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JULY 2026



BETA
developments in photography



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From one pharaoh to another, chronicles of a coup d'état

GIULIO PISCITELLI

Following the revolutions of 2011, the fragile balance in much of the Arab states was deeply shaken. New powers emerged on the international stage; the most challenging transition was undoubtedly that of Egypt.

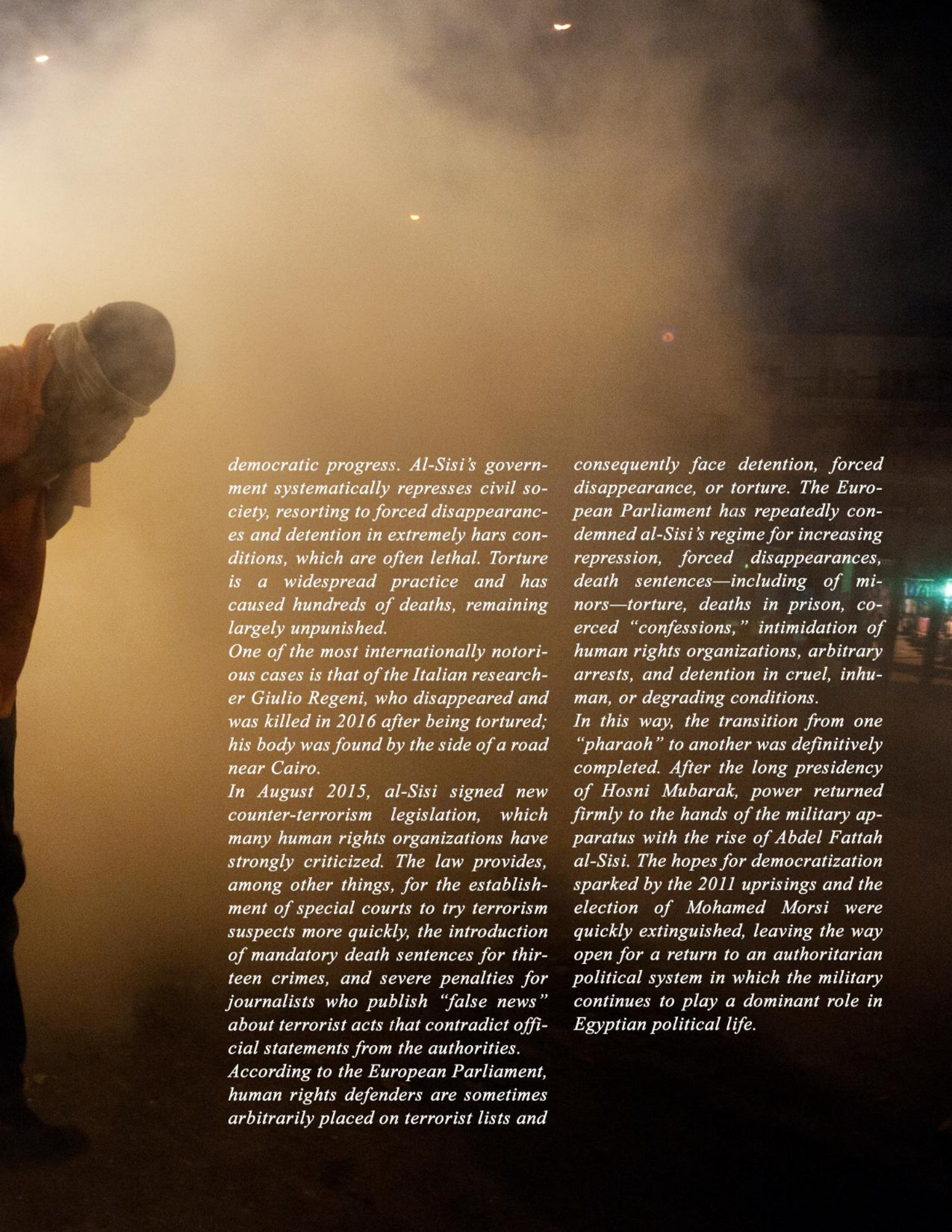
After the fall of President Hosni Mubarak, who had been in power for over thirty years, Egypt elected a president for the first time through democratic elections in 2012. The member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Mohamed Morsi, came to power.

