

il buco

a film by
Michelangelo Frammartino



In January 2007, the mayor of the Calabrian village where I was filming LE QUATTRO VOLTE, took me on a tour of the Pollino. "You must see the wonders of these mountains!", he said. He brought me to a sinkhole where a meagre cut in the ground could be seen. I was perplexed, disappointed. The mayor, on the other hand, enthusiastic and proud, threw a large stone into that void. It got swallowed by darkness. The bottom was so deep that nothing could be seen nor heard. That disappearance, that lack of response, gave me a very strong emotion. That strange place stuck with me, calling me back to it years later, to question it and create a project within the silent blackness of the Bifurto Abyss.

- Michelangelo Frammartino

CAST & CREW

Starring: Paolo Cossi, Jacopo Elia, Denise Trombin, Nicola Lanza

Director: Michelangelo Frammartino

Cinematography: Renato Berta

Script: Michelangelo Frammartino, Giovanna Giuliani

Editing: Benni Atria

Production design: Giliano Carli

Sound: Simone Paolo Olivero

Costume design: Stefania Grilli

PRODUCTION

Producers: Marco Serrecchia, Michelangelo Frammartino, Philippe Bober

Production Companies: Doppio Nodo Double Bind, Rai Cinema

Co-production Companies: Parisienne de Production, Essential Films

Supported by: MIC - Direzione Generale Cinema, Eurimages, Calabria Film Commission, Regione Lazio, CNC - Aide aux cinémas du monde - Centre National de la Cinématographie - Institut Français, Arte France Cinéma, ZDF/Arte, Medienboard Berlin Brandenburg, Cinereach

with the collaboration and patronage of: the Pollino National Park, the Comune di San Lorenzo Bellizzi and the Italian Speleological Society.



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Italy, France, Germany | 2021 | 93min, Color, 4K, Dolby Atmos



IL BUCO (2021)

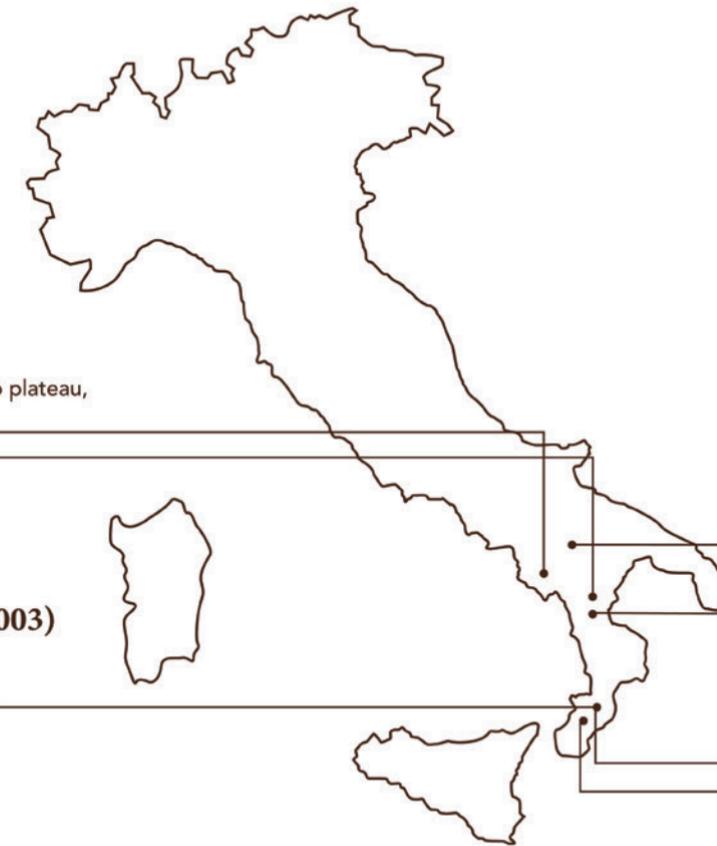
Shot in Calabria on the Pollino plateau,

Abisso del Bifurto
Cerchiara di Calabria

IL DONO (2003)

Shot in Calabria,

Caulonia



ALBERI (2013)

Shot in Basilicata,

Armanto

LE QUATTRO VOLTE (2010)

Shot in Calabria,

Alessandria del Carretto
Caulonia
Serra San Bruno

HISTORY TIMELINE

1956-1958 Construction of the Pirelli skyscraper in Milan by architect Gio Ponti. The tower is commissioned by the president of the giant Pirelli tyre company, Alberto Pirelli.

1958-1963 Peak years of the Italian economic miracle.

1958 Celebration of the construction of the Pirelli tower's roof slab, reaching a height of 127m.

1959 Beginning of the LUNA programme, where a series of robotic spacecraft missions were sent to the Moon by the Soviet Union.

4th April 1960 Pirelli tower is fully completed. The tower becomes a symbol not only of Milan, but also of the economic recovery of Italy after the devastation of World War II.

12th April 1961 Yuri Alekseyevich Gagarin, a Soviet pilot and cosmonaut, became the first human to journey into outer space, achieving a major milestone in the Space Race; his capsule, Vostok 1, completed one orbit of Earth.

10th July 1961 Walter Bonatti (the greatest Italian mountaineer of all time) attempts the ascent of the Mont Blanc (Europe's rooftop) via the Pilone Centrale del Frêne route (which will later become the "classic" route).

5th August 1961 Giulio Gècchele, Marziano Di Maio, Giuseppe De Matteis, Ginni Braida, Carla Lanza, Dario Soderò, and the other young members of the Piedmontese Speleological Group (GSP) of Turin arrive at the unexplored Calabrian hinterland of Pollino and discover the Bifurto Abyss.

