

IL PASSAGGIO

L'incanata

Marialba Russo

With an essay by Marino Niola

In this new volume of the series *I Quaderni dello Sguardo*, anthropological and photographic gaze come together again to offer us a precious documentation of the *incanata*, a healing and initiation rite that the artist Marialba Russo photographed in 1979 on a mountain near Avellino, on the border with Basilicata.

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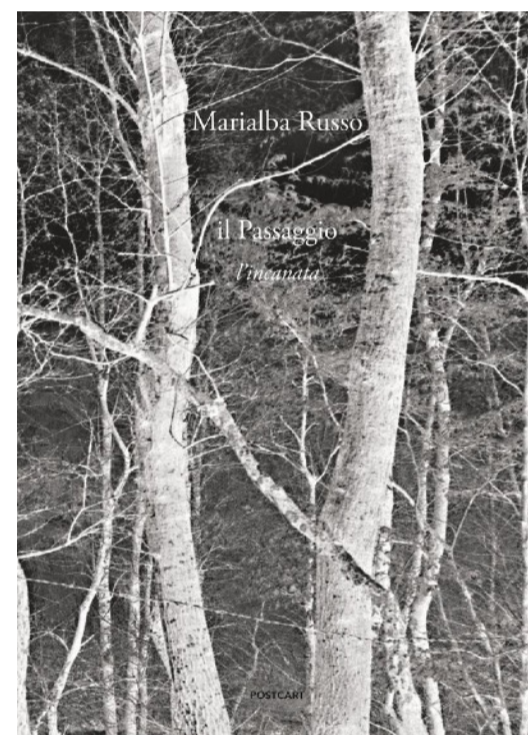
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«Life is in colour, but black and white is more realistic: the words of Wim Wenders immediately come to one's mind, almost as an automatism of thought, while looking at Marialba Russo's images. They are not merely visual records of an ancient rural rite of transition; they reveal the delicate bonds linking humankind to nature, the filigree-like ties that control the lives of entities and beings, synchronizing them to the same biorhythm. And it is precisely this slow, almost timeless biorhythm that captures the gaze of the artist, who succeeds in visualizing the cycle of birth and rebirth which is before the eyes of us all, but which only a few of us manage to distinguish from the multitude of visual images congesting our image-based society.

The *incanata* or transition, studied in the Eighties of last century by Alfonso M. Di Nola, great historian of religions, is an initiatory and at the same time therapeutic and apotropaic ritual. It served - and in fact often still serves - both to heal and to prevent hernia in children by creating a bond between the human and the vegetal world, between the physical wound one aims to heal or prevent and the opening in the tree, which has been cut so that the child can pass through. And thus heal, just as the cut in the tree will grow together.»

