



VINCENZO MAZZA  
p h o t o g r a p h y

MAGAZINE | SITE : PAESAGGI D'ABBRUZZO

NUMBER | YEAR OR DATE : 2015

ARTICLE TITLE OR ARTWORK NAME : GRAN SASSO - LANDS OF CLOUDS & WINDS

JOURNALIST: ALESSANDRO DI NISIO (EDITOR IN CHIEF)

*“When I met Vincenzo Mazza for the first time, it was the summer of 2012. We were enjoying a cup of coffee in Tagliacozzo and looking at his stunning images of the Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park. I was immediately struck by the way in which Vincenzo’s photographs manage to convey his own interpretation of these places, portraying them under special weather conditions that bring to mind Northern landscapes,” Alessandro di Nisio recalls.*

*“Today, a few years later, it comes as no surprise to me that Vincenzo has been awarded runner-up prize in the “Trees Woods & Forests” section of the International Garden Photographer of the Year Contest. His photo, taken in Monti della Laga, was chosen among 20 thousand other photographs.*

*It’s unbelievable that his project has not been published yet, especially with Expo Milano 2015 coming up, when Italy should be promoting its territories. Vincenzo’s work would be an incredible advert for the Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park. This is one of the reasons why I suggested that Vincenzo make a video, “Lands of clouds and wind”, to be promoted through Paesaggi d’Abruzzo’s channels of communication.”*

***Why did you choose the Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park as the main subject of your photography project?***

*It was in 2009 that I started to devote my time seriously to taking pictures of the Park, especially the Campo Imperatore area. At the beginning, I didn’t imagine that taking these pictures, which stemmed simply from my passion for nature and photography, would become part of such an important project. But eventually I decided to use my pictures to tell a story, focusing on the four seasons and inspired by the extraordinary landscape variety of this corner of Abruzzo.*



VINCENZO MAZZA  
p h o t o g r a p h y

### ***How many trips from Rome did it take to complete your project?***

*To answer this question I had to look at my hard disk which records all the photography trips made since 2009: 97 in total (some of them longer than one day). It has also taken 40 thousand km and more than 5 thousand euros in petrol to complete this project. Obviously, having been there so many times, I've taken many more pictures than those used for the video.*

### ***The title of your video is "Lands of Clouds and Wind". What's the importance of these two elements in landscape photography?***

*Wind and clouds are two fundamental elements of the Campo Imperatore area, and the title of my video aims to pay homage to them. Another reason for choosing this title is that I often think of the mountains as "ethereal", almost touching the sky, surrounded by the clouds and the winds. This is what I wanted to portray in my photographs and that's why I've visited the Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park so many times - I wanted to give an alternative depiction of those places.*

*I searched for images that would strike the viewer not only because of the beauty of the Park, but also because of the special conditions portrayed. This Park is in an extremely complex territory: on one hand there are signs of human life dating back to thousands of years ago, and on the other hand it is as if the Park did not really evolve between the Middle Ages and the beginning of last century. I decided to focus my project, which is far from being complete or exhaustive, on the landscapes of this territory, while other photographers have worked on other aspects of it, and there is still much more to be done.*

### ***How much studying and effort does a picture require?***

*What a tricky question, yet extremely interesting. Landscape photography is tough and I'll tell you why. First of all it's not a nine-to-five job. Inconvenient working hours are typical, you never travel light and sometimes you have to travel far even on foot. What for most people would be "bad weather" is for me the "most interesting weather". As well known British landscape photographer David Noton says, "first you go out with your camera when the weather is good, but then you realise that bad weather is actually better for photography"*



VINCENZO MAZZA  
p h o t o g r a p h y

*Some of the conditions that I remember best occurred at the end of a period of turbulent weather. For example, when the last ray of sunlight has lit up a stormy sky above a landscape covered with a blanket of fresh snow. Unfortunately, sometimes getting up really early, driving for miles on end or standing around in the cold and rain for a long time... all these efforts are not enough. Most of the time nature does not collaborate with us photographers, no matter how good we are, and in the end we go home empty-handed. But sometimes the magic happens and you just have to be ready to immortalise that glorious moment. That's why I think that never giving up is what truly helps in this kind of photography.*

