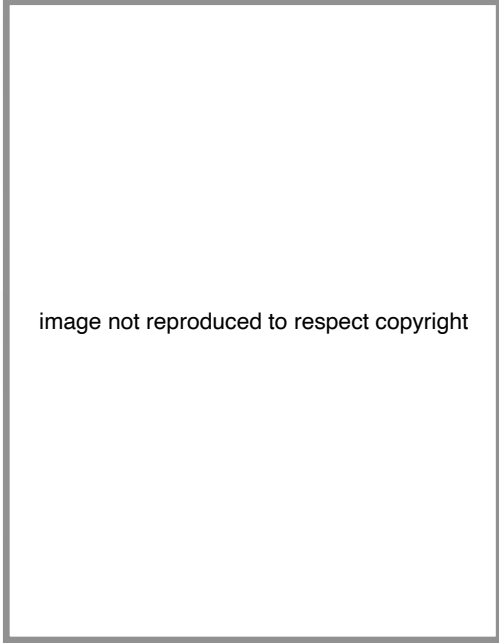


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Plate i/46: André Breton, *L'écriture automatique*, 1938



Plate i/47: Guido Guidi, *Treviso*, 1980

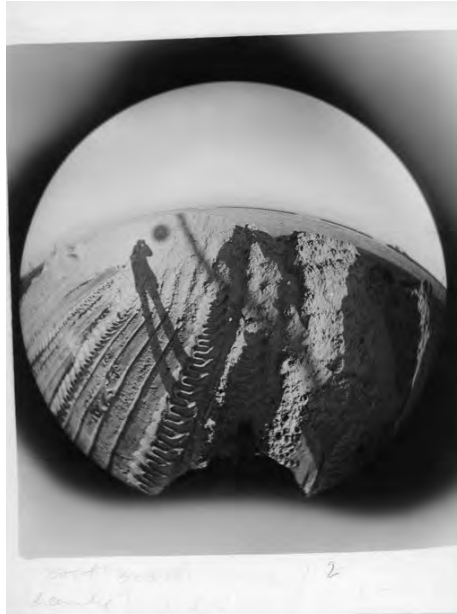


Plate i/48: Guido Guidi, *Casal Borsetti, October/November 1980*



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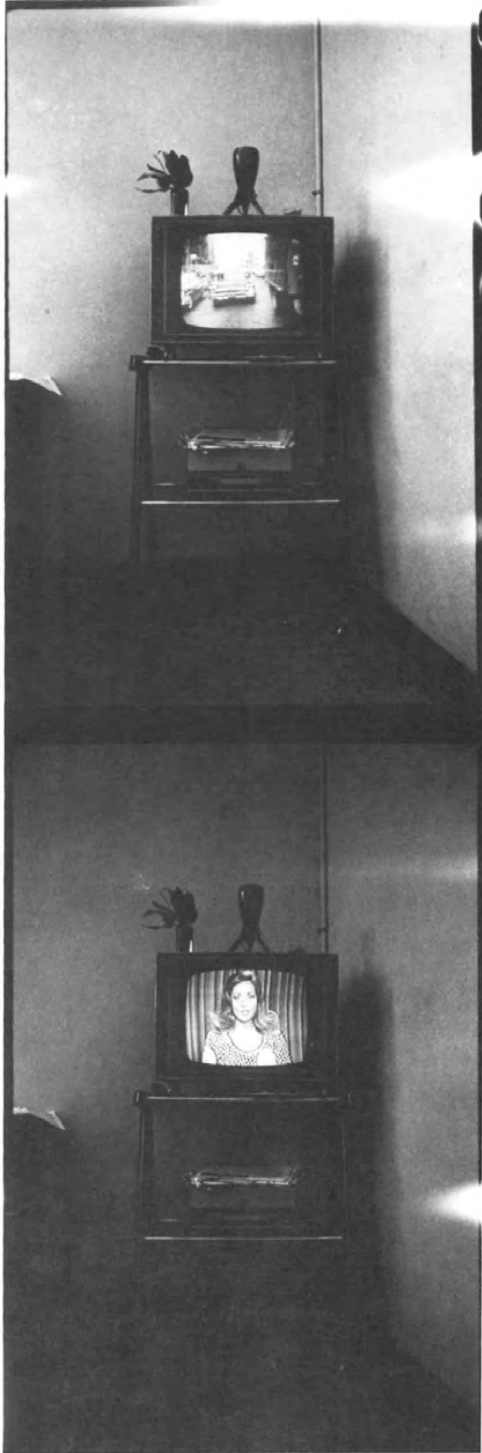


Plate i/52: Guido Guidi, *Cesena*, 1970



Plate i/53: Guido Guidi, *Cesena, 1969-71* (Also titled: *Canzonissima, 1970 Cesena (Forli) / Zoffoli Claudio*).

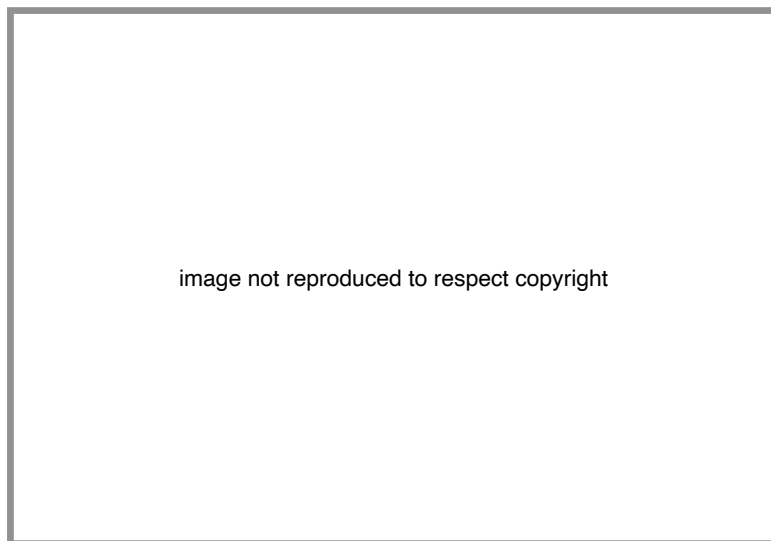


Plate i/54: Walker Evans, *East 120th Street, New York City, 1961*

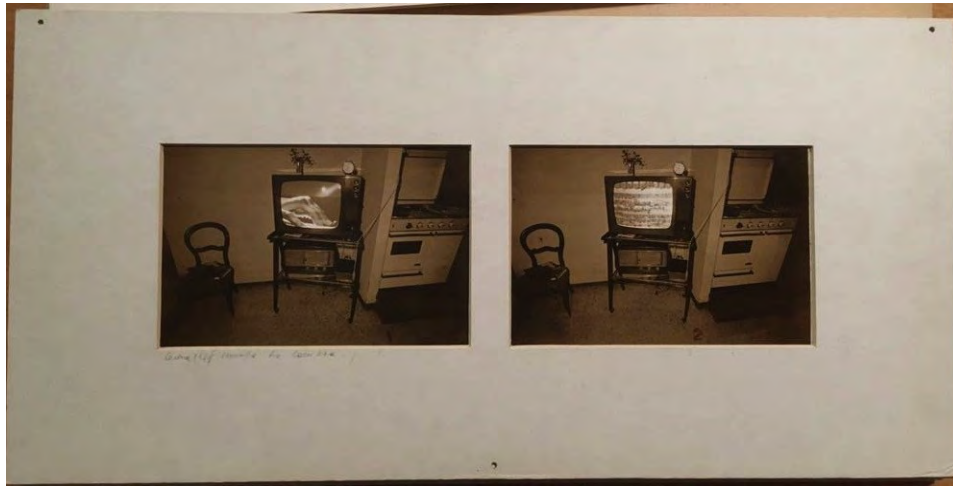


Plate i/55: Guido Guidi, *Cesena*, 1975 (*chamber music*) (Also titled *Cesena, interior with television-set, chamber music*)

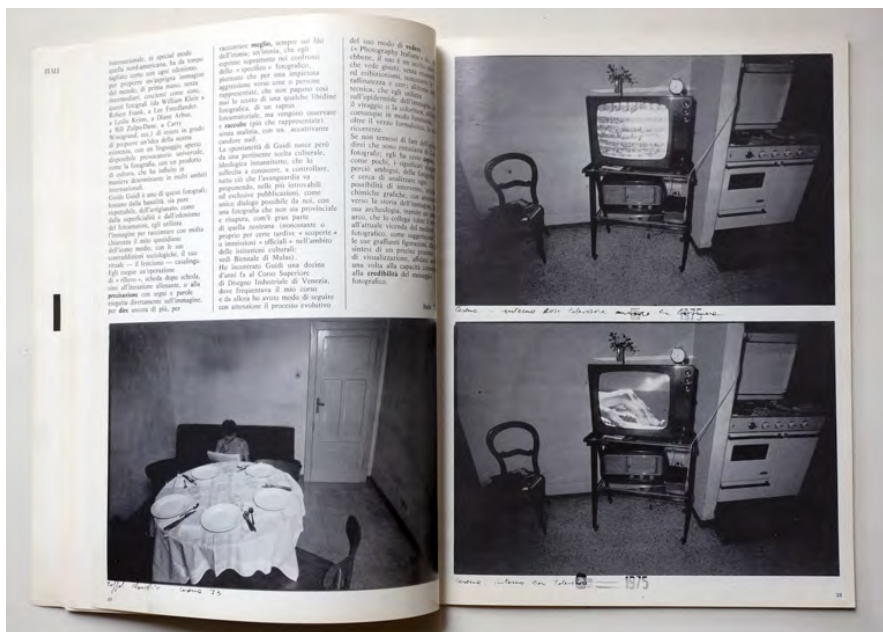


Plate i/56: The diptych published in reverse order in: "Il Diaframma: Fotografia Italiana", n. 212, March 1976: 23 (on page 22: Guido Guidi, *Zoffoli Claudio - Cesena*, 1973).



Plate i/57: Guido Guidi, *Cesena 1973 "Atlantic" Television-set* (Also titled: *End of Broadcasting ATLANTIC television-set (Cesena 1973)*).

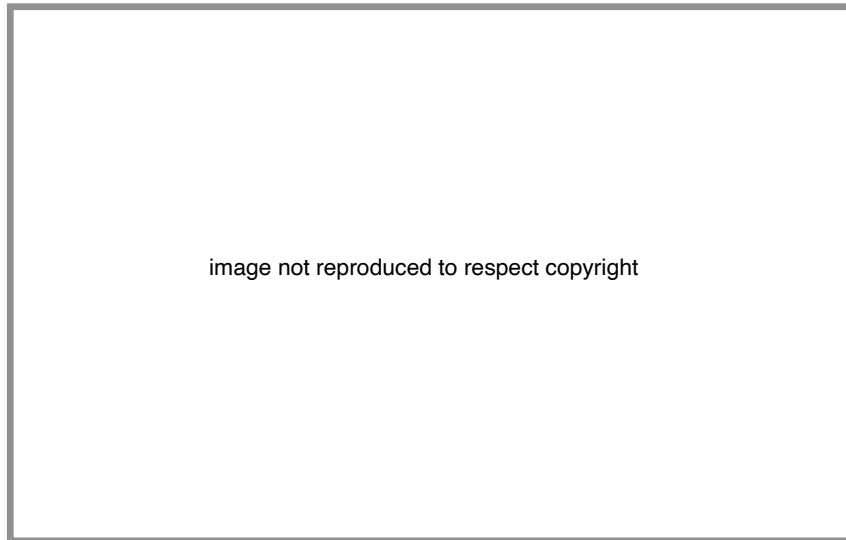


Plate i/58: Luigi Ghirri,  $\infty$  *Infinity*, 1974

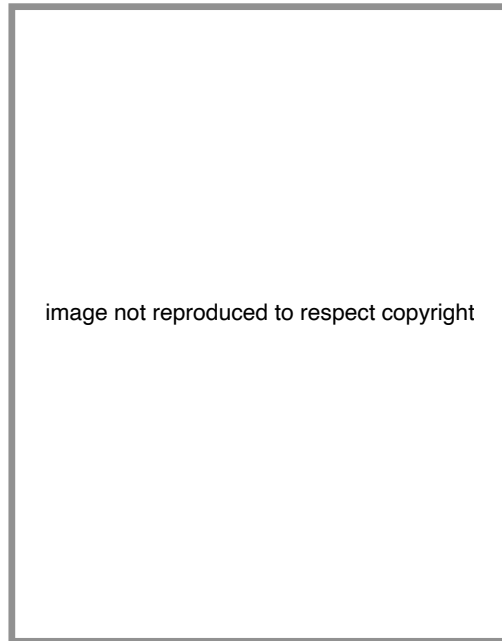


Plate i/59: Alfred Stieglitz, *Equivalent*, 1925



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Plate i/62: Guido Guidi, *Cesena*, 1977-79



Plate i/63: Guido Guidi, *Corso Mazzini, Cesena, 1984*



Plate i/64: Guido Guidi, *Via Emilia, Forlì, 1984*



Plate i/65: Guido Guidi, *Treviso*, 1980

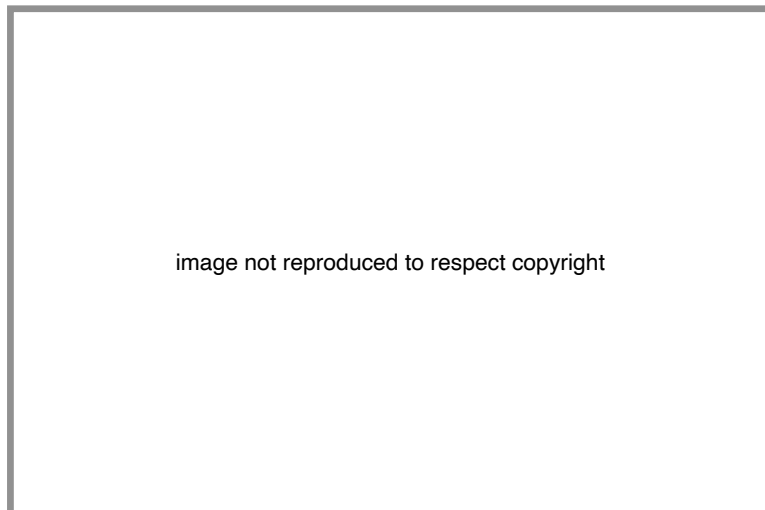


Plate i/66: Henry Wessel Jr., from the series *Traffic*, 1980s





Plate i/67: Guido Guidi, *Via Ravennate, Cesena*, 1979



Plate i/68: Guido Guidi, *Cesena*, 1980.