— Marino Niola

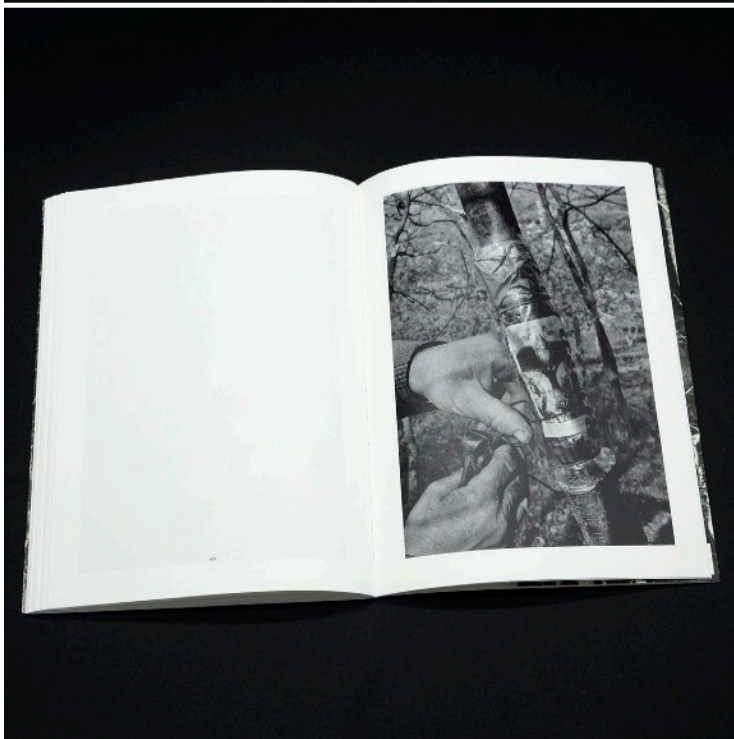
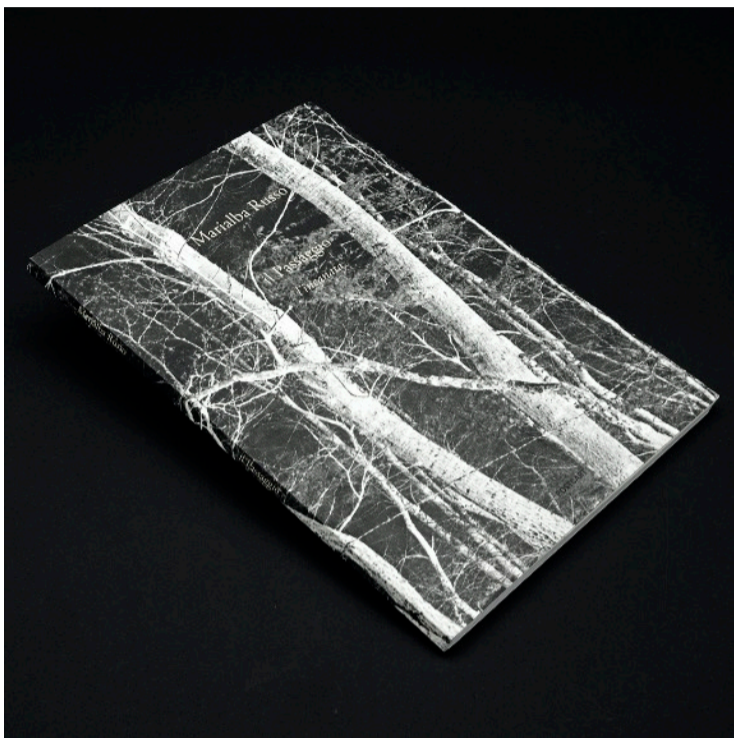


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«On a mountain on the border with Basilicata there was a person who officiated the rite, him and his son. He chose a tree in the forest, he divided it in two without breaking it, otherwise the ritual could no longer take place; the parents made the child pass through this slot three times; each passage was accompanied by a scream that simulated the entry and exit from the mother's womb.»

— Marialba Russo

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MARIALBA RUSSO

Biography



Born in Naples, in 1987 she moved to Rome where she has been living since. She first approached photography in the late 1960s focusing on religious representations and folkloric celebrations in central-southern Italy. In the years 1976-1977 she published *Al ristorante il 29 settembre 1974* and *Giornale Spray* in *i Quaderni dello sguardo*, a series she created herself. In 1979, Marialba Russo was represented Italy in the Contemporary European Photography section of *Venezia 79 la fotografia*, with the photographic sequence *Il parto*. In 1989 the Gallery of Modern Art Giorgio Morandi in Bologna hosted a retrospective devoted to the photographer and published the monograph *Marialba Russo - Fotografie 1980-1987*, featuring a letter by Alberto Moravia. In 1993, Mudima (Milan) published *Roma, Fasti Moderni - il disordine del tempo. Epifanie* is a collection of travel photographs published in 1997, followed by the intimate visual narrative *Famosa* and *Il ritratto di me*. Over the last decade, the Museum of Photography in Thessaloniki and the Jin Tai Art Museum in Beijing have hosted the premières of *l'Incanto*, volume published by Skira (Milan) in 2004. In 2010 the Camera Obscura (Thessaloniki) published the plaqueette *Worlds of Glamour and Banality* edited by Aris Georgiou. *Confine*, 2015, is the second volume of the trilogy begun with *l'Incanto* and explores the research that each subject – be it human, animal, real or symbolic – carries out within and beyond itself. The third and last volume of the series is forthcoming. With *Travestimento*, published by Postcart in 2016, and *Cult Fiction*, published in 2018 by Quinlan, *il Giorno il Gioco il Sogno*, published by Postcart, the series *i Quaderni dello sguardo* is published again. In 2021 she exhibits at the Centro Pecci in Prato and publishes the book *Public Sex*, Nero editions.