It seemed like the beginning of a change the country had long awaited; however, less than a year after his election, the first signs of crisis quickly appeared. A series of political decisions by the new government, seen as highly restrictive of civil liberties won with the blood of the recently concluded revolution, caused the president to be heavily criticized by a large portion of the population, who once again took to the streets.

Dissatisfaction continued to grow to the point of demanding the president's resignation. Empowered by this new wave of protests, the military, led by General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, overthrew Presi-

dent Morsi in a coup d'état and placed him under arrest. The country was now clearly divided. Two large protest camps emerged: one demanding the immediate release of the elected president, and the other supporting the military's action. Clashes between factions and violent protests continued until August 2013, when the military forces decided to forcibly clear the protest camp supporting Morsi. This led to extremely violent confrontations in which approximately one thousand protesters lost their lives.

The brief democratic experiment ended rapidly with the army's violent repression, which has historically held almost unlimited influence and power in Egypt. In a short time, new elections were held, widely considered a sham, won by the only real candidate, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, commander of the Egyptian armed forces and, de facto, the new "strongman" of the country after Mubarak. With the return to power of an authoritarian figure, the repression of civil rights and political opposition once again became the norm, after a brief period of hope for

A person wearing a light-colored headscarf is shown in profile, looking down. The background is dark and out of focus, with some distant lights visible on the right side.

democratic progress. Al-Sisi's government systematically represses civil society, resorting to forced disappearances and detention in extremely harsh conditions, which are often lethal. Torture is a widespread practice and has caused hundreds of deaths, remaining largely unpunished.

One of the most internationally notorious cases is that of the Italian researcher Giulio Regeni, who disappeared and was killed in 2016 after being tortured; his body was found by the side of a road near Cairo.

In August 2015, al-Sisi signed new counter-terrorism legislation, which many human rights organizations have strongly criticized. The law provides, among other things, for the establishment of special courts to try terrorism suspects more quickly, the introduction of mandatory death sentences for thirteen crimes, and severe penalties for journalists who publish "false news" about terrorist acts that contradict official statements from the authorities.

According to the European Parliament, human rights defenders are sometimes arbitrarily placed on terrorist lists and

consequently face detention, forced disappearance, or torture. The European Parliament has repeatedly condemned al-Sisi's regime for increasing repression, forced disappearances, death sentences—including of minors—torture, deaths in prison, coerced "confessions," intimidation of human rights organizations, arbitrary arrests, and detention in cruel, inhuman, or degrading conditions.

In this way, the transition from one "pharaoh" to another was definitively completed. After the long presidency of Hosni Mubarak, power returned firmly to the hands of the military apparatus with the rise of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. The hopes for democratization sparked by the 2011 uprisings and the election of Mohamed Morsi were quickly extinguished, leaving the way open for a return to an authoritarian political system in which the military continues to play a dominant role in Egyptian political life.







