


TO THE SOIL

Domestic Archaeology

Daniele DAINELLI

PC: Daniele Dainelli





All Photos by Daniele Dainelli.

The Domestic Archaeology Project is the outcome of seven years of work, from 2009 to 2016. During this period, I undertook dozens of trips to the countryside—exploring the lives of those living in the rural hinterlands of the coast, inland areas, and the western provinces.

In our contemporary era, characterised as it is by change and transformation, rural areas in China are being progressively abandoned. This change is radical, relentless, and epic. It somehow parallels the path of humanity in modern history—a path that has seen the gradual abandonment of the rural way of life in favour of an urbanisation often imposed from above.

Through the juxtaposition of imposing natural landscapes and intimate representations of objects taken from the daily life of rural dwellers, I attempt to show the contrast between these images of indoor solitude and the immensity, enormity, and variety of the land.

In the pictures that I took indoors, I try to give the spectator a tangible sensation, as if it was possible to touch the objects, to feel the textures, the essence, and the soul of these things. At the same time, in the landscape pictures, I attempt to portray the magnificence of the scenery,

exasperating and aggravating every little detail through a digital process that allows me to obtain an enlargement of up to three or four metres. Every landscape is composed of 30 to 50 images of medium digital format joined together with the help of the photo stitch technique. Through this method, I can give a precise idea of spaces and distances, providing a more precise representation of reality.

Since the very beginning, I was intensely drawn to the objects I found inside the dwellings of these inhabitants living at the end of rural history: clothes, shoes, bottles, cooking utensils, items grouped together or isolated from the others, hanging on walls as if they have been there for centuries.

I was so fascinated by the ‘archaeological’ aspect of these objects and by what they tell us about the passing of time that I eventually started collecting them. To this day, I still preserve them exactly the way they were when I first acquired them. In this gallery, I share some of these material possessions—a fleeting glimpse of a life that is already gone before it has disappeared. ■













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