**Do you think that there is any chance of developing a form of photography tourism such as has happened in Iceland?**

*Photographic tourism has spread extensively in recent years and Iceland is actually the place where this phenomenon is most evident. Many people today travel primarily to take nice pictures, and Iceland has succeeded in attracting a huge proportion of these people, with profound effects on the country's economy. For instance, when I first visited Iceland in the winter of 2012, the guesthouse next to the well-known Glacier Lagoon, was completely deserted, to the extent that we found the place open, with the lights on and nobody guarding it.*

*Eventually, before leaving, we had to call the owner ourselves, as nobody had shown up in three days! This would be impossible now: although the capacity of the guesthouse has tripled, you still need to book at least six months in advance. The situation changed completely in the span of three years! Italy still has to catch up with Iceland in this respect: although Italy has an abundance of beautiful landscapes, it has not succeeded in promoting them beyond national borders.*

*In my opinion, the reasons for this lies in the apparent inability of organisations and institutions to promote the country. What I mean is this: if an institution or organisation uses low quality photographs obtained from amateur competitions in order to promote their lands, they are unlikely to encourage international tourism. In addition, we need to take into account the fact that people from Northern Europe and North America are generally more aware of the importance of visual representation and are therefore used to seeing their lands portrayed through high quality pictures.*



VINCENZO MAZZA  
p h o t o g r a p h y

*The case of Iceland is emblematic: after high quality pictures taken by professional photographers started to circulate around the world, an increasing number of professional photographers began to visit Iceland in order to take their own photographs. As a result, Iceland began to show up regularly in international competitions, thereby becoming even more popular as a photography destination.*

*With the spread of these photos on social networks such as 500px, a chain reaction took place, resulting in the growth of a form of tourism that has perhaps gone too far. The organisations in charge of promoting tourism in Iceland have paid attention to this trend, starting specific campaigns involving beautiful pictures of the Northern Lights with the goal of increasing winter tourism.*

*I'm not saying that the Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park will never be able to compete with Iceland's appeal, but as a photographer who has travelled extensively around the world and who has seen many wonderful places, I strongly believe this Park's landscapes have the potential to attract more international tourism. I'm also aware of the fact that this is never going to happen if the promotion of the Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park consists chiefly of smartphone snapshots of skewered chunks of mutton, a traditional local dish known as arrosticini. I can hardly imagine a North American nature-lover catching a long-haul flight exclusively to see that.*

*On the other hand, Paesaggi d'Abruzzo is a perfect example of what can be achieved with dedication and professionalism. You have been able to achieve remarkable results by encouraging a grassroots kind of involvement in photography, with people of all ages devoting their time and energy to it and so improving their skills. Paesaggi d'Abruzzo presents Abruzzo passionately, using quality material and enabling people to discover less well-known places in the region.*

*When we first met in Tagliacozzo I was struck by your account of the efforts you made to encourage the growth of Paesaggi d'Abruzzo and to preserve its existence. People see a website, a Facebook page and interesting material probably without realizing how much effort has gone into the creation of this project. Paesaggi d'Abruzzo has become an important point of reference also for professional photographers like me. It is a showcase displaying quality work to people all over the world. If you have managed to achieve these results on your own, just think what you could do with more resources.*



VINCENZO MAZZA  
p h o t o g r a p h y

***What is the subject of your next photographic project?***

*I've been working for a while in the Pollino National Park, another relatively little-known territory. I'm very happy with this project so far. I've spent a great deal of time in close contact with nature and I have got to know the people of San Severino Lugano, who have accepted me literally as one of them. I have also developed a strong bond of friendship with some of them. I have already been awarded as runner-up in the "Stories of species" category in the The Nature Images Award 2014, which is a prestigious competition promoted by French magazine Terre Sauvage. I have also been awarded a five thousand dollar photography grant by The Luminous Landscape to complete my project. My dream now is to write a book and publish it with the help of the Pollino National Park. Hopefully this will work out.*

**Translated from the Italian by Priscilla Trivisonne and Enrico Tuni**