Yuri Gagarin è tornato sulla Terra dopo aver visto ciò che nessuno ha mai visto

L'uomo che ha volato solo nel cosmo è un maggiore dell'aviazione sovietica, figlio di un falegname, ha 27 anni, è sposato, ha due figlie - Il volo è cominciato alle 9,07 di ieri mattina (ora di Mosca) ed è terminato alle 10,55 - L'astronauta ha potuto comunicare con la base - Il meraviglioso racconto: "Ho visto con i miei occhi che la Terra è rotonda e di colore azzurro, mentre il cielo è scuro,,

SCIENZA E POLITICA **QUANDO È ATTERRATO HA DETTO: «STO BENE»**

La nostra assoluta incompetenza ci impedisce di apprezzare in maniera scientifica e precisa la portata dell'ultima grande impresa astronautica sovietica. Per quel che ci è stato possibile capire, una volta imparate le vie del cielo coi lanci di proiettili che andavano ad incastrarsi in orbita attorno al nostro globo a guida di satelliti, restavano da superare ancora numerose difficoltà per poter trasformare questo lancio in un viaggio di andata e ritorno ad uso dell'uomo. Bisognava costruire un proiettile capace di contenere un essere umano senza che il suo peso andasse in perdita del suo impulso di lancio. Bisognava assicurarsi della sopravvivenza di questo essere nelle condizioni d'ascesi per l'inevitabile viaggio. Bisognava poter comandare il rientro del proiettile e il suo approdo in un luogo stabilito, impedire la disintegrazione al momento dell'urto con l'atmosfera, ottenere che esso si posasse dolcemente sulla Terra, riconoscendo ineccezione il viaggiatore.

Tutti gli esperimenti fatti in questi ultimi tempi, tanto in Russia quanto in America, hanno mirato per l'appunto a risolvere poco alla volta queste difficoltà. L'Unione Sovietica è arrivata pri-

ma, è la prima prova dell'immediato-utile politico che la Russia intende trarre dall'avvenimento. Non è un documento in cui il più forte o chi si crede più forte offre con magnanimità la pace al mondo, perché sappiamo che la pace di cui si tratta è la pace sovietica.

Data la intransigenza sovietica in cui si è irrigidita la politica estera sovietica fino ad oggi, l'invito alla pace sembra, piuttosto, un invito alla resa, fatto con indubbia abilità propagandistica.

Panfilo Gentile

DAL NOSTRO CORRISPONDENTE

Mosca 12 aprile, notte. 12 aprile 1961: per la prima volta un uomo ha volato nello spazio. L'uomo si chiama Yuri Alekseyevich Gagarin, ha compiuto da poco i ventisei anni, essendo nato il 29 marzo 1934, in provincia di Smolensk. Viene da una famiglia di contadini, è stato fonditore, poi perito industriale, finalmente è diventato pilota dell'aviazione militare sovietica. È sposato: la moglie, Valentina Ivanovna, fa l'infermiera; ha avuto da lei due figlie: Elena, di quasi tre anni, Galina, di un mese.

La sua biografia è, insomma, priva di singolari caratteristiche, simile a quella di tanti altri, tipica, proprio per l'assenza, fino a oggi, di fatti straordinari, di un'intera generazione di gente russa, la generazione che ha compiuto il gran passo dalla civiltà contadina, arretrata e primitiva, alla civiltà industriale, protesa verso nuove realizzazioni scientifiche e civili. È proprio questo personaggio qualunque, Yuri Alekseyevich Gagarin, ha volato, stamane, a bordo di una nuova satellite chiamata "Vostok" (Oriente), attorno alla Terra, a

distanza immensa dalla superficie del nostro pianeta. Per la prima volta un uomo ha davvero visto la nostra amata Terra, come un corpo celeste lontano nello spazio. Appena un'ora e 48 minuti sono bastati a Yuri Alekseyevich Gagarin per compiere a bordo del suo favoloso veicolo un intero volo orbitale attorno al globo.

Momenti d'ansia

Quando abbiamo appreso in notizia del lancio, alle dieci di stamane (e ci è giunta dopo giornate di ansiosa attesa, durante le quali erano fiorite le voci o le storie più fantastiche sul volo spaziale), nel momento in cui, alla radio di Mosca, la sonora, retorica voce di Yuri Levitan, l'annunciatore che comunemente al mondo la caduta di Stalingrado, ci diceva per prima volta che il grande giorno era arrivato, in quello stesso istante Yuri Alekseyevich Gagarin era ancora perduto nello spazio remotissimo, solo fra la Terra e il cosmo, nel suo minuscolo veicolo spaziale; più che veicolo, un guscio di noce in un vuoto oceanico senza confini.

Diciamo la verità, in quel momento tutti i pensieri che avevano occupato fino ad allora la nostra mente, i dubbi su ciò che era successo prima, la sorpresa nel sentire annunciato il volo appena dodici ore dopo che si era parlato di un'altra, e meno felice impresa, si spari-



Il colloquio dell'astronauta con Kruscev per telefono

«Tua moglie sapeva che avresti fatto un volo nel cosmo?» - «Sì, lo sapeva, Nikita Sergeievich» - «Lasciamo ora che gli altri tentino di raggiungerci»



SHORT SYNOPSIS

During the economic boom of the 1960s, Europe's highest building is being built in Italy's prosperous North. At the other end of the country, young speleologists explore Europe's deepest cave in the untouched Calabrian hinterland. The bottom of the Bifurto Abyss, 700 meters below Earth, is reached for the first time.

The intruders' venture goes unnoticed by the inhabitants of a small neighbouring village, but not by the old shepherd of the Pollino plateau whose solitary life begins to interweave with the group's journey.

Another work of nearly wordless organic beauty that touches on the mystical, IL BUCO chronicles a visit through unknown depths of life and nature and parallels two great voyages to the interior.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

THE BEGINNING OF THE PROJECT

When I was filming *LE QUATTRO VOLTE* in Alessandria del Carretto, the mayor of the town, Antonio La Rocca (Nino), himself a speleologist, helped me with the location scouting. He would often tell me how wonderful the Pollino is. He thought I was too focused on the arboreal cult at the time - and wanted me to dedicate at least one whole day to visit the area.

