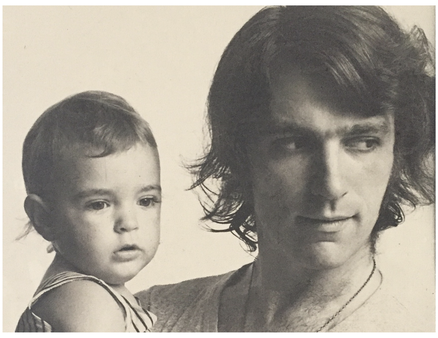
FABIO SARGENTINI



Journal #7 presents *Tutto su mio padre. Fabio Sargentini*, directed by Fabiana Sargentini.

The film recounts the career of one of Italy's most brilliant gallery owners and traces the history of L'Attico, a famous Roman gallery. This gallery hosted, among others, works and performances by Pino Pascali, Jannis Kounellis, Gino De Dominicis, Luigi Ontani, Mario Merz, Sol Lewitt, Dennis Oppenheim, Jean Tinguely, Trisha Brown, and Philip Glass.

SIDE NOTE FROM FABIO SARGENTINI

In the documentary *Tutto su mio padre*, the writer Marco Lodoli, while we were playing ping pong, asks me: "Everyone mourns their youth, it's natural. But does it seem to you that there was a golden age?" I replied: "I don't know, I live in the present."

Many years have passed, and the ball of time has bounced so many times, that today I could not limit myself to a terse "I live in the present." Of course, I live in it, now more than ever, but it is a different present, made up of substantial doses of the past and a residual sliver of the future. It is not a static past; I draw comfort and inspiration from it.
When I rewind the tape of memories, some catch me by surprise, and others repeat in cycles: voices, faces, events, and places. They accompany me on this journey.
Occasionally, I find joy in reshaping the course of events, steering them in a different direction. What if I had chosen differently, where would it have taken me? But I have no regrets.
You have to keep a little window to tomorrow open; otherwise, it will close.
Even now I am already questioning myself: With which exhibition will I open the season at L'Attico in October?
Will I still be capable of staging a performance with Elsa [Fabio Sargentini's wife, editor's note]? *Fabio Faber*, I waste nothing; I savor everything in the present.

TUTTO SU MIO PADRE. FABIO SARGRENTINI
Fabiana Sargentini
Italy, 2003, 41'

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

Why did you choose to make documentaries?

Fabiana Sargentini*: I began making documentaries out of narrative urgency: I wanted to know from people if I was the only one paying attention to certain things that came to mind. Two of my early works were films that answered those questions -- *Sono incinta* and *Di madre in figlia* -- consisting primarily of close-ups of interviews. Then I continued exploring a cinema of real-life observation.

How did this documentary come about?

FS: In 2003, I was commissioned to make *Tutto su mio padre* by a satellite channel that dealt exclusively with art (Rai Sat Art). Initially, I didn't think I was capable of narrating my father's story; I didn't know if it was the appropriate moment for me, his then 30-year-old daughter. I rode the wave, telling myself, "If they want it, I'll do it," and I did it, freely and creatively. Even now, it continues to be requested for screenings and is well-received. Apparently, it was the time to do it.

A moment in the process that you are fond of?

FS: I loved creating visual sketches to mark the chapters of the film. I wrote some of the titles on my body - Omnipotent Sodalities, The Garage, Duchamp's Door, etc... Looking back today, twenty years later, I am a bit ashamed of the skit "The Futurist Kitchen" when I see how dirty the stoves in my house were: yet back then, I didn't even think for a moment to clean them for the filming!

What is the central point of the narrative and how did you come to locate it?

FS: The focus of the film, in fact, is our relationship: the challenge of a little girl living in the art world of the Seventies and Eighties. How to understand what was beautiful and what was just strange? Who was an artist and who was an idler? It wasn't always easy. How different were my parents from those of my classmates? A lot. But mine were better, less conventional, less attached to formality.

Is there a particular aspect you wanted to highlight?

FS: My father has a volcanic, thunderous personality, he's full of energy and ideas. He's a man who's outwardly tough but, deep down, has a soft heart. I believe that this complexity comes through in my portrait.

The highest hurdle to overcome?

FS: By making this film I brought my father back to earth. For years I had placed him in an unattainable place asa sovereign deity, and everyone else, myself included, his subjects. My subservience, at the moment I was filming a documentary about him, evaporated: suddenly, we were equals, two artists (although that's a word I don't like), two people capable of creating something beautiful.
The first time he saw the film, when we reopened the shutters in the screening room, he immediately put on his sunglasses to hide that he was moved.
For me, that gesture meant more than a thousand words.

A scene you would have liked to shoot but couldn't?

FS: I would have liked to put my father on a boat and have him sail down the Tiber (as he did in 1976 with L'Attico during a trip with many artists) but I had very little time; the deadline was tight. We finished everything, shooting and editing, in four weeks. I was also going to take him back to India to find the musicians and dancers he invited to the festivals he organized in the Seventies, but we lacked the budget for that!

Your formative films or documentaries?

FS: *Grey gardens* by the Maysles brothers. A bible for me: two women, mother and daughter, both of a certain age, filmed in their wild state of life in a decrepit house in the Hamptons, spectacular. But also *Seven Up* by Michael Apted. I remember a producer first mentioning it for the first time during the post-screening debate of *Sono incinta* at the Torino Film Festival in 2003, comparing it to my voice-only film. Following certain subjects for fifty years every seven years seemed like a brilliant, powerful, unparalleled idea. And it is.

Your documentary in the drawer?

FS: Unfortunately, many projects did not come to fruition (I'm not worried, there is always time). Perhaps the one I am most attached to is a documentary about the menstrual cycle. I imagined it several years ago, and during the same period, a short documentary film about an Indian tampon factory won at the Oscars. In my opinion, it would still be very relevant and important (perhaps it would be easier with a female producer). We'll see.

***FABIANA SARGENTINI**
Director

Born into a creative family, after a restrictive adolescence in reaction to travels to India and plays performed as a child actress, Fabiana Sargentini discovered a more liberated vein through cinema. She studied, earning a degree on Altman's *The Long Good Bye*, and practiced with *Se perdo te* (1998) at the Sacher Festival in Rome. Her film *Sono incinta* won the Best Film award at the Bellaria Film Festival in 2004, and *Tutto su mio padre*, produced by Rai Sat Art in 2003. Additionally, she worked on *Non lo so ancora*, a fiction feature written in collaboration with Morando Morandini, presented at the 49th Pesaro Film Festival in 2013. In 2024 she released *La Pitturessa*, the story of Anna Paparatti (premiered at the 2023 Rome Film Festival).
Meanwhile, she collaborates with film magazines - "8 e mezzo," "Close-up" – and has a column in "Il Manifesto," maintains a blog, and writes short stories.