

## ***In Conversation with Rebecca Moccia***

*by Luca Panaro*

**Residencies offer space and stimulate artistic creation, research and experimentation, while encouraging dialogue with the local community. This publication opens with a sequence of images contributed by employees of Zenato winery, interwoven with photographs and videos you captured during your stay in Peschiera del Garda in September 2025 and your visit to the Balsamo glassworks. How did your relationship with the people you met in the vineyards help to shape and inspire your work?**

From the outset, I felt the need to anchor the project in the physical reality of wine production. Given the time available, the most natural way to build a connection with the people working in the vineyards was through an exchange of images.

I invited them to share photographs that were emotional or practical, reflecting their personal perspective of the place and the rhythm of their daily work. What I received were fragments of their daily lives: a sudden hailstorm, a dance, a lunch break. I then placed these quick snaps, often captured on mobile phones, alongside my own images. Some were simple observations, while others were images of work tools and practical references: sequences of containers, movements, passages and transformations that I witnessed throughout my residency.

I was drawn to the simplicity of these images and to their unmistakably digital quality, which made them feel completely of the moment. Like the wine maturing alongside them, they are images destined to age slowly. Within them, an emotional and collective narrative emerges, one rooted in process and place, rather than in spectacle or celebration.

Through those exchanges, I became aware of a presence, a rhythm and the vital relationships that often remain unseen, like the quiet forces behind any process of change. From this awareness came the idea to create a series of juxtapositions: photography and video projections combined with sound, wind and dark glass.

**Your work spans several media, including photography, which you approach in unconventional ways. Rather than treating the image as an informative tool, you focus on its ability to create atmosphere and evoke an emotional perception, establishing a connection with a place. The images themselves often appear unsettled or blurred, as if the viewer must push through multiple layers in order to reach them. Is making art, for you, both a social and a political act?**

That's correct, I am not interested in photography as a vehicle for information. As with other media, I use photography to explore the relationship between materials and the space around them. This may begin with the visual, but it does not end there.

The photographic image, whether digital or physical, is first and foremost a material object circulating in the world at this specific moment in time. Within my installations, it enters into dialogue with other elements, occupies space, and is anchored to a precise context and place. In this way, it helps to shape an experience that depends on the space, the materials and how the viewer encounters them.

Through the materials, the spaces they occupy, the time into which they are inserted and the people and elements that move through them, the installations create an atmosphere intended to be felt as much as seen. This process, rather than the image itself, is where my attention lies.

Because I'm interested in experiences that go beyond what is immediately visible, I am often drawn to the opaque, to conditions of partial resistance, conscious or unconscious, which lead to moments of rebellion against a culture that demands constant transparency and control and against the infrastructures and the surveillance systems related to it.

In many of the works presented in this project, this results in what I would describe as a form of 'negative architecture' suspended between perception and loss. My hope is that these spaces can open up a critical and political dimension.

This takes place, for example, through the deliberate misuse of devices, including aesthetic ones, and through perceptual strategies that unsettle the image itself. Images may appear unstable, partially obscured or almost absent. Rather than asserting themselves as evidence, they ask something of the viewer: a physical and positional involvement that raises questions about what is shown or withheld, who has access, and how.

**Through this and other projects, your distinctive methodology is always evident. During the residency, you took notes that later became short texts that accompanied the images. We then saw illuminated pages from ancient books on viticulture, drawings of winery equipment, and stills extracted from a video that plays a central role in the exhibition, accompanied by a dedicated soundtrack. How important is temporality in your work? Were you seeking to convey a sense of suspended time through the different media you have used?**

Rather than suggesting a suspension of time, I was interested in bringing a specific form of time into focus: a temporality that, together with the spatial elements of the installation, contributes to the creation of a specific sensorial and emotional atmosphere. This approach extends to the archival images and miniatures, which trace the tools and materials of winemaking across the centuries.

The video is a central component of the exhibition experience, bringing the viewer directly into the place and into the physical reality of work during the grape harvest, when workers set out for the vineyards at dawn. In this context, the title 'Workers' Sunshine' suggests a quiet form of rebellion, shifting attention away from productivity alone and back towards shared experience and perception.

The installation's sound was created by composer and sound artist Renato Grieco, with whom I have collaborated for some time. The sound is the result of a process, which brings to the forefront its materiality by distorting reality, leaving a tape exposed to the sun for several days, allowing heat and light to physically alter it.

**Your works occupy space and require the physical participation of the audience. To appreciate the installation, viewers must move through it, feel its three-dimensionality, and lose themselves in a dystopian vision that is difficult to reproduce. Do you see contemporary art as an invitation to reconnect with reality through direct contact, reactivating forms of sensorial perception that may have long remained dormant?**

The body of work presented here is composed of photographic images gathered during my residency, either taken by me or shared by the workers, and overlaid with black amber glass reminiscent of the glass used for wine bottles, curiously called 'Maya' by the glassworks that produces it, like the philosophical veil that separates appearance and reality.

