

Humans are landscapes

~~Landscapes are Humans~~

## Viviana Berti

Rome, 1985

Viviana Berti (Rome, 1985) is a photographer and filmmaker who lives and works in Rome. Her solitary childhood, divided between the Umbrian countryside and the frenetic hustle and bustle of the capital, trains her observation of the world in a state of waiting, of suspension that precedes the precipitation of things. Having moved to Turin at the age of nineteen to study History of Art at university, her first contact with the photographic image came through her encounter with the fashion photographer Bardo Fabiani, whose assistant and archivist she became for the magazine VOGUE, starting to move frequently between Turin and Milan. Parallel to selecting shots and archiving Fabiani's materials, Viviana Berti also began to collaborate with the Archives of the Living Theatre in Turin (ORSA) through Edoardo Fadini. Returning to Rome just two years later due to family vicissitudes, Berti started again with the medium of photography in her desire to investigate its technical aspects and she enrolled at the IED attending photography

courses. Her study of the medium opens the door to a new one, the cinema: during her studies in Rome, Berti consumes an enormous amount of films, moving her interest towards the moving image. It is during this phase that she gets to know the sinister and dreamy work of Martin De Thurah, a Danish director and photographer of extreme inspiration to Berti, who sees in the latter's imagery his own reading of reality. After finishing her studies, she soon joined the Roman agency Allucinazione, which still represents her today. His language moves decisively towards portraits and landscape photography, genres that strongly influence the advertising campaigns shot by Berti in these years. It is precisely this direction that pushes his work towards a naturalness, unusual for the advertising field, which becomes the founding characteristic of his poetics. Parallel to his commissioned production, Berti's camera shoots a considerable amount of personal material, intimate and free from the logic of the assignment; the result is a very long series of shots, all united by the incredible affinity in the treatment of the subjects: men and landscapes.

# La quarta parete

A short note on photography by Viviana Berti

*[...] charm of stillness—that hush in which something gathers or crouches. The change was actually like the spring of a beast.*

(H. James, *The Turn of the Screw*, in *Two Magics*, MacMillan, New York, Heinemann, London, 1898)

Mistakenly believing that we ascribe to something the characteristics proper to cinema by using the adjective ‘cinematic’, it would be useful to identify this term in its exact definition, that is, everything that is linked to movement and its geometric aspects. The linguistic pitfall is easy to unravel, considering the main contribution made by cinema to the development of images, that of setting them in motion, of adding kinema to them.

Viviana Berti's photography is therefore cinematic, even before being cinematographic.

In the images of the roman photographer and director, in fact, there is an epidermic vibration that permeates every shot as in the incessant wait for the narrative moment, of that non- climaxing instant placed in

the limbo of the plot, between the happened and the happening. The subjects 'vibrate', then, with a diffuse subterranean quivering, capable of expanding the imagination of what we would see outside the outlines, knowingly avoiding the descriptivism of the climax, where every element would be carefully scripted to play a role.

What concerns cinema only emerges from this subcutaneous motion, capable of imparting a narrative impetus to the image, of foreshadowing a future development and a past configuration of what is before our eyes; an élan vital understood, as by Henri Bergson, as a 'vital impetus', a spontaneous evolutionary development to which it is impossible to oppose. Now a stick resting on the balustrade, now a telephone left open on the coffee table, now a desert road marked by the passage of cars are freed from their inauspicious cinematographic relegation to moments of glue to rise, in photography, to mother

scenes; only that instead of describing an unequivocal ending for each spectator, they allow us to imagine our own intimate and very personal drama.

Such a stance of images, borrowed from a directorial vocabulary that looks to the densely suspended and unabashedly real aesthetics of filmmaker Roberto Minervini and to the shrewd visual compositions typical of Ulrich Siedl's cutting gaze on the world launched in his trilogy *Paradies: Liebe / Glaube / Hoffnung*, dedicated to the cynicism and hypocrisy of the human being investigated under multiple lights, is no coincidence. From these masters Berti draws the most flagrant aspects, transforming them into a dry and direct photographic poetics, composed and dense, capable of constantly maintaining a sort of 'background radiation' from contemporary cinema.

This guideline of his work returns in the images through the constant confrontation of his subjects

with the simulacra of the cinema screen: transparent curtains, glass, cages and gates, mirrors of water, liquids, blankets of fog, and dust anticipate, stand in the way of or act as a backdrop to the subjects photographed in a constant filtering of reality that reminds us of the camera, the lens, the existence of a choice of field typical of images and - as Georges Didi-Huberman teaches us - of their position in the world.

By inserting this filter, bordering on omnipresence, Berti aims at the dripping of general reality in order to hand over to us the part of it still inviolate in its intimacy.

Altruistically, Berti categorically refuses the possibility of intervention in the image: he does not pluck the flower, he does not pick up the spoon, he does not light the candle, he does not take part in the world he decides to fix in the hope of leaving every potential

gesture within the reach of the beholder, giving the spectator the most generous of gifts, leaving open the door to freedom of action, freedom of imagination.

Despite this expertise in concerting every aspect of the shot, each work is capable of retaining in nuce a fleeting and instinctive aspect, the idea of the stolen shot, an expedient typical of the poetics of another role model, Philip Lorca diCorcia. In maintaining this dynamic position, Berti gives us the keys to interpretation, to imagination, leaving empty the script that should dictate the moment after the shot. Instead, the immediacy of the gaze behind which is concealed this extreme craftsmanship gives the image a relaxed, dilated, not disturbing temporal suspension, capable of recalling the disenchanted frankness of Gustave Flaubert's masterpiece *Madame Bovary*, the literary cornerstone of the Roman photographer and director's visual education,

from which she absorbs a lucid and disenchanted vision of the world, bordering on realistic pessimism. The only aspect capable of revealing the illusory immediacy of the photographic gesture returns in the color, in a range carefully varied from soft to dense, from soft to sharp - in which is often unconsciously linked the primordial chromatism of the American master William Eggleston -, from chromatic richness to the grey scale.

