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## CHOREOGRAPHY

by Roberta Valtorta

Romeo Vendrame refers to himself as the “author and director” of this work. “Author” in that he was the photographer who took the pictures some forty years ago, back in the seventies, and “director” in that today, forty years later, he has once again returned to them, profoundly transforming them. He describes the time shift between the decades – or epochs, we might say – as “dance”, thus giving the work its title, Choreography.

Vendrame uses the concept of dance to refer to the complex, rhythmical processes of memory. And indeed, his is an intense work of remembrance and reactivation of situations experienced, things seen and ideas formulated, bringing about this process on the visual plane.

A young man in London in the 1970s, like many others he viewed photography as a means of recording places and situations that attracted his attention. This is the first level of photography and one that always leads to the concepts of documentation and memory. Now, all these years later, he sees the London images as an ideal ground for experimenting with a new, more intimate vision, as though rediscovering himself. Time has passed and his sense of photography has changed.

Marcel Proust shows us that there is an involuntary memory that arises quite freely, through sudden, unexpected links, and a voluntary memory, which is linked to conscious actions and which is therefore desired and sought after. It would seem that Vendrame adopts the criteria of this latter kind of memory, since he consciously returns to and thus relives the photographs he took so many years ago. Even so, we can see that creative actions, which are certainly involuntary, appear in the process he uses to transform these images. These actions are not entirely decided by the artist, but rather arise through his sensations and feelings.

Vendrame has avidly read Graham Greene’s *The Human Factor*, an adventurous tale that carries one along in its gripping atmosphere, and it has become a psychological key to London in those days, helping to “see” the city once again.

City streets and buildings, road signage, shop signs and advertisements, some interiors and a number of settings are all revisited through colour and light. The colour is bold and assertive, in broad swathes, as though highlighting an emergence, and at times it is introduced into the image with such force as almost

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to banish the details. Rather than being diffused, the light appears in bursts, transparencies and smears, with ample areas of sudden radiance, in a rediscovery of places and a tumultuous rush of returning memories.

Memories never come back to us in their entirety, but rather in fragments, in discontinuous areas and details. And, together with the light, without which they would not even exist, their real substance is colour. As Michel Pastoureau points out, we are wrong to think that memories come back to us in black and white, or rather in chiaroscuro: on the contrary, memories make their way through colours, even though extemporaneously and intermittently. And it is this that Vendrame's creative journey appears to proclaim, giving visual substance to an indelible bond between past and present, in the concrete world of his own personal experience.

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