RITORNO IN PIAZZA

FOTOGRAFIE DI / PHOTOGRAPHS BY

ANNA ZEMELLA
Ho percorso a lungo la piazza. Un tempo con gioia e stu-
pore, in seguito addolorata e stordita, fotografando lo svol-
imento del ‘luogo’ di Venezia e mio, cittadina veneziana. Poi
ho deciso di tornare, non per continuare quell’esperienza di
perdita ma per recuperare l’originario legame interrotto.
Dal rumore al silenzio, l’ho ritrovata in un percorso emozi-
nale, camminando tra le liste bianche della pavimentazione,
tra i racconti delle antiche figure, tra le pietre e le ombre
silenziose. L’ho ritrovata nel suo respiro d’acqua, al salire
lento della marea dalla sua vita profonda di città lagunare.
L’ho colta e trattenuta, preziosa, per non farla scomparire.

ANNA ZEMELLA
FRANCESCA BARBINI
INTRODUZIONE / FOREWORD

EMANUELA CARPANI
INTRODUZIONE / FOREWORD

MONICA CENTANNI
"Piera alta": pietre di Venezia che giocano con l’acqua / "Piera alta": The Venetian stones that play with water

ANNA ZEMELLA
Biografia /
Biography

PAOLO COLTRO
L’Acqua. Un’amante languida, avvolgente, pericolosa /
Water – Languid Lover
Enveloping, Dangerous

FOTOGRAFIE / PHOTOGRAPHS
L’acqua e Le Pietre / Stones and Water

FOTOGRAFIE / PHOTOGRAPHS
Antiche Figure / Ancient Figures
In Siena, where I used to work until just over a year ago, all the squares are referred to as piazzas apart from one known as 'the' Campo. Here in Venice it is the other way around: all of the squares are campi or campielli apart from 'the' Piazza (you don’t even have to specify 'San Marco').

The water, the stones and above all the Venetian ‘forum’ are the ingredients Anna Zemella offers us in her Ritorno in piazza, a beautiful, personal photographic interpretation of an enchanted place that has never failed to give – generously and unconditionally – emotions and feelings, aesthetic bliss, amorous smiles and palpitations, moments of reflection – as does the whole of Venice, for that matter.

In the first part (Stones and water), the design of the paving by Andrea Tirale appears to melt, becoming liquid in the vortexes and ripples of water that rise from the viscera of the city. The water interacts with the reflections of the surrounding elements: the sky, the facades of the buildings, the architectural partitions – blurring their geometry and distorting them into tragicomic masks. The visible layers – paving, water, reflections – merge, superimposing on each other like multi-exposure photographs. Only a few of the images feature people. In one bare feet can be seen
immersed in water: an image that provokes not just a visual response but also physical and tactile sensations. In another, extraordinary, photograph taken during acqua alta, a series of men and women are immortalised as, without realising it, they participate in an involuntary and perfectly constructed flash mob — in a masked ball that is at once dramatic and surreal, and in slow motion. All that's missing, to provide a muffled background, is the sound of the Piazza's café orchestras, or — better still — the constant chiming of the Marangona (the largest bell in Saint Mark's bell tower) …

In the second part (Ancient figures), sculpted faces — bearing signs of the passage of time, with their astonished eyes that seem to stare straight at you — introduce the reader to the community of stone characters that silently populate the Piazza. The statues standing atop the Libreria Marciana and the Procuratie Nuove are photographed from unusual points of view: close up from the same height, or glimpsed at from below. Some of them have been scarred by water, in stark greyscale: lines, blotches and stains left by rain-wash and accentuated by the black and white chiaroscuro. Other figures, gazing down from the buildings of Jacopo Sansovino, seem to dazzle and are almost opalescent in the insistent and intentional overexposure that sublimates them into ethereal, heavenly characters.

With this exhibition and this text, to use her words, Anna Zemella proposes an ‘emotional journey’ with the aim of returning to her ‘interrupted relationship’ with the heart of the city. Interrupted because there are moments in which it is unrecognisable, assaulted by a form of mass tourism that has become unmanageable, rendered barbaric by a rudeness and disrespect that seem beyond remedy. Yet, the gaze of this Venetian photographer will not be put out; it remains poetic and suggests new, perceptive and original points of view. With the support of the Fondo per l’Ambiente Italiano, on the 50th anniversary of the acquagranda (the big flood), Zemella shares her intimate reinterpretation of one of the most photographed cities and, in particular, one of the most photographed piazzas in the world.

Anna Zemella, journalist, publicist and photographer, has lived in Venice for over forty years. Her work as a photographer, which began in 2009, is concerned principally with her bond with the lagoon city. Her solo exhibitions include: Algario veneziano, R.S.C. Bucintoro, Magazzini del Sale, Venice, 2014; Biblioteca Hugo Pratt, Venice, 2014; Limite, Galleria Traghetto, Venice, 2012; Alberi di laguna, R.S.C. Bucintoro, Venice, 2011; Tra le briccole di Venezia by SNAPP, Waldshut (Germany) 2011. She conducted research into the ruins of the Ospedale al Mare (Hospital by the Sea) on the Lido and held a photographic workshop with the inmates of the women’s prison in Venice. Actively involved in defending Venice and the lagoon, a number of her expose photographs have been published by important newspapers and magazines and used by Vivienne Westwood to launch her Venice for the Venetians, Venice for the world campaign. She is a member of the historic photography club, La Gondola.