And yet, this little counterpoint played on color, which appears to us like a spy, like the unveiling of a trick, is none other than the artist's own hand that, with a coupe de theatre, breaks the fourth wall, inserting us, as protagonists, into a fragment of the concise and intense shortage of life.

- 1 H. Bergson, *L' évolution créatrice*, Libraire Felix Alcan, Paris 1907
- 2 G. Didi-Huberman, *The Eye of History: When Images Take Positions*, Mimesis Edizioni, Milan 2018



#8853  
Cala del Gesso, 2019

*#8314*  
Uyuni, Bolivia, 2016

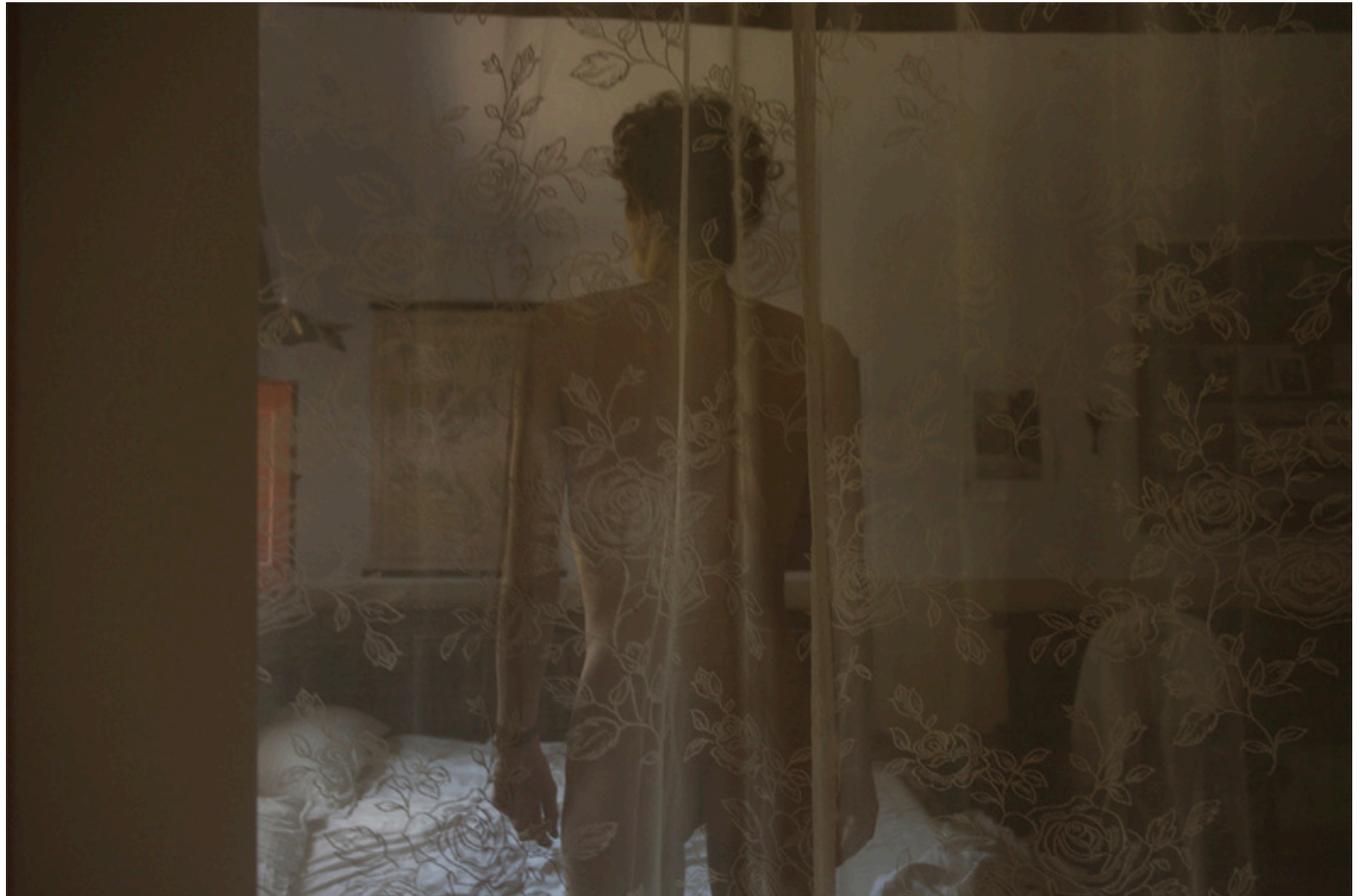




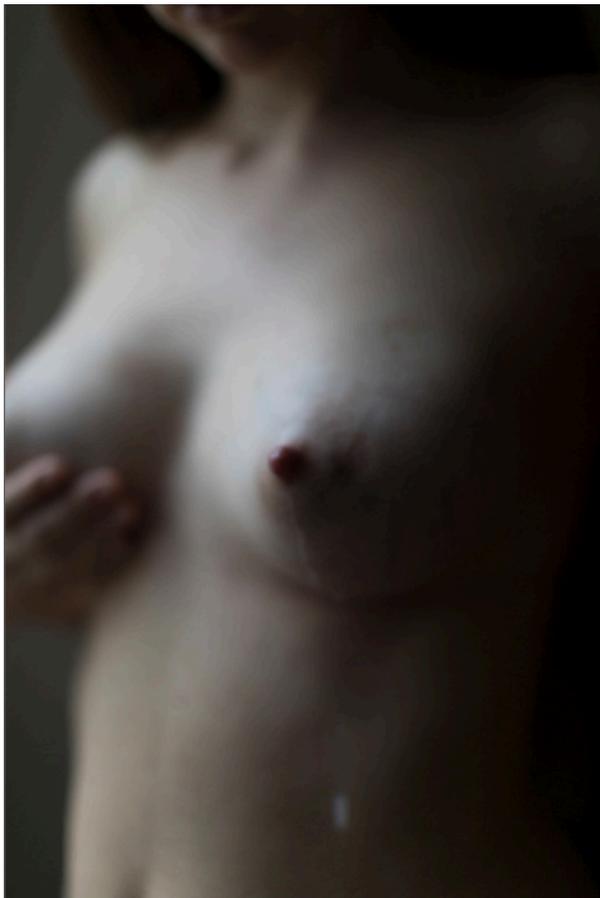


*#7857*  
Pianura Padana, 2018

*Senza titolo*  
Monti Aurunci, 2018







#7135  
Roma, 2018

#9335  
Napoli, 2020





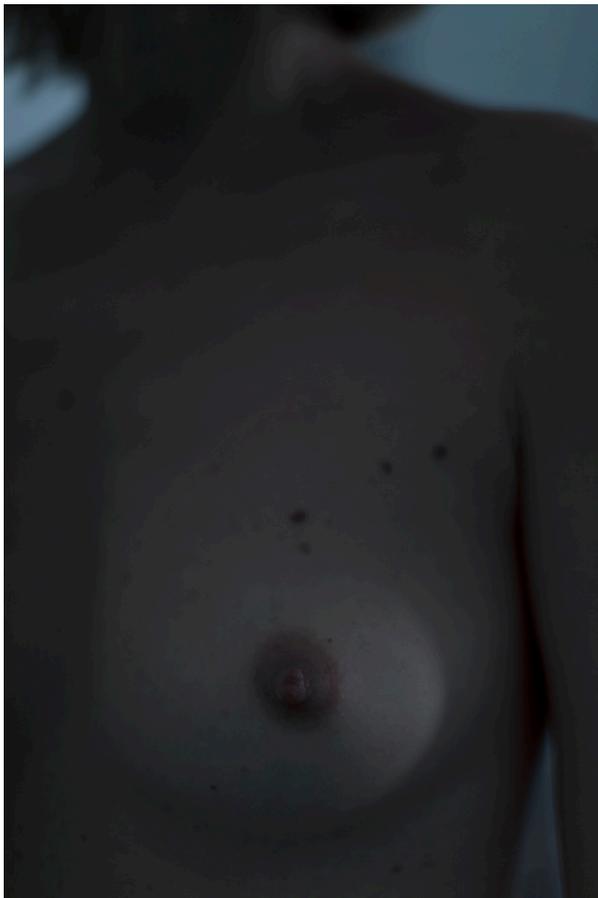
*Senza titolo*  
*Roma, 2021*





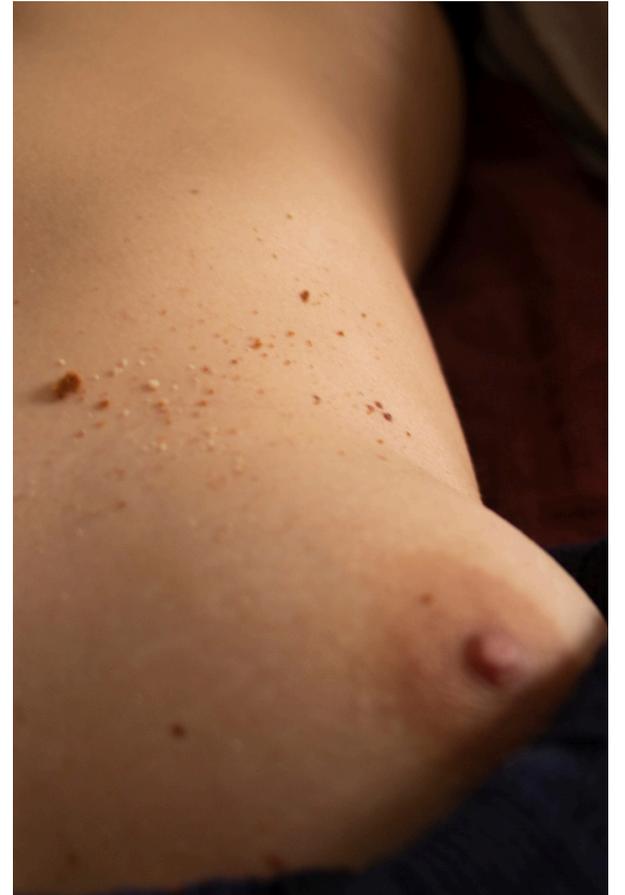
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Uyuni, Bolivia, 2016

