

MOTHER EARTH
By Giuliano Marrucci

SIGFRIDO RANUCCI IN THE STUDIO

Welcome back. Now we go to a war that has been raging for 20 years, one which began over an attempt to defend a land, between the natives and - believe it or not - the Benetton family. It's not here, it's in Patagonia, but it's a war between David and Goliath.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI VOICE-OVER

In order to visit the jewel in the Benetton family crown, we had to travel to the other side of the world. We headed into the desolate plains of Patagonia, driving hundreds of kilometres along dirt roads and even fording a couple of rivers, before finally arriving here. Seven gigantic farms, hundreds of thousands of sheep, tens of thousands of cows, thousands and thousands of hectares of monoculture pine plantation, but above all, a huge amount of unused land, spanning a total of over 900,000 hectares - an area similar to the Marche Region of Italy. And a whole people who have declared war on them.

SIGFRIDO RANUCCI IN THE STUDIO

We are in Argentina's Patagonia; in 1991, the Benettons bought a company that owned 900,000 hectares of land, and in doing so, the family became the biggest landowners in Patagonia in one fell swoop. However, if there are those who are accumulating on one side, it means that there are others who are left without - in this case, the native Mapuche people. Mapuche, literally means "people of the land" - a land which is no longer there. For this reason, for 20 years they have been waging war on the estate, and in particular on Benetton - a war that has become even more bitter due to the murder of a young man. Over to Giuliano Marrucci.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI VOICE-OVER

The Mapuche are tough folk: for three and a half centuries they were among the few who succeeded in impeding the advance of the Spanish, who in the end, in despair, officially recognised their autonomy, granting them the kingdom of Araucanía, the enormous area that extends south from the Rio Biobio. This lasted until the nation states of Chile and Argentina were created; they launched a series of military campaigns, the Pacification of Araucanía and the Desert Campaign respectively. These apparently peaceful names conceal a genocide, with tens of thousands of Mapuche victims over 20 years. And whoever killed them or financed those who killed them got a piece of land in return.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI

So the estates we see today in Patagonia are a kind of reward?

HERNÁN HORACIO SCHIAFFINI - ANTHROPOLOGIST

Exactly, the reward for financing and carrying out the genocide.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI

And the Benetton land, where does it come from?

HERNÁN HORACIO SCHIAFFINI - ANTHROPOLOGIST

There were laws designed to prevent excessive amounts of land from ending up in the hands of a few individuals. But before it was bought by the Benettons, the company had purchased a number of territories that massively exceeded the legal limits, using a series of dummy companies.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI VOICE-OVER

Here we are on the border between two of the main Benetton farms, El Maiten and Leleque. And this is a family from the Mapuche community of Vuelta del Rio, who found themselves caught up in the middle.

ROBERTO NIANKOFIL - VUELTA DEL RIO MAPUCHE COMMUNITY

This is all we have left, but we don't have enough land to graze them, and when winter comes, the animals are weak and dozens of them die.

SEGUNDO CELESTINO NIANKOFIL - VUELTA DEL RIO MAPUCHE COMMUNITY

Before the Benettons came, we could use the land around here, but since ownership changed, they've stopped us from going in. This is land that we've been using for over 150 years.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI VOICE-OVER

Various members of the Ancalao Mapuche community live on the opposite side of the same farm, around fifty kilometres away.

JULIO HERNANDEZ - ANCALAO MAPUCHE COMMUNITY

The barbed wire was put in by the previous owners before the Benettons, but before we weren't prevented from taking our cattle in to graze.
It's all Benetton land here.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI VOICE-OVER

In addition to the land where the animals graze, over time, the Benettons have also closed access to the nearby roads.

JULIO HERNANDEZ - ANCALAO MAPUCHE COMMUNITY

Look, you see? They put a nice big padlock on it. Around ten kilometres from here are a number of other families who belong to our community. Ever since the Benettons shut everything, we have to go all the way round the outside to get to them. It must be 80 kilometres. I don't even want to think what would happen if there was an emergency. They're old people, too.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI VOICE-OVER

Access to the river has also become a challenge.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI

The river is down there, right?

