

If on a summer's day a wondering soul ...

Where are we? The title on the cover speaks of Destinations, next to the pictures of a piece of string perfectly embedded in the sand like in a mould, like a tiny and surely involuntary in situ installation (we might wonder whose hand made that knot, arranging it later on in such a studied position).

The very next picture is of a barrier. A perfectly common barrier, and although we can hardly glimpse what lies beyond, it can certainly tell us something about the gaze on this side of the grid. A gaze that is not at all lazy, a gaze of someone who left home one day, and instead of taking the familiar paths, chose to venture off the beaten track - that's how it ended up here.

We have no way of knowing yet what kind of here we are in. But surely, that barrier is a borderline, cutting between a here and an over there that remains off grid, totally blurred.

But how important can it be, for a wondering gaze like this, to put in focus what is far away - when there is so much to explore, investigate, frame, in everything that lies on this side?

And here is what's left of a used cleanex tissue, portrayed like a Majestic Sail, or the sumptuous skirt of Some Little Fairy trapped in the twigs - perhaps, even the profile of an Old Wise Man, captured as he marches against the wind, with his beard, crown, and staff.

Immediately after, we bump into a perfect ikebana arrangement of almost lifeless grass blades, rigorously laid out around what looks like a reclining head of hair, mirroring the curbing line of another blade of grass, barely surviving next to it.

Then, the iron skeleton of what was once a bus seat. What could possibly be more site-specific than this? how did such a wreck end up here, in this position? How many years did it take to strip it of everything that could identify it as a seat - lining, upholstery and springs - until it was reduced to its metallic inner essence? Was it only the work of the rain and the wind, or the result of some project of radical recycling... who knows?

(And here we are: intrigued by the findings from of a very near present with the same uncertainty that we might have thought possible for an archeological find.)

Time takes its toll, in its endless erosion. The corrosive effects of what we call elements of nature, at work on any body and material, even the hardest. An astonishing transfiguration that slowly occurs upon the flesh of every thing on Earth, in a process of unrelenting and autonomous shape shifting. The results are spectacular, as we can immediately tell, just by glancing through these pages. An old iron bin on its side, beautifully carved all over by the blowing of the wind, like a mighty lace. And then a perfectly square silhouette, an unmistakable Totem, although its original identity will remain unknown. Again, we wonder who or what brought it here, against that magnificent background, where the sky and waters merge - might it be the work of some extra-terrestrial spaceship?

All this is the outcome of the work that matters more than any other kind of work: the work that humans perform when they walk with the aim of exploring, one step after the other. That particular circumspection (the word itself says it all) that gradually takes the lead and leads every other movement afterwards. Say that it took one hour of walking at a normal pace to get from here to there. Now, every step seems like an eventful moment, provided with its own

inner logic, a liturgy surely inspired by some Inner Guidance. Every new step becomes the threshold of another unexpected revelation: the weirdness of an old abandoned contraption that time has corroded with a strikingly suggestive effect; a leaf cut in such a way that makes it unrecognizable; an old battery so embedded into the ground that it looks like a miniature masterpiece of land art; or simply, the dancing of shadows on the path... every new step is a discovery.

Every image in fact is the result of a work that Elena masters very well, the work of seeing. A way of seeing that can not be just gazing - but rather an exercise of self awareness and research. Every image of this small and precious catalogue documents the depth of this endeavor, constantly alert, in tune, engaged: so careful in the way it looks for some sort of other signification, beyond the most immediately apparent one. In every bit of reality that an eye can frame, be it the contrast between fields of shadow on a wall, or a shred of nylon gracefully swooning among the stones, or the black and white contrast of a manhole - there is always something more to see.

It comes as a surprise at a certain point, to be confronted by the presence of two small Madonnas. "I literally bumped into them, after coming across a little church" Elena explains. "I always enter any church that I find in my wandering, regardless of the religion. And in that very church, there I was, in front of a prayer book, open on a page where a verse recited 'Send your Spirit, Lord, to renew the Earth ...' a prayer that indeed we could all share, that's why I took a photo. And then, shortly thereafter, I met these two small Madonnas, inside their niches so naturally protective, amidst such a landscape of abandon and degradation. While I was taking that picture, I felt like I was living a miracle ... "

Indeed, there is a beautiful crescendo in the images that follow from here on out: the foliage of trees, still lush despite the desolation all around. (Despite the repeated fires having dried up any possibility of life on that stretch of coast.) And then something that we cannot decipher in its fluid brilliance and that Elena swears is only a leaf, in which she has seen an arabic calligraphy. And then that snout of something that perhaps was a snake; and a particularly anthropomorphic trunk that is surely a warrior, next to a dried one that looks like a face in pain; and that other wooden cross, similar to a suffering Christ...

Until we reach the final and largest image, which only apparently answers the initial question: Where are we? Clearly, somewhere along a coast that still retains some human traces, where the land ends and the sea begins. But what this magnificent image has captured is the mighty presence of a sky that literally pervades every space, above the sea and at the same time right inside it. In fact, all of it is sea-sky, and it's the most perfect picture of the Immense - what the Indian sacred scriptures would call Mahadeo.

And we can almost perceive the breath of this moment, a moment of awareness for the intense exercise of individuation performed all the way. Immensity that defeats the particular while asserting the value of focusing: such a gift for the photographer's eye and for all of us.

Daniela Bezzi