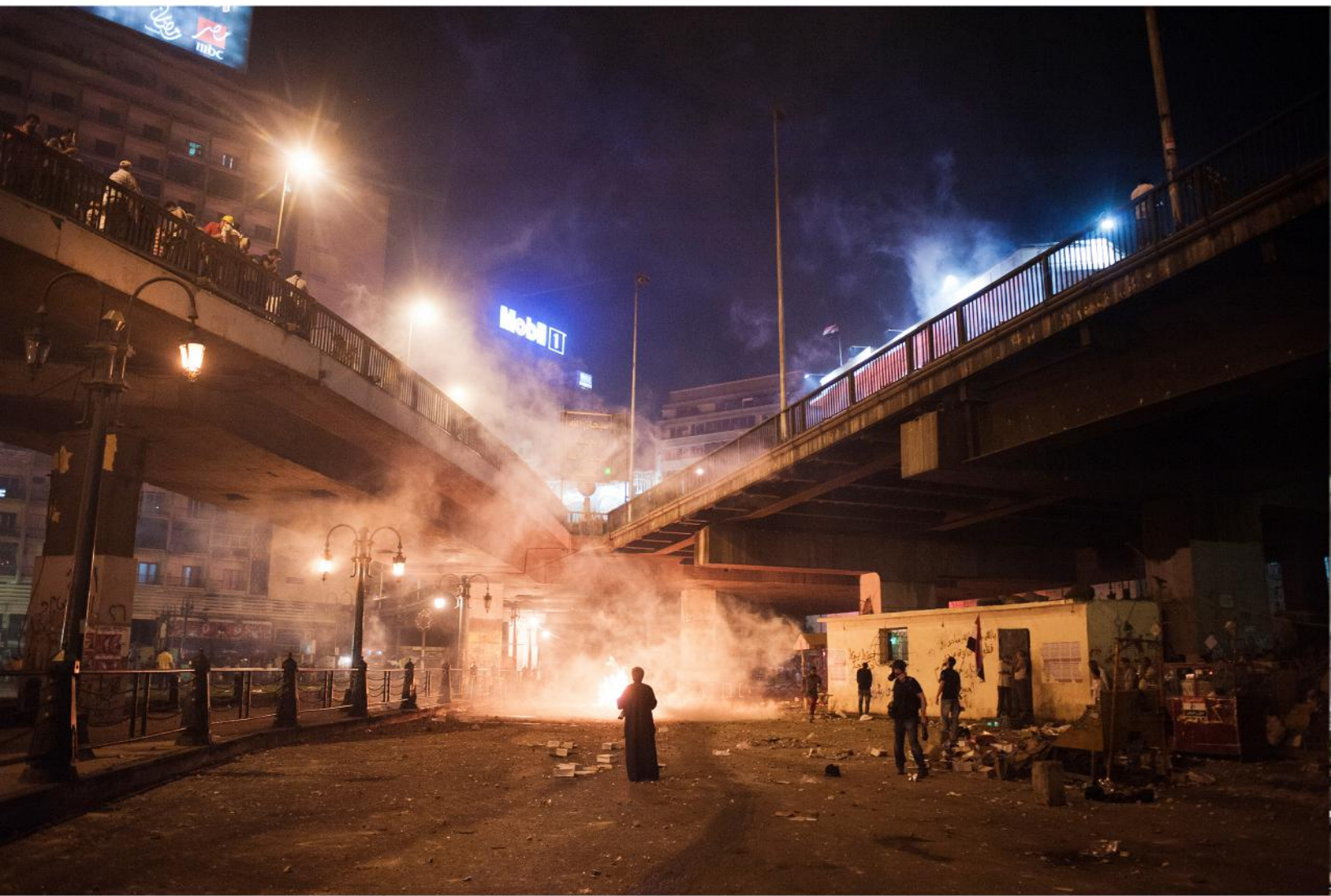
























Giulio Piscitelli is an Italian photojournalist and documentary photographer whose work focuses on migration, conflict, and humanitarian crises. He holds a degree in Communication Studies from Suor Orsola Benincasa University. Since 2010, Piscitelli has worked as a freelance photographer, documenting post-war recovery in Kosovo, HIV treatment in Kenya, and the migration routes from North Africa to Europe. His work highlights the enduring struggles of migrants and the systemic failures of migration policy, and he has reported from over 15 countries. From 2013 to 2023, Piscitelli was a staff photographer with the Contrasto photo agency. Piscitelli has worked extensively in conflict zones, including Syria, Iraq, Ukraine, Libya, Afghanistan, and Nagorno-Karabakh. His long-term project 'Harraga', documenting migrant journeys to Europe, culminated in a photobook published by Contrasto Books in 2017. The work has received numerous accolades.



He has also been a finalist for major international awards such as the W. Eugene Smith Grant, Leica Oskar Barnack Award (twice), Bayeux-Calvados Award for War Correspondents, Romano Cagnoni Award, and the Cortona On The Move Award.

