

## Chiara Piritto

(Turin, 1977)

Chiara Piritto's works with video and photography are wrapped in a patina of familiarity. In fact, the artist tries to silently work her way into the lives of others so as to grasp their habits, states of mind and uncertainties, stepping into that comfort zone in which we tend to feel most at ease. However this condition is merely apparent, due to a physical nearness between her and her subjects rather than a genuine intimacy that has finally been achieved. Piritto scrutinises her prey, draws close to them and captures them with her lens before immediately letting them go, like strangers in the crowd with an unexpressed potential of stories to tell.

In the work in the collection, *Within Image* (2003), we see a group of young girls waiting for their turn behind the wings of an illuminated stage. The framing, close up on their faces, makes it impossible to tell what the context is in which the action takes place: perhaps it's a beauty contest, perhaps a choir performance, or perhaps even a theatre audition. Every now and then, the camera shifts towards the audience in the theatre, struck by the coloured stage lights as the show goes on, while the heart of the story – i.e. what happens on the stage, continues to not be revealed. Piritto is careful to construct a work in which there is no plot, development or conclusion, thus leaving us in a limbo of uncertainty and expectations which is not so unlike that experienced by the protagonists, whose tense, emotional gazes, brimming with hope, we cannot but spy on.

In her video installation *Exposure/Esposizione* (2003), the artist aims to stage an even clearer relationship between the observed party and the observer. Here, the twilight shots of taxis waiting at traffic lights along the streets of Athens show a succession of unknown faces captured through back windows. Like the girls of *Within Image*, these people also remain on the screen no more than a few seconds, before disappearing once more as soon as the lights turn green and the taxi sets off once more. Some passengers realise they are being filmed and immediately look away out of embarrassment; others sit there, peering at the camera, questioning us in turn, the viewers of the work. Everyone, Piritto insists, is fragile and vulnerable in the eyes of the other, and the most exposed subject is never just the one in front of the video camera. Also those of the work *Talks* (2004) are unexpressed stories dedicated to the state of anonymity of call centre employees, of whom we perceive the blurred and whitish image thanks only to their reflection on the monitor of the computer they are using. Conversely, the screens fully display the personal data of the customers contacted as well as the routine questions that the operators are obliged to pose. The technological bubble that they are caught up in during their working hours makes it impossible to establish a personal relationship with the person on the other end of the line.

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