

Text THE INVISIBLE PIPELINE  
DAVIDE RAMPELLO

Invisible pipeline is Giada Ripa's latest effort and marks another step forward in the creative journey of this young and insightful landscape and portrait photographer. After acquiring experience in remote corners of the world between China and Central Asia, Giada Ripa now delves into an unseen Ecuador that under the wild yet welcoming shelter of the Amazon rainforest keeps a due distance from the modern world. While documenting life in this part of the world, the project simultaneously allows us to discover a little of ourselves as we follow the route of a pipeline that, akin to a giant anaconda, slowly makes its way through the tangled rainforest.

Ripa's work reveals a high level of expressive, but especially cognitive maturity. The images arise from the ability to tell stories, elicit emotions and reveal hidden thoughts without ever resorting to explicit statements or futile formalisms. Giada Ripa's penchant for keenly observing a people and its land results in pictures that rival those of masters the likes of Steve McCurry, Thomas Struth, Shirin Neshat, Joel Sternfeld and many others who have made their art out of an implicit and subtle narrative.

The eni pipeline lies at the heart of a plot made up of multiple stories of a people in evolution. The pipeline represents a modernity that extracts energy and resources from the land but at the sametime gives back to the land and its inhabitants wealth and respect. Giada Ripa observes the scenarios that revolve around the long metallic serpent with sensitivity and care, loyal to the principle that observing is much more than just watching. Behind every image one senses the photographer's awareness, which enables her to study the frames and allow the elements of reality to speak for themselves with lightness and clarity.

The compositions are dynamic, agile, straightforward and the result of a long process of listening. The images of Invisible pipeline explore a territory at the confines of the earth, a frontier land that returns to the forefront and becomes a metaphor for other peripheries. The Quechua communities of San Virgilio, Atakapi, Liquino and Paparawa come forth in all of their complexity. The photographs convey the intensity of faces worn by time, but also the normality of bodies weighted down by a westernized lifestyle. We see a shaman listening to mother earth and youngsters posing in the river; stunning images of unspoiled nature and small industrial settlements where workers dabble in gardening. And we see warehouses, the school, the soccer field and dozens of families that spring up like plants in the forest and blend into the landscape. There are patches of asphalt used as heliports and a dirt landing strip on which a small plane carrying teachers and doctors lands as a curious child watches on.

A great sense of harmony infuses the relationship between these seemingly opposing elements. The pictures do not condemn or condone, they document. They are the silent testimony of the evolution of a people and from the photos the story of these people emerges spontaneously and in their own language. Giada Ripa listens to these words, records them and translates them into images. Translation is always a sort of treachery. Nevertheless, the photographs of Invisible pipeline allow the truth to surface without forcing it, through the warmth of human contact, of understanding and of respect. These images give form to a land and identity to a people. They are expressions of harmony tinged with dignity. A dignity to which every human being, every animal and every plant aspires. A dignity to which every living being is entitled. Now more than ever.

Davide Rampello  
President of the Triennale di Milano, 2010