

# MILAN

VALERIO ROCCO ORLANDO, *Bisiàc#1*, 2008

**MILANESE** artist Valerio Rocco Orlando (b. 1978) employs video as well as photography to stage self-portraits through representations of people and places. He began with 'The Sentimental Glance', a series of six video-installations realized between 2002 and 2006, which depict an equal number of women with very different appearances and distinctive femininities. In a subtle formal balance between spontaneity and *mise en scène* the artist explored the borderland between androgyny and melancholy.

The dominant mood of *Bisiàc*, Orlando's most recent work commissioned by the Galleria di Monfalcone (Gorizia), is still melancholy. However, it is less a narcissistic sadness than a feeling of nostalgia deriving from the progressive loss of popular traditions and cultural heritages. This time Rocco Orlando chose as his 'mirrored self' a five-year-old girl called Giulia, who was born and lives in Bisiacaria, an area in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region of the Italian northeast, where people strive to preserve old traditions within modernisation. Valerio dressed her in traditional costume and took her for a stroll along the Isonzo river, which traces a dividing line between geographically contiguous but culturally diverse areas – the theatre of gruesome battles between Italians and Austro-Hungarians during World War I. Orlando filmed her playing with pebbles from the river shore and singing a carol in the local dialect – an old Venetian language called Bisiàc. He then froze three significant moments: the shining sun, the child walking barefoot in the river, and a final symbolic image of her lying down with pebbles over her eyes, which is simultaneously mournful and playful. Through her actions, Giulia becomes dissolved in the landscape that embodies the local (dying) language and traditions.

These three video-stills, framed together, have recently been added to a photographic installation in progress: a growing line of fragments taken from past and future video (self)portraits of the artist.

CAROLINE CORBETTA IS AN ART CRITIC AND INDEPENDENT CURATOR BASED IN MILAN

Valerio Rocco Orlando, *Bisiàc#1*, 2008. Video stills printed on paper, 12,5 x 45 cm. Courtesy Galleria Maze, Turin