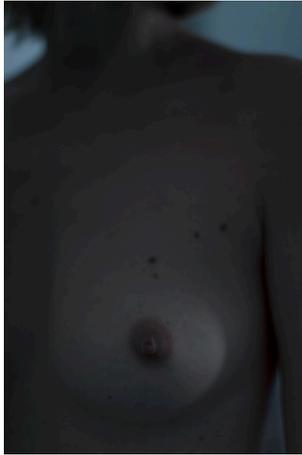


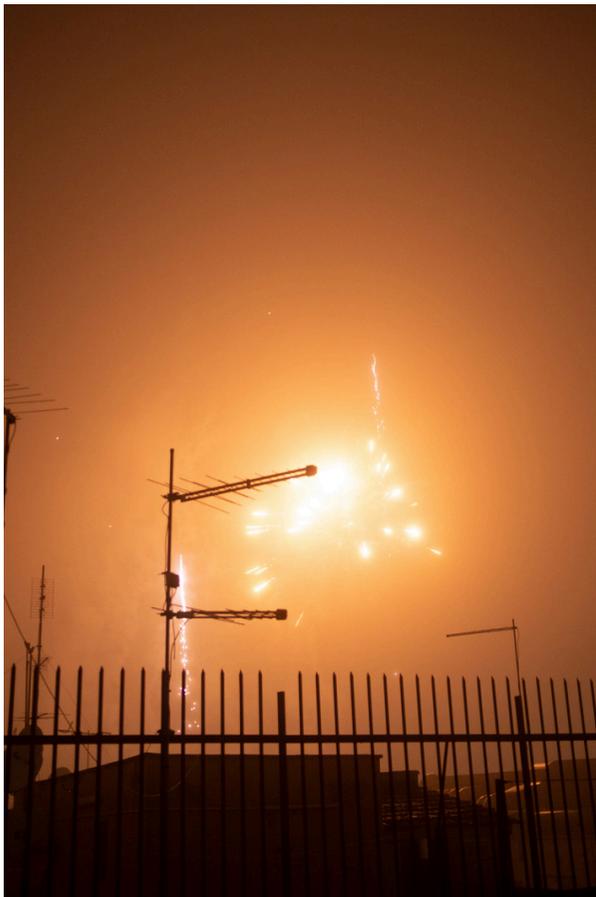


#6103  
*Roma, 2019*

#0703  
Roma, 2020



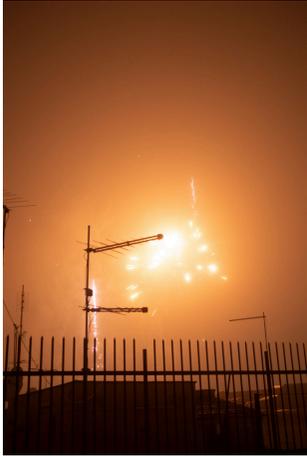




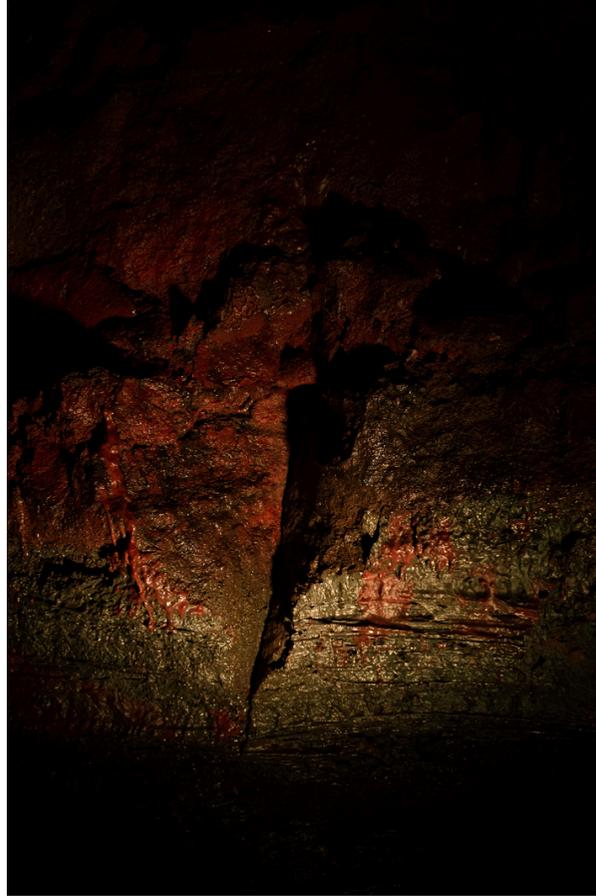
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Roma, 2022

