

Nico Marzano on Gianfranco Rosi

What does cinema stand for? Looking through Gianfranco Rosi's complete filmography, which spans nearly three decades, it seems safe to assume that the distinction between documentary and fiction increasingly feels meaningless to him; we sense, instead, an obsession with the real, for a cinema constantly in pursuit of the truth. Truth not intended as a philosophical or ethical quest but as a moment: something to capture before it's too late, before it has vanished. Something that can be as fleeting as Ali's gaze in *Notturmo* (2020) or as confrontational as the cry of the killer in *El Sicario, Room 164* (2010), or as reassuring as the woman making up her family's bed on the island of Lampedusa in *Fire at Sea* (2016).

From *Boatman* (1993), his very first film, to *Notturmo*, his most recent, Rosi's cinema not only demonstrates a carefully crafted aesthetic but also pulsates with a specific vision. His filmmaking resonates through his rigorous approach and profound care for the stories he encounters, as well as for the human beings who eventually find themselves in the foreground in his works.

Rosi seems to be constantly absorbed by the idea of looking for the right distance between the subjects of his stories and his camera. This can be seen whether we are in the holy city of Benares, where the dead are burned before their ashes are cast into the sacred Ganges (*Boatman*), or in a desert 200 miles from Los Angeles (*Below Sea Level*, 2008). It's evident in a locked motel room near the Mexican border (*El Sicario, Room 164*), roaming around Rome's vast circular highway (*Sacro GRA*, 2013), on the movingly beautiful island of Lampedusa (*Fire at Sea*), and in the painfully tormented Middle East (*Notturmo*). This carefully considered measure, which results in very clear formal and political implications in all of Rosi's films, allows the viewer to relate to something deeply intimate, whether reflected in a long sequence or in a fleeting image.

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