RAUL HUALA - KOM KINE MU MAPUCHE COMMUNITY

Yes, two hundred metres. And we used to go through here with the animals; now with the barbed wire, we have to make a huge detour.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI VOICE-OVER

The outskirts of El Maiten. This gentleman chasing his ducks is called Hijinio. He worked for the company that is now owned by Benetton for almost 40 years, long before the new owners arrived.

HIJINIO HERIBERTO CATRILAF - FORMER EMPLOYEE OF COMPAGNIA DE TIERRAS SUD ARGENTINO

Before the Benettons arrived at my farm, there were about a hundred of us, and then we were down to around 30. It just became too tiring to work: after the usual ten hours

in the fields, we had to waste our time getting back to the farm, and there was lots left to do. It was exhausting.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI VOICE-OVER

With no work, no land, blocked roads and no access to water, living conditions have become so extreme that people have fled.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI

You live here alone now?

JULIO HERNANDEZ - ANCALAO MAPUCHE COMMUNITY

Yes, alone. This was my school. When I was a child, it was so full that they had to build another building next door. See? Deserted. There's nobody left. Without any space for the animals, we no longer know how to make a living, and people have moved to the outskirts of urban areas.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI VOICE-OVER

Bariloche is one of the main urban areas in Patagonia, a city divided in two. On the one hand, the centre boasts a such a luxuriant lake-front promenade that it became the favourite destination of the escaped Nazi elite, including Erich Priebke, Josef Mengele and Adolf Eichmann. Beyond this is what's left for the Mapuche: an endless, run-down unofficial suburb lacking in even the most essential services.

SANTIAGO REY - JOURNALIST

These areas are extremely deprived, with sky-high unemployment, out-of-control petty crime and very high rates of alcoholism and addiction to various drugs. And in these areas, the overwhelming majority of the population has Mapuche origins, although most don't even know it. Today, they are beginning to rediscover their roots, as a sort of an antidote to the degradation. They are staking their claim to the right to a healthier and more dignified way of life, in harmony with nature.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI VOICE-OVER

Villa Mascardi, thirty kilometres from Bariloche. Here, with a view to rebuilding a more dignified life in keeping with its roots, a community of around a dozen Mapuche families settled illegally on a piece of land bordering this beautiful lake in 2015. There are always two lookouts guarding the area, and this is how they welcome us.

LOF KURACHE MAPUCHE COMMUNITY

You see this? You take it off, grab a rock, put it in like this, then spin it like this. See? And then you throw.

This is where we're on lookout. Sorry we can't let you go any further, but we have to protect ourselves. The less information the police have on how we're organised, the better.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI

And that's why you're wearing masks, because of the police?

LOF KURACHE MAPUCHE COMMUNITY

If we allowed them to recognise us, they'd arrest us on the spot. As the Mapuche people, we are rebelling against the destructive way that these landowners use nature. All we ask is that we can go back to living like our ancestors. No alcohol. No drugs. A simple, healthy life in harmony with nature. And in answer to this, they use the only approach they know - the weapons of repression. But we are ready to give our lives for our land.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI VOICE-OVER

And indeed, the time to die for this territory came, in November 2017. His name was Rafael Nahuel. He was 22 years old, and scraped a living by doing odd bits of carpentry work in the run-down suburbs of Bariloche. Here, he was looking for redemption. And instead, he was met with the 9-calibre bullets of the police.

LOF KURACHE MAPUCHE COMMUNITY

We were assailed by an incredible force. There must have been over 100 people, with trucks, drones, dogs... And we only had these (shows the slingshot) and these (shows the spears).

Rafael was right here. He had a rock in his hand and was heading towards the camp. They shot him from behind. He died on the spot.

SIGFRIDO RANUCCI IN THE STUDIO

The Public Prosecutor's Office is investigating it as a crime of excessive self-defence. Meanwhile, the Benettons wrote to us saying that theirs is not a case of a single expansive estate, because the land is divided into 7 smaller farms, and then they go on to say that the problems of the Mapuche breeders already existed and thus aren't their fault, but they would nonetheless be willing to give them a hand.