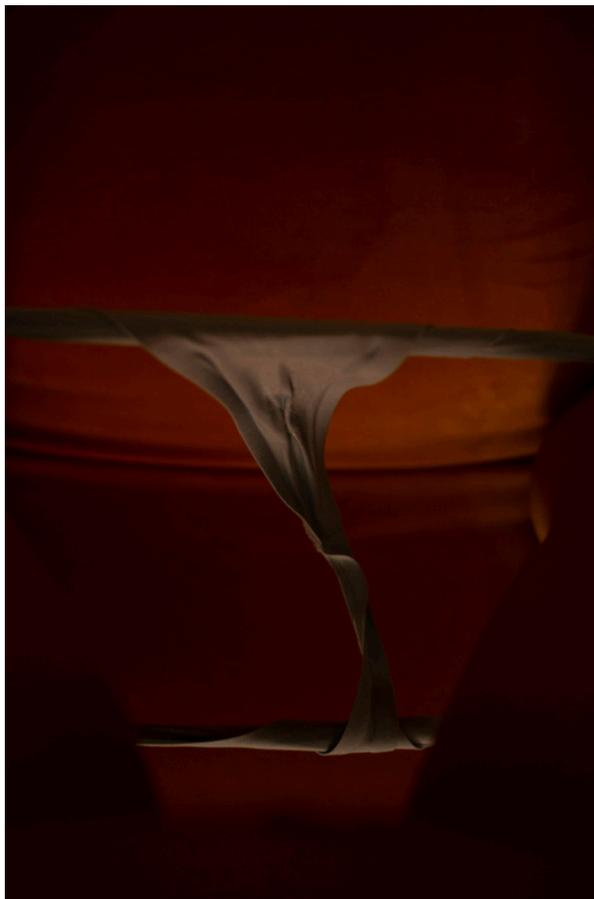
#3143  
Banyuls-sur-Mer, 2021





#9304  
Þríhnúkagígur, Íslanda, 2022





#0652  
Roma, 2020



#2016  
Uyuni, Bolivia, 2016



#0009  
Tangeri, Marocco, 2022







#0244  
Cala Moresca, 2020

#2010  
Roma, 2020







#3831  
Tokyo, 2015

#3167  
Mar del Nord, 2014







#8236  
Maximo  
Fernandez,  
Argentina, 2018

#5485  
Roma, 2018







#6860  
Roma, 2021

#0079  
Roma, 2023

