

SUBLIMATING A VITAL EXPERIENCE

was a necessary exercise for Valerio Polici when he chose to translate the action of graffiti into photography. A process of emotional and psychological growth led the author to abandon spray paint as a medium in favor of photography—a language that allows him to approach artistic research in a new way and with a greater awareness of purpose.

In photographic practice, Valerio Polici finds the formula to position himself as an observer of events while maintaining a deep connection with his subjects. Through an ever-complicit allegiance to the world of writers, he investigates its limits and constraints, its smells and moods. Acting at night while the city slumbers is the theater of heightened emotion—an experience the photographer does not forfeit in his lexical *shift*. Thus, his involvement with the traversed spaces and his companions in adventure remains steadfast, as does the state of mind of feeling like protagonists in a subterranean mythology—faceless heroes who, even before saving the world, must define themselves.

Ergo Sum simultaneously represents moments of waiting and action, of fear, visions of pure vitality, or moments suspended between decisions to be made to prevent the worst. Valerio Polici conceives this photographic project as an investigation into a context that shaped him as an individual, driven by the desire to analyze it from an alternate perspective—one that transforms that very reality from mere documentation into something unprecedented: a new world..

The installation designed for Reggio Emilia unfolds a narrative that complements and underlines the original creative experience. The four large shopfront windows overlooking the courtyard of Palazzo Brami suggest the theme without revealing it outright, instilling in the visitor the doubt of vision.

The four photographs form a sparse paradigm of creations, visions, discoveries, and entries into new worlds, where the rhythm of light suggested by the arrangement of the works blinds and at times points the way, in a continuous game of role reversals between the observed and the observer.

Thanks to the refined platinum-palladium printing technique—an ancient process applied to digital photography that retains the residual trace of acid agents on paper—Valerio Polici's photographs take on body and substance. They become open gashes revealing intimate experiences, constantly hovering between concealed identities and the desire to belong to the world.

Ergo Sum shifts into a line of research—philosophical first, then artistic—that uses the concept of hypermodernity (*surmodernité*) as the keystone to describe the existing relationships between places and human beings. It analyzes those transit spaces, interstices, borders, and outskirts: places where defined identities are lost and yield to infinite possibilities, to drifts of experience that generate unknown and unexpected cultural and social bonds.

The space of the image is that of the city-encounter, built on the foundation of collective relationships, where the degree of social interaction dictates the minimal and necessary conditions to develop a process of personifying the city while simultaneously depersonalizing those who inhabit it.

Thus, the content expressed in the relationship between man and environment, as well as the bonds between individuals, remains evident in the photographs. The idea of the hidden lingers, revealing the construction of lateral, virgin gazes—the only ones capable of mapping a territory as an image drawn by the perceptions and experiments of those who cross it.

Valerio Polici—*flâneur*-agent of his time—begins his photographic story from an intimate need to describe urban landscapes shaped by personal needs. Innervated within the crew, these needs create new relationships of meaning, governed by shared yet unwritten laws—unprecedented bonds forged outside familiar environments and “certified” friendships.

In *Ergo Sum*, environments and human beings share the same skin, feeding on one another and coming alive through reciprocal experience. Finding oneself in the world, however, is not synonymous with a resolution or contentment for Valerio Polici; it remains an expressive release valve that, though diffused between urban body and human bodies, retains a sense of claustrophobic angst. It presents a tight plane in which movement is barely possible—limited and limiting—in the constant tension of finding a safe harbor in which to take refuge.

Valerio Polici describes and lets radiate through his photographs all the energetic and entropic capacity between environment and individual. He achieves this through the exposure of his own experience, centering attention on private lives and intimate, hidden, and unexpressed relational experiences—tracing the network of strong, necessarily honest bonds that stem from sharing places that belong to us only by night. *Si fallor sum*.

Valerio Polici (Rome, 1984)

He began his journey in photography as a self-taught artist, following graffiti writers across Europe and Argentina.

ERGO SUM is an autobiographical documentary detailing that years-long personal journey.

He subsequently attended specialized courses in Rome, Padua, and Paris, and took part in Antonio Biasiucci's Workshop in Naples in 2015. Initially approaching photojournalism, his work was published in major national and international publications (The Washington Post, Newsweek, British Journal of Photography, L'Espresso) before he transitioned toward a more intimate photographic research.

His first book, created in collaboration with Polish photographer Rafał Milach and designer Ania Nałęcka, was presented at Paris Photo in 2016. His works have been exhibited at the Venice Biennale, MACRO in Rome, MADRE in Naples, and the Biennale de la Photographie d'Aubagne in France. He has also participated in numerous festivals across Italy, Germany, Turkey, and Portugal.