## **2. Indexicality**





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Plate ii/4: Guido Guidi, *Teatro Bonci, Cesena, 1984*



Plate ii/5: Guido Guidi, *Treviso, 1979-1981*



Plate ii/6: Guido Guidi, *Via Centro, Salvatonda di Castel Franco Veneto* 1985.



Plate ii/7: Guido Guidi, *Albignano, Trucazzano*, 1994



Plate ii/8: Guido Guidi, *Spilimbergo*, 1994



Plate ii/9: Guido Guidi, *Chioggia, Italy April 2000*





Plate ii/10: Guido Guidi, *Inzago*, 1990



Plate ii/11: Guido Guidi, *Cesena*, 1993



Plate ii/12: Guido Guidi, *via Emilia, Forlì*, 1984



Plate ii/13: Guido Guidi, *Cesena*, 1985



Plate ii/14: Guido Guidi, *Treviso*, 1980.



Plate ii/15: Guido Guidi, *Via Emilia-Castel San Pietro Terme* 1984



Plate ii/16: Guido Guidi, *SP 10, vicino a Monte Palon, Monte Grappa, 1987*



Plate ii/17: Guido Guidi, *Preganziol 1978-79*



Plate ii/18: Guido Guidi, *Preganziol* 1978-79

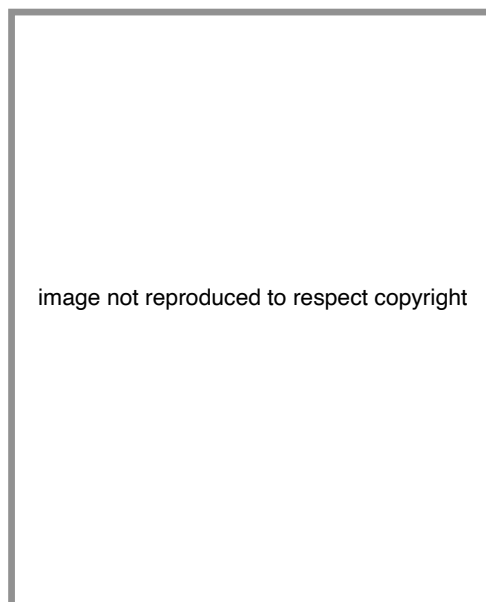


Plate ii/19: Giulio Paolini, *Young Man Looking at Lorenzo Lotto*, 1967



Plate ii/20: Guido Guidi, *Preganziol* 1980.



Plate ii/21: Anonymous, *Robert Frank and his father at a carnival, Italy, 1936.*

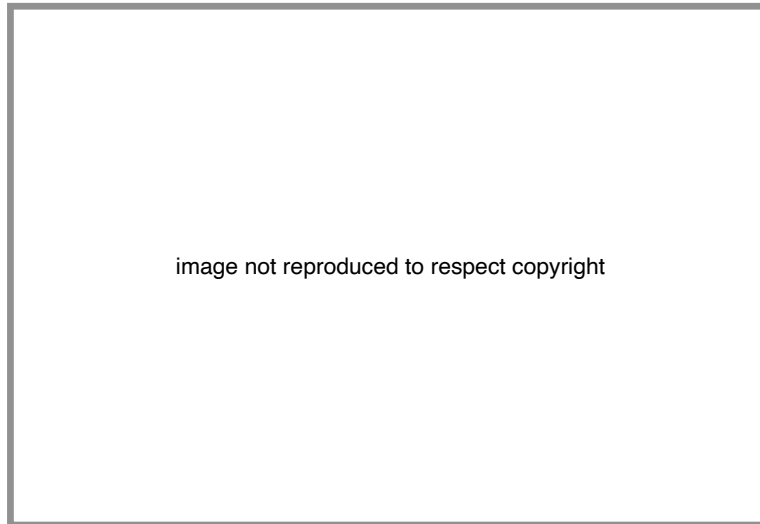


Plate ii/22: Arnold H. Crane, *Walker Evans, Old Lyme* 1969



Plate ii/23: Guido Guidi, *San Trovaso*, 1980



Plate ii/24: Guido Guidi, *Cesena*, 1981



Plates ii/25-26: Guido Guidi, *Via Roggia, Treviso*, 1981





Plates ii/27-28: Guido Guidi, *Misinto*, 1997



Plates ii/29: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, 23.07.1980



Plates ii/30-31: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, 23.07.1980



Plate ii/32: Guido Guidi, *Near Cittadella*, 1984



Plate ii/33: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, 1979



Plates ii/34-35: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, 1979



Plate ii/36: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, 1980-81



Plate ii/37: Guido Guidi, *San Martino*, 1985



Plate ii/38: Guido Guidi, *Marghera*, 1986



Plate ii/39: Eugène Atget, *Ancienne Faculté de Médecine, Rue de l'hôtel Colbert*, 1900

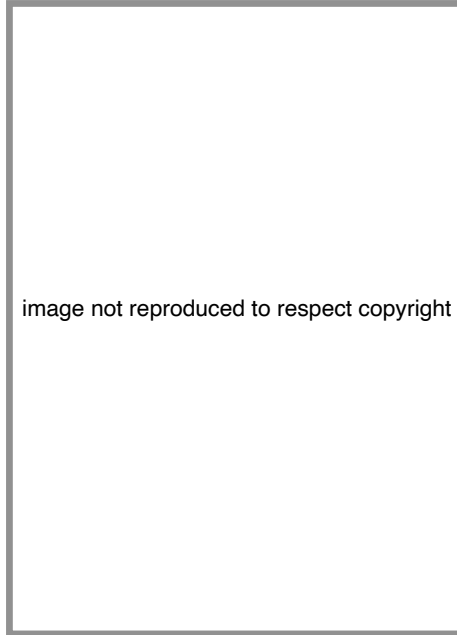


Plate ii / 40: Walker Evans, *Wash Day*, 1930

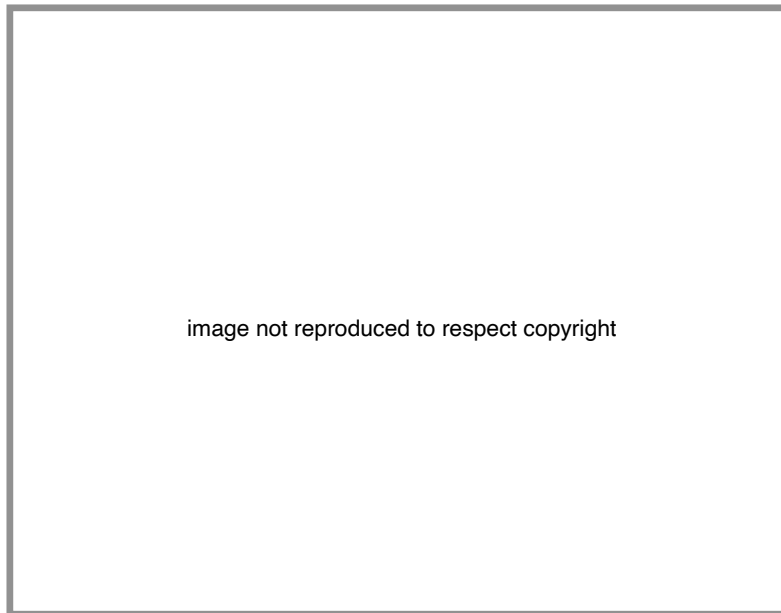


Plate ii / 41: Man Ray, *Moving Sculpture (France)*, 1920



Plate ii/42: Guido Guidi, *Forlì*, 1971

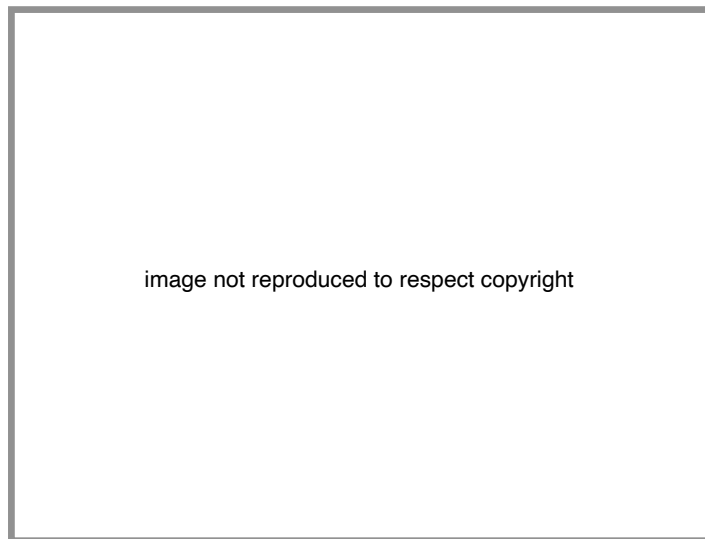


Plate ii/43: Walker Evans, *Folk Victorian Cottage at Ossining Camp Woods, New York*, 1930-31.





Plate ii/44: Guido Guidi, *Dietro Casa* 1979-1981



Plate ii/45: Guido Guidi, *via Piave, Cesena*, 1986



Plates ii/46-47: Guido Guidi, *via Piave, Cesena, 1986*



Plate ii/48: Guido Guidi, *via Cesare Battisti, Cesena, 1985*



Plate ii/49: Guido Guidi, *Milan, 1998*



Plate ii/50: Guido Guidi, *Marta Z.*, Cesena, 1973



Plate ii/51: Guido Guidi, *Treviso*, 1976



Plate ii/52: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, n.d.



Plate ii/53: Guido Guidi, *Cogliate*, 1995



Plate ii/54: Guido Guidi, *Cogliate*, 1995



Plate ii/55: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, 1980



Plates ii/56: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, 1980.



Plate ii/57: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, 1979



Plate ii/58: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, 1979



Plate ii/59: Guido Guidi, *Cesena*, 2007





Plates ii/60-61: Guido Guidi, *Cesena*, 2007



Plate ii/62: Guido Guidi, *Cesena*, 2007





Plate ii/63-64: Guido Guidi, *Meldola*, 1986



Plate ii/65: Guido Guidi, *via Aldini, Cesena, domenica mattina, 10 novembre 1984*



Plate ii/66: Guido Guidi, *Martellago, piazza Vittoria, Chiesa Parrocchiale, 1985-86*



Plate ii/67: Guido Guidi, *Chioggia, 6 April 2000*



Plates ii/68-69: Guido Guidi, *Cogliate*, 1995



Plate ii/70: Guido Guidi, *Cesena*, 1973



Plate ii/71: Guido Guidi, *Untitled*, 1980

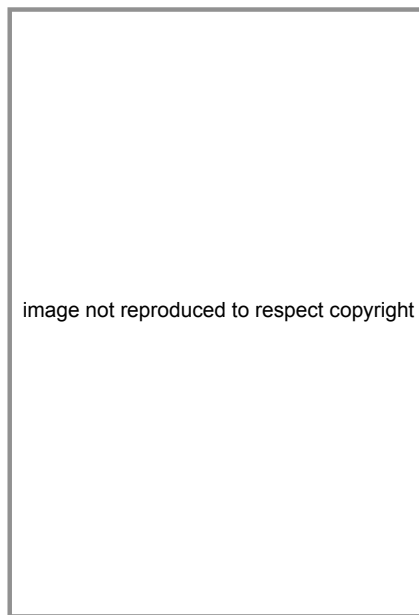


Plate ii/72: Ugo Mulas, 2. *L'operazione fotografica. Autoritratto per Lee Friedlander*, from *Le verifiche*, 1971-1972

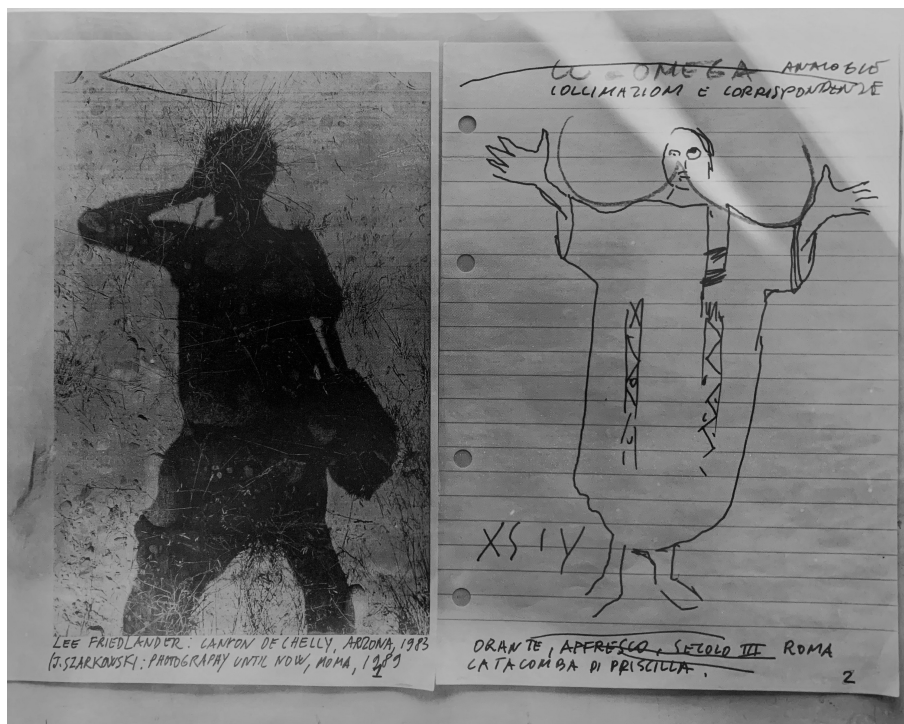


Plate ii/73: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, 2012 (on the left: Lee Friedlander, *Canyon de Chelly*, Arizona, 1983)

