



Balance and synthesis:

Arnaldo Catinari, AIC, AEC has just finished shooting *Il Caimano*, the most eagerly awaited film of the Italian cinema season, with Nanni Moretti, the widely praised Italian Director who scooped the Palme d'Or at Cannes in 2001 with his extraordinary work, *La stanza del figlio* (*The Son's Room*). Working with Moretti marks the realisation of a dream for Catinari who, in his comparatively short career, has lensed approximately 40 features for major Italian and international directors. *InCamera* talks to Catinari about the collaboration that led to the creation of *Il Caimano*.

"After so many prestigious collaborations, why did you have a specific desire to work with Nanni Moretti?"

"Nanni's talents are indubitable and I consider his films to be first-rate. He's one of the very few directors in Italy capable of creating an entire world cinematographically, as Fellini and Antonioni can do. To be perfectly candid, I'd always hoped Nanni liked my work and would ask me to work with him, so I was delighted when Producer Angelo Barbagallo phoned me to arrange a meeting with him."

"In terms of work, Moretti's films are said to be distinctly more demanding than those of other directors and the production time is considerably longer than the Italian average of eight weeks. What is your opinion?"

"When I agreed to make a film with Nanni Moretti, I signed for an adventure: a journey with a known start but one that would end who-knew-when. Time is a natural obsession for him because his poetic sense and creativity require long, leisurely periods during which he reviews and edits what he's shot and, when he considers it necessary, he re-shoots. It's a great creative freedom that few directors enjoy: a freedom associated with the fact that he also produces his films. To give you the idea, Nanni told us he'd met actor Roberto Benigni a few weeks after starting work on the film. Benigni asked him how many weeks he'd been re-shooting, to which Nanni replied 'four weeks.' Benigni responded: 'in other words, you've just finished shooting the titles!' He's a dyed-in-the-wool independent, faithful above all to his own personal view of cinema, which is very far from the conventional view."

"What was your visual approach to *Il Caimano*?"

"The photography both attracted and worried me because I was preceded by three major Italian DPs: Beppe Lanci,

AIC, Franco Di Giacomo, AIC and Luciano Tovoli, AIC, ASC. These three great masters were a constant yardstick to whom I had to refer, yet I still wanted to make a small mark of my own. My gamble was to photograph *Il Caimano* in the truest sense, embracing and accepting Nanni's world and filtering it through my own personal interpretations of the settings, the characters and the atmospheres in which they live."

"Would you please explain the colorimetry aspects of *Il Caimano*?"

"There are multiple interlinked stories within three distinctly different storytelling levels: the reality in which the characters are living; a film within the film; and various inserts such as flashbacks. We adopted three specific colorimetric references: neutral tonalities tending towards the yellow scale for the segments relating to reality; blue and cold grey tones for the film-within-the-film; and warm tones for the inserts relating to the past. I must add, however, that it is all understated in a balanced key so that the interpretative style never overwhelms the story or distracts the audience from it. Lighting follows the stories, accompanying them but strengthening their tones. The shared matrix is a strict philology of light and its use in a naturalistic key. In fact, artificial light was almost always used in the film to re-create natural light."

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lighting // Caimano

"How did your lighting fit into Moretti's charismatic and iconoclastic direction?"

"The more harmonious the relationship between the DP and the director, the greater the synergy and emotional involvement with the work, but most importantly, any differences in language and opinion should be superseded by the shared desire to create the best possible film. With a director like Nanni, I had to adopt his way of working and serve the film and the story by rejecting any and all 'effects'. I adopted a lean, pared-down aesthetic that is never overwhelming, but is characterised by dense imagery with a depth and *'chiaroscuro'* that are integral elements of my research and my way of making films; in fact I tried to achieve the same rigour in my lighting that Nanni applies as a *modus operandi* in his films. I also thought a lot about the teachings of Néstor Almendros while making this film."

"What were your technical choices?"

"We shot in pure 1.85 format which, along with anamorphic, I like very much. Nanni would have preferred 1.66, but he's a cinema owner and a spectator, as well as a director and is well aware that 1.66 is not respected in cinemas. I didn't choose a single film stock as I have done in the past, but instead chose two that work together well: Kodak VISION2 200T 5217 and Kodak VISION2 500T 5218,

and I also shot a very small section on EXR 50D 5245 because the new VISION2 50D wasn't available then. I used Cooke S4 series lenses supplied by Panalight for their great light-absorbing capacity. They're amongst the few lenses that allow you to shoot windows with no problems and with perfect reading. In the lab at Cinecittà Studios I was assisted by my 'third eye', Pasquale Cuzzupoli; he's been my favourite printer for years."

"In what aspects of the cinematography did Nanni Moretti show the greatest interest and how did you benefit from his comments?"

"The composition of the shots is a determining factor in the way Nanni makes films, more so than camera movements and other factors. I've learnt much about that aspect from him, e.g. by defining a type of photography that needs to have its own particular depth for shots that are often static. Photographically speaking, static shots are much more problematic because camera movement can mask certain defects instead of representing an expressive choice, whereas the light plays a key role in the expression of the *mise en scène*. Nanni also places an extremely high value on acting and staging and taught me a great deal in this regard. The apparent essentiality of his films stems from a fanatical attention to the slightest detail: a quality stemming from

a remarkable amount of hard work. Often, a single viewing of his films doesn't do justice to them; it's only on the second or third viewing that the audience can grasp the details and nuances that are an integral part of his research."

"Il Caimano has been the subject of much discussion because of its connotations that some describe as political. Do you share these interpretations?"

"Frankly, no. The film is complex and articulate and politics is only one of the themes it addresses. *Il Caimano* is primarily concerned with a man's private vicissitudes, their effects and how far he's come at this point in his life."

"How does your experience of working with Nanni Moretti fit into your professional career path?"

"It wasn't easy dealing with such a strong personality and with such a precise and clear vision, not only of the story but also how it should be conveyed. It was an articulated process, but a decisive one. *Il Caimano* is a mature film that required a great deal of hard work and I'm extremely happy to have participated in its creation. It represents growth in my career that's essentially reflected in understatement and balance and in the search for a formal leanness that helps the lighting tell the cinematographic story." ■

Left: DP Arnaldo Catinari, AIC, AEC, measures light on actress Margherita Buy.

Above: (L to R) Director Nanni Moretti with Actor Silvio Orlando.

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