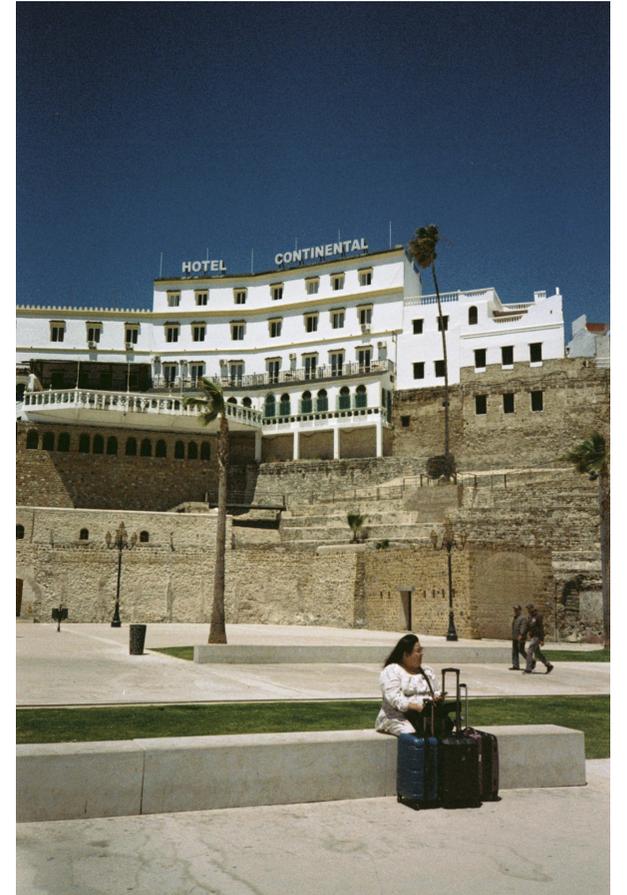






#4350  
Tokio, 2015

#0004  
Tangeri, 2022





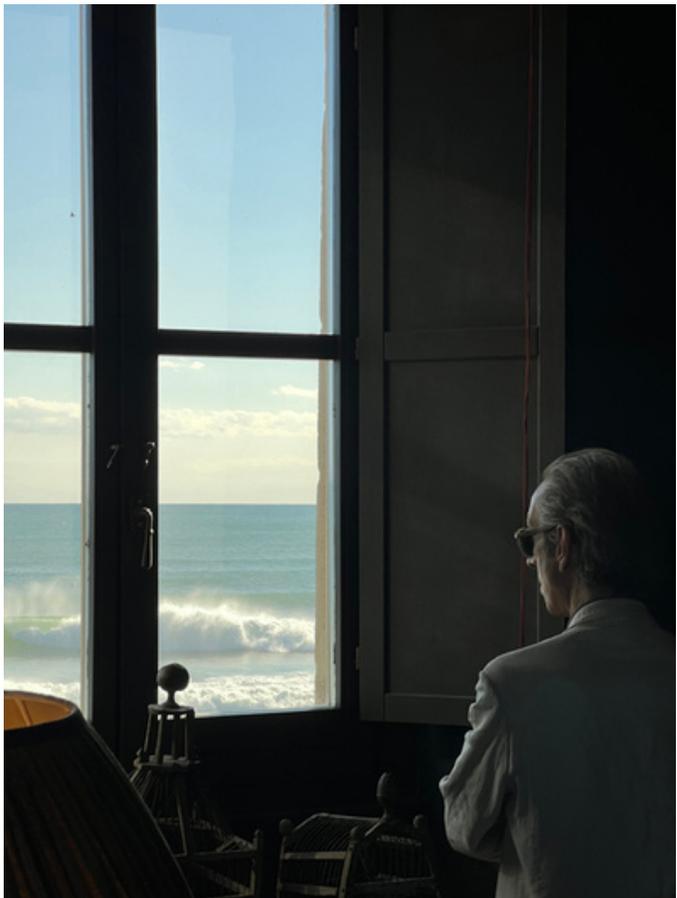


5697340  
Tangeri, 2022

#3133  
Maccarese, 2021



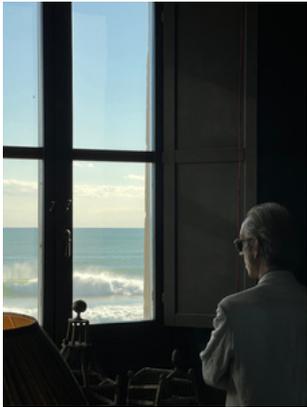




#3174  
La Macchia, 2022

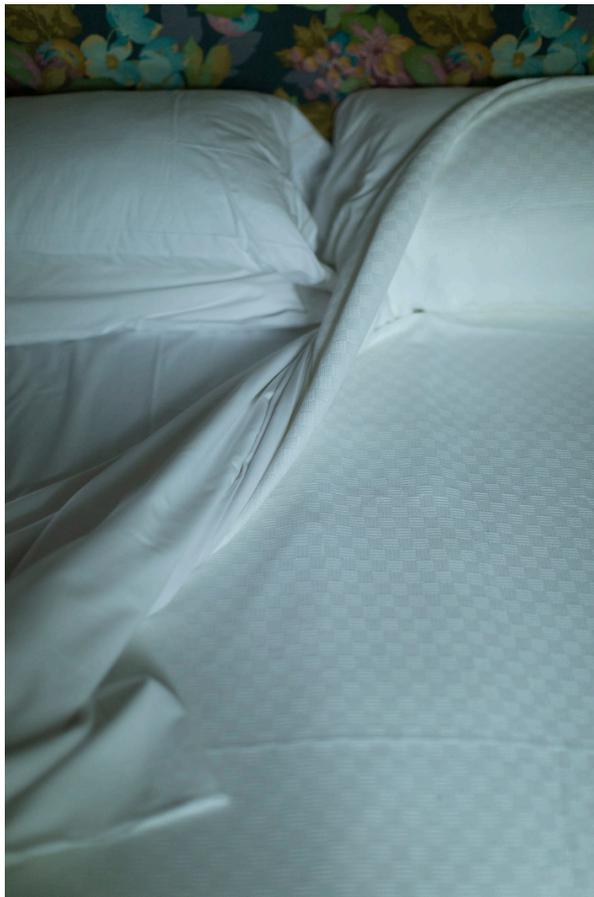
#0003  
Roma, 2020





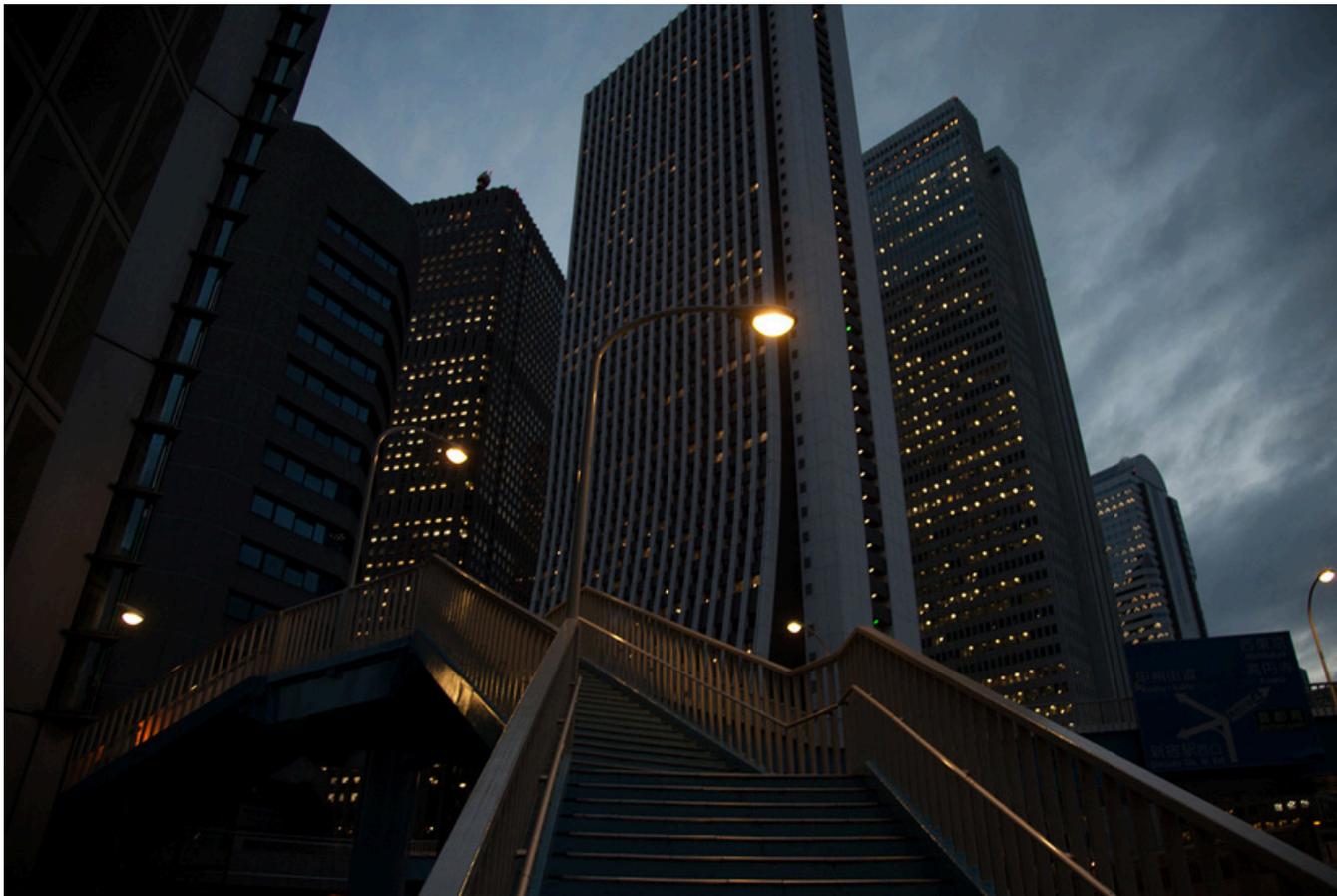
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Torino, 2022