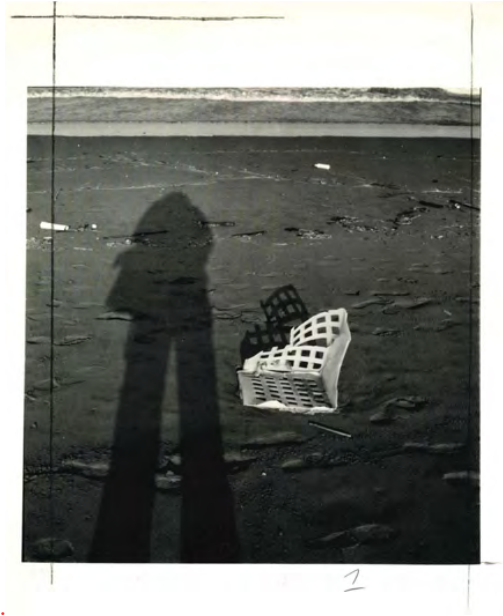


Plate ii/74: Guido Guidi, *Cervia*, 1979



Plate ii/75: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, 1979

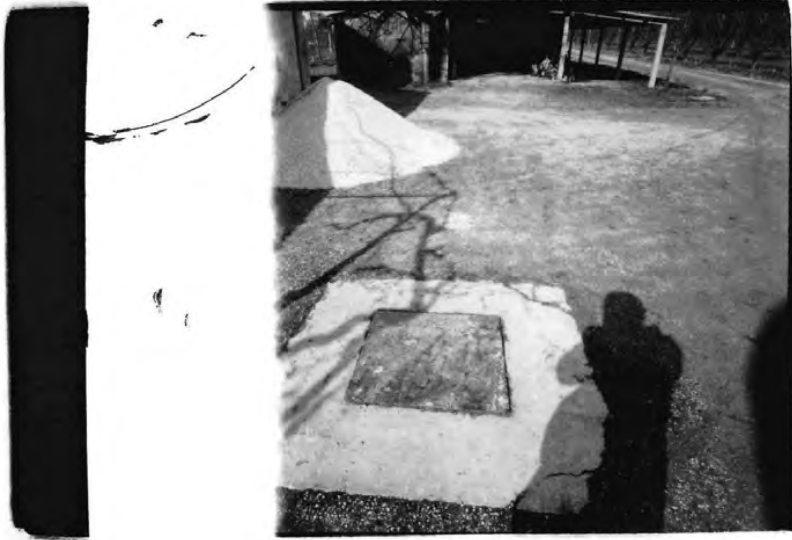




Plate ii/76: Guido Guidi, *Via Masiera, Cesena, 1985*



Plate ii/77: Lewis Hine, *Newsboy, Indianapolis, 1908*



Plates ii/78-79: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, 1979-1981



Plates ii/80-81: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, 1979-1981



Plate ii/82: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, 1979-1981



Plate ii/83: Guido Guidi, *Dietro Casa*, 1979-1981

## **3. Repetition**





1971

Plate iii/1: Guido Guidi, *Forlì*, 1971

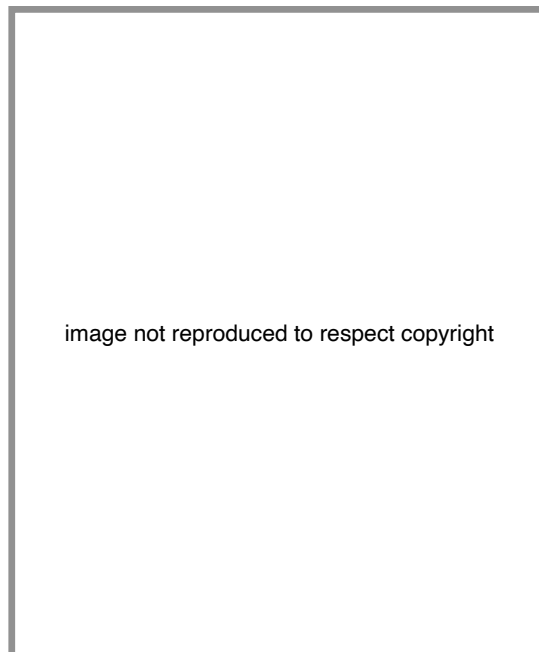


Plate iii/2: Walker Evans, *Rural Church, Beaufort, South Carolina*, 1936



Plate iii/3: Guido Guidi, *Fosso Ghiaia*, 1972



Plate iii/4: Guido Guidi, *Fosso Ghiaia*, 1972

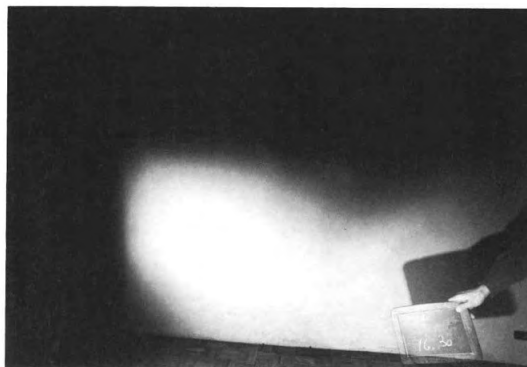
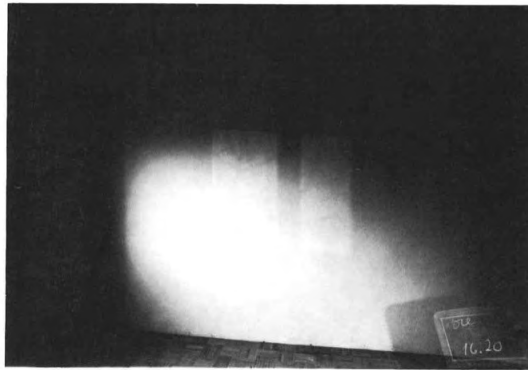
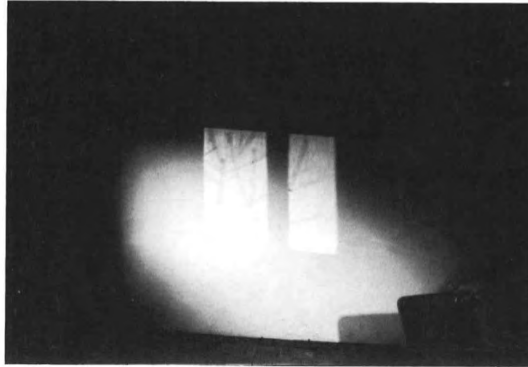




Plate iii/5: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, 11/08/1999



Plates iii/6-7: Guido Guidi, *Students in their apartment*, Treviso, 1978



Plates iii/8: Guido Guidi, *Cesena*, 4 December 1977



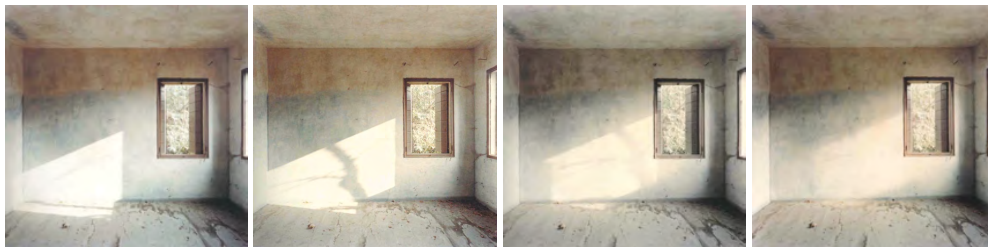
Plate iii/9: Guido Guidi, *Fiume Savio, Cesena, 2007*



Plate iii/10: Guido Guidi, *Giorgio Villa walking up the stairs of his apartments, Cesena, 1969*



Plate iii/11: Guido Guidi, *Portrait of Zoffoli Claudio with the cat, Cesena, 1970*



Plates iii/12: Guido Guidi, *Preganziol, 1983*

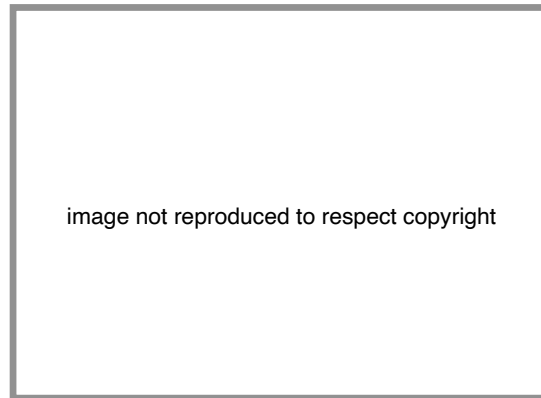


Plate iii/13:Edward Hopper, *Sun in an Empty Room*, 1963



Plates iii/14-15-16-17: Guido Guidi, *Via Roggia, Treviso*, 1981



Plate iii/18: Guido Guidi, *In Sardegna*, 1974



Plates iii/19-20: Guido Guidi, *Anna, Ronta di Cesena*, 1979-1981



Plate iii/21: Guido Guidi, *Maurizio P. growing a beard, Venice, 1972*

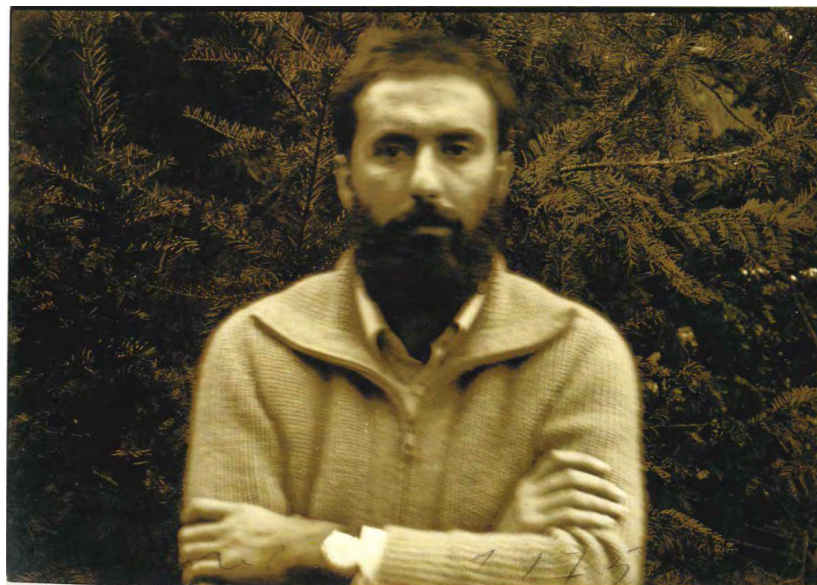


Plate iii/22: Guido Guidi, *Maurizio after a car crash, Preganziol 1975*





## **4. Mistake**





Plate iv /1: Guido Guidi, *My cousin and my niece, Cesena*, around 1970



Plate iv /2: Guido Guidi, *My uncle, Cesena*, around 1970



Plate iv/3: Guido Guidi, *Pievesestina*, 1978



Plate iv/4: Guido Guidi, *Pievesestina*, 1978



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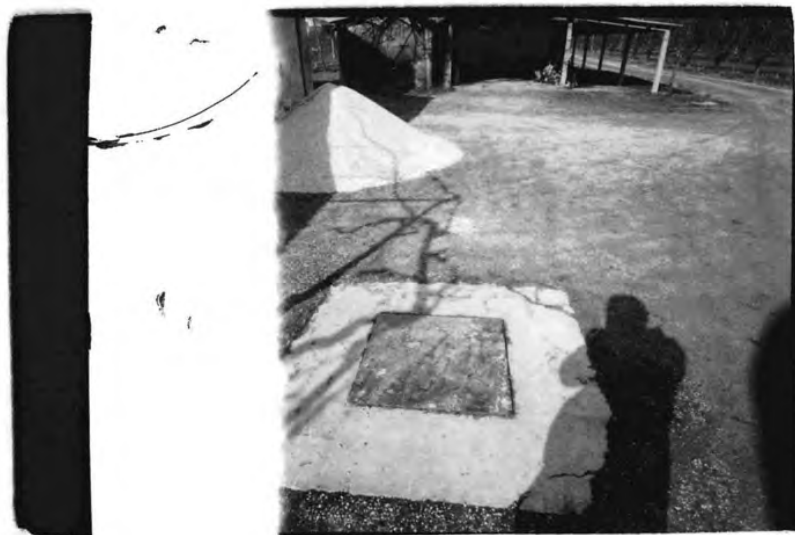


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ET IN ARCADIA EGO



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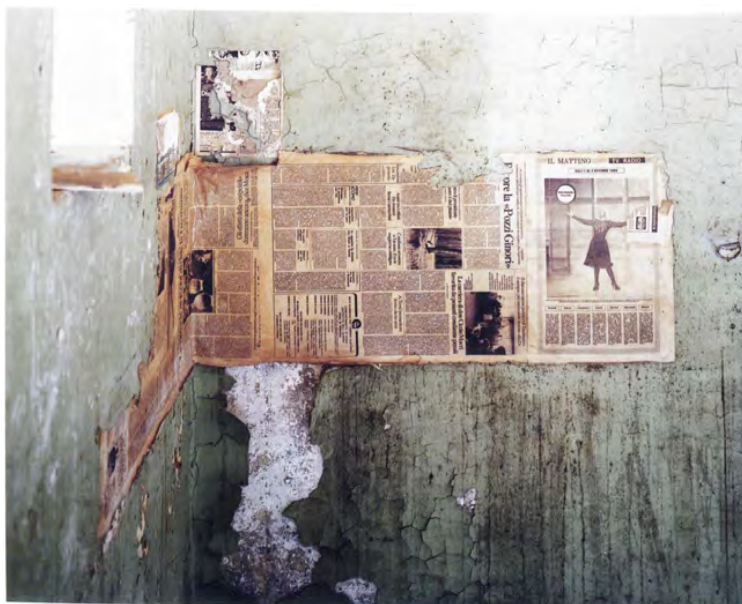


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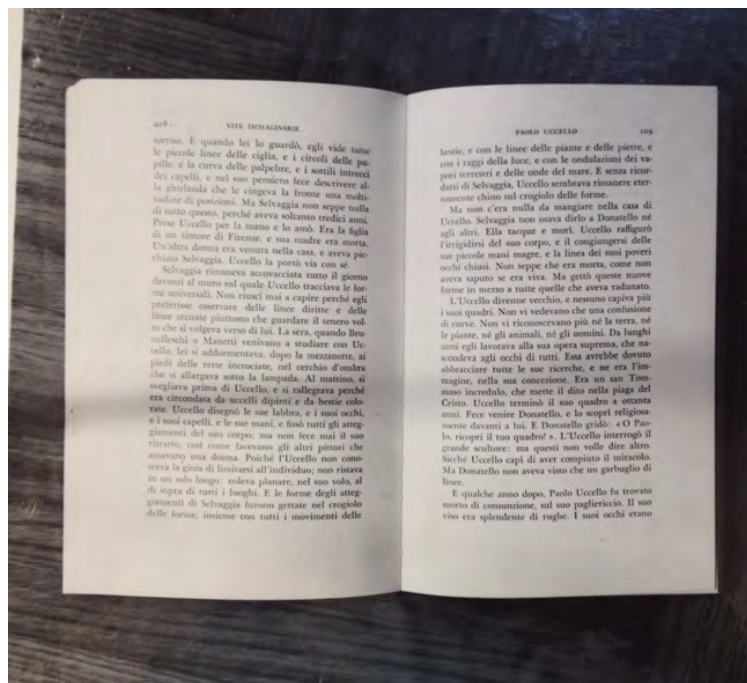