The Pollino, a massif in the southern Apennines, on the border between Basilicata and Calabria, is a vast and fascinating territory. It has canyons, deep furrows where rivers pass. Its nature and fauna are extraordinary, including golden eagles, griffins, and wolves. To convince me of the beauty of the Pollino, Nino first led me to the entrance to the Bifurto. For someone like me, who is not a speleologist, it seemed just like a mere hole in the ground. Located in the middle of a rather common Mediterranean scrub, it was not particularly fascinating. I remember looking at him in disbelief.

He started to explain how he had detected it. How he had spent years of his life in there mapping it out, using the ancient systems - with the rib and an clinometer. How he had entered it hundreds and hundreds of times, to make the perfect survey. How he had slept in there, eaten in there. He had left part of his youth in there. Of course, this place had a very special meaning to him. I began to understand him. Nino dropped a stone into the hole and I remember that it took about 3, 4 seconds for the stone to hit something. It felt as if the stone was out of sync. Then I really understood. That was in 2007.

In 2016, Nino organized an exploratory campaign to try to unblock the "trebuchet", what I had previously thought of as the hole in the ground. I spent a couple of weeks together with the group of speleologists, digging, questioning myself. There, I met 82-year-old Giulio Gècchele who led the first expedition in 1961. He was an inspiration.

In 1961, while the global economic boom was in full swing in Italy, Giulio Gècchele and his young Speleological Group, from Piedmont, were dedicated to an act that was completely free. As opposed to the trend of the unstoppable skyward trajectory, they began a speleological expedition, which ended with them climbing into a niche, a hole, a crack in the Earth, and sliding down to a depth of around 700 meters underground. At the bottom of the Italian peninsula, they discovered the second deepest cave in the world, the Bifurto Abyss. The record was unknown even to the explorers themselves.

In the same months, the monumental Pirelli skyscraper, a vertiginous example of architecture, was completed. The building was splashed over the news, receiving wide media coverage and quickly became a flashy symbol of Italy having reached the highest vertical objective. Yet the speleologists' discovery was not made public and remained as obscure as the dark underworld in which it was completed.



INVASION

However, were our marvelous young explorers also the product of those years? Did their enterprise end up being, despite themselves, a form of colonization - nothing but an offshoot of the economic boom and that spirit of optimism, which they sought to escape?

By descending with the tools of science and reason into a land that was still archaic, by annotating and portraying a place bound to myths and beliefs, using the graphic notes of studious explorers, did they merely outline, reveal and translate the unknown subterranean world according to the same parameters and numerical measurements of the world above? If this was the case, their action, which was revolutionary for its time, instead ends up being interpreted as an attack. Suddenly, the last shapeless, primitive, and primeval point of resistance that had never witnessed mankind was invaded. Its measurements and dimensions, which had remained intact and free from classification, were now recorded and deciphered. What had, until then, been nothing more than belief, myth, and mystery, would now be named and defined. It stopped to exist outside of reality and became "the abyss".

Did these young speleologists, who were trying to resist the anthropological change that was spreading rapidly across Europe,



unknowingly carry out an act of colonization in a zone of non-reality? Did they submit it to the orientation of their compasses, to the light of their lamps, to the gaze from their eyes, to the measurement of their measuring tapes? Is their light, which defies the darkness and cancels the magic of the folk tale, the light of the economic north, of knowledge and reason, which tames the mystery of the mountain?

EXPLORATION OF THE DARKNESS

IL BUCO is a film designed to be seen at the cinema, in the darkness of the theatre, together with others. Immersing the audience in the same substance as the speleologists.

In speleology, you do not see the other cavers. Darkness makes you move in space according to your needs; it is without vanity. Speleology is not a sport - in sport, even in the moment of great exhaustion, you are always under the gaze of the public, the fans, the cameras. Caving is in the dark, underground, in the mud. Speleologists are dressed more like street cleaners than athletes.

It was a challenge to find the cast as the idea of being visible, of participating in a film was not that attractive to them. They wanted to stay in the dark, to be underground.

I liked this idea of working with people who didn't want to make a film, who didn't want to be seen.

In caving, there is almost a propensity for defeat, in the sense that there is no triumph. There is no top of the mountain to reach as in mountaineering where you win, you succeed in the enterprise. In the cave, you do not know where you are going. There is no fixed point to be reached. When the exploration ends, it's a small defeat. The arrival point is usually an ugly place, a narrow, dirty, muddy place. There is always a kind of melancholy.

This vocation to disappearance, rather than to affirm visibility, was intriguing cinematographically. When I first experienced caving with Nino, I got interested in this exploration of the dark - where the most fundamental cinematic element, the light, is missing.

The beginning of modern speleology, with the founding of the first speleological society in France, was in 1895 - an emblematic year for us filmmakers, with it coinciding with the birth of cinema. I feel this strong link between darkness and cinema - these beams of light in the dark.

MAPPING THE INTERIOR

An important French geologist, François Ellenberger, a man of the earth, of volcanoes, of caves, of the interior of the planet, finds himself in a concentration camp. Unlike his fellow prisoners – famous thinkers, philosophers, who can continue to exercise their thinking, he is unable to exercise his profession. Ellenberger begins a very strange experiment which is to study one's own memory and dreams, one's own interiority and mystery, using geological methods.

When talking about the soul of the landscape, the unconscious of the mountain, the breath of the caves, we are humanizing the territories – but said by us, it sounds like amateur philosophical ambition. The 5-year long research work of renowned scientist Ellenberger, during which he questioned the similarities between the interior of the planet and those of a man, encouraged me to try this juxtaposition between the old herdsman and the Abyss of the Bifurto.