His photographs have been exhibited widely, including at Visa pour l'Image, War Photo Limited, Annenberg Space for Photography, Forma Meravigli, La Maison des Métallos, La Maternité d'Elne, Colab Gallery, and Palazzo Todesco, among others. Beyond photography, Piscitelli is also an educator and speaker. He has lectured at institutions and events such as Suor Orsola Benincasa University, the Internazionale Festival, the International Journalism Festival in Perugia, University of Prague, Collegio Universitario Lucchini, The New York Encounters, and Emergency's festivals. He regularly conducts photography workshops both in Italy and abroad.

THE WHITE FENCE

White Fence—L.A.’s oldest and most violent gang, dating back to 1900—has a history as unforgiving as the streets they rule. But what struck me wasn’t menace; it was their pride—and style: theatrical, self-curated, and precise, a visual assertion of identity and status, a razor-sharp grammar of visual identity: wardrobe as semiotics.

TOM ZIMBEROFF



Conrado "Mouse" Guzmante

Excerpt from A Photographic Memory

It was three o'clock in the morning. I figured it would be safe; my accomplices and I might get away with our caper.

I lay prone, propped up on my elbows, looking out the back of a 1970-something Ford station wagon, tailgate down, a motor-driven Nikon pressed to my eye, while being driven fast through the Third Street tunnel underneath Bunker Hill in Downtown L.A.

Two battery-powered flash units gaffer-taped to the roof of the Ford and synced to my camera's shutter shot short bursts of light like automatic weapons fire at the two shiny Chevys chasing us neck and neck, strobing them like disco dancers in the dark.

The drivers dropped their chassis lower to the ground with electric pumps and hydraulic suspension, so heavy pyrophoric steel plates bolted underneath scraped the pavement like giant Zippo lighter flints, spraying golden sparks out the back—Roman candles for exhaust pipes.

I exaggerated the illusion of speed in still photos by using a slow shutter, combining motion blur with stop-action flash—"dragging the shutter"—so the cars popped out sharp against a less distinct backdrop of grime-streaked tiles in our subterranean chute. Picture the Flash, straight out of a comic book, running at full tilt with a comet's tail in his wake.



Dos Hermanos

Well, that was fun!

A siren's short shriek shot through the tunnel like a bullet through the barrel of a gun, chased by a persistent wail that overwhelmed our own double-digit decibel assault on peace and quiet.

Nictating red lights lit up the walls and vaulted ceiling all the way to where the tunnel spat us out.

The squad car pulled us over. Two wary cops got out, their high beams trained on us in harsh contrast with the sickly yellow streetlights. One cop was a woman. She approached the driver of the station wagon, my photo assistant. He had the wheel, but I had the camera, so she pivoted toward me instead. As I crawled out the back of the station wagon, her partner kept his eyes on the other two cars.

"What the hell are you doing?" she cried. And I detected a glimmer of glee, a twinkle in her eye.

*L.A. cops are used to all kinds of weird shit going down; all of L.A. is Hollywood—the same tunnel became the location later that year, 1984, for Schwarzenegger's Harley-Davidson chase scene in *The Terminator*.*



Carlos

The thing is, we didn't have a filming permit. If we'd had one, these two officers, plus as many other traffic cops a production company could bankroll, would have cordoned off the tunnel so we could shoot under controlled conditions. They must have deduced, however, that this was no lowrider sideshow; there was no audience. It was also the weariest, quietest hour before dawn, decades before anyone had either the means to video such a thing or social media to share it on. But what newsweekly with a deadline went looking for permits? Guys like me got hired to accomplish feats of der-ring-do, aware that apologies are easier to give than permits are to get.

My hope was that these two cops had already been on duty long into "the late show," but not yet at the end of a boring, all-night shift, happy for distraction. Explaining that I was shooting a story for Time magazine about Mexican-American culture, including car clubs, I whipped out my L.A.P.D. press pass, a laminated photo ID that one jumps through all kinds of hoops to get. I told the female cop that this was a legitimate news story, not commercial entertainment, and because I had a deadline I'd have no film to file for publication if I'd gone through channels.