Plate iv /38: Guido Guidi, *Untitled, 1970s*

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### **“Looking down” as ethos**







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Plate II/3: Guido Guidi, *Milan* 1991



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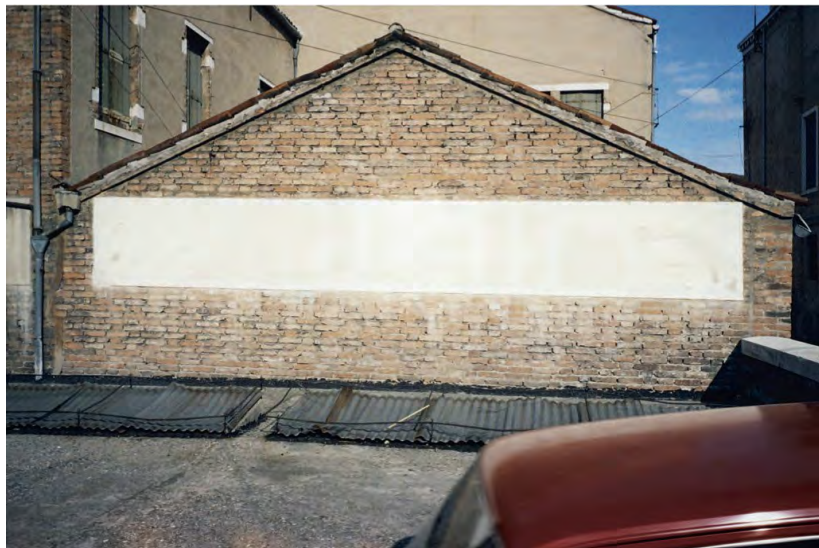


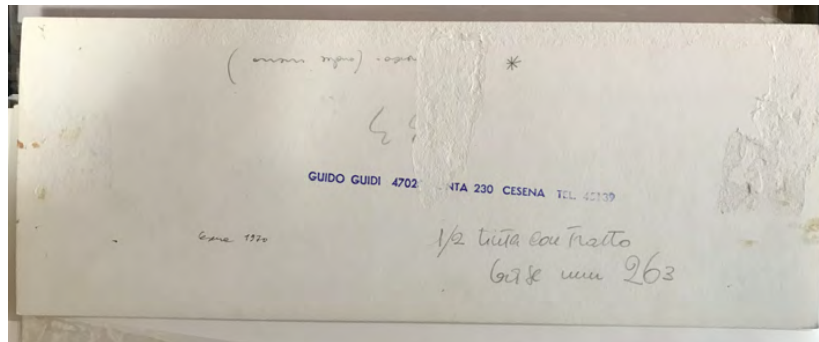
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## **5. Waste**





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Plates v/9, 10: Guido Guidi, *Cabo Finisterre, Spain, August 1995*



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Plates v/13, 14: Guido Guidi, *PK TAV 139+500*, 2005



Plate v/15: Guido Guidi, *via Giarabub, Cesena*, 1976



Plate v/16: Guido Guidi, *Via Violetto, Bulgaria di Gambettola, 1987*



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Plate v/20: Guido Guidi, *Atri 05.03*, 2003



Plate v/21: Guido Guidi, *Cesena*, 1970





Plate v/22: Guido Guidi, *Untitled*, 1970s



Plate v/23: Guido Guidi, *Venice*, 1970

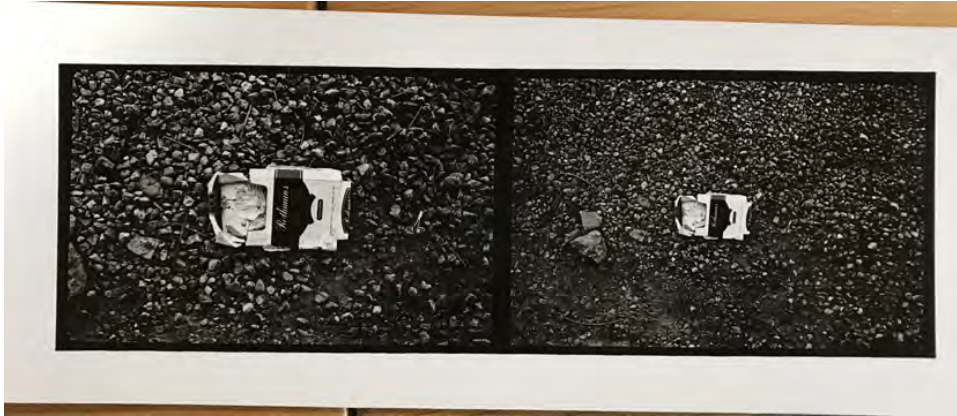


Plate v/24: Guido Guidi, *Untitled*, 1970s

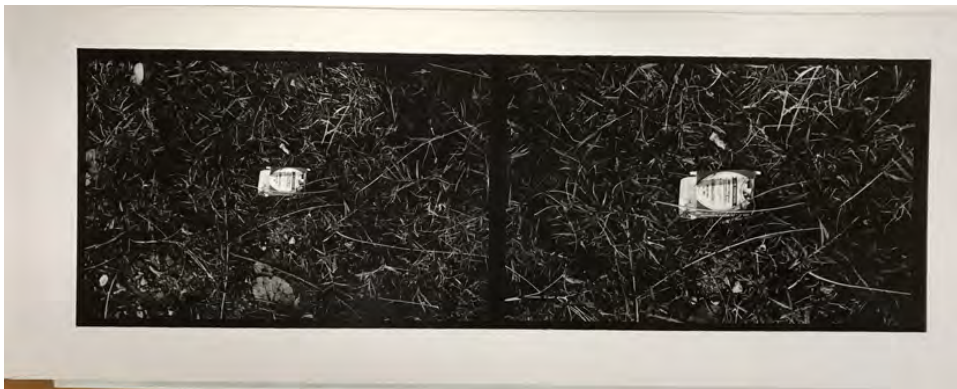


Plate v/25: Guido Guidi, *Cesena*, 1976



Plate v/26: Guido Guidi, *Calais, France, April 1996*



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Plate v/28: *Unknown author and title, ca. 1935*



Plate v/29: Francesco del Cossa, *Annunciation*, ca. 1470-1472



Plate v/30: Guido Guidi, *Gronowo, Poland, August 1994*

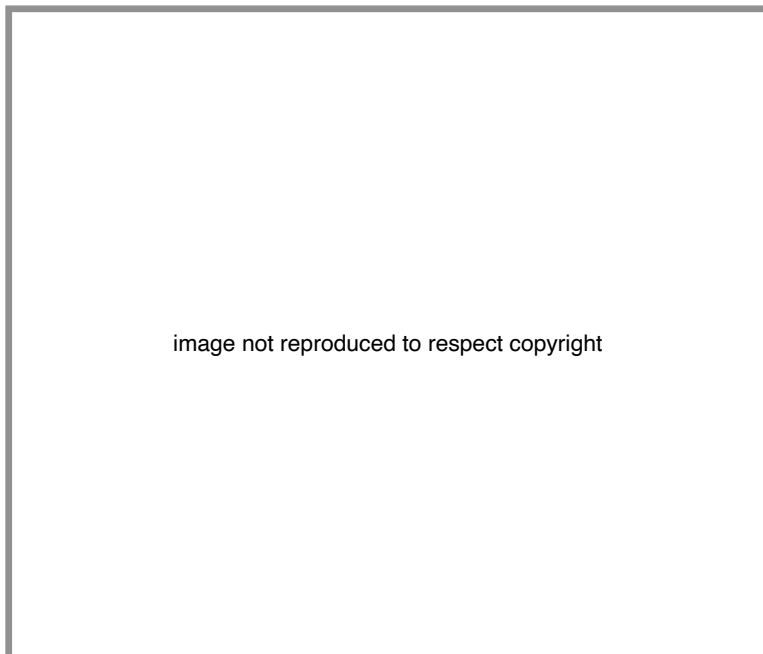


Plate v/31: Robert Adams, *On Interstate 25, 1973*

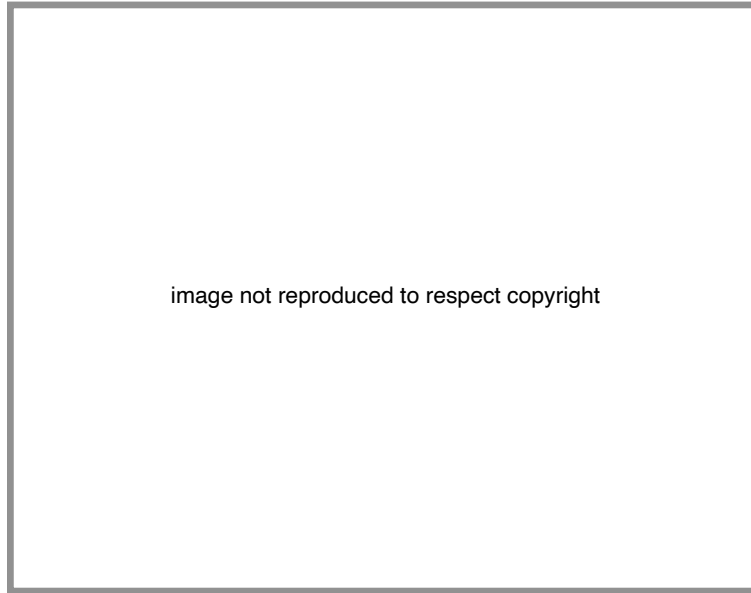


Plate v/32: Frederick Sommer, *Jack Rabbit*, 1939

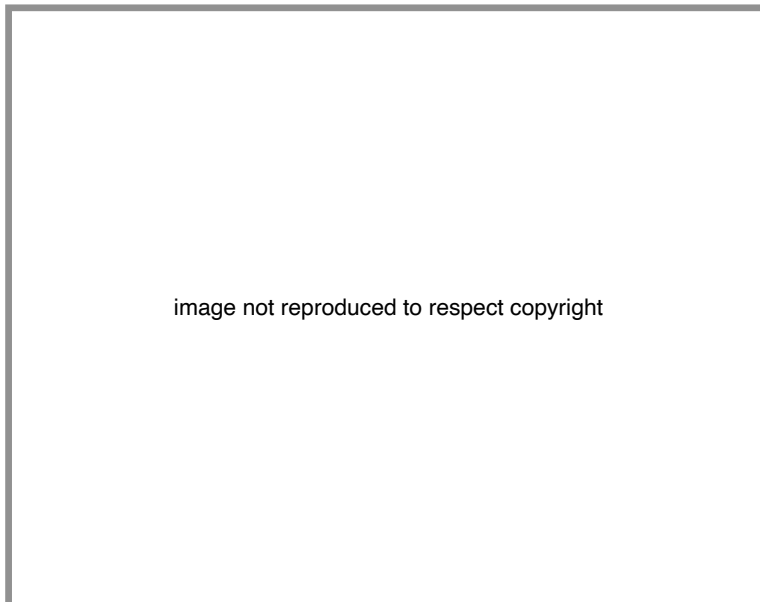


Plate v/33: Edward Weston, *Dead Rabbit, Arizona*, 1938



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Plate vi/31: Guido Guidi, *13837 km 29, Former sugar refinery, Cesena, August 2000*



Plate vi/32: Guido Guidi, *Ravenna, 1990-2006*



Plate vi/33: Guido Guidi, *Rimini Nord*, October, 1991



Plate vi/34: Timothy H. O'Sullivan, *Tufa Domes, Pyramid Lake, Nevada*, 1867



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Plate vi/40: Guido Guidi, *Via dei Mulinelli, San Vittore di Cesena*, 1991

