**LOOK AROUND**

**Text by Valerio Dehò**

Wandering poetics, a gaze which constantly tends to the elsewhere, curiosity as the starting point to move beyond the experience, the daily habit of feeling the emotions beside seeing them. The photographic work of Luisa Menazzi Moretti moves on coordinates which are close to the analytical research of the image, and to the creation of a rift between the appearance and the essence of a picture. The artist chooses to be conquered by a complex reality which does not imply simply placing oneself at the centre of the vision, but rather to be on the constant quest for a new and different point of view. The centrality of photography is seen precisely as a form of wandering which is both stylistic, although it is not exasperated, and in making itself recognisable not in the repetition but rather than in the difference. Therefore, the starting points coincide with the points of arrival, creating a virtuous circle which becomes a spiral-shaped experience. Behind this whirlwind of pictures, thoughts, book and people Luisa Menazzi Moretti does not work in wholly closed cycles, but rather in cycles which stop on the threshold of choice: in her choice of showing and sharing them, of making them going out of the private and psychic sphere. A proper research method derives from this, on one side tending towards what there is and can be seen, on the other tending towards her inclination in looking for a backseat position with regards to the object. In other words, she has not chosen to give to her photography that perspective which implies a single and absolute vision, with a certain essentiality and plasticity which then becomes the emblem of something else. Luisa Menazzi Moretti tries to represent what she has chosen to show in a multiple perspective, not only because she does not want to superimpose her point of view on the other, possible, ones, but also because she merges in it the probability and the randomness which lies behind every shot. She is not interested in a constructive shape of the image which is connected only to the effect achieved on the spectator; on the contrary, she understands that a contemporary picture has to include some room for a non decisive design on the author’s part. Moreover, her innate traveller’s curiosity heedless of time but not of place implies that she is willing to change her mind, that is, her point of view on the things she has seen and therefore to express a vision open to the world. For this reason her pictures, which are always notably intense, suggest something one has never seen before and have the value of an announce. What is about to happen has not yet happened: in other words, she creates some images which are being made while the spectator is observing them. She does not try to surprise the onlooker with a well conceived cunning *punctum* like Roland Barthes, but she wants to bring within the picture the meaning of the discourse. Thus, one can understand her choice of working in cycles, using wide sequences which can produce the Narrative art effect she wants to achieve. Therefore, the picture is not conceived as a surprising or unique moment, but it becomes an interpretation of the reality which becomes complete in the interaction between the spectator and the image, whereas the photographer is only a medium. This ability lies also in her idea of the collateral point of view, which implies that she avoids to impose her vision. Looking around means precisely that the glance continues to look after it has looked. It means that one cannot stop even a moment, if not for fixing the time for the following glance. There is not positive or negative connotation imposed, her photography has the aesthetic awareness of a world which does not change, although it could change in a minute. This is at the basis too of her choice of a photography which is strongly connected to the spectator and his involvement, to his participation and ultimately, to his entrance in the world of the medium-artist. There is a social connotation in all of this, although one cannot talk of ideology, but rather of a feeling, a *sentiment* which is present in all her works. The construction of her pictures starts from this awareness of a research on reality in the perspective of an opening to different choices, of the position of the *certain regard* rather than of the contemplation of the closed space of the past moment. The spontaneity revealed by each of her works derives from the enthusiasm, interpreted in its etymological meaning of being inspired and possessed by something superior, which is, after all, the desire of finding an object to stop on. Thus, the quest starts over and over again, and it is always new, but also with the certainty of translating it in a picture as the subject of an inter-subjective emotion. There is a determining need of communication, which adds to the discipline of the image and to the consistency of the aesthetic result. All these elements are necessary to built the ensemble of her pictures, the general meaning of the series, the meaning hidden in a general picture which recreates without explaining too much and without giving to the onlooker the access code. The opening of the pictures by Luisa Menazzi Moretti is essential to understand her work in a perspective which still has to establish its time and way. There are no possible summaries, because her work is still in progress, it is young; it will have the opportunity to be re-read or maybe that will never happen, if the premises are the multiplicity of points of view and the research of an audience which is at the same time an emotional partner and the critic of the work.

This constant aesthetic and intellectual tension has emerged since her early works such as *Nature’s Matters* in 2013. In it, she has been able to relate both to the permanent collection of the Gallery of Modern Art in Genoa and to the creation of personal visions which did not exclude the real world but which, on the contrary, enhanced it.

She achieved and extraordinary effect because Nature itself got back its authority and position after having being watched through the art and the photography. As she herself wrote: “ Whatever happens, nature is innocent, for better and for worse”. Maybe only the confrontation of art and reality can give back that innocence and can give back a sort of virginity to the glance.

We are vexed by a society which produces too much images; thus, there is probably the need to find some other paths, among our glances and those of the other people, between the past and the present glance; there is the need to choose, among the possibilities of the look, those who give back a meaning to what one does when one chooses to move the vision inside the perspective of the other people.

