Virginia Zanetti
I just want to know who I am

The image of a person falling through the air comes from a photograph that Virginia Zanetti remembers of her grandfather Luigi Zanetti, silver medal-winning gymnast at the London Olympics in 1948, doing a somersault.
The artist had already used the trick of changing the viewpoint in her project "I pilastri della terra" (2015-2019). In that work the people were doing a handstand, but, seen the other way up, it looked like they were holding up or hanging from the earth. For this new work created in July 2021, upside down, the image gives the illusion of a person falling from the earth and letting herself go towards the unknown.

"The period of history we're living in starkly underlines the vulnerability of the human condition. As I hypothesize that life in all its forms develops through cyclical phases of origin, growth, degeneration, death and rebirth, this research investigates our need to disintegrate to then rebuild ourselves," the artist explains.

To make the photographic work and the videos that form the trilogy I just want to know who I am, Virginia Zanetti involved an athlete from the Società di Ginnastica Etruria 1897 in Prato (the same club that her grandfather belonged to), reviving the connection with her personal history and the place where she lives. The whole trampolining team got organized so they could do their sport outside. Athlete Chiara Cecchi worked with the artist for a long time to create a different posture from the canonical landing positions used by gymnasts. Upon landing after a somersault, she made her body look relaxed, as if her arms, hands and feet were let go.
The photographic image capturing that gesture portrays a single human being not falling onto the earth, but from it. The work originates from the loneliness and powerlessness felt by the artist – like everybody else – during the lockdown. The suddenly empty space she found herself in enabled her to feel our fragility and impermanence on one hand, and the sublime that brings about a drastic but necessary reset, and a sense of extreme freedom on the other.
The two videos show athlete Chiara Cecchi doing a series of somersaults and falls. One video is a totally realistic shot of the action: the dizziness of an immense jump, the strength, fluidity and control of the athlete's body, the yearning for freedom during the brief instant of flight as the human being seeks to erase the force of gravity that inevitably ties her down to the earth. In the other video the artist turns the photograph upside down, focuses on the fall, slows it down and fades it out. The powerful body becomes a delicate figure that keeps on falling from the earth, finally free to regenerate over and over and over again.

"Action and performance are a fundamental part of my way of working," states Virginia Zanetti, "both as an aesthetic experience and as the force generating my photographic, sculptural, pictorial or environmental works. They are put together like psychomagical rituals or acts which serve to rediscover forms of social consciousness. With my work I try to bring out the essence of the community and the 'essentiality' of the human being, by using the critical potential of the crisis to stimulate a continual rethink of reality."

BIOGRAPHY

Virginia Zanetti (Fiesole, 1981) artist and art professor, she lives and works in Prato. Graduate in painting with honors at the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence, she is specialized in art education.
She works both in unconventional places and Italian and foreign institutions for culture and contemporary art such as the Man in Nuoro, Palazzo Strozzi in Florence, the CAC Pecci in Prato, the Kunsthalle in Bern, the Italian Cultural Institute in New Delhi, and Zurich.
Her works are in public collections such as MADRE in Naples and MAMBO in Bologna.
Co-founder of the *Estuario project space* of Prato and of the *Laboratory of the Future*, a discussion platform where intellectuals from various cultural areas meet and debate the main themes of our time together with citizens.