

UMAR عمر

RAW SIGHT PRESENTS A FILM BY FRANCESCO CIBATI IN ASSOCIATION WITH LINEA D'OMBRA

WITH MOHAMMAD UMAR ARIE, LINEA D'OMBRA & LORENA FORNASIR

CULTURAL MEDIATION AND TRANSLATION RAHEEM ULLAH, ISMAIL SWATI & SHABANA DOP MARCO BERGONZI EDITOR MICHAEL PETROLINI SOUND ALBERTO MARRAS

WRITTEN BY FRANCESCO CIBATI, MARCO BERGONZI & MICHAEL PETROLINI DIRECTED BY FRANCESCO CIBATI



Umar, 24yo, arrives in Trieste from Pakistan after a long and terrible journey on his foot. He witnessed the death of his best friend, he was tortured by the Croatian police, he risked his leg's amputation and was finally found salvation, also thanks to Lorena. She is the president of Linea d'Ombra, an association that welcomes migrants upon their arrival in Italy from the Balkan Route and that represents a new beginning for Umar.

Umar is also the first work by Francesco Cibati, an observational short documentary written with Marco Bergonzi and Michael Petrolini.

CONTEXT

Trieste is the final point of the Balkan Route. Here the migrants arrive from Bosnia, the external border of the European Union, defended with brutal and systematic violence by the Croatian police. Despite the complaints brought by countless institutions, associations and newspapers, the situation along the Route continued to deteriorate, the European Union and the sovereign states were guilty of serious violations of human rights.

Today, following the Route, people on the move arrive in Trieste after the "game", a walk of about twenty days through dangerous and inhospitable forests, forcing the pass for 270 km through Croatia and Slovenia. It's not possible to stop, because the risk of being caught, rejected and raped is very high. Upon their arrival, many migrants have not eaten or drink for days except roots, leaves and puddle mud filtered through their socks. Their shoes are broken, their clothes soaked in water, their skin covered with bruises, abrasions, parasites, their feet are terribly sore. Yet they all smile.

Umar is one of these people, and he bears the marks of the violence he suffered. He tried the game 37 times, a team of sadistic policemen inflicted repeated burns on his right leg, his best friend died next to him in the forests near Rijeka. For two years he was stuck in Bosnia, losing heart because of the condition of his leg. It is at this point that he meets Lorena. She heals and comforts him and, he tells that she gave him the strength to try again. In February 2020 Umar arrived in Trieste. ragged, thin, the infected leg causing fever and excruciating pain, but the worst was finally over.

Trieste is a city on the border that does not want to recognize itself as such. The few structures that provided relief and first help to migrants have been closed in the last year by the far-right administration, indifferent about human rights. It is in this context of rarefaction of the sense of community that Lorena, together with her partner Gian Andrea and other people, founded Linea d'Ombra. This commitment involves meeting every day in Piazza Libertà in front of the train station to welcome arriving migrants. At the same time, the association organizes solidarity trips to Bosnia in support of migrants stranded beyond the European border.

Umar found again Lorena in Piazza Libertà. He decided to stay, becoming an integral part of the association, a good cultural mediator and tireless worker. He struggles with Italian and English, the leg is almost healed thanks to the care and attention received. He wants to go back to his family, but he also knows he wants to come back to Trieste, where he feels at home. "Where you find people who love you, there is your home and your family".

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Umar's story, as well as Lorena Fornasir and Gian Andrea Franchi, are already known among those who follow the events of the Balkan Route. Umar has been filmed many times already: he has been quoted on Italian, Spanish, Belgian and Dutch national television, he appears in countless articles and reports and in Sara Del Dot's documentary, "Confine | Umanità".

But there is one thing: Umar has always been told as the object of Croatian violence, a tragic character and archetype of the migrant who, fortunately, managed to save himself. A version of Umar that originated from himself was missing, one that would represent righteously the person Umar is now, rather than focusing mostly on the violence he suffered in the past. Being an active part of the Linea d'Ombra association and frequenting Umar almost daily, I sensed the possibility of involving him in the project, the idea thrilled him, so we decided to give space to his daily life, observing him for about two days at home and in the public square. At the same time with Umar, with the help of Raheem Ullah and Shabana, friends and precious mediators, we have developed what is the narrating voice in the final editing: Umar who tells his own story, choosing accents and nuances as he wants, in a work, albeit assisted, of self-determination.

In thinking about the short doc Umar, the intention towards the viewer was immediately clear: the awareness of what happens at the borders is important, but thanks to patient observation, by taking the time to get to know a character on a more intimate level, it is possible to turn awareness into empathy, making a fundamental qualitative leap. The moment of prayer, the study of Italian language, the care of the external appearance, discovering that in northern Pakistan people do not eat spicy, seeing an awkward Umar (unexpected symbolism) who cannot open the door of the house are all necessary details to paint his present, his desire for redemption and his will for the future, net of a past of violence to be forgotten.

Umar is a spontaneously born film, shot and assembled on a zero budget in two weeks. The troupe was made up of camera operator/dop (Marco Bergonzi) and director/boom operator (Francesco Cibati). Writing work before shooting was minimal, having decided to follow Umar's daily life and then select the most significant moments. The choice to use the shoulder strap is not only practical but stylistic, to make the comparison with the protagonist as real as possible.