I gradually discovered a strong relationship between speleologists and shepherds - both on the Pollino, but also in the Maritime Alps, and in Piedmont. The shepherds are the ones who know the landscape and mountainous territories best. They are the ones

questioned by the explorers to know how the territory is made. They know of any cavities. They know holes and caves – which tend to be dangerous places for them – except the horizontal ones, where they can put livestock. Historically also, caves have always been linked to beliefs and traditions associated with fear.

Shepherds are also those who baptize the territory, who give names to the peaks, to places that they are used to crossing. There is a strong ancient bond that I have always encountered since I started working in caving. Even in the videos of the speleological group from Piedmont, in the films of the 50s, of the early 60s, the shepherds appear with their animals. It is a constant.





MICHELANGELO FRAMMARTINO & RENATO BERTA: A conversation

MICHELANGELO FRAMMARTINO: I first came to you seeking advice in 2018. It seemed very interesting to have an eye like yours, an eye that created some of the key images of the 20th century, grapple with the challenge of this cave's utter darkness. I must admit, I really didn't think you would want to do a film like this.

RENATO BERTA: There was a whole series of reasons as to why I said yes: going to a small town in Calabria that I didn't know, what more does one want in life? But importantly, I never had the chance to film absolute blackness, where the screen was no longer a simple rectangle.

What worried us most was how you'd navigate in the cave. You never entered the cave!

I'd never done something like this before. I've found myself on a crane on other shoots, or on a tower in the cold. I would stay up there for hours, while the director stayed down below. There was

always a little distance, but honestly that was not the case here. I did feel like I was inside with all of you.

I remember one time, at the beginning of the shoot, I was down, with the camera. It was way too dark to look into the viewfinder, so I tried to follow your instructions from above. I told you, "I can't see anything," and you said, "Ah, but I do!". You were the one who really saw what we were capturing.

I remember when we decided that I would ultimately stay up and you would be going down. On the surface we would anxiously await the moment when sound could be heard, when contact would be established, and often it took one, two, three, four hours.

Sometimes it would take us eight or nine hours before we sent you the first images.



The moment the optical fiber connected and the image arrived – those moments were always extremely emotional. I must say that the team who helped us shoot this were saints.

The film would not exist without our speleologist safety team. Being down there at 100 or 400 meters of depth for many hours, always staying on their feet, carrying materials... that was truly exhausting. The optical fiber that they stretched for hundreds and hundreds of meters inside the cave was a very heavy coil. It was used to bring a large amount of information to a high-quality screen outside. It allowed you to manage the aperture in real time.

Some shots have at least eight different apertures – that's something that I've never done in my life.

Do you remember the first time I came out of the cave? I was extremely desperate, because I thought it was a disaster, yet you greeted me saying: "Now this is quality!"; you were so happy. For me, you also represented this voice that existed differently, both spatially and temporally.

Seeing you entering the cave, having this distance between us, was of an absolutely hallucinatory reality. You were dying from the cold down below, while we were dying from the heat up above.

We worked like this for 6 weeks, I really felt like I was attached via an umbilical cord to someone who perceived what was really happening to the images. I always had the feeling that we were your messengers.

All the photographic choices gradually imposed themselves as we progressed in our cinematic dialogue. The image came by itself, we were merely there to capture it.

You spent weeks, for example, working on the helmets' lights to construct the illuminating elements of that part of the film. By shining their light, they created that underground universe. We also tried to characterize the teams with a certain type of light, depending on the task they would have had in the exploration.

We did a helmet casting in some sorts. I did a series of experiments because, in the 1960s, most of the speleologists' lighting systems were completely handcrafted. Every speleologist had a different personalized helmet. They adapted lights that ranged from small





tungsten bulbs to acetylene, which gave a very hot light; there were no LEDs yet.

We were lucky enough to find a speleologist as our set designer, Gilliano Carli. He acted like a 60s speleologist. He scrapped material together from old miners' helmets or WWI motorcycles.

We used LEDs in the end because they consume very little compared to tungsten. I then colored them with various filters and jellies. The main problem really was the batteries because of the humidity and the cold.

The fascinating thing when in absolute darkness is that speleologists only see what they illuminate. In some ways, their gaze became our own and this is what the camera captured. The space would completely change with a small movement of the head.

Yes, the illuminated parts determine the screen. Everything beyond is nothing, it's darkness. In fact, there are some shots in the film where one can see the screen change.

Looking meant inventing an entirely new part of the shot, where previously there was just black photo pixels. The darkness

constituted a border, in some way, between what is the world and what isn't. I really liked that you were interested in exploring this.

Cinematically speaking, these spaces are always renewing themselves, reinventing themselves. You thought at some point that we needed to add some lights to see these how gigantic these environments were. That would have been a mistake. If we eliminated that underexposure, we would eliminate the blackness and betray the principles of these explorers.

Exactly, theirs is an exploration disguised as a real invention.



PIEDMONTESE SPELEOLOGICAL GROUP (GSP) - HISTORY

The Piedmontese Speleological Group (GSP) was formed in 1952 by four young men with a passion for underground adventure.

The founders, in the early years, led the group with the desire of exploring caves, and even today, the group shares this same objective. In 1957, the first speleology course was established with the main aim of publicizing speleological experiences and finding new members who would share their same passion for caves.

In a very short time, the GSP gained the exploratory experience that allowed it to become one of the most important Italian speleological groups. Notable exploits from this period include the exploration of Piaggia Bella and Gaché sul Marguareis in Piedmont, the Spluga della Preta in Veneto, Su Bentu in Sardinia and of course, the Bifurto Abyss in Calabria.

Throughout the 1980s, the GSP deepened its knowledge of the caves throughout the national territory. In the nineties the group

went outside of Europe, exploring an abundance of new destinations, including Patagonia, Pakistan, Vietnam, and China.

Currently, the GSP, seventy years after its founding, has hundreds of members and the group remains managed mainly by amateur enthusiasts.

