

Emma Ciceri
Anatomia – Folle

Emma Ciceri is attracted by the potential for energy expressed by crowds. Her works get their impetus from grand collective scenes: student demonstrations, rock concerts, train journeys, a stadium still emptying of people, a party in a prison. But in her work the impersonal aspect of these situations, the collective modes of behaviour with their power to sweep people along and their repetitive character do not gain the upper hand; instead they coexist with the distinctiveness of individuals.

What interests Emma Ciceri is precisely the relationship between the one and the whole. Her crowds are made up of individuals in the same way as monuments, in her eyes, are the hub of a shared history. In the sphere of the great rituals Ciceri isolates and examines a series of sociocultural practices, in which it is personalities, peculiarities and desires that emerge. In this sense her work may represent a reply to the rhetoric of the anonymity of the multitude.

When taking pictures of major student demonstrations, for example, Ciceri shoots the street, its movements and moments of stasis, capturing the unrestrainable energy and emotional density of the protesters. But then, thanks to the light that carves out and accentuates the figures, she draws our attention to the features of the young people, their appearance; for a moment she makes them stand out among the crowd, revealing the always unique intensity of their expressions, and the gestures that govern encounters and relations, so intimately connected to emotional states; and their concentrated air notwithstanding the chaos of the setting. Her sensitive gaze, the saturated colours of her shots and the dilatation of time that she introduces into her videos combine to make the street a dynamic stage for individuals; a stage in which a micro-rituality emerges that is part of the grand, complex spectacle of daily life.

Thus social behaviour is unveiled in all its complexity: on the one hand an expression of collective action, on the other a sharing without necessarily conforming, a playing of one's own part within a polyphonic society of individuals and an offering of oneself to the gaze of others that is governed by codes and conventions, but maintains its uniqueness, the fruit of personal qualities, of care and conscious attention.

The effect, in these videos, is cinematic, but in no way anecdotal.

The video *Lode (Praise)* records the appearance of a stadium at the end of a game and recounts the time after the event, when what could happen has taken place and now things are happening elsewhere. All that remains to animate the tiers of seating deserted by the fans are traces and micro-events: the rubbish has not yet been swept away; and innumerable sheets of newspaper vibrate and flutter, stirred by a breath of wind.

In the series of erasures and in the video *Zone (Zones)* the images, taken from newspapers and magazines, are progressively erased until only one element emerges at a time.

The overall visual plane is lost and from the whiteness stand out fragments, isolated figures, minimal vistas, micro-actions underway.

Similarly, in *Isolamenti (Isolations)*, the profiles of a number of prisoners float against the neutral background of a series of ordinary sheets of squared paper glazed with coats of water and plaster. The artist has first photographed them, and then gone over the lines of their features, succinctly. The figures are unrecognizable, even though, on close examination, each of them retains its uniqueness and character. They are isolated individuals, deprived of a face, a context, a clearly definable time, a ground on which to stand. It is impossible to compose an overall picture around them. In many cases their bodies intersect with coloured shapes, allowing themselves to be partially swallowed up or contained, or are flanked by mysterious animals. Ciceri ascribes to them a sense of suspension, of uncertainty, and the feeling of fragile lives that unfold in a limbo, stripped of their context and their relationships, of the very essence of their life. So what emerges is a tragic sense of loss. But once again Ciceri's sober language brings out their distinctiveness, without ever seeming emphatic, without turning into eccentricity. The individual is only such within a social network.

Gabi Scardi