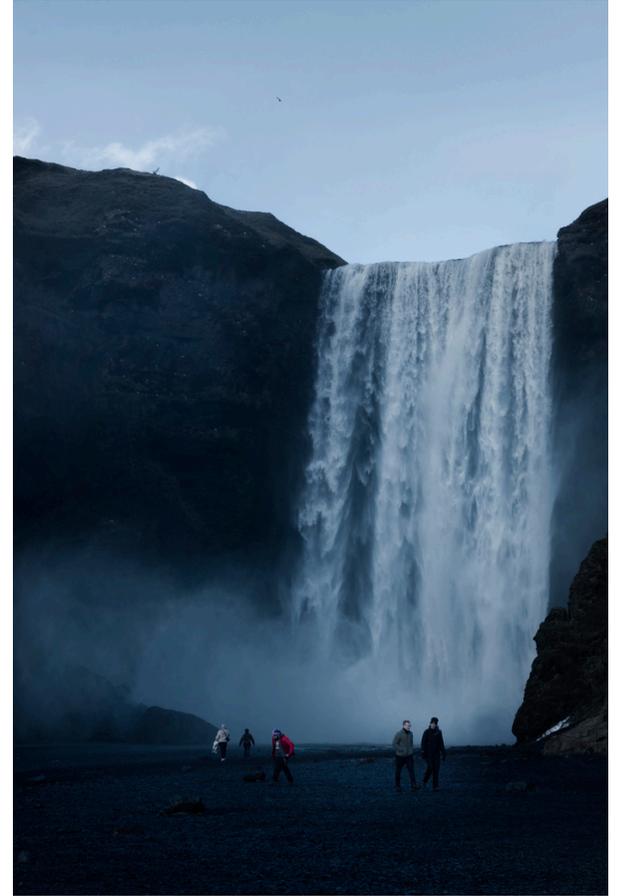
#4200  
Grosseto, 2020

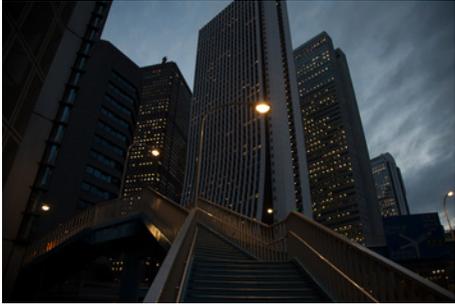




#3343  
Tokio, 2015

#8505  
Skogafoss, 2022







#7841  
Santa Cruz, 2016

#0099  
Maximo Fernandez, 2018

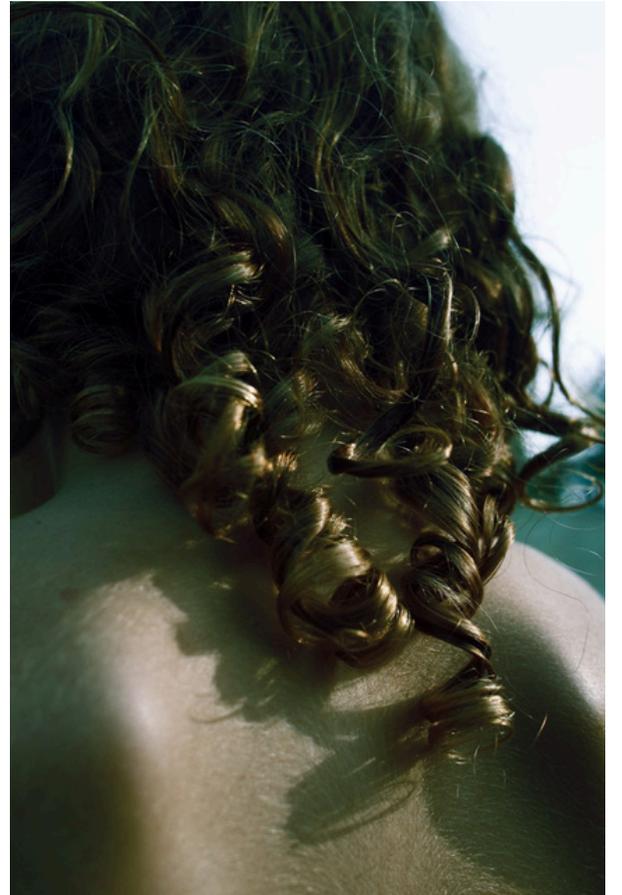




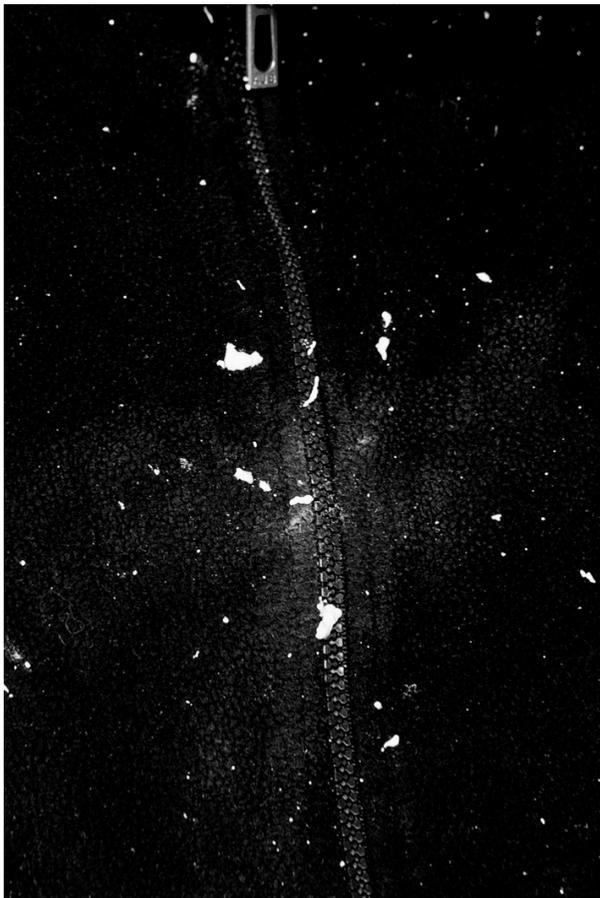


#9233  
Islanda, 2022

#0499  