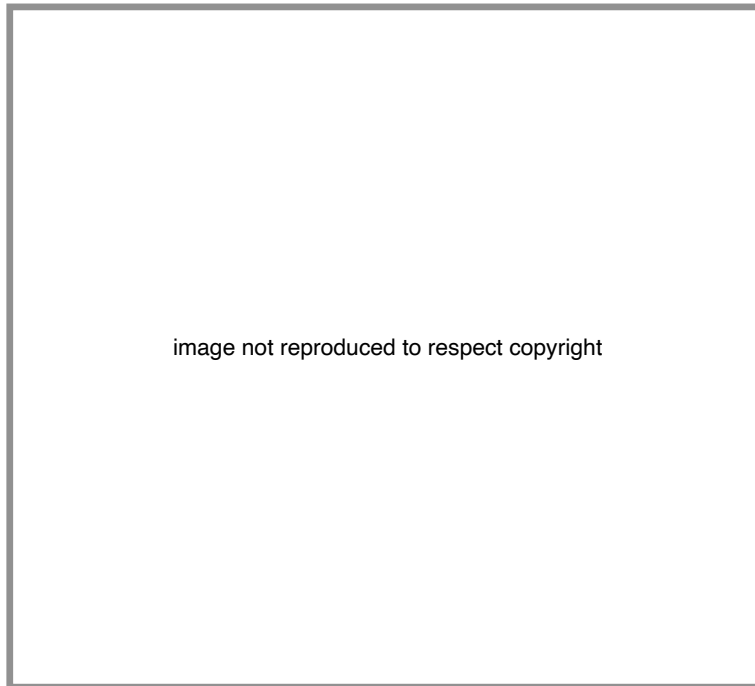


Plate vi/41: Robert Adams, *Basement for a tract house. Colorado Springs, 1969*



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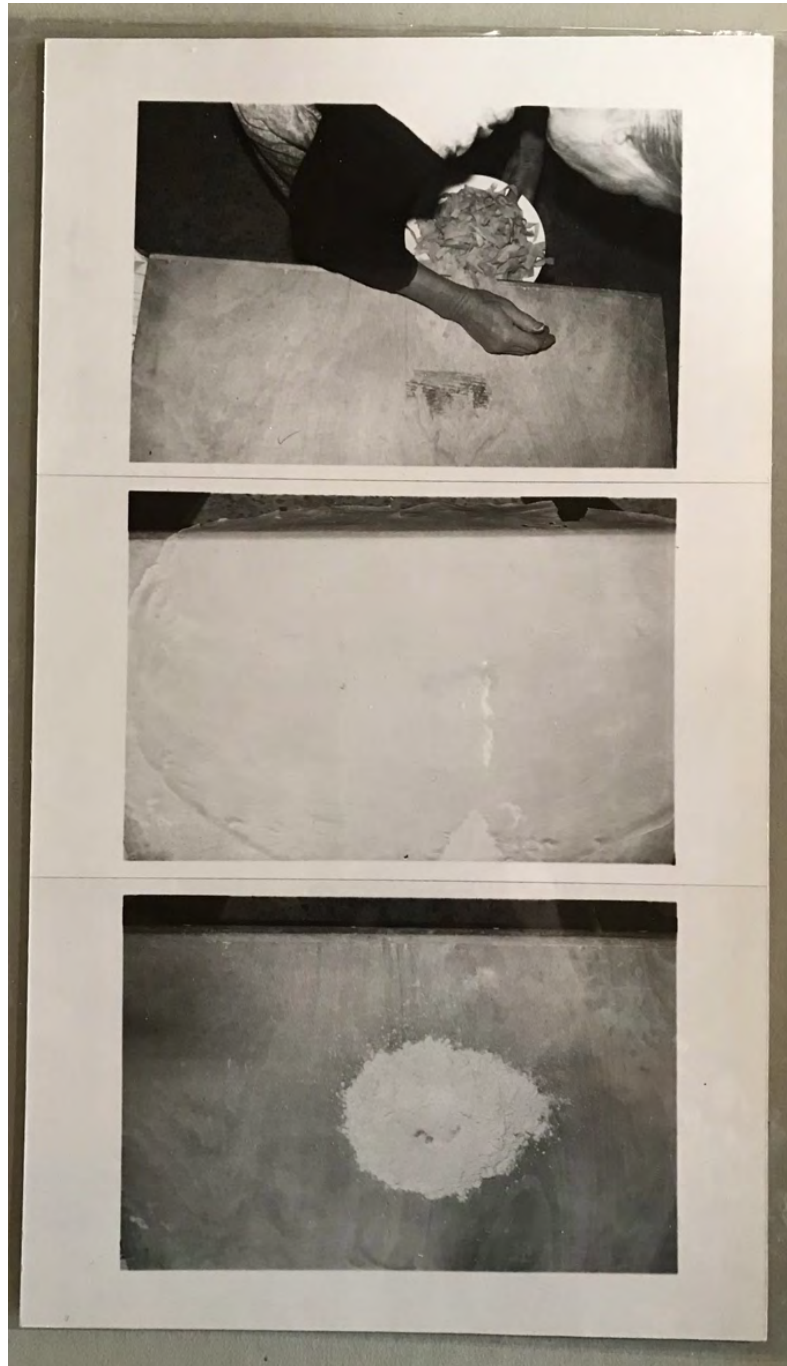


Plate vi/51: Guido Guidi, *Ronta di Cesena*, 1970

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Unless otherwise stated, all photographs © Guido Guidi, courtesy of the artist, Large Glass London and Viasaterna Milan.

For the details of the bibliographic sources please see the Bibliography at the end of the first volume.

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Plate 1: Plywood self-built camera stored in Guido Guidi's atelier.  
Published in Leonardi, *La macchina maleducata e l'intrattabile realtà*: 160.

Plate 2: Guido Guidi, *Apartment of Zoffoli Renato, Emigrant, Geneva, 1974*  
Gelatin silver print sepia toned.

Published in Zannier, *70 anni di fotografia in Italia*: 180.

A positive of this image can be found in the archive of CSAC - Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione Parma, archive number C002841S.

Plate 3: Guido Guidi, *Room of Salvatore Rosponi, prof. of mathematics, Treviso, 1976*

Gelatin silver print sepia toned

Published in Zannier, *70 anni di fotografia in Italia*: 180.

A positive of this image can be found in the archive of CSAC - Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione Parma, archive number C002846S.

Plate 4: Robert Adams, *Colorado, 1973-1974*

Gelatin silver print

© Robert Adams. Courtesy Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne.

Plate 5: Robert Adams, *Colorado, 1973-1974*

Gelatin silver print

© Robert Adams. Courtesy Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne.

Plate 6: Walker Evans, *Farmer's Kitchen, Hale County, Alabama, 1936*

Gelatin silver print

Object number: 394.2015

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Plate 7: Guido Guidi, *Cesenatico 1973*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 7.

Plate 8: Guido Guidi, *Fosso Ghiaia, Ravenna, 1971*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 32.

Plate 9: Guido Guidi, *Ronta, 25.05.98* (door in Guidi's atelier)

C-print

Published in Guidi (ed.), *SS 9 Itinerari lungo la via Emilia*: 17.

Plate 10: Fra' Beato Angelico, *Christus am Kreuz*, c. 1430

Pen and brown ink, with red wash, on paper, 29,3 x 19 cm

Albertina Wien Graphische Sammlung Online, inventory number 4863.

Source:

[https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search=/record/objectnumbersearch=\[4863\]&showtype=record](https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=search=/record/objectnumbersearch=[4863]&showtype=record)

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Published in Frongia, *Il paesaggio che guarda me*: 392; and in Guidi, *La figura dell'Orante*: 6.

Plate I/2: Guido Guidi, *Self-portrait. Ronta, 1968*

Gelatin silver print, 28,4x28,8 cm

Published in Frongia, *Il paesaggio che guarda me*: 395; and in Guidi, *La figura dell'Orante*: 6, 7, 11, 21.

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Gelatin silver print

Published in Antonello Frongia, *Il paesaggio che guarda me*: 397.

Plate i/2: Guido Guidi, *Botanic garden, Naples, 1982*

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Published in De Seta (ed.), *Napoli '82*: 92.

Plate i/3: Guido Guidi, *Corso Comandini, Cesena, 1984*

C-print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*, vol. 1: 29.

Plate i/4: Guido Guidi, *Via Aldini, Cesena, 1984*

C-print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*, vol. 1: 27.

Plate i/5: Guido Guidi, *Porta San Martino, Cesena 1984*

C-print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*, vol. 1: 67.

Plate i/6: Guido Guidi, *Via San Cristoforo, Cesena, 1984*

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Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*, vol. 3: 112.

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Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*, vol. 1: 30.

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C-print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*, vol. 3: 125.

Plate i/9: Guido Guidi, *My Aunt, Cesena, 1969*

Gelatin silver print

Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plate i/10: Guido Guidi, *Ronta di Cesena 1981*

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Published in Ghirri, Leone and Velati (eds.), *Viaggio in Italia*: 100.

Plate i/11: Guido Guidi, *Ronta, Cesena, 2015*

C-print

Work displayed in the exhibition *Guido Guidi. Col tempo*, curated by Jean-Paul Derrider, Fondation A Stichting, Brussels, 25 September – 11 December 2016.

Plate i/12: *Guido Guidi, Preganziol, Treviso, 1982*

C-print

Published in Ghirri, Leone and Velati (eds.), *Viaggio in Italia*: 101.

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Gelatin silver print

Published in Dahó and Sire (eds.), *Guidi Guido Veramente*: 26.

Plate i/14: Guido Guidi, *Teatro Bonci, Cesena, 1 August 1984. Looking North*

C-print

Published in Ghirri and Guidi, *Due fotografie per il teatro Bonci*: n.n.; Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada, vol. 1*: 23; and in Mariano and Maggiori (eds.), *Guido Guidi, Italo Zannier. Un itinerario*: 35.

Plate i/15: *Guido Guidi, Via Montanari, Cesena, 1980*

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Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada, vol. 3*: 5.

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Gelatin silver print

Published in Dahó and Sire (eds.), *Guidi Guido Veramente*: 29.

Plate i/17: August Sander, *Mädchen im Kirmeswagen, 1926*

Gelatin silver print.

Published in Gunther Sander (ed.), *August Sander Menschen des 20.*

*Jahrhunderts. Portraitphotographien 1892-1952*, Munich: Schirmer/Mosel 1980: 349; and in Szarkowski, *Photography Until Now: front cover and 241.*

© 2023 Die Photographische Sammlung / SK Stiftung Kultur - August Sander Archiv, Cologne / ARS, NY.

Plate i/18: Guido Guidi, *Teatro Bonci, Cesena, 21 April 1984. Looking West*

C-print

Published in Ghirri and Guidi, *Due fotografie per il teatro Bonci*: n.n.; Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada, vol. 1*: 24; and in Mariano and Maggiori (eds.), *Guido Guidi, Italo Zannier. Un itinerario*: 34.

Plate i/19: Eugène Atget, *Cabaret de la Biche, 35 rue Geoffroy-Saint-Hilaire, 5ème arrondissement, Paris, 1905*

Albumen silver print, 21,8x17,5 cm

Archive number: PH31513

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carnavalet/oeuvres/cabaret-de-la-biche-35-rue-geoffroy-saint-hilaire-5eme-arrondissement-paris#infos-principales

Plate i/20: Eugène Atget, *Collège Saint-Michel, ancien collège de Chanac, 12 rue de Bièvre, 5ème arrondissement, Paris, 1900*

Albumen silver print, 21,5x17,9 cm

Inventory number: PH6956

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<https://www.parismuseescollections.paris.fr/fr/musee-carnavalet/oeuvres/college-saint-michel-ancien-college-de-chanac-12-rue-de-bievre-5eme-0>

Plate i/21: Guido Guidi, *Per Anna (TV), 1979*

Gelatin silver print, 13x20 cm

Published on the website of Viasaterna, Milan:

<https://viasaterna.com/Guido-Guidi>.

Plate i/22: Eugène Atget, *Versailles, Maison Close, Petite Palace, 1921*

Albumen silver print. 22,2x27,8 cm (image), 37x28,5 (mount). Open Content Program. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Anonymous gift, 94.XM.108.2. Source:

<https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/107QX5#full-artwork-details>

Plate i/23: Guido Guidi, *Piazzola sul Brenta, 1985*

C-print

Published in Rössl and Sordi (eds.), *Guido Guidi – In Veneto, 1984-89*: 29.

Plate i/24: Guido Guidi, *Pomposa, 1983*

C-print

Published in Guidi, *Guido Guidi*: plate 2; and in Mariano and Maggiori (eds.), *Guido Guidi, Italo Zannier. Un itinerario*: 7.

Plate i/25: Guido Guidi, *Preganziol, 1983*

Gelatin silver print

Work displayed in the exhibition *Guido Guidi. Col tempo*, curated by Jean-Paul Derrider, Fondation A Stichting, Brussels, 25 September – 11 December 2016.

Published on the website of the museum:

<https://fondationastichting.com/exhibition/guido-guidi/>

Plate i/26: Guido Guidi, *Preganziol, 1983*

C-print

Published in Valtorta (ed.), *Guido Guidi Preganziol 1983*: plate A6.

Plate i/27: Guido Guidi, *Cattolica, 1975 (Sunday morning, 10 o'clock)*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Quintavalle, *Guido Guidi. Album 1969-1977*: 2317.

A positive of this image can be found in the archive of CSAC - Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione Parma, archive number not indicated.

Plate i/28: Guido Guidi, *Pinarella di Cervia, 1977*

Gelatin silver prints, each 13x18 cm

Published in Quintavalle, *Guido Guidi. Album 1969-1977*: 2319; and in Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*: 96.

A positive of this image can be found in the archive of CSAC - Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione Parma, archive number C002850S\_Guidi.

Plate i/29: Guido Guidi, *Pinarella di Cervia, 1977*

Gelatin silver prints, each 13x18 cm

Published in Quintavalle, *Guido Guidi. Album 1969-1977*: 2319; and in Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*: 96.

A positive of this image can be found in the archive of CSAC - Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione Parma, archive number C002849S\_Guidi.

Plates i/30, 31: Guido Guidi, *Ronta, 19 May 1981*

Negatives on paper

Published in Dahó and Sire (eds.), *Guidi Guido Veramente*: 30-31; and in Leonardi, *La macchina maleducata*: 161.

Plate i/32: William Henry Fox Talbot, *Latticed window in Lacock Abbey, August 1835*

Photogenic drawing negative

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[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Talbot\\_Erkerfenster.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Talbot_Erkerfenster.jpg)

Plate i/33: Marcel Duchamp, *Fresh Widow, 1920*

Miniature French window, painted wood frame and eight panes of glass covered with black leather Inscribed across sill, applied in black paper-tape letters: FRESH WIDOW COPYRIGHT ROSE SELAVY 1920. Cat.: L145, S265.

Ex. coll.: Katherine S. Dreier, West Redding, Connecticut. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Katherine S. Dreier Bequest, 1953. Picture scanned from D'Harnoncourt and McShine (eds.), *Marcel Duchamp*: plate 134.

Plate i/34: Guido Guidi, *Ronta, Italy, 9 September 1981*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Dahó and Sire (eds.), *Guidi Guido Veramente*: 33; and in Leonardi, *La macchina maleducata*: 162.

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Guidi's private archive, Ronta di Cesena.

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Gelatin silver print

Published in Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*: 100; and in Guidi, *Di sguincio*: 5.

Plate i/37: Guido Guidi, *Treviso-Venezia, Train, 1979*

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Published in Guidi, *Di sguincio*: 102.

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Published in Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*: 104.

Plate i/40: Guido Guidi, *Ronta, Italy, 9 September 1981*

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Published in Dahó and Sire (eds.), *Guidi Guido Veramente*: 32; and in Leonardi, *La macchina maleducata*: 162.

Plate i/41: Guido Guidi, *Cesena, 1971-1972*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 29.

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C-print

Published in Frongia and Moro (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Cinque paesaggi*: 16.

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Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*, vol. 1: 79.

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Abbott-Levy Collection. Partial gift of Shirley C. Burden. Source:

<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/42934>

Plate i/45: Guido Guidi, *Treviso (Dario)*, 1980

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Di sguincio*: 35.

Plate i/46: André Breton, *L'écriture automatique*, 1938

Photomontage

Vera and Arturo Schwarz Collection, Milan. Image scanned from Krauss and Livingston (eds.), *L'Amour fou, photography & surrealism*: 8 (fig. 3).

Plate i/47: Guido Guidi, *Treviso*, 1980

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Lunario 1968-99*: 55.

Plate i/48: Guido Guidi, *Casal Borsetti, October/November 1980*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Lunario 1968-99*: 51.