1961 Bifurto Exploration Bulletin Board

14th August 1961: In the evening, mindful of the corporal's wishes, we accepted the hospitality of some very kind shepherds; around the fire, they told us of the existence in the area of the ghost cave of Antonio Franco, named after the brigand who inhabited it. This cave exists, but no one has ever found it and, of course, inside is hidden treasure. Every shepherd dreams of finding it and giving up the hardships of their mountain life. A young man is said to have seen the mysterious cave whose entrance is adorned with a bush of roses. Greedy for the money, it is said that he kept the discovery a secret. He went down to town and bought ropes and lights. But when he returned, the cave was gone.

But we didn't look for it: what was the point if there actually wasn't a cave? And if there was, why destroy a legend?

- Carla Lanza



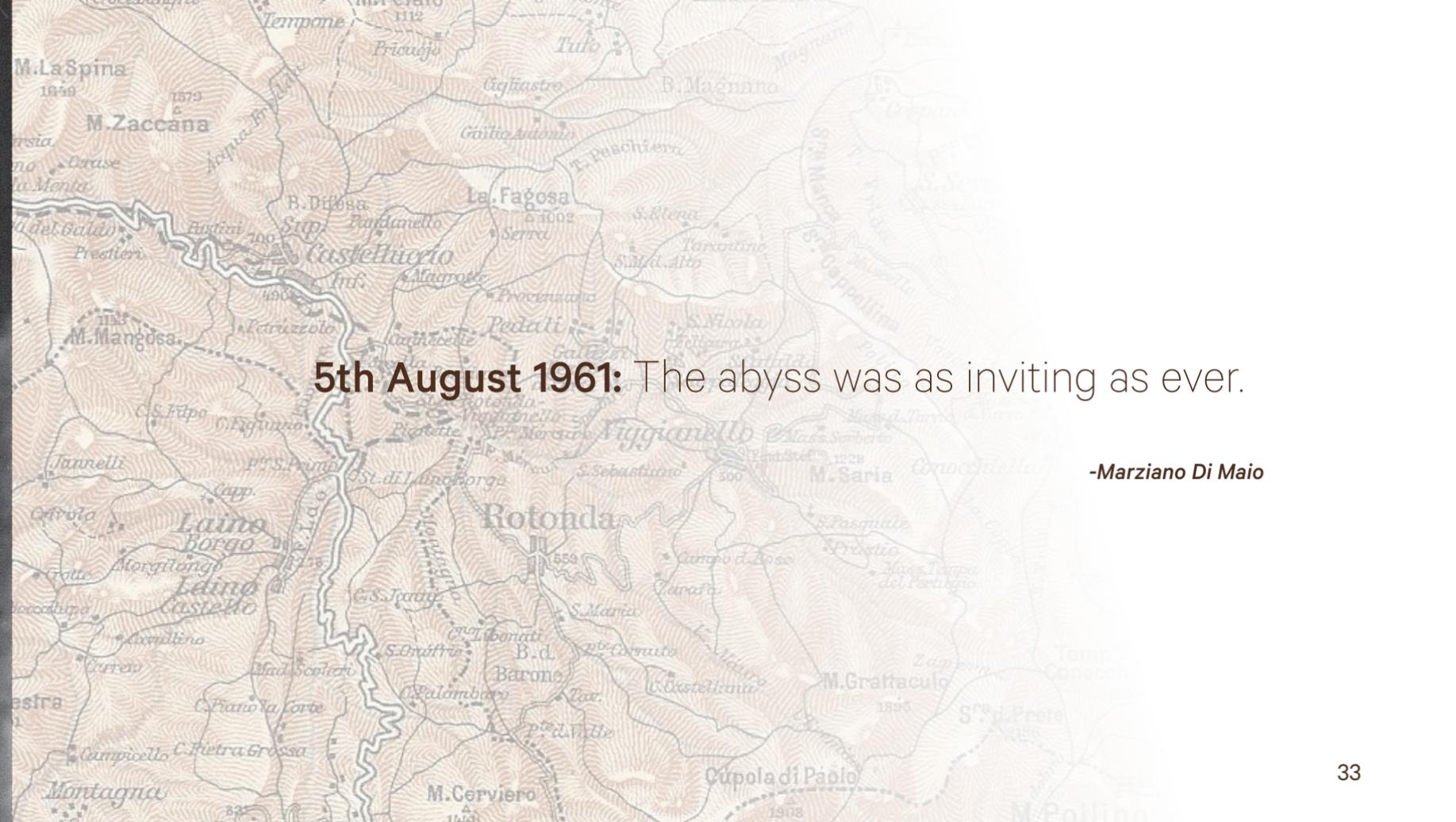
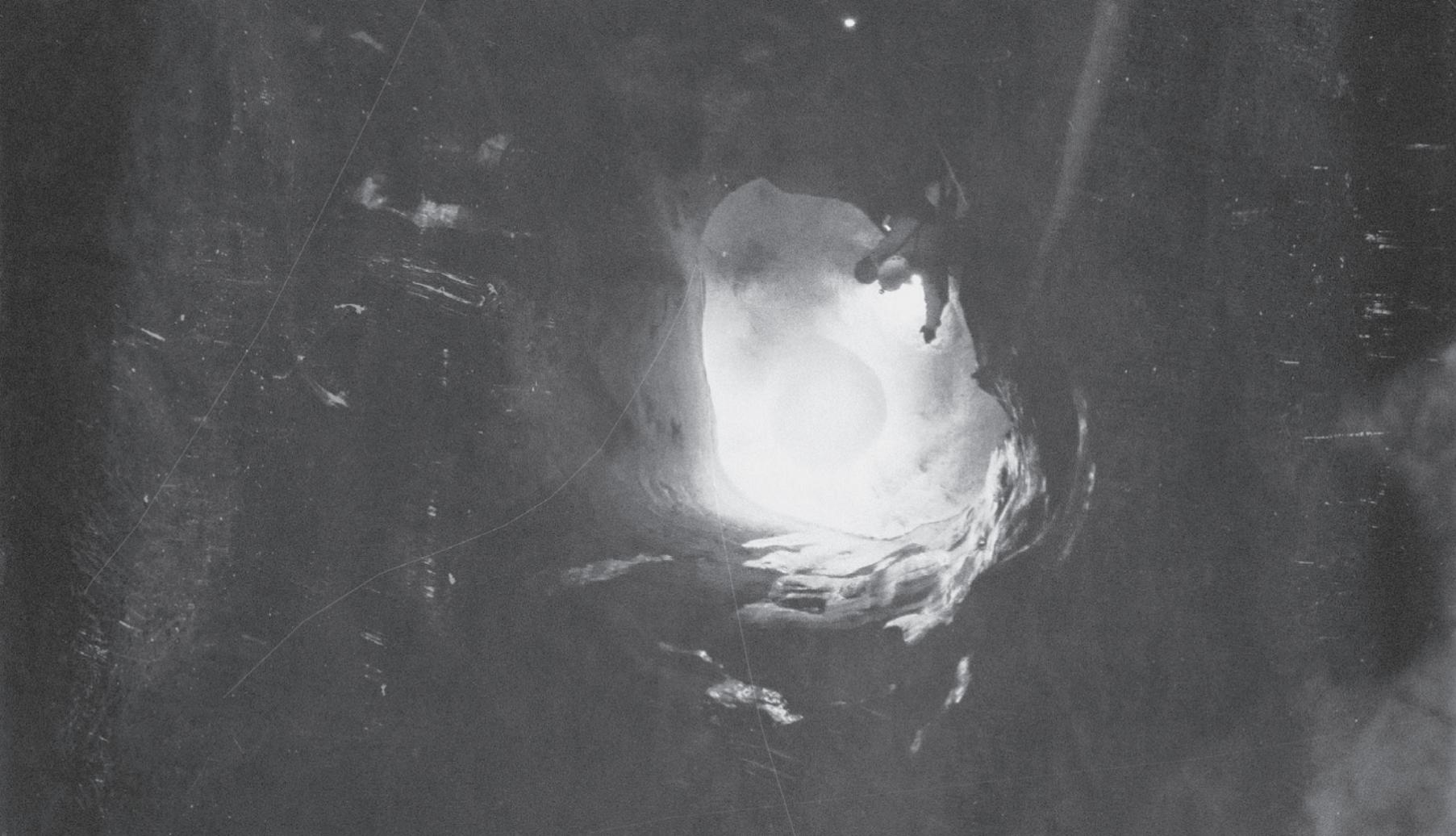
We went in as friends and came out as brothers, we saw the most beautiful world, we enjoyed life, the sun, the colors, everything: even if it were only this, the result of the "700 hours underground" was certainly worth doing.