They say that they tried to give them 7,500 hectares of land for free, but they refused, saying the land was too dry. This is not true, they claim; the refusal conceals "political motivations that are unrelated to the Benetton group". But there must nonetheless be an issue if it is true that a Nobel Peace Prize winner, Adolfo Perez Esquivel, felt obliged to step in to defend the rights of the Mapuche. According to the director of a museum financed by the Benettons, these rights do not exist, but he swears that he did not help to rewrite history, because the Mapuche - according to him - are not indigenous, but are actually invaders from Chile.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI

Look. Room 1, indigenous peoples. The Mapuche are not even mentioned. Then here, at last, we come to the first Mapuche pieces, and here, it talks about the invasion of the Mapuche from Chile, presenting them as being part of a culture that was completely foreign to this land.

ALEJANDRO BALAZOTE - PROFESSOR OF ECONOMIC ANTHROPOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF BUENOS AIRES

What did you expect to find in a Benetton-funded museum? It is clear that the Benettons wish to demonstrate that there is no proof that the Mapuche existed on their territories before. Arguing to the contrary would mean having to grant the Mapuche people access to the land.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI VOICE-OVER

Alejandro Balazote is professor of economic anthropology at the University of Buenos Aires, and has always fought fiercely against the instrumental use of anthropology.

ALEJANDRO BALAZOTE - PROFESSOR OF ECONOMIC ANTHROPOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF BUENOS AIRES

The claim that the Mapuche did not live on this land, and that they suddenly invaded from Chile just over a century ago, is groundless. It's clear that they are a people who have lived on both sides of the mountain range since time immemorial.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI VOICE-OVER

But in order to deny rights, a narrative - however sophisticated - is sometimes not enough: you need to get tough.

Buenos Aires. 1 September, 2017. The police employed violence to suppress the demonstrators. They asked the government to find out what happened to Santiago Maldonado, a 28-year-old activist from Buenos Aires who vanished into thin air after escaping a month earlier from a gendarmerie raid on a Mapuche community that was occupying a piece of Benetton territory.

MAURICIO ROJAS - LAWYER FOR THE PERMANENT ASSEMBLY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Santiago's disappearance has brought the conflict between Benetton and the Mapuche people into the spotlight. Until then, the rest of Argentina didn't even know what these people were talking about. For the first time after the years of the dictatorship, there was the disappearance of a young man following a conflict with the gendarmerie.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI VOICE-OVER

The Benettons have tried to regain possession of the occupied land a number of times. In 2015, the President of Argentina, Mauricio Macri, indirectly lent them a helping hand: as soon as he was elected, he implemented a campaign of repression that led to the arrest of many Mapuche people. At the demonstration where Santiago was last seen, the protesters were demanding their release.

ROMINA JONES - PU LOF EN RESISTENCIA MAPUCHE COMMUNITY

A truly disproportionate number of reinforcements arrived: a hundred men from three different battalions, all armed to the teeth. Their orders were simply to get us off the road and get traffic circulating as normal, but instead they started chasing us through this territory, which is Benetton-owned land that we are occupying.

And the last time Santiago was seen, he was running over there, towards the river.

MAURICIO ROJAS - LAWYER FOR THE PERMANENT ASSEMBLY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The demonstrators were completely unarmed, but the gendarmerie intervened with unjustified force. And it wasn't the first time. The difference is, this time it went wrong: a person went missing - and not a Mapuche, but a white man.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI VOICE-OVER

Santiago's body was eventually found lifeless 78 days later, just a few metres from where he was last seen, along the Chubut River. The autopsy revealed no signs of violence or struggle.

MARTINIANO JONES HUALA - PU LOF EN RESISTENCIA MAPUCHE COMMUNITY

Here, this is where the body was found. What no-one can understand is how it wasn't found before. In the days following his disappearance, three searches were carried out, with dozens of men and all the necessary means.