Rocca Sinibalda, 2020

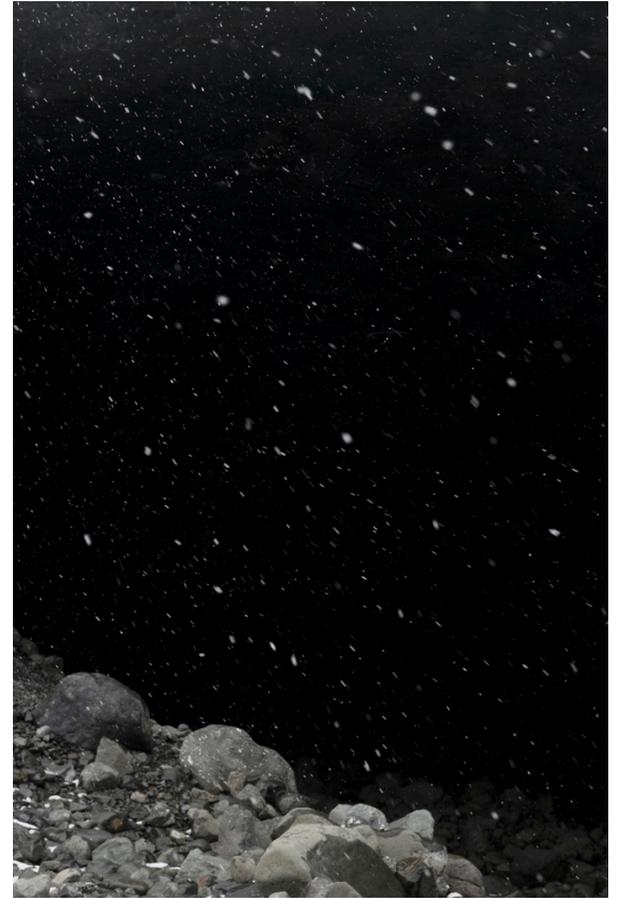


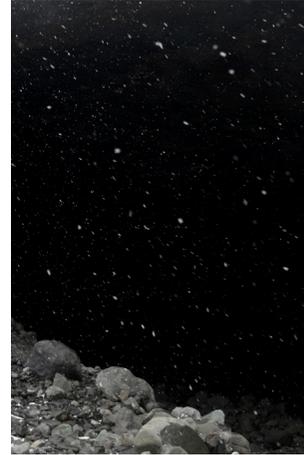
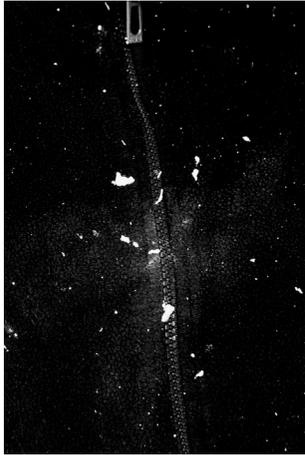


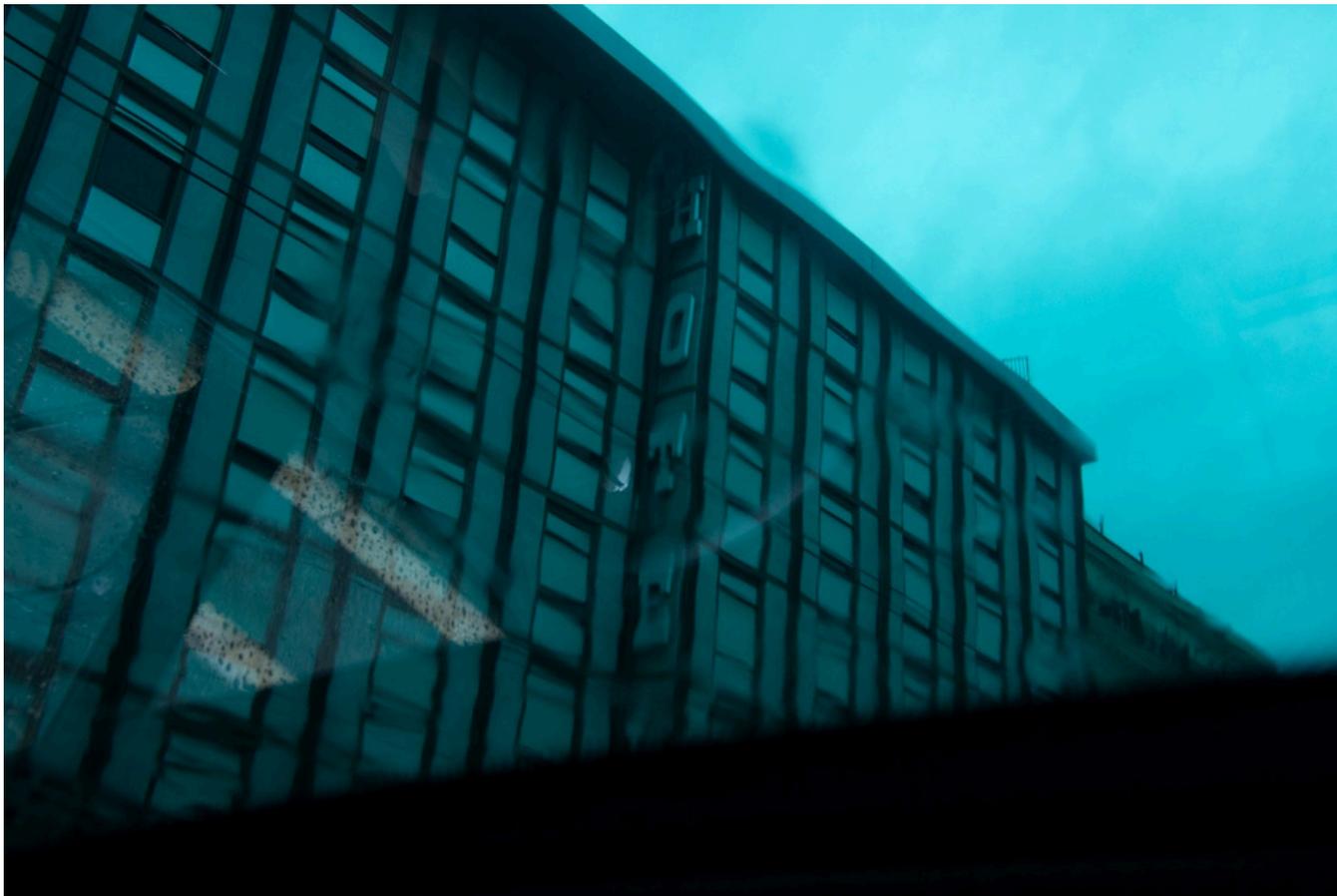


#1096  
Volvera, 2023

#8968  
*Vatnajökull, 2022*







#0020  
Roma, 2021



#6678  
Londra, 2019





#8989  
Maximo  
Fernandez,  
2019

