



MUSEI VATICANI

Mostra

DIVINE CREATURE

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The Birth of an Idea

The idea of the “Divine Creatures” photographic exhibition dates back to around four or five years ago. Perhaps even longer. I cannot recall the year exactly, but I do remember perfectly when the idea first crossed my mind. At the time I was working at a centre for disabled youngsters and we were writing a short story together to make a short film. It was not the first time I had worked in a facility like that: a number of times over the years I have been lucky enough to be involved in small projects with disabled youngsters. Yet, also in that case, as often happens during experiences of this kind, I did not waste the opportunity to ask myself some of those classic, famous questions that more or less everyone asks themselves in such situations. The most trivial, trite questions, and, naturally, ones destined to remain unanswered. And in all this, right on cue, there emerges the role of God. We wonder how it can be possible that God... , where is God, and blah, blah, blah. Yes, because, at least in my case, my mind trotted out the usual idiocies soaked in cheap rhetoric. In all this idle chatter I remembered a beautiful passage from a book, *Night* by Elie Wiesel, and precisely that moment filled with dramatic power in which the community of deported people look on impotently when a boy is hanged on the gallows: “Behind me, I heard the same man asking: ‘Where is God now?’ And I heard a voice within me answer him: ‘Where is He? Here He is: he is hanging here on this gallows...’”.

And so, for me too, that is the answer. Where is God? Here He is. He is right in front of me. Indeed, the title I gave at the beginning of the first idea for the exhibition was “We too God”, which was then changed to “Divine Creatures”, following a suggestion from my friend Monica Palmieri.

And from this first impulse up to the plan for the exhibition, it was a cohesive whole. The idea was to make the figure of Christ, as represented in the history of art, coincide with disability. I therefore rushed to reread the Gospels in this vein, for the first time recognising the profound relationship that links Christ’s work with disability. Or rather, to tell the truth, I had the impression that it had been precisely the healing of numerous infirmities and the hatred that all of this aroused in the scribes and Pharisees that had enabled the perfect conclusion of his work.

I therefore proceeded to choose ten painted works of sacred art that, in my view, best summed up the parable of the Son of man, avoiding those that portrayed disabled people or miracles involving disabled people so as not to detract from the power of the message I wished to convey. Finally... finally, although everything was clear inside me, I kept the idea in the place it had come about, inside my mind. Since, in short, I did not dare propose it to others, since I thought it was ‘blasphemous’, ‘offensive’...

However, the following year I returned to work at the same centre and, when I had finished, I asked the educators for a meeting. I remember I was very embarrassed. I told them about the project as best I could and they responded, way beyond all my expectations, with enthusiasm. In the sense that the idea brought ‘joy’ to them. Genuine and immediate joy. They helped me by enabling me to meet the parents

of the Noi da grandi Association, which provides homes for disabled children when their parents pass away. It turns out that they too were enthusiastic. And not only the parents, the children too; they hugged me as only they can do, showing a dedication and a festive earnestness that I could not possibly describe.

From that moment on, the idea gradually took shape between one lucky break and the next: on one hand the willingness to help of the parents and the youngsters, on the other the coming together of a troupe of professionals of great sensitivity and artistic substance. Finally, the photographer and post producer Leonardo Baldini, who, thanks to his artistic skills, has succeeded in giving life and overall depth to my dream. That very dream that came about by asking myself some rather stupid questions, although – and perhaps this is the moral of the story – when we talk about God there is no such thing as a stupid question. Never.

Adamo Antonacci
Creator of the project