



Fig.148 Picture showing me filming a public place while living in North America. At that time I still did not make use of a smartphone and had to carry around many more devices like a digital video-camera which was more discreet as it allowed me to film flipping the screen rather than holding it up. Most importantly however, the reviewing of public places of my time in North America links me to memories of my oldest son. While I avoided having him or anyone I know in the videos, the emptiness of the public places is filled with memories of the adventurous time I had with him there. As the video of public places ironically became the most intimate of my works, I understood how the human brain, as also suggested by ancient art of memory techniques, allocates a memory per place. The many places I filmed in the North American city where we lived are for me then a big repertoire of past memories I get too nostalgic to think about, memories and places that are forever gone and break my heart to get back to.

PLACES 04

While on one hand the resulting videos look like surveillance camera footage, they are in fact premonitions of public spaces on the verge of disappearing. As in the work of French flâneur Eugène Atget, in my urban walks I record the emptiness of public spaces. Ironically this emptiness is, among all my works, what enables me to re-experience the past. In this respect I find the reviewing of these streams of videos a sad experience reminding me of life experiences that can never return. With time also this emptiness started to become more precious. The cities where I have been living throughout my project have become increasingly overcrowded. Not only the big capital cities but also the once quiet

little downtown of my native village in the alps is invaded by a flood of tourists aimlessly walking through it. The environment in response has certainly lost its aura and got completely gentrified; it too no longer has a familiar face.

I can then walk through these cities and no longer recognize a single face and no longer relate to the architecture. It is a very tiring experience Marxists I guess would call alienation because I think in some ways it is the city turned into a factory at the service of mass tourism. Walking along the lagoon of an ancient city with thousands of people taking selfies in every corner, having to live up to that experience as a daily reality is very diminishing. In addition to what a local may think of all the mass tourism and in addition to the gentrification it brings to the city itself it is also the relation between him or her and the foreigner traveler that is damaged. If I was to live in my native highland and I would meet a stranger walking from who knows where I would certainly be very curious about him or her and I would certainly share my meal and provide him or her with a place where to spend the night. My hospitality and generosity would not feel any boundaries. I often encountered this very attitude in other people who no matter how poor they were they would give me their handmade shirt and a precious item to bring back after getting to know each other.

I can clearly remember on this account all the beautiful presents I have received, the gifts I was honored with only because in my wandering I have reached some destinations. Now I had nothing to give in return but my presence and my foreignness, meaning my experience of a life in a faraway place along with the experience of having crossed many other places in order to reach that destination. I find it very sad in this respect that by now society is very regimented. Everyone has to focus on his or her own career and is locked up in his or her office while the city is flooded with tourists that only experience a gentrification they can experience almost identically in any other tourist hotspot around the world. Ironically the countries where the economy is blooming are the counties generating more tourists who in turn get to travel the world only to buy gadgets that were in the first place produced in their own countries. These tourists are also very much segregated from the local environment they visit, walking in compact groups and hardly interacting with the outside as if not only locals were regimented

in their professions but also the tourists were armies just systematically plundering a foreign terrain.

So on one hand there are the locals the system locks up in office spaces which disables them from actually experiencing their local environment and on the other there are these army of tourists marching through the environment. This is a capitalist scheme that is only convenient for the elite who actually own all the gentrified shop and commercial activities but it comes as a complete deprivation of what can be in fact a local and spontaneous culture. It is a very effective system that I feel I am disrupting by roaming in it although I almost always try to circumnavigate it and wander in these areas that are more peripheral and where still some life can be experienced. Now I used to do this quite often with my children as in a neorealist film up until mandatory school started and they were forced to attend it and also become an army of locals kidnapped by the system so as almost not to be able to interact with their environment but only become mere bureaucrats to maintain the system.

I hope with my project I was also able to disrupt this scheme but generate myself a whole new public space. In the many inaccessible pockets of land where total wilderness have taken control and human interaction is no longer allowed so as to provide a green lung to the overcrowded cities, in where once civilizations used to thrive in total autonomy, out of all the date I have gathered throughout my project I was able to conceive a public space where not tourists but pilgrims can access, not with big ships and busses but on foot and on small dirt roads. There they can experience in my opinion something authentic and I can become human and de-regimented again by showing my hospitality and generosity not literally offering them food and beverages but sharing with them the date I so much strived to collect and the meanings that arose with it, becoming primitive in a sense like a hunter-gatherers sharing his or her game with the community and re-establish a healthier and reciprocal economy of values which also in turns nurture the environment and its creatures that are free to roam around and use the same place to graze.