Plate i/49: Guido Guidi, *Cesena, begin of 1970s*

Gelatin silver prints

The diptych was published on the flyer of Guidi's first exhibition: *Mario Cresci – Guido Guidi. Due aspetti dell'attuale ricerca fotografica*, curated by Vittorio Sgarbi, Galleria di Palazzo Galvani, Bologna, 15-30 January 1977.

Also published in Quintavalle, *Guido Guidi. Album 1969-1977*: 2320. In the book the photographs are presented as vertical diptych with an handwritten caption by Guidi: «Zoffoli Loris mentre guarda il padre la sorella la nipote. Cesena, 1 gennaio 1976. Sequenza in tempo quasi reale» [Zoffoli Loris looking at his father his sister and his niece. Cesena 1 January 1976. Sequence almost in real time].

Another positive is present in the collection of CSAC - Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione, archive number C002845S\_Guidi.

Plate i/50: Guido Guidi, *Aldo Gattamorta, Cesena*, 1970

Gelatin silver prints

Published in Zannier, *Dopo Krims*: 36.

Plate i/51: Lee Friedlander, *Florida*, 1963

Gelatin silver print

© Lee Friedlander. Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco and Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne.

Plate i/52: Guido Guidi, *Cesena*, 1970

Gelatin silver prints

Published in Müller-Pohle, *Series – Cycle – Sequence*: 21; Zannier, *Guido Guidi. La lunga Posa*: 28, 29; and in Foschi (ed.), *Guido Guidi 19692004*: 3.

A positive of this image can be found in the archive of CSAC - Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione Parma, archive number C002836S\_Guidi.

Plate i/53: Guido Guidi, *Cesena*, 1969-71 (Also titled: *Canzonissima*, 1970 *Cesena (Forlì) / Zoffoli Claudio*)

Gelatin silver print (montage)

Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 17; in Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*: 86-87; and in Zannier, *Dopo Krims*: 36.

Plate i/54: Walker Evans, *East 120th Street, New York City*, 1961

Gelatin silver print

From Walker Evans, *Message From the Interior*, New York: Eakins Press, 1966, plate 7. © 1966 Walker Evans. Courtesy Fortune Magazine, New York.

Plate i/55: Guido Guidi, *Cesena*, 1975 (*chamber music*) (Also titled: *Cesena, interior with television-set, chamber music*)

Two gelatin silver prints mounted on board

Published in "Il Diaframma: Fotografia Italiana", n. 212, March 1976: 23.

Plate i/56: The diptych published in reverse order in "Il Diaframma:

Fotografia Italiana" (on page 22: Guido Guidi, *Zoffoli Claudio - Cesena*, 1973).

Plate i/57: Guido Guidi, *Cesena 1973 – "Atlantic" Television-set* (Also titled: *End of Broadcasting ATLANTIC television-set (Cesena 1973)*).

Gelatin silver print mounted on board

Guidi's private archive. Another positive is present in the collection of CSAC - Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione, archive number C002837S\_Guidi. Picture displayed in the group exhibition *Nuove figure in un interno*, curated by Paolo Barbaro, Cristina Casero, and Claudia Cavatorta, *Fotografia Europea*, CSAC Parma, 12 April – 9 June 2019.

Plate i/58: Luigi Ghirri,  $\infty$  *Infinity*, 1974

Series of 365 colour photographs

© Eredi Luigi Ghirri. Source:

<https://www.archivioluigighirri.com/artworks/infinito>

Plate i/59: Alfred Stieglitz, *Equivalent*, 1925

Gelatin silver print, 11.8 × 9.3 cm (image/paper/first mount/second mount);  
34.3 × 26.8 cm (third mount)

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Collection. Source:

[https://archive.artic.edu/stieglitz/portfolio\\_page/equivalent-1925-3/](https://archive.artic.edu/stieglitz/portfolio_page/equivalent-1925-3/)

Plate i/60: Guido Guidi, *Untitled*, 1978

C-print, printed 2018

Published in Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro*: 37.

Plate i/61: Guido Guidi, *In Sardegna*, 1974

Gelatin silver prints

Published in Guidi and Zucca Alessandrelli (ed.), *Guido Guidi. In Sardegna:  
1974, 2011, vol. 1*: 68.

Plate i/62: Guido Guidi, *Cesena*, 1977-79

Negative on paper, 13x18 cm

Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plate i/63: Guido Guidi, *Corso Mazzini, Cesena*, 1984

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada, vol. 1*: 16.

Plate i/64: Guido Guidi, *Via Emilia, Forlì*, 1984

C-print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada, vol. 1*: 115.

Plate i/65: Guido Guidi, *Treviso*, 1980

C-print, printed 2019

Published in Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro*: 28.

Plate i/66: Henry Wessel Jr., from the series *Traffic*, 1980s

Gelatin silver print

© Henry Wessel Jr. Estate. Courtesy Galerie Thomas Zander Cologne.

Plate i/67: Guido Guidi, *Via Ravennate, Cesena*, 1979

C-print, printed 2019

Published in Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro*: 25.

Plate i/68: *Guido Guidi, Cesena, 1980*

C-print, printed 2019

Published in Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro*: 24.

## 2. Indexicality

Plates ii/1-2-3: *Guido Guidi, Cesena 1967*

Gelatin silver prints

Published among others in Dahó and Sire (eds.), *Guidi Guido Veramente*: 5-7.

Plate ii/4: *Guido Guidi, Teatro Bonci, Cesena, 1984*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada, vol. 1*: 19; and in Mariano and Maggiori (eds.), *Guido Guidi, Italo Zannier. Un itinerario*: 40.

Plate ii/5: *Guido Guidi, Treviso, 1979-1981*

Gelatin silver print, printed in 1981 on Kodak Bromesko paper

Published in Guidi and Fulford (eds.), *Dietro Casa*: n.n.

Plate ii/6: *Guido Guidi, Via Centro, Salvatronda di Castelfranco Veneto 1985*

C-print

Published in Frongia and Moro (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Cinque paesaggi*: 63.

Plate ii/7: *Guido Guidi, Albignano, Truccazzano, 1994*

Contact print from 8x10 in. negative

Published in Benigni (ed.), *Guidi Guido, Cinque Viaggi*: 25.

A positive of this image can be found in the archive of MUFOCO-Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea, Cinisello Balsamo, fonds: Archivio dello spazio, archive number: ADS\_4253\_ST\_CQ.

Plate ii/8: *Guido Guidi, Spilimbergo, 1994*

C-print

Published in Guidi, *Guardando a Est*: 21.

Plate ii/9: *Guido Guidi, Chioggia, Italy April 2000*

C-print

Published in Dahó and Sire (eds.), *Guidi Guido Veramente*: 134.

Plate ii/10: *Guido Guidi, Inzago, 1990*

Contact print from 8x10 in. negative

Published in Benigni (ed.), *Guidi Guido, Cinque Viaggi*: 10.

A positive of this image can be found in the archive of MUFOCO-Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea, Cinisello Balsamo, fonds: Archivio dello spazio, archive number: ADS\_996\_ST\_CQ.

Plate ii/11: Guido Guidi, *Cesena, 1993*

C-print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*, vol. 3: 86.

Plate ii/12: Guido Guidi, *Via Emilia, Forlino-popoli, 1984*

C-print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*, vol. 1: 98.

Plate ii/13: Guido Guidi, *Cesena, 1985*

C-print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*, vol. 2: 133.

Plate ii/14: Guido Guidi, *Treviso, 1980*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Di sguincio*: 64.

Plate ii/15: Guido Guidi, *Via Emilia-Castel San Pietro Terme 1984*

C-print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*, vol. 1: 138.

Plate ii/16: Guido Guidi, *SP 10, near Monte Palon, Monte Grappa, 1987*

C-print

Published in Frongia and Moro (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Cinque paesaggi*: 87.

Plates ii/17-18: Guido Guidi, *Preganziol 1978-79*

Gelatin silver prints, each 13x18 cm

Published in Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*: 102; and Guidi, *Di sguincio*: 57, 65.

Plate ii/19: Giulio Paolini, *Young Man Looking at Lorenzo Lotto, 1967*

Photo emulsion on canvas, 30x24 cm

Original source: Lorenzo Lotto, *Ritratto di giovane*, c. 1505, oil on wood, 28x22 cm, Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence; reproduction from *Mostra di Lorenzo Lotto*, edited by Pietro Zampetti, exhibition catalogue, Venice, Palazzo Ducale, Venice: Casa editrice Arte veneta 1953: 15, plate 7.

Paolini's archive number: GPO-0140. FER Collection. © Giulio Paolini / Photo



© Giorgio Colombo. Courtesy Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini. Source:  
<https://www.fondazionepaolini.it/eng/artwork/GPO-0140?searchid=ef5a6c3a7d515&i=0>

Plate ii/20: Guido Guidi, *Preganziol 1980*  
Gelatin silver print  
Published in Guidi, *Di sguincio*: 119.

Plate ii/21: Anonymous, *Robert Frank and his father at a carnival, Italy, 1936*  
Black-and-white photograph taken by an automatically operated camera: a device connected to a target pressed the button of the shutter each time the shot with the rifle was successful.

Plate ii/22: Arnold H. Crane, *Walker Evans, Old Lyme, 1969*  
Gelatin silver print, printed 1976, 23,7x34,9 cm (image), 28x35,4 (paper)  
© Estate Arnold H. Crane. Courtesy Art Institute of Chicago. Gift of Herbert Molner. Archive number: 1976.1183.

Plate ii/23: Guido Guidi, *San Trovaso, 1980*  
Gelatin silver print  
Published in Guidi, *Di sguincio*: 69.

Plate ii/24: Guido Guidi, *Cesena, 1981*  
Gelatin silver print.  
Published in Guidi, *Di sguincio*: 67.

Plates ii/25-26: Guido Guidi, *Via Roggia, Treviso, 1981*  
C-prints  
Published in Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro*: 44, 45.

Plates ii/27-28: Guido Guidi, *Misinto, 1997*  
C-prints, each 20x25 cm  
Published in Benigni (ed.), *Guido Guidi. Cinque Viaggi*: 78-79.  
A positive of each of these images can be found in the archive of MUFOCO-  
Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea, Cinisello Balsamo, fonds: Archivio  
dello spazio, archive numbers: ADS\_6911\_ST\_CQ and ADS\_6899\_ST\_CQ.

Plates ii/29-30-31: Guido Guidi, *Ronta, 23.07.1980*  
Gelatin silver prints  
Published in Guidi, *Lunario 1968-99*: 62, 63, 64.

Plate ii/32: Guido Guidi, *Near Cittadella, 1984*

C-print

Published in Frongia and Moro (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Cinque paesaggi*: 62.

Plate ii/33-34-35: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, 1979

C-prints

Published in Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro*: 5, 6, 7.

Plate ii/36: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, 1980-81

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Lunario 1968-99*: 37.

Plate ii/37: Guido Guidi, *San Martino*, 1985

C-print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*, vol. 2: 80.

Plate ii/38: Guido Guidi, *Marghera*, 1986

C-print

Published in Rössl and Sordi (eds.), *Guido Guidi – In Veneto, 1984-89*: 9.

Plate ii/39: Eugène Atget, *Ancienne Faculté de Médecine, Rue de l'hôtel Colbert*, 1900

Albumen silver print

Archive number: PH6942

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<https://www.parismuseescollections.paris.fr/ru/node/112509#infos-principales>

Plate ii/40: Walker Evans, *Wash Day*, 1930

Gelatin silver print, 27,6x20,3 cm

Object number: 84.XM.956.45

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<https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/106H4T>

Plate ii/41: Man Ray, *Moving Sculpture (France)*, 1920

Gelatin silver print

© Man Ray Trust / Adagp, Paris

Plate ii/42: Guido Guidi, *Forlì*, 1971

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 26; and Ghirri, Leone and Velati (eds.), *Viaggio in Italia*: 60.

Plate ii/43: Walker Evans, *Folk Victorian Cottage at Ossining Camp Woods, New York, 1930-31*

Gelatin silver print

© Walker Evans Archive, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Plate ii/44: Guido Guidi, *Dietro Casa 1979-1981*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi and Fulford (eds.), *Dietro Casa*: n.n.

Plates ii/45-46-47: Guido Guidi, *Via Piave, Cesena, 1986*

C-prints

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*, vol. 2: 36, 37, 39.

Plate ii/48: Guido Guidi, *Via Cesare Battisti, Cesena, 1985*

C-print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*, vol. 1: 97.

Plate ii/49: Guido Guidi, *Milan, 1998*

C-print

Published in Benigni (ed.), *Guidi Guido, Cinque Viaggi*: 100.

A positive of this image can be found in the archive of MUFOCO-Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea, Cinisello Balsamo, fonds: Archivio dello spazio, archive number: ADS\_5684\_ST\_CQ.

Plate ii/50: Guido Guidi, *Marta Z., Cesena, 1973*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 22.

Plate ii/51: Guido Guidi, *Treviso, 1976*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Di sguincio*: 94.

Plate ii/52: Guido Guidi, *Ronta, n.d.*

C-print

Published in Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro*: 54.

Plates ii/53-54: Guido Guidi, *Cogliate, 1995*

C-prints, each 20x25 cm

Published in Benigni (ed.), *Guidi Guido, Cinque Viaggi*: 77, 78.

A positive of each of these images can be found in the archive of MUFOCO-Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea, Cinisello Balsamo, fonds: Archivio dello spazio, archive numbers: ADS\_5692\_ST\_CQ and ADS\_5691\_ST\_CQ.

Plates ii/55-56: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, 1980

C-prints

Published in Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro*: 60, 61.

Plates ii/57-58: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, 1979

C-prints

Published in Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro*: 10, 11.

Plates ii/59-60-61-62: Guido Guidi, *Cesena*, 2007

C-prints

Published in Dahó and Sire (eds.), *Guidi Guido Veramente*: 142, 143, 144, 145;  
and in Zanot, *Guido Guidi Fiume*: 5-8.

Plates ii/63-64: Guido Guidi, *Meldola*, 1986

C-prints

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*, vol. 2: 90, 91.

Plate ii/65: Guido Guidi, *Via Aldini, Cesena, Sunday morning, 10 November 1984*

C-print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*, vol. 2: 110.

Plate ii/66: Guido Guidi, *Martellago, piazza Vittoria, Chiesa Parrocchiale, 1985-86*

C-print

Published in Rössl and Sordi (eds.), *Guido Guidi – In Veneto, 1984-89*: 21.

Plate ii/67: Guido Guidi, *Chioggia, 6 April 2000*

C-print

Published in Dahó and Sire (eds.), *Guidi Guido Veramente*: 83.

