

Weaving Connections

Pietro Lo Casto's work is based on connection, evolution, and a deep respect for natural elements.

Strongly concerned with exploring the multi-level relationship between man and nature, the artist seeks to stimulate the collective consciousness to build a posthuman becoming, which is at the heart of a process of redefining one's own sense of connection with a common and shared world.

This exhibition presents three key projects by Pietro Lo Casto: *Pulp*, *New Gods* and *To Search the Secret of the Forest*. The photographs show the artist's interest in exploring how the relationship between humans and nature develops according to the places and cultures he has encountered throughout his life.

Pietro Lo Casto & His Work

Pietro Lo Casto's research began when he left his job in London to travel to South America out of a need to escape from a consumerist life. During this trip, he lived experiences which deeply influenced his artistic vision. At this time, Pietro discovered photography as a means of expression and Ayahuasca (a plant root with strong psychotropic properties) as a tool to create a powerful spiritual connection with nature.

He describes this feeling in the following lines:

My eyes are wide open
while the earth reveals itself
I see things that I know
in different shapes and form

I see the green blood of the trees
The vein of the earths
I see my grandfather, his body is a tree
His face is the moon
Green are his lungs,
veins of the earth.

Thunders scream in the night
In the midst of this remote mountain

I am fearing the darkness
But Inside the Maloka
a fire protects the souls that are restless
I see a man wraith, is he looking at me?
I'll never know

By the end of a long night
a light appears in the dark
a positive note,
cubicle letters, slowly approaching,
a message, keep exploring inside yourself
It's a beautiful place.

After this period in South America, the artist travelled to Australia and then to Bangkok, where he produced *Pulp*.

Pulp is Lo Casto's first complete body of work, and it's incredibly feverish and carnal. Developed across two years, it expresses the primary need to push one's limits to find oneself looking into the eyes of one's own primordial animal instincts:

"She is skeletal, has tattooed eyebrows and an ugly scar that deforms her hand. I find her beautiful. I have not touched alcohol but I feel drunk. A trickle of dog pee flows under the sidewalk. How much is missing at dawn? Where exactly am I? A ladyboy laughs at my joke even if he does not speak English. He puts his eyeglasses on me, everything becomes blurred. I watch him kiss the skeletal girl for a game, then his laughter disappears in the distance. [...] I left the clock in Perth, along with my limits and dogmas. We cross a dark alley whose street lamps are the faces of people illuminated by smartphones. When will it be dawn? I hope never. The moon is gone. A guy leaning on a shelter works his mouth with a toothpick. There are no more neon, just a sky of wet reinforced concrete that crushes us to the ground, peeling walls, grates of rusty metal. The skeletal girl tickles me, follows an infinite hug. How long have I known her? It doesn't matter, now we are siblings."

As we may read in Pietro's own words, what stands out in *Pulp* is how the power of the human being can rebel and let his instinctive and primordial nature prevail against a degraded, artificial, and increasingly oppressive context, such as the one of the metropolis. If in *Pulp* the focus is on human nature and its confrontation with the raw reality of the city, in *New Gods*, the second work presented here, it is the waste produced by man, objects conventionally considered waste, that become the protagonists of the images. This project was realised by Pietro Lo

Casto during a period of study at the Pathshala Institute in Nepal and is presented as follows by the artist:

"No river contains a spirit anymore, no tree is the principle of a man, no mountain cave the home of a great demon". In *Man and His Symbols*, C.G. Jung argues that we feel isolated in the cosmos because we have lost our emotional and unconscious identity with nature. [...] Referencing the work of Andres Serrano "Piss Christ", these items are taken out of their context, immersed in an aquarium and photographed underwater to create a godly atmosphere. *New Gods* is an ongoing attempt to reflect on human's loss of spiritual connection with nature. But also on the excess of the Capitalocene, which threatens the sustainability of our planet as a whole."

When the artist arrived in Nepal, he became aware of the tragic nature of the climatic situation. Inspired by Serrano's *Piss Christ*, the subjects of the images become totems to environmental disasters and, in particular, to how this is a consequence of the loss of a spiritual and emotional connection with the natural element.

Pietro Lo Casto's final project is *To Search The Secret of The Forest*. It took three months to complete it and was realized in Tangia Basti, a community located in the middle of a forest in Nepal.