Seis Homeboys

There was a real possibility of getting written up for some misdemeanor with a hefty fine attached, or even getting hauled off to a holding cell; we were within eye-sight of County Jail. I don't know what her partner thought, but fortunately she was playing good cop that night.

"I'll give you two more tries to make sure you got it right," she said straight-faced. "Then get out of here, and don't let me see you do it again."

I swear I wanted to ask her out. But I noticed she was sporting a ring along with her badge.



Raul Alaniz

Shooting assignments for newsweeklies rarely affords time for anything like a deeply reported documentary or photo essay. Something like that would take weeks or months to do properly. On a magazine assignment, I usually had to illustrate whatever a reporter was writing about, then ship my film ASAP to fulfill a deadline, all in a day's work. Then, I'd be off to my next assignment—or promoting myself to get one. But everywhere I turned in East Los Angeles, there were picturesque expressions of a culture that captivated me to distraction. So I did what I could; for instance, trying to spend some time with a lowrider car club. But all the while, I was eyeballing—and being eyeballed by—a more ferocious fellowship: the White Fence, an East L.A. gang in the Boyle Heights barrio.



Numero Uno

They were a handsome bunch, irrespective of their criminal history—the oldest gang in Los Angeles—with murderous rivalries dating back to 1900. The name White Fence itself came from the white picket fence that once enclosed La Purísima Church, their neighborhood parish. What began as the “La Purísima Crowd” evolved into White Fence, the name carrying both a literal and symbolic charge: a boundary between the parish and the street, between Mexican-American youth and the Anglo world that fenced them out.

Sharply-pressed threadbare slacks, wife beaters, hairnets, bandanas, button-down shirts closed at the collar but unbuttoned at the belt, shiny shoes, tattoos, hand signs. What immediately struck me about the White Fence gang wasn’t menace, but their proud, theatrical, and self-curated assertion of identity—a razor-sharp grammar of style: wardrobe as semiotics.



