

The first time I came across Sofia Podestà's work, I had the feeling that she and I knew each other. Moreover, it seemed like we might have talked for hours, shared stories, discovered common tastes and passions, but this is perhaps only the childish claim of any member of the public to have a special bond with the artist whose work he or she is infatuated with, whose paths and talents instead travel far from our own lives and expertise only to meet each other one day, perhaps in a gallery.

I visited Iceland several years ago, a poignant journey to a place that I still cherish inside me with a perpetual nostalgia (Iceland looks like another planet, not another country). When I first encountered Sofia's work, I was overwhelmed by the power of her images. Her eye had kept intact the strength of those landscapes which take the visitor by surprise; in front of her photos I felt very small again, dismayed and flooded by the power of nature as it manifests itself with such vastness that Man seems forgotten. It is not clear to me how she was able to capture all this with her lens but Sofia succeeded, and I guess that is the artist's secret. And once again, looking at photographs like *Il bosco dell'imperatore* and *Fine estate*, I relived sensations that I seemed to have experienced, and it is no longer clear to me whether the place I seem to have been is a physical or an emotional one because Sofia has expressed them both.

In his novel *Un amore*, Dino Buzzati described the protagonist in the middle of a mad car race towards his beloved: *"He suddenly understood the meaning of that natural spell... he understood the meaning of the visible world when it makes us amazed and we say 'how beautiful' and something great enters our soul. All his life he had remained in awe before a landscape, a monument, a square, a glimpse of a street, a garden, a church interior, a cliff, a path, a desert. Only now, at last, did he realize the secret.*

*A very simple secret: love. All that we leave behind in the inanimate world, the woods, plains, rivers, mountains, seas, valleys, the steppes, more, more, the cities, buildings, stones, more, the sky, sunsets, storms, more, the snow, more, night, stars, the wind, all these things, in themselves empty and indifferent, are loaded with human meaning because, without our suspecting it, they contain a presentiment of love."*

What Sofià is searching for, what attracts her eye before the hard stones of the Marmolada or along an old bobsleigh track which nature reclaims in the absence of man, remains a mystery. But in her work I also love something that reminds me of Luigi Ghirri: the inanimate objects that seem to replace human protagonists, the seas in winter, the architecture in which colors and shapes have created a special partnership but above all those photographs in which the fog and mist seem to create a space in which our ability to clearly read things and events is impaired. And it is precisely in this uncertainty and suspension that Sofia is able to immortalize our sense of loss and perhaps, for someone, a presentiment of love.

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