Plates ii/68-69: Guido Guidi, *Cogliate*, 1995

Gelatin silver print and C-print

Published in Benigni (ed.), *Guidi Guido, Cinque Viaggi*: 46, 47.

A positive of each of these images can be found in the archive of MUFOCO-  
Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea, Cinisello Balsamo, fonds: Archivio  
dello spazio, archive numbers: ADS\_5702\_ST\_CQ and ADS\_5701\_ST\_CQ.

Plate ii/70: Guido Guidi, *Cesena*, 1973

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 12.

Plate ii/71: Guido Guidi, *Untitled*, 1980

C-print

Published in Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro*: 77.

Plate ii/72: Ugo Mulas, 2. *L'operazione fotografica. Autoritratto per Lee Friedlander*, from *Le verifiche*, 1971-1972

Gelatin silver print

© Ugo Mulas Estate. Downloaded from

<https://www.ugomulas.org/gallery/verifiche/2-loperazione-fotografica/#gallery>

Plate ii/73: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, 2012 (on the left: Lee Friedlander, *Canyon de Chelly*, Arizona, 1983)

Gelatin silver contact print from a negative 8x10 in.

Published in Guidi, *La figura dell'Orante*: 5.

Plate ii/74: Guido Guidi, *Cervia*, 1979

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 1.

Plate ii/75: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, 1979

C-print

Published in Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro*: 12.

Plate ii/76: Guido Guidi, *Via Masiera*, Cesena, 1985

C-print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada*, vol. 3: 116.

Plate ii/77: Lewis Hine, *Newsboy*, Indianapolis, 1908

Complete title: *John Howell, an Indianapolis newsboy, makes \$.75 some days.*

*Begins at 6 a.m., Sundays. (Lives at 215 W. Michigan St.).* Location: Indianapolis, Indiana

Photographic print

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[services/service/pnp/cph/3b00000/3b01000/3b01000/3b01097r.jpg](https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/pnp/cph/3b00000/3b01000/3b01000/3b01097r.jpg)

Plates ii/78-79-80-81-82: Guido Guidi, *Ronta*, 1979-1981

Gelatin silver prints

Published in Guidi and Fulford (eds.), *Dietro Casa*: n.n.

Plate ii/83: Guido Guidi, *Dietro Casa*, 1979-1981

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi and Fulford (eds.), *Dietro Casa*: n.n.

### 3. Repetition

Plate ii/42: Guido Guidi, *Forlì, 1971*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 26; and Ghirri, Leone and Velati (eds.), *Viaggio in Italia*: 60.

Plate iii/2: Walker Evans, *Rural Church, Beaufort, South Carolina, 1936*

Gelatin silver print, 22,7x18,5 cm

Accession Number: 1999.237.3

© Walker Evans Archive, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Source:

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/282777>

Plate iii/2: Guido Guidi, *Fosso Ghiaia, 1972*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro*: 122.

Plate iii/3: Guido Guidi, *Fosso Ghiaia, 1972*

Kodachrome reversal film

Published in Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro*: 123.

Plate iii/4: Guido Guidi, *Ronta, 11/08/1999*

Gelatin silver prints and c-prints

Published in Guidi, *Lunario 1968-99*: 75-93.

Plates iii/5-6: Guido Guidi, *Students in their apartment, Treviso, 1978*

Gelatin silver prints

Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 44 (only plate 6); and in Zannier, *70 anni di fotografia in Italia*: 159 (both).

Plates iii/7: Guido Guidi, *Cesena, 4 December 1977*

Gelatin silver prints, each 18x24 cm, overall 30x24 cm

Published in "European Photography", vol. 1, issue 1,

January/February/March 1980: 20; and in Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*: 98.

A positive of two of these three images can be found in the archive of CSAC - Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione Parma, archive numbers C002832S, C002831S.

Plate iii/8: Guido Guidi, *Fiume Savio, Cesena, 2007*

C-prints

Published in Dahó and Sire (eds.), *Guidi Guido Veramente*: 149-152.

Plate iii/9: Guido Guidi, *Giorgio Villa walking up the stairs of his apartments, Cesena, 1969*

Gelatin silver prints mounted on cardboard

Guidi's private archive. Published in Zannier, *Conoscere la fotografia*: 56.

Plate iii/10: Guido Guidi, *Portrait of Zoffoli Claudio with the cat, Cesena, 1970*

Gelatin silver prints

Guidi's private archive. Published in Zannier, *L'avanguardia di Guido Guidi*: 24.

Plates iii/11: Guido Guidi, *Preganziol, 1983*

Chromogenic contact prints

Published in Guidi, *Guido Guidi*: plates 3, 4, 5, 6; Valtorta (ed.), *Guido Guidi Preganziol 1983*: entire sequence from plate A1 to A12; and in Valtorta, *Other Gazes*: 9, 12, 15, 16.

Plate iii/12: Edward Hopper, *Sun in an Empty Room, 1963*

Oil on canvas, 73x100,3 cm

Private collection. Image scanned from Lyons, Weinberg, and Grau (eds.), *Edward Hopper and the American Imagination*: plate 59.

© 1995 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Plates iii/13-14-15-16: Guido Guidi, *Via Roggia, Treviso, 1981*

C-prints

Published in Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro*: 42-45.

Plate iii/17: Guido Guidi, *In Sardegna, 1974*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi and Zucca Alessandrelli (eds.), *Guido Guidi. In Sardegna: 1974, 2011, vol. 1*: 26.

Plates iii/18-19: Guido Guidi, *Anna, Ronta di Cesena, 1979-1981*

Gelatin silver prints

Published in Guidi and Fulford (eds.), *Dietro Casa*: n.n.

Plate iii/20: Guido Guidi, *Maurizio P. growing a beard, Venice, 1972*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 10A.

Plate iii/21: Guido Guidi, *Maurizio after a car crash, Preganziol 1975*  
Gelatin silver print  
Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 10B.

Plate iii/22: Guido Guidi, *Maurizio P., Venice, 1972*  
Gelatin silver print  
Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 9.

#### 4. Mistake

Plate iv/1: Guido Guidi, *My cousin and my niece, Cesena, around 1970*  
Gelatin silver print  
Published in Zannier, *Dopo Krims*: 35.

Plate iv/2: Guido Guidi, *My uncle, Cesena, around 1970*  
Gelatin silver print  
Published in Zannier, *Dopo Krims*: 35.

Plate iv/3: Guido Guidi, *Pievesestina, 1978*  
Gelatin silver print  
Published in Guidi, *Di Sguincio*: 111.  
A positive of this image can be found in the archive of CSAC - Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione Parma, archive number C002847S\_Guidi.

Plate iv/4: Guido Guidi, *Pievesestina, 1978*  
Gelatin silver print  
Published in Guidi, *Di Sguincio*: 113.

Plate iv/5: Guido Guidi, *Venezia (Giuliano), 1978*  
Gelatin silver print  
Published in Guidi, *Di Sguincio*: 90.

Plate iv/6: Guido Guidi, *San Trovaso, 1979*  
Gelatin silver print  
Published in Guidi, *Di Sguincio*: 105.

Plate iv/7: Guido Guidi, *San Trovaso, 1979*  
Gelatin silver print  
Published in Guidi, *Di Sguincio*: 23.

Plate iv/8: Guido Guidi, *San Trovaso, 1980*



Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Di Sguincio*: 43.

Plate iv/9: Guido Guidi, *San Trovaso, (Domenico), 1980*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Di Sguincio*: 50.

Plate iv/10: Guido Guidi, *San Trovaso, 1980*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Di Sguincio*: 58.

Plate iv/11: Guido Guidi, *Untitled, 1979-1981*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi and Fulford (eds.), *Dietro Casa*: n.n.

Plate iv/12: Guido Guidi, *Bologna Mare, 1970*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 3A.

Plate iv/13: Guido Guidi, *Ronta, 1979-1981*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi and Fulford (eds.), *Dietro Casa*: n.n.

Plate iv/14: Guido Guidi, *Treviso, 1979*

C-print from a 24x36 cm colour negative.

Published in Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro*: 124.

Plate iv/15: Guido Guidi, *Atri, 05.03, 2003*

C-print

Published in Frongia (ed.), *Atri, 05.03*: n.n.

Plate iv/16-17: Guido Guidi, *Casse di espansione del fiume Secchia, Rubiera, 1989*

Gelatin silver prints

Published in Costantini (ed.), *Guido Guidi. Rubiera*: n.n.; and in Costantini,

*Guidi a Rubiera: un progetto fotografico*: 60, 64.

Plate iv/18: Guido Guidi, *Via Romea, Km 19, 1984*

C-print

Published in Frongia and Moro (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Cinque paesaggi*: 46.

Plate iv/19: Guido Guidi, *Via Emilia, Forlì, 1984*

C-print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada, vol. 1*: 114.

Plate iv/20: Guido Guidi, *Ponferrada, Spain, August 1995*

C-print

Published in Frongia and Venturi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. In Between Cities*: 121.

Plate iv/21: Guido Guidi, *Rimini Nord, 1991*

C-print

Published in Guidi, *Rimini Nord*: n.n.

Plate iv/22: Guido Guidi, *Cesena, Christmas, 1970*

Gelatin silver print

Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plate iv/23: Guido Guidi, *Cesena, 1969-70*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 15A.

Plate iv/24: Guido Guidi, *Ronta, Italy, 10 January 2004*

C-print

Published in Dahó and Sire (eds.), *Guidi Guido Veramente*: 95.

Plate iv/25: Guido Guidi, *Lido di Savio, Italy 1970*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 9.

Plate iv/26: Guido Guidi, *Treviso, 1979*

C-print

Published in Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro*: 23.

Plate iv/27: Guido Guidi, *Via Emilia, Forlimpopoli, 1984*

C-print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada, vol. 1*: 25.

Plate iv/28: Guido Guidi, *San Trovaso, 1980*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Di Sguincio*: 61.

Plate iv/29: Guido Guidi, *Ortez, France, April 1996*

C-print

Published in published in Frongia and Venturi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. In Between Cities*: 105.

Plate iv/30: Guido Guidi, *Passport, 1970*

Gelatin silver print

Guidi's private archive. Published in Mariano and Maggiori (eds.), *Guido Guidi, Italo Zannier. Un itinerario*: 59.

Plates iv/31, 32, 33, 34: Guido Guidi, *Lama plateau, Casentinesi Forests, (Et in Arcadia ego), 1970s*

Gelatin silver prints

Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plate iv/35: Guido Guidi, *Via Uberti, Cesena, January 1985*

C-print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada, vol. 1*: 88.

Plate iv/36: Guido Guidi, *Salerno, Italy, 8 September 1997*

C-print

Published in Dahó and Sire (eds.), *Guidi Guido Veramente*: 98.

Plate iv/37: Guido Guidi, *Abbasanta, Sardinia, 15 July 2011*

C-print

Published in Dahó and Sire (eds.), *Guidi Guido Veramente*: 114.

Plate iv/38: Guido Guidi, *Untitled, 1970s*

Gelatin silver print

Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

## Second part: "Looking down" as ethos

Plate II/1: Guido Guidi, *Bertinoro, Forlì, 1975*

Gelatin silver print sepia toned

Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plate II/2: Guido Guidi, *Rizzo Giuseppe (circus stableman), Badoere, Treviso, 1976*

Gelatin silver print sepia toned

Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plate II/3: Guido Guidi, *Milan 1991*

C-print, 20x25 cm

Published in Benigni (ed.), *Guidi Guido, Cinque Viaggi*: 16.

A positive of this image can be found in the archive of MUFOCO-Museo di

Fotografia Contemporanea, Cinisello Balsamo, fonds: Archivio dello spazio,  
archive number: ADS\_2662\_ST\_CQ.

Plate II/4: Guido Guidi, *San Trovaso*, 1977  
Gelatin silver print  
Published in Guidi, *Di sguincio*: 82.

Plate II/5: Guido Guidi, *Treviso*, 1977  
Gelatin silver print  
Published in Guidi, *Di sguincio*: 107.

Plate II/6: Guido Guidi, *Untitled*, 1980  
C-print 16x24 cm, printed 2018  
Published in Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro*: 95.

Plate II/7: Guido Guidi, *Venezia*, 1979  
Gelatin silver print  
Published in Guidi, *Di sguincio*: 85.

## 5. Waste

Plates v/1, 2, 3: Photographs in Guidi's archive in Ronta di Cesena  
Left: Guido Guidi, *Nello with his mother, Bruna Tonetto, Preganziol* 1977  
Gelatin silver print pasted on cardboard  
Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.  
Right: Guido Guidi, *Ronta 1977, Gino Gori and Maria (farmers), with their first son*  
Gelatin silver print pasted on cardboard  
Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plate v/4: Guido Guidi, *Apartment of Zoffoli Renato, Emigrant, Geneva*, 1974  
Gelatin silver print damaged by humidity  
Published in Zannier, *Guido Guidi. La lunga Posa*: 13.

Plates v/5, 6: Guido Guidi, *Gibellina, November 1989*  
C-prints, contact sheets  
Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 58-59.  
A positive of each of these images can be found in the archive of FMAV  
Fondazione Modena Arti Visive (archive numbers 33822 and 33869).

Plate v/7: Guido Guidi, *Cologno Monzese, Milan, 24 December 1991*

C-print, contact sheet

Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 67.

A positive of this image can be found in the archive of MUFOCO-Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea, Cinisello Balsamo, fonds: Archivio dello spazio, archive number: ADS\_2656\_ST\_CQ.

Plate v/8: Guido Guidi, *Milan 1998*

C-print

Published in Benigni (ed.), *Guidi Guido, Cinque Viaggi*: 107.

Plates v/9, 10: Guido Guidi, *Cabo Finisterre, Spain, August 1995*

C-prints

Published in Frongia and Venturi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. In Between Cities*: 144, 145.

Plate v/11: Guido Guidi, *Lazzate 1997*

C-print

Published in Benigni (ed.), *Guidi Guido, Cinque Viaggi*: 68.

A positive of this image can be found in the archive of MUFOCO-Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea, Cinisello Balsamo, fonds: Archivio dello spazio, archive number: ADS\_6873\_ST\_CQ.

Plate v/12: Guido Guidi, *Cesena, August 2000*

Contact C-print

Published in Foschi (ed.), *Guido Guidi, 19692004*: 20.

Plates v/13, 14: Guido Guidi, *PK TAV 139+500, 2005*

C-prints

Published in Serena (ed.), *Guido Guidi, PK TAV 139+500*: n.n.

