

Eva Frapiccini

Forget/Fullness

text by Federica Martini



opening:
20 April 2023

6 > 9 P.M.

exhibition:
21 April >
1 June 2023

opening hours:
Tuesday-Saturday

3 > 7 P.M.

MORNINGS BY APPOINTMENT

Cut through with a slash, the word *Forget/Fullness* conjures a paradoxical “fullness in forgetfulness”. Eva Frapiccini chooses this disjointed term as the title of her solo exhibition at Peola Simondi Gallery, which interrogates the condition of the image in a visually saturated world, where the volume and type of digital photographs in circulation is inversely proportional to our ability to remember. The artist presents a series of analog snapshots that record marginal events. The photographs portray secondary aspects typically confined to our peripheral vision: photographing the margin reveals dynamics of light as well as material textures; the frame is freed from the task of documenting and capturing a central piece of information. Images represent emotions, but they do not tell a story, as the artist exempts them from retaining traces of specific events. While Eva Frapiccini’s archives usually insist on preservation and on the importance of remembering, in *Forget/Fullness* photography serves towards creating a unique archive of moments to be forgotten.

To define her work protocol for *Forget/Fullness*, the artist connects the contemporary notion of cognitive *offloading* and the practice of delegating memories to the *cloud* with the analog experience described by Italo Calvino in “Avventura di un fotografo”¹. Written in 1970, when an early “viewfinder folly” created the illusion that the camera could record reality completely and in a 1:1 scale, the story follows Antonino Paraggi’s conversion from wary non-photographer to “hunter of the unattainable” and crazed amateur photographer: “The only way to act consistently”, Paraggi argues, “is to snap at least one picture a minute, from the instant he opens his eyes in the morning to when he goes to sleep. This is the only way that the rolls of the exposed film represent a faithful diary of our days, with nothing left out”.

In *Forget/Fullness*, Antonino Paraggi’s extreme attempt to document every moment and his belief in the power of photography to remember what happens are suspended and unhinged. If “photography promises power since it purports to make truth visible,” writes art historian Griselda Pollock, it is in the “photographic gaze” that “the visible and the invisible, presence and absence”, come together. The memorable events that photography traditionally records are thus associated, with equal importance, with the secondary visual fact and the blind spot. As in other projects, Frapiccini focuses on the subsidiary elements of these binomials. Whether recalling “the dust” of subjective dream experiences in *Dust of Dreams*, or marginal annotations and minute entries written in the margins of historical documents in *Words without Action poison the Soul*, the artist’s documentary process aims, first and foremost, to capture the emotional and psychological dimensions of major events of the past. Her gaze dwells on materials that historians would dismiss and that in archival jargon historian Arlette Farge calls the “scraps”: documents that are unclassifiable, incomplete, corroded, and abused by time, and thus partially unreadable.

¹ Italo Calvino’s “Avventura di un fotografo” was published in the collection of short stories *Gli amori difficili* (Turin, Einaudi, 1970). The story brings up the thoughts on amateur photography developed by Calvino in the article “Le follie del mirino”, published in *Il Contemporaneo* in April 1955.

There is a striking contrast between the fragility of incomplete documents and the informational fullness in which social media immerses us today, as digital photography is at once ephemeral and enduring, bound to the present instant, yet potentially re-postable. The reappearance of a digital image is no longer determined by its historical relevance, Eva Frapiccini observes, but by the emotional charge, it holds for those who select it. In the economy of attention and shared visual memory, the photograph thus becomes affective and social in a different sense. Preserved by social media, it summarizes a set of data, without confronting us with the “sound and sensory intensity” of the image it narrates (Tina M. Campt) or eliciting the social cohesion proper to any act of collective memory (Allan Sekula). The archiving performed by the professional historian or those who, like artists, understand the importance a visual document holds for a given community, gives way to a privatization of the mnemonic act, which, for all its showing and the social media lexicon (*share*), does not get shared.

To this injunction, Eva Frapiccini opposes a redistribution of visual responsibilities, attributing the relevant event to human memory and what remains out of focus to the machine. Off-center vision implies a focus on the materiality of memory. Though missing in the photographs of *Forget/Fullness*, the body does feature in the use of the Hasselblad camera, which requires the artist to go through an eminently physical process: the device is held at belly height, the intervals of shooting extraordinarily slow compared to the rapidity to which the smartphone has accustomed us. It is a matter of attempting the unreal operation foretold by Calvino of “giving a body to memory in order to replace it with the present before his eyes”.

Federica Martini

Italo Calvino, “Le follie del mirino”, in *Il Contemporaneo*, April 30, 1955.
Italo Calvino, “Avventura di un fotografo”, in Id., *Gli amori difficili*, Turin, Einaudi, 1970.
Tina M. Campt, *Listening to Images*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2017.
Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and Histories of Art*, London, Routledge, 2015.
Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive”, in *October*, vol. 39 (Winter 1986).