**Barbara Molteni Zanessis**

**Milos isole interiori/Milos inner islands**

*Critical text by Philippe Daverio*

What is photography, if not the art of looking, staring at the think being looked at and conveying it to someone else’s eye, to someone else’s mind? You can shoot everything you see. It would be far too easy to make an artist of a photographer! The first constraint that leads to the work consists precisely in defining the scope. It is by deepening a path rather than in widening it you penetrate the consciousness, which is after all the seat of poetic sensibility. The camera itself is a neutral tool, just like the keyboard of the computer on which I’m writing. The finger that snaps, the eye that applies itself to take aim at something else are nothing more than an extension of the mind and heart.

Objets inanimés, avez-vous donc une âme
Qui s'attache à notre âme et la force d'aimer ?...

*Inanimate objects, do you have a soul*

*which sticks to our soul and forces it to love?...*

So wrote Lamartine thinking of his homeland, and so photographs Barbara Molteni who, having married the architect Zanessis, has found a new homeland.

And so, perhaps unwittingly, Barbara Zanessis moves on from Lamartine to Baudelaire, finding out that:

La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

*Nature is a temple in which living pillars
Sometimes give voice to confused words;
Man passes there through forests of symbols
Which look at him with understanding eyes.*

Baudelaire’s verses are taken from a collection entitled *Correspondances*, and maybe it is precisely a question of correspondences in the work of Barbara Zanessis, intimate and deep relationships that organize, establish themselves mentally and then visually between nature and the framing of the camera, the one controlled by the mind and the heart.

Consequently, nature becomes a source of inspiration for a game that is intimately deep and poetic, where although the forms remain intact, their definition, framing and light become evocations of another dimension of seeing, abstract in the most etymological way possible, i.e. removed from normality and elevated to the sublime ether of evocation.

This nature which, among other things, is very particular, was formed over the past centuries – during the millennia of stones – into images that leave room for any possible evocations, any necessary misunderstandings. The ancients’ gods of a mysterious Olympus are hidden in the features that the camera investigates. Greece is a myth by definition, that of the gods, the heroes, and colour. Then colour was joined by the bizarre modernity that was brought there by the first paint factories as early as more than a century ago, when Greece became part of German industry, which originated from the same northern lands that had given Greece the monarchy of independence. So much so that immediately after the royal dynasty of the Bavarian Wittelsbach, who gave the lands freed from the Ottoman Empire the blue coat of arms of Bavaria, there came IG Farben to colour the boats to offer them waterproofing, which until then had only been possible using black tar. And so colour began to make its appearance on doorposts, on the distant islands, and from there in the paintings by Giorgio de Chirico, who brought it back to its native Bavaria. Today, colour has perhaps lost the memory of its origin and has become completely Greek, completely Mediterranean. It combines with stones and with the sea, aging in the mysterious elegance of rust, cracking in the magic of wood. And everything becomes evocation, stones, irons, colours, solid shapes and choppy water. Because, before archaeologists transformed memory into a white dream of snow-white marble, the land of the gods became heady with joy in extravagant chromaticism, Dionysian, striking and everlasting.

It is curious that a woman’s eye born in the chromatic tenderness of Lake Como is converted with such conviction to the Achaean intoxication. Fortunately, Greece perverts and converts. Greece, without asking and giving explanations, attracts to poetry, where the term still has an etymological value, that of ποίησις, and where the fundamental meaning comes from **ποιέω**, the deep and visceral throbbing which is the source of life and existence itself. Moreover, the ensuing [τέχνη](http://it.wiktionary.org/w/index.php?title=%CF%84%CE%AD%CF%87%CE%BD%CE%B7&action=edit&redlink=1) becomes the source of what the Romans, precisely those of Lake Como, after so many years called art, because it corresponds to the awareness that combines indeed with the skills of the limbs, of which limbs the finger that controls the shutter of the camera becomes the modern protagonist.

This is what turns a lake dweller converted to the sea salts in the heart of the Mediterranean, initiated into the rites of an eternal antiquity, an observer dazzled by too bright light, the exciting colours and uncontrollable memories, an active witness and therefore, in all likelihood, another woman poet of the Aegean.