

NEW PUBLICATION 2023



Giovanni Maria Sacco *Silent Theaters*

Texts by Laura Cosso, Giovanni Maria Sacco
 Designed by Kehrer Design (Laura Pecoroni)
 Hardcover
 28,8 x 24 cm
 144 pages
 101 duotone illustrations
 English
 ISBN 978-3-96900-124-0
 Euro 48,00

Abandoned buildings that still have an unmistakable beauty and narrative power

Giovanni Maria Sacco's *Silent Theaters* is seemingly about abandoned factories whose silence reminds us of the silence of theaters after the last performance. And, as in theaters, one imagines these places full of noise, filled with voices, people and activity that suddenly stop and are no longer there. But the real theme is the end of human endeavor, the slow decay of things, hopes, efforts.

Before these buildings are demolished to make way for some useless shopping mall, they show that ruin and decay can also be dignified and beautiful. In fact, this is about death itself: too horrible to look at directly and realize that it is actually just one step in a journey, perhaps the last. Sacco's abandoned factories present a clear and haunting metaphor for death.

From the text *Silent Theaters* by **Laura Cosso**:

Looking at them, it is clear that these are not empty spaces, but emptied spaces. Emptied of the human presence that made them alive; stripped, it seems, to the point of not retaining any tangible trace of those who spent their lives there. A shoe, a few broken bottles, the faded image of a holy card, nothing more. Industrial still lifes which are dangerous to enter, precarious and dilapidated as they are; cathedrals on the verge of crumbling, saved from oblivion only by the eye of those who, at their own risk, sneak into them to show their grandiose, disquieting beauty. As if their surrendering to uselessness, the end of every function, revealed an aesthetic dimension. Some of the shots really recall cathedrals, basilicas with large windows or naves extending as far as the eye can see. Others, especially the one in which a plastic sheet hangs across the left side of the image like a torn curtain, bring to mind the stage of a theater. And it is natural to imagine a staging when a beam of light enters violently and isolates a detail.

From the afterword by **Giovanni Maria Sacco**:

The subject here is the end of human endeavors, the slow decay of things, hopes, efforts. As I enter these places, I imagine when they were built and inaugurated: the optimism, the speeches, the energy, the future. And then... all things must pass. [...]

These [images ...] are metaphors for my real concern: the death of people, a theme that one could represent directly, like the skulls in a memento mori or the corpses in Witkin's photographs. Death can be devastating and dreadful. After all, it is a journey to "the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns," it turns people into objects and then into dust, and quickly erases them from memories. It is so horrible that it is difficult to look directly into it, and understand that it is just a step in a journey—the final one perhaps. I believe that one needs metaphors to see this, though they might not be enough.

Giovanni Maria Sacco (born in Rome, Italy, 1954) was a university professor of computer science for 30 years, until he resigned to pursue his passion for photography. Not surprisingly given his background, he strives for mathematical elegance: everything exactly as needed, nothing more, nothing less. The composition of his images influenced by his interest in painting, from Duccio to contemporary painters. He has received awards such as the International Photo Awards (IPA), Fine Art Photography Awards, Prix de la Photographie Paris (PX3), MonoVisions, ND, Siena Creative. His works have been exhibited in Turin, Milan, Rome, Trieste, Venice, Glasgow, New York, Miami, Tokyo and Zurich. He uses digital cameras and film cameras from 6 x 6 to 20 x 25 cm.

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 Fon ++49 (0)6221/649 20-18 | Fax ++49 (0)6221/64920-20
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