

IF YOU SAW WHAT I SAW

The project consists of a series of videos and photography carried out during a residency in the Sicilian village of Corleone.

It was, first of all, a journey into reality that generates stereotypes. It was an immediate interaction with things and people living there and in their everyday life, before then its judgment, the sociological analysis and the media could manipulate them.

Corleone is a place of saints and devils, of victims and executioner, of stereotypes and reality, a local reality famous in the world. A reality used as a metaphor, to quote the Italian novelist Leonardo Sciascia.

But also a place of common people who have to play the role of actors in a real set of an imaginary movie in front of an audience of demanding tourists.

In front of the lens of my camera the inhabitants built their own stories: they recreated their own identity. The word Mafia has always been a recurring label associated with the identifications of Italians abroad. However, what does this word stand for today? According to Sicilians, the word Mafia only has a negative connotation, depicting a situation more difficult to understand than to be represented. For most people around the world, it is associated to the fascinating Don Corleone's world as depicted in "The Godfather".

By bringing together the multiple voices of the village, this project reveals a place in which the reality of the Mafia is apparently not acknowledged, but its fictionalization is considered acceptable and exploitable as a commodity.

Part of the project is an installation of 12 videos that shows different interviews of people met in Corleone. They represent different points of view: a Polish tourist who was looking for The Godfather's village and is upset because he did not meet any mafioso; on the contrary, a Canadian tourist who is happy because he found exactly what he was looking for: the real mafia atmosphere; the anti-mafia center director who talks about Corleone as a big stage where everything "seems normal"; the old man who talks about mafia – "if you mind your own business nobody bothers you and mafia only exists if you talk about others' business"; the trade unionist who is threatened by mafia because "he does not know one's place", remembering that in Corleone there were also people who died because they opposed mafia; the tourist guide who gives mafia lessons, and then the young migrant forced to leave the village to find a job abroad, and so on.

At the center of my observation are also places charged with symbolic value, such as the anti-mafia center where the documents of the 'Maxi Processo' are archived and the cemetery of the village. Here the tombs are blank, deliberately left anonymous to protect the family of the person buried.

Part of this project is in Zero Degrees of Separation, a group of works that investigates the traces that are more visible in this journey. It refers to a theory of the famous American psychologist Stanley Milgram. According to his well know axiom, every person on earth is connected to any other through not more than 6 contacts. In the small towns, the degrees of separation can be reduced to zero. As a paradox, they can become hundreds if the separation is assessed by mental distance and between reality and its truth, a common person and a Mafioso.

The final part of the project consists of a series of 360 images of folders that contain original documents of "The Maxi Trial" (Italian: Maxiprocesso), a criminal trial that took place in Palermo, Sicily, between 1986 to 1987. It brought more than 400 defendants on trial convicted for a multitude of crimes relating to Mafia activities, based primarily on testimony given in as evidence from a former boss turned informant. The photographic series is a homage to Falcone and Borsellino, two judges that built the trial and worked intensively on it for several years. They were killed by mafia at the end of the trial.