

CRITICAL ESSAY by Flavia Rovetta

WoodBergs'12 Beginning|as|End is one of the seven series of the Mother&Land photography project by Patrizia Dottori focused on Mother Earth.

The pictures of WoodBergs'12 are divided into four sections, each corresponding to one of the seasons, dedicated to the meticulous analysis of the variations undergone by nature; the unifying element is wood, represented at times as living matter, at times as a plundered and derelict wreck.

The artist uses negative printing both as a means of expression, exploring its aesthetic qualities, and as a programmatic manifesto. As a matter of fact, the negative shows the other side of the coin, that is an «artificial» view of nature, obtained by inverting chromatic tones. By exploiting the property of simultaneous contrast between complementary colors, it is possible to provide an unusual point of view, in which attention is captured by details that would not have been noticed without such emphasis. Therefore, the first purpose of the project is to accustom the eye to grasp details, not to look superficially but be surprised by the unexpected and the unusual.

However, the primary concern of WoodBergs'12 is characterized by the urgency that runs through the whole Mother&Land project: it is a call to action, a rejection of indifference and a call to the sense of responsibility that every human being must have towards Mother Earth.

In this sense, for Patrizia Dottori the use of this technique has the gravity of a denunciation and the forcefulness of a declaration of intent. The negative highlights the sense of loss, estrangement, inconsistencies and, in short, the rush of mankind towards the point of no return.

These images, already defined as "artificial", appear dramatically distant from what nature should be and so dangerously close to what will be.

The subtitle Beginning|as|End highlights the circular nature, made particularly significant by the choice to begin the series with Autumn, the season of the falling, and to close it with Summer, apparently the most prosperous period of the year. Even in the interpretation of the cycles of nature, Patrizia Dottori offers a disorienting interpretation, in which each moment can represent the end or a new beginning. In addition, the shots of WoodBergs'12 possess the communicative immediacy of rhetorical figures, which with extreme immediacy convey the meaning of each image.

Autumn is narrated through a synecdoche, the rhetorical figure that uses a part to indicate the whole. Not trees but trunks: their life cycle is already over, they are no longer living beings but objects with a specific intended use. The photographs show the process of reification of nature, the exploitation of its resources and energy for human purposes. Yet the sap leaves evidence of its passing in the wood grain, which pulsates like blood vessels; knots become peering eyes that force the viewer to compare and contrast. In the cut sections, abstract shapes appear, stars, furrows of light that carry the germ of rebirth in themselves.

Synesthesia is the dominant feature of the section dedicated to Winter: sensations belonging to different sensory spheres merge in the images. The visual element of color, tends excessively towards green, violet and bluish tones, can create the tactile perception of cold. Glacial shots, made pointy by the angular shapes of the dry trunks and the rough surfaces of

the rocks, reminiscent of slabs of ice. It is the realm of silence and desolation, yet a faint hope patiently awaits, hidden under the impenetrable blanket of frost.

Spring is the season of antithesis, in which the artist manages to bring together opposite interpretations of reality. The time of rebirth is celebrated with the brightest and delicate tones; the photographic lens "paints" with small touches of color, in a spontaneous evocation of the impressionist brushstroke. Nature, brave and resolute, regains its own space, creeps into the folds of rock. Yet a deadly omen is hidden in the foliageless trunks: like Persephone, torn away the Earth to be taken to the Underworld, the silhouettes of the trees dry up in a slow and sad agony.

Finally, Summer is the oxymoron par excellence, having its shots inherently contradictory features. The most luxuriant season is dressed in acid and sanguine tones; psychedelic landscapes with their estranging colors are, at the same time, a promised land or the threat of the apocalypse. The omen of death, so far only anticipated, has become real. The negative reveals the real nature of summer: drought that drains every glimmer of life. The emptiness of the sky faces the abandoned presences on earth, almost reminding of the tragedy of Marat's Death: innocent Nature has been stabbed in the back and left languishing, while mankind has committed a guilt that is impossible to redeem except by an act of consciousness.