

"Terra Nostra" is a photo essay on the effects of Mafia in Sicily. With my photographs I have endeavoured to document and capture the permanent scars inflicted by Cosa nostra on the Sicilian territory and the social context, victim and persecutor, of a system strongly rooted on fear and corruption. Born in Sicily myself, I started shooting Terra Nostra in 2009 and only now, after five years of work I finally found the project to be almost completed. The biggest challenge I had to face was to convey the legacy that Cosa nostra has imposed on the Sicilian people, the coasts permanently destroyed by illegal building speculation, the unsustainable economy resulted by a system based on extortion and corrupted public competitions of a broad capitalist monopoly of the crime families, and that sense of claustrophobic lack of freedom one can sense throughout the territory. A man standing on a vandalised bus stop in Palermo represents the haunted features of a degraded society.

The imposing structure of a foreclosed hotel overshadows a couple sunbathing in a polluted beach in Trapani, while the photograph of the girl wearing a mask suggests how complex and multilayered are social interactions in a place where the less you expose yourself the safer you'll be. During this last five years I came to the realisation that the vague knowledge on the Mafia phenomenon, constructed by Hollywood imagery and stereotypes, has weirdly overpassed reality. This gap has triggered a common deception by stigmatising Sicily as a land where even tourists aren't safe from the mob. Such creative yet unrealistic attitude has led the real life Mafiosi to borrow back fragments of identity they lost along the way. Several bosses were found in their hiding places with copies of Coppola's Godfather or Pacino's memorabilia. To me Terra Nostra is an endeavour to focus back on the state of things in a place where decades of violence have marked permanently the territory, hoping that one day we'll find again rightful ownership on our land.