

THE BATTLE FOR AN IMAGE

by Vincenzo Sanfo

Rossella Pezzino de Geronimo's multi-faceted production makes her one of the most interesting voices on the contemporary art scene, and specifically a paradigmatic representative of the island of Sicily.

Her unusual photographic technique produces highly evocative shots generated through progressive macroscopic enlargement of the frame, amplifying that which is represented to create works that fill the entire frame. Her initial focus was on women living and working in poorer countries, with a highly sensitive, participatory eye. Her work does not just faithfully reproduce reality, but is elevated to symbolic value with the aim of representing the physical and emotional condition of her subjects. These barefoot creatures, whose expressions speak volumes, seem directly connected to the earth, becoming its vital lymph and bearing the fatigue of their hard work on their heads. At first glance her shots recall Steve McCurry's journalistic photography, with a similar focus on the native populations of less wealthy countries, but what is most striking about her production is the study of emotion. And it is precisely because of the artist's capacity for introspection and the empathy she conveys that she abandoned the documentation of reality, even seen from a poetic slant, for a broader dimension. She gradually abandoned portraiture in favour of landscape photography; but once again, she did not base her work on the criterion of realism, but on an analysis shifting from the detail to the bigger picture. Drawing her inspiration from the great tradition of environmental photography rooted in the work of Ansel Adams and Franco Fontana, she expresses her interior qualities even before the vastness of the natural elements. Following an important voyage to unexpected places, projecting herself before the uncontaminated, wild power of nature, she allows herself to be carried away by the power of what she sees. Vast expanses, waves, deserts and lagoons become the focus of her vision, defined as "Landscapes of the soul": elements in which viewers cannot help but lose themselves, returning to a dialogue with their own spirituality. Between 2015 and 2018, her subject matter gradually shifted toward the four natural elements: air, water, earth and fire. Changing her lifelong habit and expressing herself in first person before the vastness and unpredictability of the environment, the artist managed to grasp and understand how it is love that unites these components in an indissoluble bond. She thinks of them as "the bricks of life". Forces of attraction and repulsion determine whether the cells of which matter is made will interact or move away from one another. It was analysis of these relationships that led the artist to holography. Her dimension then expanded to include three-dimensional works of a conceptual nature, representing imaginary scenarios, particles and spheres, a direct allusion to the transformations of the universe, regulated by entropic forces. The mechanisms of approach of the cells relate directly to the sentiment whose effects and power Rossella sets out to document: love. Her images inspire new, more profound reflection in their viewers, in communion with their own inner being. The artist's multi-faceted

production has progressively led her to work with new media, eventually including video art. She produced a three-dimensional video analysing the utopian concept of the world that she yearns for, entitled "*Futuro*". Her video production also includes "*L'uovo aurico*", "The Aura", the product of her study of the basic theme of the four elements. Her recent hologram about the sentiment of love, "*La danza dell'amore*" or "The love dance", a dance inspired by the courting rituals of Japanese cranes, is also concerned with the same theme. She observes the familiar gestures of coming together and moving apart and the primitive sentiments of a young couple in love, represented with unusual sensitivity to form a true "choreography of the emotions". It is worth noting that in the making of this video, the artist created the hologram using a video camera, unlike her other works, which were produced with the aid of a computer. With her propensity for renewal, Rossella is currently considering a new project indissolubly binding art with holography, "using the hologram as a way of amplifying reality, transformed into conceptual and abstract terms". These are the foundations of "*Colore, calore, movimento*", "Colour, warmth and motion"; in it, she reinforces the bond between art and technology, driving it to the point of generating creation of three-dimensional sculptures, enveloped in the fascinating effects of light as matter, dazzling the senses and amazing the viewer. A similar effect is obtained using the medium of photography. In a series of recent photographs, the artist immortalises mountains with unusual valleys which she observed on her travels with an unusual angle and projection. They appear to emerge out of the two-dimensional surface of the photograph and be projected directly into the viewer's space, becoming true natural sculptures. Her incessant experimentation, underlying a concept in which life itself is a "project", has led her to use "augmented reality" as the result of a long process of digital manipulation. Her creative idea for the future is to subvert the traditional relationship between the viewer and the artwork, so that the space will react to the visitor's actions within it. In this way, everyone will have a different sensory experience, conducted through objects which are rendered interactive with digital content, through use of near-field communication and introduction of sensors and video projections. This proceeding will bring new value to the person regarding it, who takes on equal importance in the artistic narration. To Rossella, art serves "the primary function of narrating, amazing and thrilling", and her goal is to leave behind a trace of herself, designing a recognisable landscape that is an expression of respect for our neighbours, solidarity and integration... a trace that will stay with us, as a teaching to be treasured and applied at all times in our everyday lives.