

**Francesco Zanot**

**Claudio Gobbi's *Persistence***

For some years now claudio gobbi has been conducting a more or less single-handed photographic survey of the interiors of historical meeting places in major European cities (so far Prague, Warsaw, Milan, Paris, St. Petersburg, Berlin, Barcelona and Copenhagen).

A distinguishing feature of his images is a fundamental ambiguity that rests on a double layer of meaning. On the surface they appear to be the result of a purely socio-anthropological investigation typical of the medium: the collective customs and behaviours of the old continent, in which the fluidity of geographical borders is reflected in the broad similarities between the various locations, the ubiquity of certain characteristics and a common atmosphere. Ultimately, however, he turns sharply away from mere reportage, from the bare aesthetic/ethical statement, by subtly manipulating the scene before him, at the same time remaining scrupulously faithful to the 'facts'.

As in the theatre and earlier cinema—two key components of Gobbi's imagination and authentic homes of fiction—the author chooses to present reality by means of a *mise en scene*, while never resorting to the possibilities of digital technology to alter the visible evidence. Before each shot he personally sets the stage, cleaning and tidying, preparing and composing the scene he sees through the viewfinder. As he releases the shutter, he reminds the inattentive viewer that behind the diaphragm, behind the artificial limb of metal and glass he holds before his face, is the eye of the photographer through which we finally see our world.