We have completed, during our stay in Cerchiara di Calabria, where this year the G.S.P. held its summer camp, the exploration of the Bifurto Abyss, which after almost two weeks of effort rewarded us with the satisfaction of having reached the depth of 683 meters, making it one of the deepest in the world.

-Marziano Di Maio





5th August 1961: The abyss was as inviting as ever.

-Marziano Di Maio



INTERVIEW WITH SPELEOLOGIST/ACTOR LEONARDO ZACCARO

Can you tell us about your first experience in the Bifurto?

I started caving by following a course in Calabria in August 1997 and, a month later, I moved to Turin. That week in the mountains literally transported me to a new world. One of the outings of the course, perhaps the last, was right at the Bifurto but we stopped immediately after the first well or a little further on. In the following years, there were several opportunities to go to the bottom, but I was never fully convinced: it was as if I was waiting for something, for a reason to go there, different than the typical hit and run. The right opportunity came in the summer of 2017, when Michelangelo Frammartino and Giovannella (Giovanna Giuliani), after only three months from their first tour in the cave, asked to be accompanied to the bottom. They were in the process of writing the script and had to physically prove what they were writing about. My descent of the Bifurto began in 1997 and exactly twenty years later, I reached the bottom, with Michelangelo and Giovanna.

What does the discovery of the Bifurto in '61 represent?

In terms of speleology, I grew up with that idea. From the balcony of my room, in Calabria, you can see the Sellaro, the Bifurto's mountain. One of the first things I did when I arrived in Turin was to go and track down the explorers to hear the reports from their voices. So, armed with a pen, notebook, and admiration, I interviewed Marziano Di Maio, Beppe De Matteis, Giulio Gècchele (I also earned a dinner at his house!) and the others who all gravitated to the Turin area because I wanted to tell their story. From their words, I understood that those were very hectic years from an exploratory point of view: the maximum depths were quickly announced one after another and some, voluntarily or not, disguised the numbers to give greater prominence to their businesses. Technically, the Bifurto is not a difficult cave, but it showed that even in southern Italy it was possible to find abysses. At the time of its discovery, it was the deepest in Italy: the survey, redone a few years ago with modern instruments, is the result of extreme precision. Caving has never met with great media

success unlike, for example, mountaineering. Given the queues in recent years to climb Everest, all things considered maybe...

How was your experience on set?

I felt well looked after, which was a novelty. When Michelangelo's voice was heard saying (rarely) "Right first take!", there was real excitement. There was applause and we would call out encouragement to each other: we felt cool, like real actors. Then Michelangelo would look at the scene and say "Ok, guys! Let's do it again! "... I wished I could have seen the scenes during the shoot: but we weren't allowed. Maybe it was for the right reason. I don't know. I didn't understand anything before and I don't understand anything now. But I still remember the desire to see the shot which evolved into the desire to see the film.

Can you describe how it is, how time passes underground?