Tangia Basti lives in a very particular situation: it was established about forty years ago when the Nepalese government decided to send a number of farmers to the region for reforestation work. Following a change of government, these people were forgotten in these territories and, thus, laid the foundations of Tangia Basti. However, for almost thirty years, the possibility of an airport being built there has threatened the entire area as it would lead to displacement and deforestation.

Pietro Lo Casto immortalizes this reality, not limiting himself to documenting its life, but becoming an integral part of it. *To Search the Secret of The Forest* portrays the villagers' intertwining with the forest, the river, and the land:

"While walking along the river, I noticed a man taking a bath and I immediately realized that the mist was actually steam emanating from the river. I then discovered that during the winter the water becomes unexpectedly warm in the early hours of the morning, creating the ideal conditions for people to bathe. A large fallen tree trunk on the side of the river serves as a platform where people wash their clothes and hang them to dry".

Tangia Basti has lived in a state of isolation, the government has never provided electricity or running water to the village. Yet, from the artist's words, it is clear to infer that those people have found in nature the perfect ally to meet their needs. The water is only warm in the early hours of the morning and only in the winter, which is the perfect example of how man and nature work together in Tangia Basti in an almost surreal balance.

To Search the Secret of The Forest is the most recent piece of a research that comes from the artist's desire to investigate his own nature, his own instincts, and his inner self, as seen in *Pulp*, until arriving at a much broader picture. First with *New Gods* and then with *To Search the Secret of The Forest*, the artist deepens his conception of the natural element as an inseparable part of the human being himself.

Text by Rita Meschiari

Pietro Lo Casto

b. 1986, Italy

Lives and works in Chiang Mai, Thailand

Education

2021 - 2023 MFA Visual Arts with full scholarship, Chiang Mai University, Thailand

2020 International Program of Photography, Pathshala South Asian Media Institute, Kathmandu, Nepal 2009 BA Communication, University of Bologna, Italy

Solo Exhibitions

2021 "Natural Ellipsis, Anima Mundi and Ecological Conversion" curated by Rita Meschiari, Gate26A & Studio Tape, Festival Filosofia, Modena, Italy

Group Exhibitions

2021 "Un/Natural", Lishui International Photography Festival, China

2021 Internazionale Festival, Ferrara, Italy

2021 Images Gibellina, Italy

2021 DongGang International Photo Festival, South Korea

2021 Photoszene, Cologne, Germany

2021 "Control", FORMAT International Photography Festival, Derby, United Kingdom

2020 "Even though the whole world is burning", Angkor Photo Festival, Siem Reap, Cambodia 2020 "Inside" curated by PH Museum, Bologna, Italy

2020 Bird in Flight Exhibition, Kiev, Ukraine

2020 "Departing/Arriving", Singapore International Photography Festival, Singapore

2020 Photo Vogue Festival, Milan, Italy

2020 "Erratic Dream", Online exhibition curated by PH Museum

2020 "Canon Young Photographers Award", Cortona on the Move Festival, Cortona, Italy 2020 "Chronicles 2076", Yala Maya Kendra, Kathmandu, Nepal

Awards / Scholarships / Grants

2021 Presidential Scholarship, in support of MFA Visual Arts, Chiang Mai University
2021 GUP's FRESH EYES Talent
2021 Prix Nouvelle Écritures de la Photographie Environmental, Finalist
2021 Zine Tonic Award, Honorable Mention
2020 Bird in Flight Prize '20, Finalist
2020 Premio Canon Giovani Fotografi, Third Prize Winner
2020 Everything is Connected by Slideluck Editorial, Winner

Collections

Collection of Collections APS, Modena

Publications / Features

2021 [Juliet Art Magazine, Review](#)
2021 [Gup Magazine, Portfolio](#)
2021 [FRESH EYES 2021, The Latest European Photography](#)
2021 [Inside / PHmuseum 2nd Photobook On Mobile Photography](#) 2020
[The British Journal of Photography, Interview](#)
2020 [The Record Nepal, Essay](#)

Guest Lectures

2020 "Using Photography as a Research Tool", Center for Ethnic Studies and Development, Chiang Mai University, Thailand

Workshops

2021 Text & Image / Image & Text with Jorg Colberg, ISSP Online
Masterclass 2017 Magnum Workshop with Antoine D'Agata, Bangkok, Thailand

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