

Introduction, by Giuliana Scimè, to the catalogue "Pause".
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Of all the expressive media, photography is the only one privileged to be in perfect synchrony with reality. Events, people, objects, are frozen, unchanged forever. An instant of life that will survive itself. But there are those who have a pressing need to narrate, yet whose mental designs do not adhere to the infinite possibilities provided by the real world. So they construct their stories following a script, which, just like the cinema, creates a parallel, hidden reality, one not lacking in imagination.

The story that we follow on the screen seems actually to be taking place before our very eyes, despite the fact that the setting is foreign to our experience and our culture, and it belongs to moments in the past, or even in the future.

It is the grand illusion, mankind's extraordinary gift of being able to reproduce itself in various forms in the adventure of the imagination.

Francesco Pignatelli is one of those who feels this need to create. This absolute freedom, liberated from every limitation (imposed by whom?), is beautiful. And the connection to the cinema is no mere coincidence.

"Pause" is composed of three different stories, brought to life from three selected pauses, moments of reflection.

Decalog. The ten Commandments have taught us ever since we were tiny children. Pignatelli's storytelling is an attempt to answer the fundamental questions so many of us pose ourselves, in relation to these rules.

Sometimes we recall them in a confused way. Religious belief itself is unimportant. The Commandments provide the rules; for respect toward others, for harmonious co-existence in wider society, and for profound relations with others.

But what changes have these rules been subjected to in the modern world?

In appearance none. They are accepted, immutable.

In fact it is not so, even if the changes which our obedience has undergone are almost imperceptible. In his visual storytelling Francesco Pignatelli reflects upon modern society and how this has imposed variations on these fundamental rules, focusing upon one city in particular, Milan, as a symbol of metropolitan life.

The initial idea was born of Decalog, the monumental cinematic work by the celebrated director Krzysztof Kieslowski. The inspiration came from the screenwriter Krzysztof Piesiewicz, who also questioned the present meaning of the Commandments, through an observation of a gothic painting.

After more than a year's work the series of ten, surprisingly innovative, feature-length films were completed at the beginning of 1989. The protagonist of Pignatelli's work is the very same Piesiewicz. Invited to Milan, he agreed to follow the narrative project which consisted of an individual facing each of the Ten Commandments in the arc of just one single day.

In Pignatelli's bare images there are few essential elements needed to define the impact, both natural and inevitable, of each of the rules and our current

relationship to them. The basic concepts of his work are themselves very clear. Yet it also contains hidden references to the gradual changes in our social customs, and an acknowledgement of the new phenomena imposed by modern society.

For example, the Commandment "do not desire another man's wife". In a society that spasmodically tries to create sexual equality, and that also attempts to eradicate discrimination based on grounds of gender, this is anachronistic.

Meanwhile the fundamental "do not kill" is the theme nowadays underpinning the ecological movements, which influence our current sensibilities to a large extent.

It is an intellectual work, that of Pignatelli, one which needs to be observed with the utmost care to discover the secrets contained in each image that profoundly stimulate our emotional mechanisms.

Cinema is once again the concept behind "On the Real". The chosen character is Wim Wenders. The literary connection comes from the guru of the Beat Generation, Jack Kerouac and *On the Road*, the laical bible of naively rebellious behaviour from times very recent that now seem so distant.

In "On the Real" a single meeting point between cinema, literature and photography is provided by a sequence of images referring to conceptual art and in particular to land art, where photography is indispensable to relate to the ephemeral. At the figurative level the photographs are of a disarming simplicity, but, as is the case with good photography, are very clear in expressing the ambiguity between that which we believe we have seen and that which we have truly captured.

The third pause is dedicated to that undoubted maestro of sequence photography: Duane Michals, who uses the screenplay technique to relate his extraordinary universe of imagination.

"Stealing from Reality". The most theatrical of Pignatelli's work, it seems like the photographic record of a performance taking place on stage. Once again, however, the author has built his story choosing characters, environments and scenography following the script and studying the director. It is a metaphor on psychological imprisonment and dependence. It is a wholly original homage to Michals. At the end of the sequence Michals is the sole character capturing the truth. But what is the truth? Certainly not that which is presumed and accepted of photography, whichever photography. The truth is subjective and we need "pauses" of reflection to look into ourselves and others and into objects, to consider the relations we form with the "alien" world, that which constitutes the world immediately beyond ourselves.