

ZENATO ACADEMY

Wine. Beyond objects

by Luca Panaro

Artworks

Giacomo Alberico: Se nell'attesa (If While You're Waiting)

Giacomo Alberico's visual investigations are focused on Zenato's Santa Cristina cellar in San Benedetto di Lugana. These enchanting spaces are home to the casks and the winery's most valued bottles. The characteristic soft lighting and cool temperature help to create a unique sensorial environment. As a result, it becomes the ideal setting in which to represent the imposing, stationary "objects" that dominate the cellar. As he was shooting the photos, the artist examined the role of light as an investigative tool. It helped to highlight unexpected details in the large casks, which he captured using close-up photography. The aesthetic component of these noble vessels, aside from their specific function, conveys the stretch of time necessary to produce a good wine — beyond the slow but progressive passage of time. The environment is suffused by an atmosphere that prompts Alberico to turn his gaze to surfaces as he reveals them in a more precise manner. The images he produced are definitely different than the traditional perceptions we have of such objects. From the apparent stasis evoked by the place where a refined wine is born, the artist doesn't *show* us the subject in his images. Instead, he *suggests* what subjects we should look for. By rendering them through the exclusive use of black and white, he reveals the physical relationships that exist between the objects and the cellar space.

Cecilia Del Gatto: Méscita (Pour)

Each of Zenato's wines is created in its own unique way in the cellar. But it doesn't reveal its true essence until the moment it is finally tasted. Aromas, flavors, and colors are the sensations that are directly involved in the wine experience. Cecilia Del Gatto has worked in various fields of the visual arts. But in this case, she has shifted her focus to photographic inquiry. Color is the most evident aspect of her work for this project and the chromatic spectrum of wine is what most powerfully grabs the viewers' attention in her images. She creates a bridge between her own world, art, and wine production. The act of pouring becomes her link between two different environments, just as chromatic gradation also becomes a connecting point. Each of the five images shows a photograph hanging from a string, as if projected in a *camera obscura*. Each photograph stands apart from the others thanks to its representation of Renaissance iconography. The body of a faceless woman in a priestly pose diligently watches over the nectar of the gods. The nectar is poured from the hanging photograph into the glass in the foreground. Del Gatto metaphorically evokes the deep connection that binds the sacral character in Italian painting using the "aesthetic" characteristics of wine: Clarity, transparency, fluidity, and color.

Alessandra Draghi: Ladro (Thief)

The main character in Alessandra Draghi's photo series is a glass wine thief (hence, the Italian title *ladro* or *thief*), a tube used to draw wine from a cask for tasting or analyzing. Its name is owed to the fact that it "steals" wine through the hole in the cask. This object plays an important role in the production cycle for wine. Its shape is very particular: A long glass tube with a small diameter and a bulge on the upper part where the handle is. In the images, the Ladro is examined through details that emerge from a series of compositions that feature the plastic beauty of this instrument. It's so simple in the function it plays but it's also particularly powerful from an aesthetic-visual point of view. Draghi's photographs show the object in the context of natural elements like water, a grape stem, or vine cane — all items taken directly from the *terroir*, in other words, Zenato's Santa Cristina estate. Here the artist is interested in drawing attention to man's focus and the enological cures he uses to conjoin ancient knowledge and his desire to produce wine. An ancient and noble tool, the Ladro hides it from our curious gaze in Alessandra Draghi's work. It only shows itself in fragments or reflected. The discretion of its appearances make it seem mysterious and desirable — beyond our interest in its function.

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Cesare Lopopolo: Le cose sensibili (Sensitive Things)

Machines are the theme examined in Cesare Lopopolo's series. They are an integral element in production, an imposing presence throughout the landscape. Here the artist reveals how in the realm of wine, machines and nature work together in perfect harmony. When closely examined, the "arm" of the large steel structure at Zenato's Santa Cristina winery is similar to the stalks of the vegetation that surrounds the vines. Lopopolo takes his time with the details in this rich study and dense examination of shapes in close-up. The contours of the metal structures used in winemaking are silhouetted against the monotonous backdrop of the sky making for beautiful figures. As with the best photography, the view perceives the presence of man even in his absence and without evidence of his action. Basking in sunlight, a simple step enters into a conversation with the surrounding environment. It offers the viewer innumerable potential ways to use it. Wide and soft, the storage tanks come into contact with the landscape around them and allow the viewer to glimpse them in perspective. Within this oneiric framework, even a suspended object can silently allude to an action that's about to start a story.

