

Domenico Mangano

(Palermo, 1976)

Domenico Mangano's art feeds off the contradictions hidden in the deepest folds of everyday life. The work with which he became well-known was *La storia di Mimmo* (1999), featuring his uncle, a Palermitan fishmonger affected by schizophrenia who spends his days shut up in his home, in front of the window or the television. Mangano grasps the slow and repetitive gestures, the heaviness of his body, his invectives and his dialectal wisdom, moving delicately through the never-changing life of a man. In his early works, Sicily is often featured: the artist's homeland but above all, with its incredible complexity, the incarnation of all the outlying areas of the world. For him, it represents something more than a geographical South: instead it is the land in which to explore marginal, alternative situations, ones at odds with rules and expectations. This is shown by the fact that his research approach did not change even in the wake of his moving to the Netherlands, where he had to come to terms with a society based on order and respect for the rules. But it's his new Dutch life that shows him that Nordic rigour is a concept as stereotyped as his own Sicilianitude, and that even here, digging a little deeper below the surface brings out imperceptible elements of incoherence.

Momentarily putting aside his individual artistic experience, the move to Amsterdam also coincided with the start of his collaboration with the art and architecture historian Marieke van Rooy. The most important work produced together so far is *The Dilution Project*, a multi-year research project developed around the antipsychiatry movement. Taking hold throughout the 1970s right across Europe, this trend spread in the Netherlands thanks to the activity of the psychologist Carel Muller within the Nieuw Dennendal community. His experiment revolved around the concept of 'dilution', which consisted in bringing sane people into contact with psychiatric patients in the attempt to overcome the polarisation of society, the prejudices and the isolation of care facilities. Over the course of three artistic residences between the Netherlands and the island of Curaçao in the Dutch Antilles, Mangano and van Rooy developed the project through installations, sculptural objects, photographs, drawings, workshops and a video trilogy, the first of which was purchased for the collection. *Birds Singing, Sandy Ground* (2014) is the touching portrait of life inside a Frisian community that hosts patients of all ages affected by various forms of mental disability. The images flow slowly, like time in a microcosm immersed in the forest, governed by its own rhythms and rules. In the creation of the following *Homestead of Dilution* (2016) and *When the Whistle Glares* (2019), the two artists applied the notion of dilution to their practice, involving the patients of the psychiatric institutions hosting them in the activities.

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