Plate v/15: Guido Guidi, *Via Giarabub, Cesena, 1976*

C-print, 16x24, printed 2018

Published in Galvani and Guidi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Tra l'altro*: 18.

Plate v/16: Guido Guidi, *Via Violetto, Bulgaria di Gambettola, 1987*

C-print

Published in Frongia and Moro (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Cinque paesaggi*: 28.

Plate v/17: Guido Guidi, *Naviglio Martesana, Vimodrone, 1990*

C-print

Published in Benigni (ed.), *Guidi Guido, Cinque Viaggi*: 15.

A positive of this image can be found in the archive of MUFOCO-Museo di

Fotografia Contemporanea, Cinisello Balsamo, fonds: Archivio dello spazio,  
archive number: ADS\_957\_ST\_CQ.

Plate v/18: Guido Guidi, *Rimini Nord*, 1991

C-print

Published in Guidi, *Rimini Nord*: n.n.

Plate v/19: Guido Guidi, *Cogliate*, 1995

C-print, 20x25 cm

Published in Benigni (ed.), *Guidi Guido, Cinque Viaggi*: 39.

A positive of this image can be found in the archive of MUFOCO-Museo di  
Fotografia Contemporanea, Cinisello Balsamo, fonds: Archivio dello spazio,  
archive number: ADS\_5684\_ST\_CQ.

Plate v/20: Guido Guidi, *Atri 05.03*, 2003

C-print

Published in Frongia (ed.), *Guido Guidi Atri 05.03*: n.n.; and Frongia, *Quello che  
resta*: 154.

Plate v/21: Guido Guidi, *Cesena*, 1970 [also dated 1969]

Gelatin silver print

Guidi's private archive. Right frame published in Guidi, *Di Sguincio*: 103 [see  
plate v/27].

Plate v/22: Guido Guidi, *Untitled*, 1970s

Gelatin silver print

Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plate v/23: Guido Guidi, *Venice*, 1970

Gelatin silver print

Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plate v/24: Guido Guidi, *Untitled*, 1970s

Gelatin silver print

Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plate v/25: Guido Guidi, *Cesena*, 1976

Gelatin silver print

Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plate v/26: Guido Guidi, *Calais, France, April 1996*

C-print

Published in Frongia and Venturi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. In Between Cities*: 88.

Plate v/27: Guido Guidi, *Cesena, 1969*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Di sguincio*: 103.

Plate v/28: *Unknown author and title, ca. 1935*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Dali, *Psychologie non euclidienne d'une photographie*: 57.

Source: gallica.bnf.fr/Bibliothèque nationale de France

Plate v/29: Francesco del Cossa, *Annunciation, ca. 1470-1472*

Tempera on poplar wood, 139x113,5 cm

Gemäldegalerie Alter Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, archive number: Gal.-Nr. 43.

Plate v/30: Guido Guidi, *Gronowo, Poland, August 1994*

C-print

Published in Frongia and Venturi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. In Between Cities*: 44.

Plate v/31: Robert Adams, *On Interstate 25, 1973*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Adams, *The New West*: plate 12.

© Robert Adams. Courtesy Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne.

Plate v/32: Frederick Sommer, *Jack Rabbit, 1939*

Gelatin silver print

© Frederick & Frances Sommer Foundation [CMT-022]. Source:

<http://www.fredericksommer.org/cr/artwork/detail/cmt-022>

Plate v/33: Edward Weston, *Dead Rabbit, Arizona, 1938*

Posthumous digital reproduction from original negative

Edward Weston Archive, Centre for Creative Photography. © 1981 Arizona Board of Regents

Plate v/34: Video-still from *Guido Guidi, A tour of my bookshelves*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3k9RCuQPifQ>

## 6. Humus

Plate vi/1: Guido Guidi, *Via Romea, near Chioggia, 1984*

C-print

Published in Frongia and Moro (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Cinque paesaggi*: 49.

Plate vi/2: Guido Guidi, *Via Romea, 1985*

C-print

Published Frongia and Moro (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Cinque paesaggi*: 45.

Plate vi/3: Guido Guidi, *Misinto, 1997*

C-print

Published in Benigni (ed.), *Guidi Guido, Cinque Viaggi*: 82.

A positive of this image can be found in the archive of MUFOCO-Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea, Cinisello Balsamo, fonds: Archivio dello spazio, archive number: ADS\_6907\_ST\_CQ).

Plate vi/4: Guido Guidi, *Abandoned warehouse near Savignano sul Rubicone, looking West, February 1991*

C-print

Published in Ballardini, Delucca, Guidi et al., *Altri Luoghi. Percorsi di fotografia contemporanea*: n.n.

Plate vi/5: Guido Guidi, *Piazzola sul Brenta, frazione di Presina, via Santa Colomba, 1984*

C-print

Published in Rössl and Sordi (eds.), *Guido Guidi – In Veneto, 1984-89*: 12.

Plate vi/6: Guido Guidi, *Via Romea, vicino a Chioggia, 1987*

C-print

Published in Frongia and Moro (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Cinque paesaggi*: 48.

Plate vi/7: Guido Guidi, *Secante, Cesena, 1987*

C-print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada, vol. 3*: 75.

Plate vi/8: Guido Guidi, *Via Montaletto, San Giorgio, 1989*

C-print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada, vol. 3*: 140.

Plate vi/9: Guido Guidi, *Barlassina, 1996*

C-print

Published in Calvenzi (ed.), *Italia inside out*: 161; and in Benigni (ed.), *Guidi Guido, Cinque Viaggi*: 41.

A positive of this image can be found in the archive of MUFOCO-Museo di



Fotografia Contemporanea, Cinisello Balsamo, fonds: Archivio dello spazio,  
archive number: ADS\_5674\_ST\_CQ.

Plate vi/10: Guido Guidi, *Sabres, France, April 1996*

C-print

Published in Frongia and Venturi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. In Between Cities*: 111.

Plate vi/11: Guido Guidi, *Monte Coronaro, 1980*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Guidi, *Di sguincio*: 91.

Plate vi/12: Guido Guidi, *Via Emilia, Capocolle, 1984*

C-print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada, vol. 2*: 65.

Plate vi/13: Guido Guidi, *Via Montaletto, San Giorgio di Cesena, 1985*

C-print

Published in Frongia and Moro (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Cinque paesaggi*: 26.

Plate vi/14: Guido Guidi, *Via Ronta, Ronta di Cesena, 1985*

C-print

Published in Frongia and Moro (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Cinque paesaggi*: 33.

Plate vi/15: Guido Guidi, *Cittadella, 1985*

C-print

Published in Rössl and Sordi (eds.), *Guido Guidi – In Veneto, 1984-89*: 44.

Plate vi/16: Guido Guidi, *Via del Mare, Cesena, 1986*

C-print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada, vol. 2*: 47.

Plate vi/17: Guido Guidi, *Secante, Cesena, December 1988*

C-print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada, vol. 3*: 79.

Plate vi/18: Guido Guidi, *Via dei Petroli, Marghera, April 1990*

C-print

Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 81.

Plate vi/19: Guido Guidi, *North industrial canal dock, Porto Marghera, 1992*

C-print

Published in Frongia and Moro (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Cinque paesaggi*: 73.

Plate vi/20: Guido Guidi, *Gronowo, Poland, August 1994*

C-print

Published in Frongia and Venturi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. In Between Cities*: 44.

Plate vi/21: Guido Guidi, *Puente la Reina, Spain, August 1995*

C-print

Published in Frongia and Venturi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. In Between Cities*: 126.

Plate vi/22: Guido Guidi, *Napoli 1982*

Gelatin silver print

Published in De Seta (ed.), *Napoli '82, città sul mare con porto*: 100.

Plate vi/23: Walker Evans, *Corrugated Tin Facade / Tin Building, Moundville, Alabama, 1936*

Gelatin silver print, 17x23,2 cm (image), 20,3x25,2 cm (sheet)

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<https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/1041R0>

Plate vi/24: Guido Guidi, *Napoli 1982*

Gelatin silver print

Published in De Seta (ed.), *Napoli '82, città sul mare con porto*: 101.

Plates vi/25, 26: Guido Guidi, *Ronta, 1979-1981*

Gelatin silver prints

Published in Guidi and Fulford (eds.), *Dietro Casa*: n.n.

Plate vi/27: Guido Guidi, *Piazzola sul Brenta, district of Presina, via Santa Colomba, 1984*

C-print

Published in Rössl and Sordi (eds.), *Guido Guidi – In Veneto, 1984-89*: 12.

Plate vi/28: Guido Guidi, *Verso il Monte Grappa, 1985*

C-print

Published in Rössl and Sordi (eds.), *Guido Guidi – In Veneto, 1984-89*: 42.

Plate vi/29: Guido Guidi, *St. Denis, France, April, 1996*

C-print

Published in Frongia and Venturi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. In Between Cities*: 95.

Plate vi/30: Guido Guidi, *Via Galileo Ferraris, Porto Marghera, 1989*

C-print

Published in Frongia and Moro (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Cinque paesaggi*: 75.

Plate vi/31: Guido Guidi, *13837 km 29, Former sugar refinery, Cesena, August 2000*

C-print

Published in Guidi, *SS 9 Itinerari lungo la via Emilia*: 47.

Plate vi/32: Guido Guidi, *Ravenna, 1990-2006*

C-print

Published in Frongia and Guerrieri (eds.), *Red Desert Now*: 26.

Plate vi/33: Guido Guidi, *Rimini Nord, October, 1991*

Contact c-print

Published in Foschi (ed.), *Guido Guidi 19692004*: 25; and in Guidi, *Rimini Nord*: n.n.

Plate vi/34: Timothy H. O'Sullivan, *Tufa Domes, Pyramid Lake, Nevada, 1867*  
Albumen silver print, 22,4x27,8 cm

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<https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/106GHW>

Plate vi/35: Guido Guidi, *Secante, Cesena, 1991*

C-print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada, vol. 3*: 27.

Plate vi/36: Guido Guidi, *Cesena, 10 April, 1993*

C-print

Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 65.

Plate vi/37: Guido Guidi, *Secante, Cesena, 28 April, 1992*

C-print

Published in Guidi and Simi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Per Strada, vol. 3*: 48.

Plate vi/38: Guido Guidi, *Berlin, Germany, August, 1993*

C-print

Published in Frongia and Venturi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. In Between Cities*: 74.

Plate vi/39: Guido Guidi, *Gibellina, November 1989*

Contact c-print

Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 61.

Plate vi/40: Guido Guidi, *Via dei Mulinelli, San Vittore di Cesena, 1991*

C-print

Published in Frongia and Moro (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Cinque paesaggi*: 32.

Plate vi/41: Robert Adams, *Basement for a tract house. Colorado Springs, 1969*

Gelatin silver print

Published in Adams, *The New West*: plate 24.

© 2023 Robert Adams. Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco and Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne.

Plate vi/42: Guido Guidi, *Looking West, Monte Grappa, August, 1988*

C-print, contact sheet

Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 51.

A positive of this image can be found in the archive of FMAV Fondazione Modena Arti Visive (archive number 33689).

Plate vi/43: Guido Guidi, *Looking South-West, Monte Grappa, August, 1988*

C-print, contact sheet

Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 53.

A positive of this image can be found in the archive of FMAV Fondazione Modena Arti Visive (archive number 33776).

Plate vi/44: Guido Guidi, *Romano D'Ezzellino, 1985*

C-print

Published in Rössl and Sordi (eds.), *Guido Guidi – In Veneto, 1984-89*: 23.

Plate vi/45: Guido Guidi, *Arce, Spain, August 1995*

C-print

Published in Frongia and Venturi (eds.), *Guido Guidi. In Between Cities*: 116.

Plate vi/46: Timothy O'Sullivan, *Ancient Ruins in the Cañon de Chelle, In a Niche Fifty Feet Above Present Cañon Bed, 1873*

Albumen silver print, 27,6x19,2 cm

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<https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/1045PM>

Plate vi/47: Guido Guidi, *Via Garibaldi, Mercato Saraceno, 1983*

C-print

Published Frongia and Moro (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Cinque paesaggi*: 12.

Plate vi/48: Guido Guidi, *Via Garibaldi, Mercato Saraceno, 1983*

C-print

Published in Frongia and Moro (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Cinque paesaggi*: 14.

Plate vi/49: Guido Guidi, *Via Ronta, Ronta di Cesena, 1984*

C-print

Published Frongia and Moro (eds.), *Guido Guidi. Cinque paesaggi*: 30.

Plate vi/50: Guido Guidi, *Cervia, 1973-1975*

Gelatin silver print, sepia toned

Published in Guidi, *Varianti*: 5.

Plate vi/51: Guido Guidi, *Ronta di Cesena, 1970*

Gelatin silver prints mounted on cardboard

Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

## Unpublished works

Plate i/9: Guido Guidi, *My Aunt, Cesena, 1969*

Gelatin silver print

Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plate i/62: Guido Guidi, *Cesena, 1977-79*

Negative on paper, 13x18 cm

Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plate iv/22: Guido Guidi, *Cesena, Christmas, 1970*

Gelatin silver print

Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plates iv/31, 32, 33, 34: Guido Guidi, *Lama plateau, Casentinesi Forests, (Et in Arcadia ego), 1970s*

Gelatin silver prints

Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plate iv/38: Guido Guidi, *Untitled, 1970s*

Gelatin silver print

Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plate II/8: Guido Guidi, *Bertinoro, Forlì, 1975*

Gelatin silver print sepia toned  
Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plate II/9: Guido Guidi, *Rizzo Giuseppe (circus stableman), Badoere, Treviso, 1976*  
Gelatin silver print sepia toned  
Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plate v/1:  
Guido Guidi, *Nello with his mother, Bruna Tonetto, Preganziol 1977*  
Gelatin silver print pasted on cardboard  
Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plate v/2:  
Guido Guidi, *Ronta 1977, Gino Gori and Maria (farmers), with their first son*  
Gelatin silver print pasted on cardboard  
Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plate v/22: Guido Guidi, *Untitled, 1970s*  
Gelatin silver print  
Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plate v/23: Guido Guidi, *Venice, 1970*  
Gelatin silver print  
Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plate v/24: Guido Guidi, *Untitled, 1970s*  
Gelatin silver print  
Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plate v/25: Guido Guidi, *Cesena, 1976*  
Gelatin silver print  
Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.

Plate vi/51: Guido Guidi, *Ronta di Cesena, 1970*  
Gelatin silver prints mounted on cardboard  
Guidi's private archive. Unpublished.