Damon Ignacio

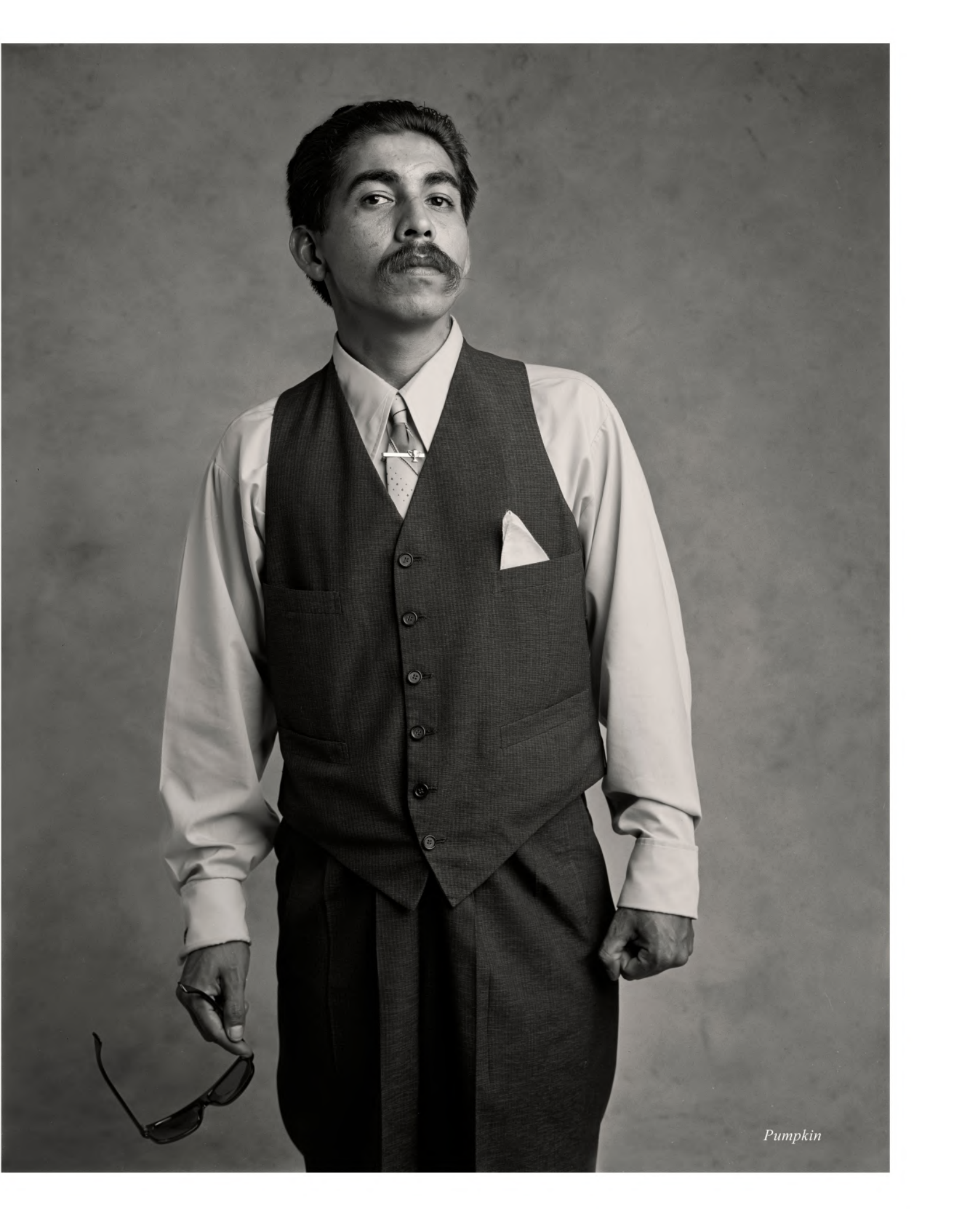
I met a woman in Boyle Heights who worked for the city and had ties to a non-profit that helped keep kids out of gangs—and helped some already in finding a way out. She introduced me to a few gang members. I proposed portraits not on the street but in my studio, a neutral zone light years from the planet they lived on, closer to Beverly Hills than Boyle Heights.

They wanted to be paid. That wouldn't fly. But they started to catch on to the idea I laid out for them: our portraits would create a historical record with a fashion twist. Art, not exploitation. I would give them prints.



Handshake

Curiosity won out. On the appointed day at the appointed hour, I waited outside in front of my studio on Beverly Boulevard. Three cars showed up and parked with indifference at the red curb. Eight homeboys got out. I ushered them inside. My studio partner was apprised in advance about who'd be showing up, but he must not have paid attention because, when he saw those gangbangers saunter in through the front door, he quickly disappeared upstairs into his office. I wished more of them had come. I wish they'd brought their girlfriends and wives as I had requested. The women, they explained unapologetically, were home in curlers, prettying up for some kind of fiesta. But that's exactly what I had hoped to get on film: before and after—big hair, exaggerated makeup. Perhaps another time, they said.



Pumpkin

These young toughs endured the strange ritual of posing in front of an "old-timey" camera and a tall lightbox. The big 4x5 with its accordion bellows, on a tripod of course, slowed things down and demanded deliberation. Theirs and mine. I stood the men in front of the camera one by one and in small groups. They relaxed a bit. It wasn't trust, exactly, but performative participation. They let me see them on their terms. They became more comfortable with mine.

Those who weren't on camera drank beer, ate the pizza I had delivered, and wandered around the studio. They grew restless, less cooperative. It had been two hours. I made a little speech about how we were just getting started and how I wanted to bring the women back to the studio. They remained noncommittal. They took the hundred bucks I offered to fill their gas tanks and left.





WWW.ZIMBEROFF.COM



Tres Homeboys

Tom Zimmeroff began with a clarinet, not a camera, studying orchestral music on scholarship at USC (University of Southern California). Then photography, he says, “grabbed me by the eyeballs and wouldn’t let go.”