Some works are framed in handcrafted steel, like containers that store wine, while for other pieces the image and glass are simply held together with steel hooks. Alongside these is the audio-video installation, projected onto a dark surface, and a large industrial fan taken directly from the grape-drying rooms.

These elements form a constellation of themes: visibility and invisibility, exposure and ageing, membranes, transitions, materials and containers. Set against a culture of instantaneous consumption of both images and products, the project calls for patience, attention and presence. It draws attention to how things are made, how long work takes, and how change happens over time.

As a result, the works can be fully experienced only through a physical presence. They resist the flattening effect of digital abstraction. I am interested in the fact that this experience cannot be substituted or replicated, and that this limitation may even produce a certain degree of frustration.

**You have been working in the art world for over a decade and have held major exhibitions. Among your recent works, ‘Ministry of Loneliness’ (2022–2024) stands out in particular. How did this work come about, and what questions does it raise? How does it relate to your previous work?**

‘Ministry of Loneliness’ (2022–2024) explores loneliness as an emotional condition shaped by contemporary neoliberal social and economic systems. Its symbolic and practical starting point was the establishment of the Ministry of Loneliness in the United Kingdom in 2018, a governmental initiative that was later replicated in various forms in other countries.

This research took on a strongly physical dimension. It unfolded through residencies and workshops in different contexts, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, Japan and South Korea. I visited various ‘ministries’ of solitude, studying how space, the material world, and networks of relationships between bodies and political-economic structures influence the way loneliness has emerged within modern capitalism and is experienced today. This research led to the development of a body of work that was first presented at ICA Milano and later at the Italian Pavilion of the 15th Gwangju Biennale. Alongside the exhibitions, a series of publications and related outputs continue to expand on the project’s central concerns.

‘Ministry of Loneliness’ builds on my earlier works, such as ‘Rest Your Eyes’ (2021), and informs the research I am currently developing that marries my interest in the materiality of contemporary emotional distress with my interest in aesthetic atmospheres and devices.

**In your previous project, and in the video installation ‘Cold As You Are’ (2024), you work with images captured using a thermal camera, a device that combines a photographic lens with infrared technology, translating temperature data into a color range. How long have you been pursuing this research into thermal vision?**

I began working with thermal imaging during the ‘Ministry of Loneliness’ project at a time when this technology began to circulate more visibly within civilian life, through the widespread use of thermal scanners during the Covid-19 pandemic for example. Originally developed for military purposes, thermal imaging has often reduced bodies to targets or data points. Its use and implications have been critically explored by a number of artists, including Eleonor Weber (2020) and Richard Mosse (2016).

In 'Cold As You Are', a video installation commissioned by OGR for the *Luci d'Artista* program (2024), I used thermal imaging to record everyday scenes, both intimate and public, often involving non-human subjects. Using the camera at extremely close range, many images became almost indistinguishable and, in a sense, 'untargetable'. What emerges are unsettling aesthetic and sensorial presences that, at the same time, are uncanny. These sequences were then projected onto the façade of the institution.

The work was developed during a period marked by widespread violence in the context of the ongoing Palestinian genocide, and within a building that also hosts technological infrastructures linked to military research and development, including activities associated with Leonardo.

My interest in thermal imaging, both practical and symbolic, lies in questioning whether such a device can be diverted from its typical uses in order to expose its limits and potential for subversion, as well as to reflect critically on the dynamics of power, control and perception that shape both contemporary society and cultural production.

### **Rebecca Moccia – Short Biography:**

Rebecca Moccia (Naples, 1992) is an artist whose transdisciplinary practice explores the materiality of perceptual and emotional states as they emerge from specific physical and social contexts. Combining moving image, photography, sound, sculptural and ephemeral elements, her installations are developed through situated research processes that often involve collective practices and workshops. Through this approach, her work investigates the intersections between institutional power, media pervasiveness and neoliberal policies, with particular attention to the politics of affect.

Rebecca's work has been presented internationally, including exhibitions at the Italian Pavilion of the 15th Gwangju Biennale, OGR Turin, Oberhausen International Short Film Festival, ICA Milano, Jupiter Woods, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Fondazione Zegna, Mazzoleni London–Turin, the Italian Cultural Institute in Brussels, Galeria Madragoa, Museo Novecento Florence and Cripta747, among others.

Between 2021 and 2023, Rebecca won the OGR Award from the CRT Foundation (Artissima), the ArteVisione Award promoted by Careof, and the international research grant of the Ministry of Culture (Italian Council X-DGCC) for the 'Ministry of Loneliness' project, which was developed in collaboration with ICA Milano, Magazzino Italian Art (New York), Nanzan University (Nagoya), ICC Seoul and Seoul Institute of the Arts (Seoul).

In 2024, Rebecca represented Italy at the 15th Gwangju Biennale.

Since 2026, she has been undertaking a PhD of National Interest in Visual Arts and Creative Practices.

Rebecca is also an activist and the co-founder of AWI (Art Workers Italia), an organization dedicated to the rights and the recognition of art workers.