It is difficult to completely detach ourselves from the passage of time. I still happen to lose this sense, however, during the speleology camps: two or three weeks completely isolated in the mountains, without a telephone line, the only metronome is the sun (and hunger of course). There are many methods of caving. I never liked

haste. It was while caving that I stopped wearing my watch. At first, I didn't wear it so as not to ruin it... now I don't even know where it is. The caves I normally explore are quite cold, so often time is spent thinking about how not to freeze.

Did you have any difficulties during the filming?

The very first scene. Michelangelo said "Action!" and I had to cross a small lake. I started to move my hand, then the other, my foot, the other and... I slipped! I was soaked right up to my chest! I took pity not on myself, but on Michelangelo who at that moment, I believe, sensed that the Bifurto would be the lesser problem. But the crew was very efficient: in only a few minutes, I was dry and in clean clothes, with a person sitting outside checking via video that I was ready and hadn't yet made a mess of the new outfit.

Did you discover anything new about caving by making this film?

Yes, the link between speleology and the landscape. Actually, for me, it's not a new concept but this film helped me focus on it. Many people's thoughts about a cave are confined to it, as if they were imprisoned inside and had difficulty getting out of it. Making this

film, on the other hand, was like being taken by the hand and finding oneself immersed in a context where cave and landscape, natural and human, are equally powerful and support each other. The cave begins when you talk about it around the fire with your friends of exploration and continues as long as you want it to continue, as long as you can remember it.





GIULIO GÈCCELE, POINT MAN OF THE 1961 BIFURTO EXPLORATION, ON THE FILM

Ante scriptum: here is the fruit of my nocturnal ruminations.

I don't know if Michelangelo, being from Calabria, considered our exploration to be an invasion by the Piedmontese, similar to that of a hundred years earlier, or as a moment of happiness for a group of young people to whom the door had opened for the exploration of an unknown world, which we would bring to everyone's knowledge.

I believe the second hypothesis is true, however I was impressed by the mental purity of the director, and his screenwriter, who experienced the emotions of those first explorers that reached the bottom of the Bifurto.

When adding new names to my memory bank, I pair them with adjectives such as Turinese, Cunean, Bolognese, Milanese, Triestian. I have now added Calabrian and Neapolitan for my dear Michelangelo and Giovannella (screenwriter Giovanna Giuliani).

It is nice to have memories of the living (and alas dead) with which to share a breath.



THE ITALIAN ECONOMIC MIRACLE

The Italian Economic Miracle refers to the decade of strong economic growth that took place in Italy from the 1950s to the 1960s and, in particular, the years from 1958 to 1963, during which the country was transformed from a primarily rural country into a global industrial power. Gone were the miserable days as shown in the neorealist films by de Sica and Rossellini. The miracle did not only entail an economic change of the scenery, it also changed the social landscape of the country. It was a time during which consumer society changed the fantasies, the fears, and the hopes of Italy's common people.

Benefiting from over \$1.2 billion thanks to the Marshall Plan after from 1947 to 1951, Italy began a rapid development. The Italian contribution to European production rose from 9 to 12% thanks to the development of its steel industry to contribute to the Korean War of 1950-1953. Between 1958 and 1963, Italy saw industrial growth rates of more than 8% per year. This development was, however, rather unequal throughout the territory. The country's first

industrial triangle composed by Turin, Milan, and Genoa, an area that held the large-scale industrialization of the Italian economy since the end of the 19th century, continued to dominate the rest of the peninsula. The southern part of the country where the income per capita in 1950 was half of the North's, remained rather underdeveloped. This gave rise to an exodus of the inexpensive workforce from South to North. In 1962, Turin saw the rise of 35.5% in inhabitants, Milan 36.6%, while the entirety of the South lost 12.2% of its population. It has been calculated that in the period between 1955 and 1971, nearly 9,150,000 people, including Michelangelo Frammartino's parents, were involved in interregional migrations. This depopulation represented one of the most dramatic aspects of the transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy and is one of the key themes depicted in *IL DONO* (2007).

The Italian economic miracle saw the rise of new traditions. On January 3rd, 1954, the national public broadcasting company RAI, with its headquarters in Milan and relay stations in Turin and Rome,

started its regular service of television broadcasts. At the time, there were only 90 license holders, which then became 24 thousand after a month, 88 thousand after a year and 1 million after four. The proliferation of TV sets offered a new reality to the one experienced by the common Italian. In *IL BUCO*, this can be seen in the bar scene, during which the inhabitants of Cerchiara gather in the evening to watch variety shows on the bar's small television.

The increase in consumption was made possible by the continuous growth of employment and, therefore, of wages which from 1950 to 1960 had increased by 142%. In 1960, the Italian Lira was nominated as the strongest currency of the Western world by the *Financial Times*. Brands such as Fiat, Maserati, Olivetti, Gucci or Bulgari became international standards of quality and luxury. The Fiat 500, launched in 1957, is still considered a symbol of this miraculous decade. The Italian way of life was now characterized by consumer culture. As a matter of fact, from 1945 to 1960, the consumption rate of the average Italian tripled.

In Europe, Italian rates of growth were second only, but very close, to the German rates. However, this vivid societal change did not come without its criticism and somber consequences. Italian filmmaker and intellectual Pasolini argued that this new model of society was

more totalitarian than fascism, calling it a "catastrophe, destructive homologation, anthropological cataclysm, anthropological mutation, destruction of humanistic culture, destruction of man, appearance of a new human category, genocide, more simply a tragedy [...] It's just that there are no more human beings, there are only strange machines that bump into each other". The golden streak of the Italian Economic Miracle came to an end with the Hot Autumn Strikes (1969-1970) which led to the demeaning and tragic Years of Lead, a decade marked by social unrest, interior terrorism and political turmoil.





