

Wild Routes
The Rome Exhibition
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Teatro Villa Pamphilj
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This exhibition brings together a small selection of photographs from my travels across Africa, Asia, and South America. They were taken in Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Kenya, South Africa, Brazil, and India, places rich with life and open space, where the wild has not yet been entirely enclosed. These are countries that have chosen, at least for now, to protect parts of the earth for animals, and for those of us who come seeking them.

To select the few exposed images, I started with thousands, far too many, and slowly pared them down, letting go one image at a time. What remains are the photographs that felt alive to me: the ones that carry me back to the moment I pressed the shutter, and that can exist within the limited space of a theatre while still hinting at wide grasslands, forests, and endless savannahs.

Each photograph belongs to a particular moment in time: when the sun flared or faded, when the moon was new or full, when the air was still or stirred by wind. I remember the heat rising from stone, the smell of wild sage and wet grass, the sharp sweetness of elephant dung. The low hum of flies, the laughter of hyenas, and sometimes a long, unbroken silence that makes the skin prickle. No photograph can hold all of this, the mix of sound, scent, heat, and distance. No lens, however refined, can fully match what the human eye does so naturally: notice the smallest movement while still taking in the entire horizon. I adjust angles and light, work through the careful balance of shutter and aperture, ISO and compensation, knowing that no photograph will ever be complete. Perhaps that incompleteness is what gives it meaning.

To travel through these landscapes in the presence of wild animals, is to feel, almost physically, our place in the world. The experience strips away illusion. It reminds us how small we are, how brief our time is, and how miraculous the world remains despite us. I have been fortunate to spend time in places of extraordinary beauty and yet of extreme fragility. They need protection, passionate advocates, time to recover and recuperate from ecological disasters, concrete actions to defend them and pass them to future generations as an unreplaceable legacy.

This is the reason why I decided to partner with *CISP Sviluppo dei Popoli*, an Italian civil society organisation operating in more than thirty developing countries, and to make available my wildlife photographs as a sign of environmental commitment to support thousands of young people and adult women from seven rural communities in Ecuador's Esmeraldas province, villages without roads and without alternatives, lost in the green labyrinth of the mangrove forest.

They do not speak of poverty, though it shapes their daily lives, but of belonging: they define themselves as guardians of the mangroves, as if survival itself were a form of stewardship. Here, poverty is an age-old condition, violence a constant presence, institutions a distant echo.

Families, largely of Afro-descendant origin, survive on what the sea allows: artisanal fishing, shellfish gathered with bare hands. But the sea is retreating, fish are disappearing, and even the the small, dark shelled clam, the *concha negra*, which women search for while immersed in the black mud of the mangroves, is becoming scarce, as if the land itself were clenching its fists.

They need support in their quiet task: protecting the marine-coastal ecosystem, creating breeding areas for shellfish and aquatic species, pulling plastic from the tides and returning it to a useful cycle, imagining an economy that does not destroy what it depends on. It is slow, almost nomadic work, combining environmental protection with the dignity of life, and with the rare yet necessary possibility of a peace born from respect for the land. All profits from the exhibition will be donated to the project supporting the communities in Ecuador's Esmeraldas province.

After the one in London, this is my second exhibition, and the greatest challenge was yet again not technical; it was mental. I had to make a profound transition: from photographer to storyteller. And it is not the same thing. As photographers, we are immersed in the moment of the shot. We gamble with light, with time, with the animal's movements. Narrating through an exhibition, instead, requires stepping outside that moment. One must create a bridge between the one who looks and the one who looked first. This second exhibition allows me to continue my journey.

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