

BONDING

Intimacy, relationships, new worlds

The theme of the 2019 edition of the Fotografia Europea festival works on the individual and the collective level, which often naturally merge into a single channel. Eighteenth-Century literature and philosophy represent here an ideal starting point. As a matter of fact, we might say that this edition starts from the images and legacies of one of the most beautiful novels in history, *Choderlos de Laclos' Dangerous Liaisons*, clashing and often merging with those of *Jean-Jacques Rousseau's On the Social Contract*. In other words, it touches upon a wide variety of human relations: from sentimental relationships, which are more private in nature, to social ones, which naturally mostly take place in the public sphere.

Relationships start from the private sphere and subsequently expand over public relations: family ties can be considered as the core of such elaboration, and it is well known how these relationships are, in contemporary society, subject to constant change of perspective (as Paul Ginsborg recently wrote: *"In contemporary societies we find a first dichotomy between closed and open families, between self-referential family cores, which are basically focused on themselves, and others which are oriented, at least potentially, towards the outside, towards civil society"*). These changes emerge even more clearly in the public sphere, where the concepts of relationships and bonding leave the intimacy that underlies interpersonal relationships, giving way to social and political behavior. Meaningfully, one of Rousseau's most famous definitions deals exactly with this specific area: *"The problem is to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before"*.

Ontologically, bonding always goes towards the other from within one's self. It occurs by a relationship transforming all those who are involved. From "me" we move to "us", and from "us" we move to "all of us", welcoming the other from within our horizon, a horizon that is not only ideal: by establishing these relations we define the society we

live in. This is clearly a matter of extraordinary urgency: let it be understood in connection to the past (which level of alteration have we reached in the concept of bonding with territory, space and people, with the phenomena of urbanization still underway on a global level?) or as an insight into the future, in the evolution of a society like ours, currently reaching a new shape in this millennium (our relation with machines and artificial intelligence forces us to further think and re-establish what we know: this is no more science fiction but everyday reality).

These premises allow us to frame endless conceptual and visual elaborations which, in photographic terms, might be summarized by the title of a recent book about the latest developments in photography, *L'immagine partagée* ("The Shared image") by André Gunthert, where the idea of photography modifies its nature because of the act of 'sharing' becoming an intrinsic element – which is the result of the new world created by technology. This profoundly influences our concept of intimacy, sometimes in a dramatic negative sense, thus bringing in itself, once again, an elaboration on the meaning of the term "bonding" in today's society.

Walter Guadagnini