THE POLLINO TERRITORY & CALABRIA

The Pollino territory in Calabria is rich in culture, history, and nature. The region was the first area in the peninsula to be referred to as Italy by the Greeks, as it was inhabited by the Italics in the 1st century BC. Lost in southern Italy, the Pollino was once at the geographical center of the Ancient world, inside a triangle formed by Rome, Athens, and Syracuse. The territory is a place of myths and legends; Calabria has been a bargaining chip for foreign powers, Hannibal is said to have taken refuge there during the Second Punic War, Spartacus allegedly fought a legendary battle there. Calabria later had one of the most ferocious feudal systems in Europe. In the aftermath of the Risorgimento, the unification of Italy, which began in 1848 and ended in 1871, the Pollino was dominated by the brigandage which proliferated there as a reaction to the economic and industrial neglect of the South.

The Pollino overlooks a region where time has stood still and remained at the outskirts of Italy. In the 1860s, the *Questione meridionale*, the “southern question”, begins to appear on the political agendas of the

time. This term was, and still is, used to give an explanation to the phenomena, political choices and elements that have profoundly marked the history of southern Italy. The gap between northern and southern Italy was present before the unification but the question is if unification ultimately hindered its development. In October 1850, Count Camillo Benso di Cavour entered the cabinet and directed a *laissez-faire* economic policy. Capitalist development did not reach the South and reforms in customs policies (such as the reduction of customs duties by up to 80%) were passed which helped northern, exporting, industries and ended up giving the coup de grace to the few less competitive industries present in the South, which saw themselves disarmed in the face of competition from foreign products. Southern agriculture aimed at export (grapevines, citrus fruits, olives, etc.), but the result remained limited due to the persistence of backward agrarian methods. Lastly, the unification of public debt was set up, which consisted in sharing the burdens of the Piedmontese wars and the burdens relating to the construction of railway networks and other communication routes (in order to

unify the national market) among all the regions of Italy, leaving the South and its already weak economy with the biggest disadvantage.

In the wake of the country's unification, Calabrian life was characterized by widespread illiteracy, profound misery, laborer hatred for the rich, the proud detachment of the latter from the rural masses and the lack of capital to invest in agriculture. In the period between 1876 and 1895, Calabrian emigrants represented 90% of the entire foreign overseas emigration. This persisted right up to the economic miracle, with many people emigrating abroad, just as their grandparents had already done in the past. Between 1951 and 1970, 750 000 Calabrians tried their luck in the Americas, Australia, or other European countries (especially Germany, Switzerland, and Belgium) thus completely depopulating the area. The most dramatic consequence of this phenomenon is the rapid aging of the population. It has been calculated that by 2030, only one in three Calabrians will be younger than 40 years old.

Today, the immutable and unpopulated Mount Pollino, with its 2248m altitude, is protected by a 192,000 hectare national park that stretches from southern Basilicata to northern Calabria. This park is the largest national park in the country and ranks among the 50 largest in the world. The fauna and flora of Pollino National

Park is rich in rare species that the whole world comes to admire. The variety of flora has long been a source of natural remedies for the inhabitants of the territory. What makes the vegetation of the Pollino unique is the Bosnian pine, also called loricato pine, which stands majestically and climbs over rugged rock faces. Regarding the fauna, that of the Pollino is among the most important in all of southern Italy, featuring unique species such as the podolica cow whose bells are one of the musical themes of IL BUCO.



MICHELANGELO FRAMMARTINO BIOGRAPHY

Michelangelo Frammartino was born in Milan in 1968. He studied Architecture at the Politecnico di Milano, where he developed a passion for the relationship between physical space and photographic images, video, and cinema. After graduation, he continued his studies at Civica Scuola del Cinema in Milan, where he designed video installations influenced by Studio Azzurro's art research.

Frammartino's debut *IL DONO* (2003), a no-budget feature film, shot in his parents' village in Calabria, premiered at the Locarno Film Festival. It went on to win the Grand Prix at the Annecy Film Festival and the Jury Prize at both Thessaloniki and Warsaw.

Frammartino's second feature, *LE QUATTRO VOLTE* (2010) premiered in Directors' Fortnight at Cannes Film Festival. The film won the Europa Cinemas "Best European Film" award in Cannes, and the main prize at CPH:DOX, and was the 2010 Directors' Fortnight "Coup de coeur".

In 2013, Frammartino's installation *ALBERI*, a 26-minute loop, premiered at MoMA PS1 and was subsequently shown at other museums, including Centre Pompidou's 2021 Hors Pistes Festival.

Frammartino's third feature film, *IL BUCO* was shot in Southern Italy, in the neighboring regions of Calabria and Basilicata which continue to inspire him and where all his previous works were shot. With the approach of an anthropologist, Frammartino captures the traditional and transcendent with a simplicity and spirituality that is unique to his filmography.





RENATO BERTA BIOGRAPHY

Renato Berta trained at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome from 1965 to 1967, where he forged his cinephilia thanks to professors with the likes of Pier Paolo Pasolini, Luchino Visconti and Federico Fellini. He then proceeded in becoming one of the most prolific directors of photography of the Swiss new wave.

Since 1969, Berta has worked as a cinematographer on over 100 films, collaborating with a long series of cinema's most renown directors such as Jean-Luc Godard, Amos Gitai and Alain Resnais.

Berta won a César Award for Best Cinematography for Louis Malle's Golden Lion winning GOODBYE, CHILDREN in 1988 and a Davide di Donatello for Best Cinematography for Golden Lion nominated WE BELIEVED (Martone, 2010). In 2013, he was knighted by the French government's Order of Arts and Letters.

Michelangelo Frammartino's IL BUCO represents his 103rd film.

“I don't like the term director of photography very much. In the credits, I prefer to use the word image. Because it seems to me that it covers the sum of the work on the frame and the light. The image is the very fragile result between the photo and the frame, and the combination of the two is the most difficult to find. What annoys me the most are the dominant images, the visual clichés of the time.”

- Renato Berta



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