MAURICIO ROJAS - LAWYER FOR THE PERMANENT ASSEMBLY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

There was also a lab report, stating that pollen residue had been found on Santiago's body and clothes. According to them, 30 days after drowning, these traces should have disappeared completely. It suggests that the body was taken somewhere else and then brought back to the site shortly before it was discovered. But the judge wouldn't accept this report as evidence.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI

And what is Benetton's alleged role in all this?

MAURICIO ROJAS - LAWYER FOR THE PERMANENT ASSEMBLY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Throughout all the investigations, the various political powers, the judiciary and Benetton have acted in a coordinated manner. When the body wasn't found, we tried to insist that they carry out a search inside the Benetton farm, but the judge was always opposed to it. And when - after more than 70 days - this search was finally due to take place, the body magically reappeared.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI VOICE-OVER

The ties between Macri and the Benetton family extend far beyond Patagonia. Through its subsidiary Abertis, Atlantia is the majority shareholder of Ausol, the main motorway operator in Argentina, and the company at the heart of one of the biggest scandals of the Macri era. Thanks to him, the company was allegedly paid \$499 million in arrears, and the concession was extended for a further 10 years. Macri himself also benefited; until May 2017, he held 7% of the shares through the family company, and thanks to these concessions, the value of these shares was multiplied to around 20 times their original value. Today, Macri has been called upon to explain this series of events in court, alongside two of his former ministers.

Here, we are not far from the tourist resort of El Bolson; on one side we have the demonstrators, and on the other, on horseback, the vigilantes of another landowner, with the local police dividing them in the middle. And leading the protesters is Sergio Maldonado, the brother of Santiago, the boy who disappeared and was found dead.

SERGIO MALDONADO – BROTHER OF SANTIAGO MALDONADO

From here, a path leads to Lake Escondido. According to Argentine law, this route should be public, but one day this English entrepreneur, Joe Lewis, arrived; he's a friend of Macri. He bought the land and closed the path. Every year, we do this walk along the path to the lake. This time, Lewis's vigilantes unleashed their dogs and threw stones at us. And when the local police intervened, it wasn't to stop them. They divided us, and are now stopping us from getting in.

GIULIANO MARRUCCI VOICE-OVER

But the Mapuche have no intention of giving up. Here we are alongside the Corcovado river, where under the leadership of the indigenous leader Moira Millan, an international camp has been organised, with activists from all over the world; this will be their base for launching a new battle.

MOIRA IVANA MILLÁN – LOF PILLAN MAHUIZA MAPUCHE COMMUNITY

The goal is to create a new legal principle - terricide. What is it? It is the systematic devastation not only of the tangible ecosystem, but also of the cultural and spiritual ecosystem that dwells within it.

The capitalist system is based on the priority of the right to property, whereas we are focused on the preservation of the profound balance that exists between the well-being of people and the health of the ecosystems they inhabit.

And we strongly believe that this reciprocity must be the basis of a new humanity, which is nourished by the vitality of the ecosystem, instead of destroying it to create profit for a privileged few. Terricide is a crime, but currently it is not recognised as such. Our battle is to make it a specific criminal offence, a legal instrument that will enable us to combat the practices that these businesses engage in, along with the states that support them.

SIGFRIDO RANUCCI IN THE STUDIO

The right of indigenous people to their ancestral land is ratified by both national and international law. It's just that this law has remained theoretical, because nobody has

applied it. 15 years ago, a law required the government to reconstruct history in order to determine whether or not the natives were actually entitled to the land in question, but it remained nothing more than words on paper; it has been deferred three times. The double thread that ties the government and the landowners together has enabled it to be continuously postponed. Justice, especially for the weakest, can wait. Like the death of Santiago Maldonado, in which, it must be said, the Benettons were not involved at all. Let us state it clearly.

The Benettons also deny any ties with former Argentinian President Mauricio Macri. The Benetton-owned company Atlantia bought Abertis after the former president had sold his shares in Ausol, the equivalent of Italy's Autostrada del Sole.

And above all, after the accusations against the president had already been made. As far as Abertis is concerned, the company told us that the accusations against the Argentine President are political in nature, as well as reminding us that there is no Abertis manager involved in this matter. We're happy. Now from Patagonian green, we move on to another shade of the same colour.