The first time Tom looked through a viewfinder with the serious intention of making a portrait, John Lennon was looking back. It was his first magazine cover—at twenty-one. His second portrait was Groucho Marx. He flipped them to get Marx and Lennon—the familiar cadence, the historical resonance, the pun. That improbable pairing for a young photographer’s first two portraits set the tone for a career navigating the intersections of art, history, and serendipity.

Tom came up in the crucible of photo assignments when magazines ruled the media. His prints have homes in museums and private collections. In 2016, his film archive was accessioned by the Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin.

LEFT BEHIND

After chartering a reconnaissance flight to survey the changed landscape created by Kilauea's 2018 eruption, I began looking closely at what remained. Below me, hardened lava channels held fragments of homes, vehicles, gates, and vegetation, human elements embedded in blackened terrain. I had expected erasure. Instead, I found traces of human life still present within the altered ground.

I was less drawn to the eruption than to the altered landscape it left behind, where ordinary life stood suddenly suspended within blackened lava. Structures stood altered yet intact, and green growth reappeared through fractures in cooling lava. Some forms persist quietly. Others are partially claimed, their presence marked but not erased.

Left Behind reminds us of our own human presence within a transforming landscape and how brief that presence is within geological time.



LESLIE GLEIM











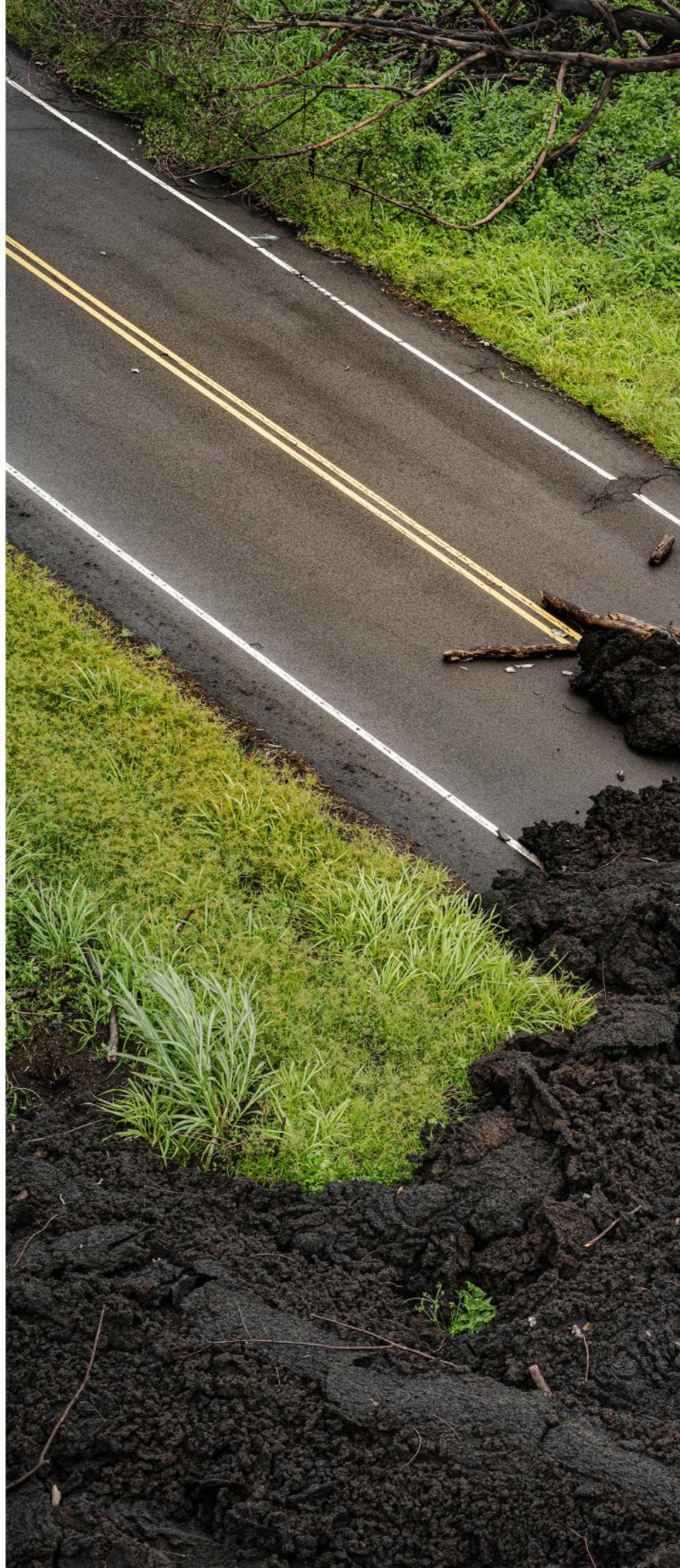


























A high-contrast, black and white photograph of a massive, dark, and highly textured lava flow. The lava surface is rugged, with deep cracks and ridges, showing a complex, almost organic pattern. In the upper right corner, a portion of a wooden platform or walkway is visible, along with a metal frame structure, possibly a ladder or part of a viewing platform. The overall scene conveys the raw power and scale of volcanic activity.

Leslie Gleim is a Honolulu-based fine art photographer whose work explores land as a living, evolving process shaped by time and transformation. Living in Hawai'i since 2007, her practice has been deeply influenced by the islands' volcanic landscapes and the visible forces that form, erase, and renew them. Working primarily through aerial photography, she examines scale, change, and the relationship between human presence and elemental power. Her work has been exhibited and published locally, nationally, and internationally.



WWW.LESLIEGLEIM.COM

RITORNI



CRISTINA CUSANI

Ritorni is a work about transition.

I work as a photographer in a real estate agency and I decided to photograph the houses in the moment of transition from a tenant to another. I take pictures of empty houses, before they are renewed or they are rented again.