Anna Vezzosi: Punti di origine (Places of Origin)

Anna Vezzosi's work centers around the concept of origin. The bottle from 1973 represents tradition and Sergio Zenato's desire to harness the then untapped potential of the indigenous grape variety Trebbiano di Lugana. The presence of the land in the images is a clear reference to that which is generated: Man's toil and the culture of place. These are accompanied by natural elements drawn from the vineyard. They have been harvested and presented by the artist as archeological artifacts that belong to a now archaic time. They symbolize the evolution of the plant, which has been studied here with meticulous precision and attention for how high-quality wine is produced and continues to evolve. This material evokes the birth of the winery, which coincides with a profound knowledge of the land and the products — a place where natural and human history constantly intersect. The repeated presence of graph paper represents the scientific precision that you can sense in the winery. It also represents the care needed to produce such high quality. The only vertical photograph in the series is there to indicate the place of origin: Where the plant and the land meet. It's a synthesis of the creation of all the evolving projects — past and future — connected to Zenato wines. The white dot marks the place where the fundamentals (roots) began and become architecture (tree). It's the place where ideas are transformed into projects.

Author

Luca Panaro (born 1975 in Florence) is an art critic and curator. He received his degree in contemporary art from the University of Bologna and teaches photography criticism at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera in Milan and history of photography at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Bologna. Previously he worked with the Laboratorio di architettura e arte negli spazi pubblici at the Politecnico in Milan (Piacenza campus) where he taught photographic iconography. He has authored books on photography, video art, and new media, including *L'occultamento dell'autore*, *Tre strade per la fotografia*, *Casualità e controllo*, and *Un'apparizione di superfici*. His essays "Realtà e finzione nell'arte contemporanea" was published in the Enciclopedia Treccani XXI Secolo. He writes regularly for *Flash Art* and other art magazines. He has worked with museums and cultural institutions in Italy and abroad as a curator of exhibitions and site-specific installations. He is also the artistic director for the Centrale Festival in Fano and the founder of the educational program Chippendale Studio in Milan. www.lucapanaro.net

Giacomo Alberico (born 1994 in Pescara) studied "new technologies in art" at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Urbino. The focus of his work is urban landscapes and the ways in which man experiences his space in everyday life. He was selected for an artist residency at Biennale in Venice (2015) and Milano PhotoWeek (2018). He has exhibited his work in group shows including the International Design Biennial "Agrafa" in Katowice.

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With a diploma in graphic design from the Accademia di Belle Arti in Macerata, Cecilia Del Gatto (born 1995 in Fermo) has focused her research on identity and the body. Following her first one-woman show at the Galleria Mirionima in Macerata (2017), Cecilia has exhibited some of her works at the Fuorisalone in Milan in 2018 and the Ragusa Photo Festival.

Alessandra Draghi (born 1994 in Milan) creates alternative worlds by building sets in her studio and decontextualizing common objects. After completing her studies in painting and visual arts at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera in Milan, she has worked with artists and curators like Armin Linke and Cloe Roberta Piccoli. She has exhibited her work at the Casa del Novecento in Monza and the Galleria Suzzara in Mantua.

Cesare Lopopolo (born 1995 in Milan) received his diploma in graphic arts in 2018 at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera in Milan. He writes about art and culture and conducts research on the relationship between body and environment and body language and natural decoration. He has exhibited his work in group shows at the Fabbrica del Vapore (2018) and GAM Le Ciminiere in Catania (2016).

Anna Vezzosi (born 1994 in Mantua) lives and works between Brescia and Milan where she is conducting research on the physical and conceptual transformations of materials and objects. She received her diploma in Grafica d'arte in 2018 at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera in Milan and she has exhibited her work in different group shows including "Segni Agathae" at GAM Le Ciminiere in Catania (2016) and "Dei nuovi confini della fotografia" at the Fabbrica del Vapore in Milan (2018).

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