

"Santa Subito," a Film About Violence Against Women, Winner of Rome's Festa del Cinema

Monica Straniero (October 29, 2019)



The film by Alessandro Piva tells the story, through a documentary lens, of Saint Scorsese, a young woman killed in March 15, 1991, in front of her family home, by a man who had been stalking her for three years. Here is an interview with the director.

In 1991, California became the first place on earth to adopt an anti-stalking law. That same year, in the province of Bari, Santa Scorsese was killed, Italy's first victim of stalking and "femminicidio" (ed. literally "female murder," refers to the victims of violence against women) Those were brutal times, back then, such crimes had no name.

Fourteen stabs, a desperate race to the hospital and a tragedy for her father, a policeman, who could do nothing to save her. At the hospital, Scorsese, who was only 23 then, forgave her killer. This



gesture earned her the title of Servant of God, and she is now about to become the first Italian "femminicidio" victim to be made a saint. Her story is now told in Alessandro Piva's documentary, which just won the people's choice award at Rome's Festa del Cinema.

Compared to the United States and the rest of Europe, in Italy, the first anti-stalking law was only drafted in 2008. And it wasn't until 1981 that "honor" killing was abolished.

The main problem is that, for years, no administration has made addressing violence against women a priority. It's as if it were a natural phenomenon. People are used to it. It's also the mentality, which remains that of a predominantly patriarchal culture, where women are the property of the "pater familias."

Santa's family, as the film illustrates, says that her aggressor had already been reported several times, to no avail. At the time, they weren't able to categorize the oppressive and persecutive behaviors of those who repeatedly harass someone. But even today the list of unprotected women is far too long.

Saint Scorsese was killed because she refused the advances of a man, as the headlines from the time read. It seems that still today violence against women ties into the rapture narrative.

Strides have been made but it's necessary that we also change how most media frame these episodes in a way that justifies these acts of violence. Too often newspapers use sentences or expressions that convey the image of men who "suddenly" turn into murderers but until then were good fathers, model citizens.

But how could so much violence be directed towards such a young woman?

Because what still needs to change is the culture of the "other." Human feelings are never linear and people can harbor bigotry and prejudice deep inside. We automatically reject whoever doesn't belong to their own circle, country, culture. What we don't know or don't understand scares us and turns into violence, often brutal.

In the documentary you chose to prioritize the religious aspect: the testimonies of priests, sunday school teachers, of her mother Angela and her father Piero, of her sister Rosa Maria, all paint a picture of the perfect girl next door.

Santa had decided to devote herself to God. And it's this decision that had provoked her stalker's fury, prompting him to explain: "If I can't have you, nobody will, not even God." The documentary shows two forms of religious radicalism. On the one hand, of a man disproportionately obsessed with the theme of religion and on the other of a fervent catholic who wrote to Jesus. A tragedy, as her



sister Rosa Maria said, with two victims of a nation, which at the time, was inequipped to deal with this type of violence, and in fact did nothing to prevent Santa's persecutor, a man which had clearly displayed his own psychic issues, from hurting himself and others.

To whom is this film dedicated?

To those who survive these tragedies. It's an appeal for women to not be left alone to face the consequences of psychosis disguised as love.

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