

LIFE'S JOURNEY | Fang Tong

by Gino Carpi

Instant-non-instant snapshots on backgrounds of common life, inside the rooms of any motel, frequented by any person in any part of the world. Strongly probable narratives, of a disarming daily life, in which to find the essence of life recovered from the chaos of modernity that drags everyone in a homologated and often unaware order. This is the photograph of Fang Tong, a Chinese-Canadian artist with academic studies in Shanghai and Paris.

Fang Tong belongs fully to the new generations of photographers whose task is to complete the process of incorporating the concept of "photography" into the pantheon of the major arts; he does so by challenging traditional photography and its stereotypes; it does so through the complete reversal of the meaning of photography, attributed to it from the day of its discovery to today.

"Artist photographers" (those who express themselves only through photographic procedures), are increasingly united to "conventional artists" in the need (glaring) of wanting to represent, not the real, but above all the tensions related to current history, which directs the art towards disparate forms of expression, but linked by some fundamental elements, such as the general tendency towards narration and fiction, whose most evident effect is that of moving away from reality.

This tendency, which on one hand rejects any residual claim of assimilating it to a "mirror of reality", on the other reveals, in a sort of loyal transparency, the mechanisms and tricks inherent in communication through images.

Fang Tong defines, in this context of metamodernism, a personal strategy in which photography (moment of shooting) is destined to be the final product, the compendium and the solution of a communication project that has nothing to do with the moment of Cartier-Bresson or the refined Salgado reports, rather with contemporary authors such as Cindy Sherman, Gregory Crewdson, Anna Gaskell or Jeff Wall; photographers who have reshaped the role of photography with their work, not only in the arts, but in communication in general.

The photographic genre of Fang Tong, although coming from the American area or, in any case, non-European conceptual photography of the sixties and seventies, is connected, perhaps more, considered his formative path, to the figurative painting of the pre-photographic era, (from Raphael to Vermeer rich in tableau vivant), which post (from the European realism of the nineteenth century to the American one of Edward Hopper).

The title of the exhibition, Life's journey, irrefutably manifests the subject of the filming of Fang Tong: the simple everyday life in which the life of each one of us finds space; frames taken from millions of stories lived beyond tensions; millions of actors who interpret their own history of normality within a range of sustainable emotions and tensions. Carefully composed scenes to consecrate the order of life, actors guided in their gestures by a masterly direction that governs their bodies and characters interpreted. No randomness of research in the representation of everyday life, no link with the common idea of a photographer waiting for the image ("interesting", "emotionally engaging") to form itself in his sights.

The fury of images, when the images do not transpire no fury (clamor) is the proof of their strength against the stereotypes of communication in which the sensational or pathos are a must, in which only the pre-packaged stylistic elements of beauty are worth or of the politically correct.

Photography was the reality, today it is the truth, like the one narrated in the Fang Tong frames.