

From the interview with Kipras Dubauskas [KD] by Elisa Del Prete and Silvia Litardi [EDP | SL] of March 2022

[EDP | SL] In *Firestarter*, you set out to investigate the theme of 'rescue' in an era, such as the current one, in which we find ourselves answering or perhaps questioning, each in our own way, the central theme of caring for others. What is the point of view you want to give this trilogy in this regard?

[KD] I am interested in bringing out the ways in which we are taking on that which is safety. We must not lose sight of what it means for each of us to be saved, in what way, by what and by whom, in what our individual healing consists.

[EDP | SL] The city, with its urbanism and its hidden infrastructures are protagonists. These are landscapes of an 'elsewhere' that speak of a periphery of existence, places that become emotional before being functional, where one lives on the margins but within the essence before the urban construction. Where does the research you develop on the relationship between the visible and the non-visible, between the emerged and the underground, start from?

[KD] Landscape, the concept of psychogeography and graffiti have dictated the guidelines of my urban exploration. After growing up in Vilnius and experiencing all its transformations following independence from the Soviet Union and seeing the city change before my eyes very quickly, my routine has changed. I am interested in this constant state of transformation and incessant precariousness to which human action leads. And this is also the reason why I also started to dialogue with the city through graffiti, because they are short interventions, susceptible to many variations, from the type of surface the wall has to the possible removal in 24 hours.

[EDP | SL] The theme of 'impermanence', together and in rhyme with that of 'circularity', which is reuse, but also a narrative tool, whereby films go in a loop, the end coincides with the beginning, also returns in the practice of film.

[KD] Yes. I especially love that about film: it's not a medium that I use just to tell a story, but it's a living, material tool that I relate to. I studied sculpture and I don't consider myself a professional filmmaker, I like to think of myself as an amateur or simply as an artist. Most of the things I do relate to my artistic practice, when I cook as when I do my job as a rider, which confronts me with street scenes every day. Of film I appreciate the fact that it doesn't give me too much time and too many chances, that I can shoot alone, without a crew or big expensive productions. I consider my films as material. That is why I intervene on the film, sometimes I compromise it, I am interested in experimenting with its potential, its mistakes.

[EDP | SL] And indeed your films do not end with images on film
The film and the experimentation I carry out on it is only a small part of the work, it interests me as much as all the other aspects of it. That is why I rarely exhibit them on their own without objects or traces of the path that saw them come into being and of which I want to make the public aware. Placing the film within the installation is a way of accompanying the audience in their enjoyment by forming a zone of continuity between what is inside the film

and what is outside, a form of welcome. Music also plays an important role, it is the heartbeat of the city. At the moment I am looking for new ways to work with sound in relation to the film, I would like to go beyond the typical passage whereby, once finished, I hand the film over to the composer who writes based on the images. I am interested in exploring the opposite process, editing the film according to the sound like a music clip.

[EDP | SL] The filmic narrative exists together with the process that precedes it in which exploring the city is combined with the encounter of certain people, the recovery of certain objects, the reconversion of certain forms. A practice of walking, in solitude or together with colleagues and friends, which you describe as the most normal activity possible, within everyone's reach and thanks to which the changes in rural, industrial and urban space are experienced, traversed and then observed, read and processed. In Bologna, for Firestarter, you wanted to descend into its canals, exploring perhaps its most hidden and unexplored part, that 'liquid' backbone of the city. What did you find?

[KD] Bologna's canals are like underground rivers that then go to emerged rivers and then to the sea, from which in turn other rivers are born, and so they belong to the map that weaves the whole world. It reminded me of how in many countries of the former USSR, cities were renovated by covering hidden canals in order to build on them. What amazed me was that no one goes there. In the ones I walked, I found no traces of human infiltration, no tags, no dirt, no encampments. Perhaps in the age of the internet there is no more room for the underground? In Bologna, there is a very clear distinction between a talking 'above' where you find tags and graffiti but also arcades that condition, just like tunnels, your range of vision and perception, and an uninhabited 'below'.

I visited Bologna for the first time in the summer of 2021. I was struck by its industrial and silk trade history, the image of its medieval skyscrapers, the towers, with these arches that draw infinite perspectives under elegant buildings while not far away, in what is defined as the suburbs, brutalist buildings are repeated... a landscape that is both homogeneous and fragmented at the same time, which I believe makes this city unique in its connection between past and present.