



Firaq... nostalgia

Massimiliano Gatti
with texts in the exhibition by
Cesare Pomarici

September 23 – October 28, 2023



On Saturday, September 23, at 11 a.m. Studio la Città will present, in the Project Room, the solo exhibition of Massimiliano Gatti with exhibition texts by Cesare Pomarici entitled ***Firaq...nostalgia***.

The evocative title encapsulates the meaning of a series photographs, *Firaq*, a video of the same name directed by Massimo Leonardi, a second cycle of works entitled *Anche tu sei collina (You Are Also Hill)*, and three new neon works *Tracce di viaggio (Traces of Travel)*.

The Arabic word "Firaq" signifies a separation and at the same time refers to a kind of nostalgia born from that separation. *"The images show plants that - like the human beings to whom they metaphorically visually represent - have roots uprooted from their land."*

The artistic project arises from Gatti's contemporary perspective dedicated to the theme of migration and was realized during an artist residency in Ithaca in 2022. Massimiliano Gatti relates the challenging journey of migrants to the journey of Ulysses, which embodies not only the perilous voyage but also the *nostos*, the desire to return home: a need for separation and a desire to return. The artist gives shape to this dual path by photographing certain plants mentioned in the *Odyssey*, which also serve as a metaphor for people forced to flee their home countries, undertaking long and often dramatic journeys. Cesare Pomarici's texts accompany the work of Massimiliano Gatti in the interpretation of the exhibition.

The second cycle of works *Anche tu sei collina*, from the poetry of Cesare Pavese, portrays the fragment of a *pal ad castegn*, which in the Pavese peasant dialect indicates the pole that holds up the vines, tirelessly immersed in the earth, parched in summer and soggy in winter. This series is also linked to the theme of 'rooting,' which the artist describes as *"solid and stable support for the vines that grow and sprout every year."*

"You are the vineyard," Pavese says in his poem," I am also a vineyard," Gatti says, "I too have these roots that sink into the hills like the wedges of the poles, a metaphor for this close bond with my land and my previous generations. This wedge is inside me and always brings me back to my place of origin. It is a legacy of family culture, memories, and land that nurtured me like a "caloss," a sprout, that becomes a vine plant. It is attachment to the land, unconscious and ancestral, the starting point of growth."

Gatti created the prints in this second cycle, using an analog silver-salt technique, then buried them, so that they could absorb the earth's influence just as the artist did. "Each print was buried at a distinct time and the varying temperature and humidity conditions of the earth had a unique effect on the individual prints. The result is a symbolic process in which the work carries the memory of the earth, like the pal ad castegn and like me."

Anche tu sei collina, was born out of the meeting and many reflections with the guys from Soaza: an artisanal carving and cabinetmaking workshop in the hills of the Valtidone Valley, who oversaw the crafting of the Apennine walnut wood frames.

Tracce di viaggio is a third project carried out by Massimiliano Gatti realized with some young migrants who, with only the help of memory and their perception, drew the journey from their country of origin to their European destination. Many had little geographic knowledge, so their drawings are mere traces of the journey. The artist then translated these traces into neon lights of the same red colour used by the young people, and Paola D'Alessandro drew the actual geographic map by placing it next to each work.

MASSIMILIANO GATTI. Pavia (Italy), 1981

Massimiliano Gatti holds a degree in Pharmacy and graduated in Photography at Cfp R. Bauer in Milan, Italy. He has been conducting his artistic research in the Middle East for quite some time. As a photographer accompanying archaeological missions in the Middle East (from 2008 to 2011 in Qatna, Syria and since 2012 in the PARTeN project in Iraqi Kurdistan), he has the opportunity to experience and deepen his knowledge of those lands rich in history and stories. With a documentary approach, but far from reportage, his research ranges from exploring the past, the remains and ruins of the ancients, to observing the multifaceted contemporary reality, suggesting his own personal reflection.

His works are part of private and public collections including Fondazione Fotografia (Modena), Galleria Civica (Modena), BNL Collection, California Museum of Photography (Riverside, USA), Musei Civici (Monza), Musei Civici (Pavia), Stills Scotland's Centre for Photography, Edinburgh (Scotland), Italian Embassy in Washington DC (USA), Columbia University, New York (USA).

Since 2013, he has been part of the Regional Archaeological Project Land of Nineveh (PARTEN) as a field photographer, an interdisciplinary research conducted by the University of Udine in Iraqi Kurdistan. He lives and works between Italy and the Middle East.

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Opening: Saturday, September 23, 2023 at 11 am

Exhibition Period

September 24 to October 28, 2023

Location

Studio la Città, Lungadige Galtarossa 21, 37133 Verona

Opening hours

Monday 2 – 6 pm, Tuesday to Friday 9 am - 1 pm and 2 pm - 6 pm

Saturday 9 am – 1 pm (by appointment by Thursday of the same week)

Press Office

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