In *Words* Luisa Menazzi Moretti succeeded in a very complex enterprise: she carried the words and the writing within the pictures. Usually, those are two paths that meet only episodically; in this case, she has been able not so much to create a series of pictures out of the ordinary but rather to make the words “visible” and to give a meaning to the “meaning” they could have. “*Words* is a series of pictures of words that were about to be lost or could be lost, and that I wanted to fix before they would be useless, before they would change light, or a voice would overlap on them, or the paper would be ripped off, or the page would be turned.” She has used the pictures like an archive, like a tool to document and preserve. Those are words, and therefore fragments of stories, in which the onlooker is involved, even though they maybe concern memories, personal mental images. However, the language can become iconic only if it becomes elliptic, only if it hints at something which is never openly expressed. There is a beginning and an end to each sentence, which, however, are never revealed. One can infer it through the imagination. Moreover, she has been able to work on the tools of writing too, on the textures which gave plenty of concreteness to her pictures. Writing is a physical action, even though the digitalisation tends to put this aspect on the background, for instance by rejecting the mistakes or the afterthoughts and de-materialising any manual activity. The choice of the light itself confers a certain depth to the pictures, which reverberates on the words, amplifying thus the meanings and creating resonances between the senses and the memory.

In *Ingredients for a Thought* ( 2015) she enacted a symbolic narration on food, introduced not only as the nourishment and foundation of every civilisation, but also as a language. Food is an absolute language too, which communicates through the images something which is essential and direct. In the year where everything was influenced byfood*,* Luisa Menazzi Moretti has caught a completely different aspect and she has treated it as if it were made of sentences and words. The result was a wide reflection on the issue, a list which was connected to childhood and the discovery of the colours matched to the food, which also psychologically influences taste. It is food for the eyes but for the memory as well: a food accompanied by sentences and nursery rhymes, that is, by a verbal language which joined the visual one to create a different synesthetic aesthetic to awaken in the onlooker some personal emotions, recollections, small memories of happiness or of sorrow.

There is also much intensity in the cycle *P. Greek*, a truly magical number that occurs in human history; a constant of Archimedes that in our memory principally recalls the ability to measure the circumference of the circle. Strange destiny for an irrational number that describes the magical figure of the circle, where religious symbolism are condensed perfectly with those of Greek philosophy. Luisa Menazzi Moretti dedicated to his figure so recurrent in cultures around the world a series of pictures concise, essential, finding her images in the industrial world, on decorations, in nature, on objects creating an unexpected religious and cultural syncretism. These photographs, although not representing people, are an example of the ability to enter the hidden aspects of the forms, a characteristic of the artist’s work that never looks at the appearances but wants to transform an idea in a vision. Without organizing the series of pictures in a catalogue, she opens new bonds and relationships without time, were past and future are on equal level.

The most recent photographic series takes into consideration the immaterial aspect of existence, that part which one cannot control and which escapes rationality. *Solo* maybebetter represents Luisa’s sensibility for that something which we cannot explicitly name, which is, precisely, ineffable, but we can only place in an elsewhere that means, simply, that it is not here, close to us. Death opens to some questions which have always been part of the destiny of man. Does everything ends so? Does really man leave no other trace of his earthly passage but his memories in those who survive him? It is certainly an extremely difficult theme to include in a single picture. The artist’s idea was to privilege and to focus on the lost glance, on the glance looking in another direction, beyond the things, beyond life. *Solo*, the title of this series of images, becomes an existential condition, a style of solitude like the fragments scattered in the infinity of the universe, aimlessly moving in the unlimited dimension of the eternity. In the series of portraits of men, women and children death has nothing tragical in it if not the idea of a journey to the unknown. Moreover, *Solo* is also a tribute to the fine line dividing life and death, or joining them, according to the point of view. The borders are passages too. The pictures of Luisa Menazzi Moretti are made of crossings, of people caught in a moment of suspension in time, in a condition which seems to foretell what it is happening. The most difficult dimension to include within the frame of a picture is that of time. In this case, the artist played with the filters and the superpositions, almost to create a distance between those who look at it and the subject of the picture. Distance, elsewhere are spatial coordinates to reach an undefined moment in time which leads us to death. These images express also the awareness of a peculiar emotional value. The pathos derives from the complete adhesion to the state of mind of the subject through the construction of the picture, which remains always spontaneous. In brief, it maintains all the truth that art can still convey. The last experience in life leaves us, in any case, completely alone: it is the individual’s task to imagine what comes after it and to live it. However, these pictures tell also about other things, as for instance those conditions in which the thought is able to move beyond reality. In order to achieve this result, Luisa Menazzi Moretti has given plenty of freedom to her art: each image transforms the faces in territories to explore, like some sort of geographical map. Our eyes follow and search the eyes of the subjects, which are caught in a blurred thought or emotion. The picture, the language of reality and that of the visual detail become thus the vehicle of something undetermined, troubling and concrete like a question which continuously comes back unanswered.