When I enter in a house that is no longer inhabited, I find what is left behind. The thing that interests me the most is that in the vacuum there are traces of the passage of time, and these are the same traces, even if different ones, in each dwelling. What remains in those houses is the relic of an experience that the walls have absorbed, traces of the man and of his change.

The Italian word for relocation is trasloco and comes from the Latin Trans (over) and Locus (place), so it is about what that particular place means for that human being. The house represents shelter and the family; it means security, intimacy, stability and when emptied there are signs of what it was. There remain belongings, identity, smell, signs of past life and, with the nostalgia related to farewells, these homes contain the beauty of a new beginning.

During the transition from one stage of life to another, one can be lost, with no more reference marks. Then, when the transition is completed, one feels again the sense of belonging to oneself and is reassured; in this moment, the change becomes a homecoming.













































***Cristina Cusani** (Naples, 1984) is a visual artist with a background primarily in photography. After graduating in Communication Sciences from Sapienza University of Rome, she earned a diploma in photography as an artistic language from the Academy of Fine Arts of Naples.*

Her work focuses on themes of identity, memory, and family. She explores private life and, starting from her own personal experience, seeks to reach a collective dimension. She uses photography in its most intimate aspect, capable of touching the deepest emotions, aiming to convey to the viewer the emotional dimension present in everyone's life. She works with what remains: traces, memory, history, and residue. In her projects, she often incorporates written or spoken words. Her most recent works investigate how photography can alter memory as much as narrate it, transforming archival photographs into images where



fiction and reality meet, meanings shift, and past and present become one. More recently, she has conceived installations created through public participation.

Her work has been exhibited in solo and group shows at galleries, festivals, museums, and industry fairs, and has been shortlisted for major awards; some of her works are part of contemporary art collections. Since 2018, together with Chiara Arturo, she has curated Progetto Vicinanze, a multidisciplinary project based on sharing as an artistic practice and on the Mediterranean as a place of crossing and exchange. Since 2022, she has been part of the collective of artists and activists The Glorious Mothers. In 2024, she won Strategia Fotografia, the Italian Ministry of Culture's program supporting the promotion of Italian photography abroad. She lives and works in Naples.

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