

Photocracy (Article for the magazine Effetto Arte)

Summer.

The time when we abandon our dwelling for some other place, any other place.

The artist travels too, among the other fugitives, and observes the post-atomic exodus.

Along the lovely Italic alleys it is all one film set of men and women photographing one another, striking poses by dint of shouting; the images so produced set off from the telephones to reach other people's devices — people presumably busy, in their turn, immortalising relatives in front of exotic landscapes.

If one could trace this traffic in visual souvenirs, one would discover that we are accidentally present in many other people's holiday photos, and that our images are used to describe the imaginary holidays of call-centre employees.

From the Alps to the Pyramids the instantaneous seizure infects everybody: we must produce the proven proof of having really been in this place today; everyone must know that we are enjoying life, today.

We clog our digital memories, we fill our hard disks with images of our worldly happiness!

Although it is certain that everything has already been photographed at least once, we are sure it has not been photographed by us, and that is enough for us.

We document for posterity, for history, for future digital memory.

Virtual spaces of sharing are born, in which we can narrate our holiday life in images, our exploits, our conquests, our gaze on the world at rest; we sell the imaginary image of ourselves.

We try to show it to as many as we can, we share, we promote the images of our holiday as though they were products, we bewitch strangers in order to turn them into our followers: let him who loves me follow me.

My happiness, my fun, my amusement, I sell at the price of a moment of your time — the moment you need to say you like it, that you appreciate it, that you would like to know me.

What remains of this enormous traffic in visual information of the worst taste?

Nothing.

We ourselves delete most of the shots that had seemed fantastic to us: in one you can see we have put on weight, in another the little niece has made bunny ears, and in this one some idiot artist walked in front of the setting sun.

Only a tiny part will end up on our social networks, where it will remain for ever and ever, indelible, Amen.

More than the fifteen minutes of fame, it is a whole life spent describing how we would like to be, how we would like to live, how we would like others to see us.

Once upon a time one could poison the existence of friends and relatives with the projection

of twenty slide magazines; the boldest had produced a VHS video on holiday, with a sound commentary read out by the tour guide. Today photography and documentary video are free, like democracy.

Everyone can photograph, film, vote, found political parties — and they really do, without shame, regardless of their culture or competence.

The observing artist, analysing the situation thoroughly, realises that there are only four solutions for enjoying a view or visiting a monument in this age:

- A) Look up the photo of the view or the monument on the internet.
- B) Get up at five in the morning — and some do, but not artists, who are too lazy.
- C) Go to a bar and read a good science fiction book.
- D) Go and live in North Korea.

While we meditate on what to do, a girl takes a photo of a friend who is photographing herself; the bells peal out; today another art has died, and photographers join painters in the eden of the useless, marvellous, stubborn people of yesteryear.

Will some young virgin arrive to rethink the very idea of photography from scratch?

Will a providential solar rain destroy the digital world, giving back dignity to the photographer-artist?

We can simply take comfort in the certainty that the digital memory on which we save our images will not reach the archaeologists of the year 4000 intact, preventing historians from branding our epoch as the most pathetic of all.

At school we are forced to swallow harrowing readings and aberrant visions of buried epochs, and this only because of the immortality of paper and papyrus; our epoch, by contrast, produces disproportionate quantities of useless information which self-destructs in an

unconscious act of deep ecology.

Luca Motolese · Siracusa 2017

motolese.com — Original text in Italian