

THE STONES OF VENICE

UGO CARMENI'S ENVIRONMENTAL INSTALLATION

The cinematic universe created by Ugo Carmeni, both in his work and in his contribute as a photographer for various artists' installations, is rich of illusions and allusions. He is fearless about his practice and meticulous about his own artistical process: two fundamental qualities proper of any artist and, above all, of an independent photographer.

The environmental installation *The stones of Venice* is not built on the narrative, but on images, on happenings. It tells its genesis and construction throughout its inventive motives. The creative experience is comparable to the surrealist artists' one and to their creation of "exquisite corps", in which the last sentence or image brings, in a collaborative artistic effort, to the next one. Carmeni deals with its pictures availing himself of a similar method: by displaying connections, both evident and subliminal, between images and words, scenarios and occurrences. The photographical process is an integral part of his stories' narration. The stories he discovers are refined and "collected" by the artist, scrupulously reprocessed and finally displayed in a restrained and stylized way, with hints of the narrative photography's conventions. With its light and shadow's structure, its original playfulness and its worldly but intimate range, this ambitious project promises to reach a wide public.

Moreover, the details' attention – both in the big and in the small installations – is the peculiar characteristic of Carmeni's working method. Indeed, the mentioned masterpiece, shows an accurate care of the details, with extreme coherence with the figured subject, generating a harmonious whole.

This is one of the many Carmeni's prerogatives, which contributed in letting international artists, such as Sarah Sze, Marco Maggi (and others), to contribute with him.

The outstanding prerogative of ductility is proper of Carmeni as a photographer, even while maintaining its deep-rooted identity. This is what, in Carmeni's various collaborations, contributes to enhance and to make the eye rediscover every detail, which at the first gaze could get out of the viewer's sight. This process proposes itself as a sort of "encyclopaedia of seeing" (John Berger). Moreover, Carmeni's work is characterized on the spectacular and temporal perspective. Both an extended and accelerated time and a freeze frame – which, often, suggests something else – lead us both to see the successive stages and to rest in our contemporary epoch, with its essential speed and its fast forwarding. Following this process, the human gaze is brought to find the pleasure of taking a moment to examine, inspect and contemplate an image, a concept or a basic void.

The artistic piece shows part of the photographic series concerning *the stones of Venice*, produced by Carmeni for the video installation "Venetikà", realized by Ferzan Ozpetek for the *Venice Pavilion* during the **58th International Art Exhibition organized by La Biennale di Venezia**. The element of the water, Venice, the rediscovery of classics, apparently simply accessible, and the fundamental concept of human interaction and of the spectator's involvement inside the Installation, are just some of the elements you can find here. The figures follow one another between dreamlike and illusive sounds: S. Giorgio, the Heroes, the Graces, the Warriors, the Holy, the cities' Patrons, the walls, the epigraphs, the strength, the lion, beauty, synchrony, elegance, symmetry and asymmetry, the material imperfection which

enhances the perfection – and vice versa, guide us across the journey between the unveiled stones, through the eye of Ugo Carmeni, while stones in turn observe us in an ideal journey through the Serenissima.

When we build, let us think that we build forever.
(John Ruskin)

The place seems a fantastic vision at the best, from which the world must at last awake some morning, and find that after all it has only been dreaming, and that there never was any such city.
(William Dean Howells)

Critical text by Chiara Marin

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