

Mimmo Jodice

(Naples, 1934)

In mythology, at the origin of archetypes, every principle contains its opposite. This was also true for the basic stories of Greek and Roman worship before modernity established a clear Cartesian distinction between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. In the Mediterranean culture of Mimmo Jodice, the two broken halves of the principle: the chthonic and the ethereal, vital breath and inanimate stasis, death and life, are brought back to the ambiguous unity of their origins. And photography is nothing but an esoteric ritual capable of renewing that ancient union. In the series *Mediterraneo*, Jodice recognizes in the faces of classical statuary some potent *idola*, through which he celebrates that unity. Moreover, while in some cultures photography is a form of magic that steals the soul, in our history it has more often conveyed the dream of the soul's reawakening, as in a nineteenth-century discovery of the Hebrew spell of the Golem, and perhaps not unlike eighteenth-century research into the Apollonian and Dionysian by the Neapolitan Prince of San Severo. The various *Atleti dalla Villa dei Papiri* (*Athletes from the Villa dei Papiri*), 1986, find themselves confronting the shadows of their own bodies, in the darkness of a historical past, while subsequent works such as *Bacco* (*Bacchus*), 1992, *Volto virile* (*Male Face*), 1993, or *Anamorfosi* (*Anamorphosis*), 1993, as well as many others, frame a single, sculpted face. They emerge from a halo-like black space and look into the light, but now it is only the infinite time of their glance, victorious over every possible concept of dating, that seems to matter.

The work in the CRT Collection, *Roman Boy*, 2000, represents a return to the theme of ancient statuary, slowly modified, having grown in the shadow of an uninterrupted reflection on the very particular temporal code of photography, which led Jodice to state: "With the imagination, temples, roads, statues themselves come to life again, time no longer exists, past and present become a single thing." (Mauro, A., *Lo sguardo da sud. Conversazioni sul sud e la fotografia*. Rome: L'Ancora, 1999). *Roman Boy*, the stone face that emerges from the blinding whiteness of a flat light, as dense as milk, is a breath of life enveloped in absolute time. The idea of historical past, even of reawakening, has diminished. In earlier works, a liquid atmosphere ruffles the surface of the image and the outlines of the face, recalling in part the depths of a sunken glance, at the moment of discovery of an ancient life sheltered on the sea floor. The liquidity of *Roman Boy* is different, its features immobile, anchored to the grandeur of icons, yet also animated and watchful, as if it were surfacing from a primordial lymph that we might call eternity. (EV)