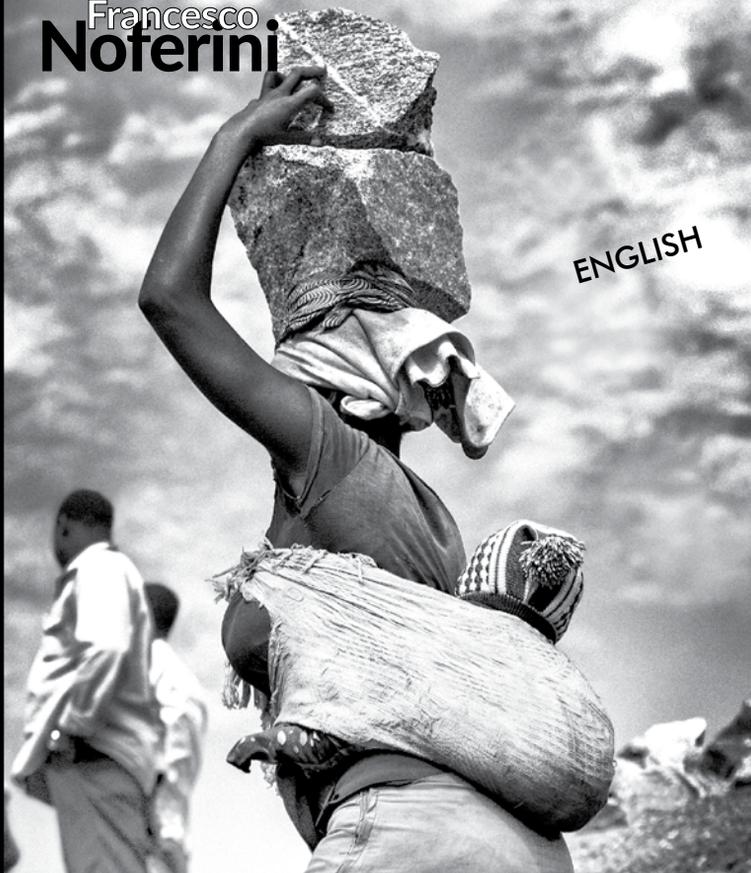


Francesco  
**Noferini**



**BURKINA FASO**  
Le donne e i bambini della cava di Pissy  
ISTITUTO DEGLI INNOCENTI - FIRENZE



# BURKINA FASO

The giving and cooking of Pissy cava

FOTO DI FRANCESCO NOFERINI

ISTITUTO DEGLI INNOCENTI  
P.zza Santissima Annunziata - FIRENZE





## LA CARRIERE DE PISSY "The hole of the devil"

Such torment and suffering is not imaginable in our day. A huge hole in the earth, from which the smoke of the burnt tires used to extract the granite slabs rises, which are then brought to the surface on the women's heads.

Up there, sheltered by small improvised and lacerated tents, other women with a steel tube crumble, by hand, the plates and collect the fragments in a large aluminum container.

Imagine the very hot environment, saturated with smoke and dust, and these women who were crushing the granite slabs. For each full container you earn 2000 CFA, about 3 euros. How many hours and how much sweat, for 3 euros under the heat and there, next to the mothers, also their children.

Despite the inhumane work and the place where it takes place, it immediately springs to mind their serenity, great humanity and great love for their children.

In that suffering each one is ready to help the other and all do not skimp a sincere smile and a greeting to the stranger passing by.

This exhibition is a tribute to these women, strong, indomitable, loving, so that it can help us to understand the true values for which it is right to fight and for which we must sacrifice ourselves. It is up to each of us, within ourselves, to bring out these values, in whatever situation we find ourselves. Meanwhile, something we have already done with your help: a small dispensary for immediate care, a kindergarten not far away, where you can keep the children while the mothers are at work, and for the older ones enrollment in the elementary school.

We still count on your generosity so that LA CARRIERE DE PISSY can become a better place to work and suffer less.

Luca Margheri  
President ASSOMIS

## The technique - The shots

The diagonal / accidental cut reinforces the close vision and also generates a pressing that evokes the movement, the direct grip, the snapshot, the intimacy between the subject and the photographer. The front view allows you to put yourself in direct dialogue with the gaze / the person. The choice to raise or lower the point of view allows to evaluate the action-observer relationship.

The foreground applied to people enhances the characters of expression (amazement, joy, distrust ...) The close-up of objects generates the depth of the image, exalts materic and formal peculiarities.

The choice of the black and white instead of the color, to represent a world that, all in all, still today "after having known it, belongs to me very little" (Noferini).

The choice of black and white allows, on the contrary of the captivating use of the color, to "distance oneself", not to be enchanted by those suggestions that in the collective imagination are attributed, a little superficially, to the peoples and to the African continent. The black-white filter proves to be extremely effective for fixing images of people who have been considered different and different for their skin color. Black and white is in fact a declaration of understanding, allows dialogue, reduces material distances and places images in a timeless reality, that is, images always appear contemporary.

Giuseppina Carla Romby  
Full Professor Department of History, Archeology, Geography,  
History of Architecture, Art and Entertainment

For over thirty years I have been paying close attention to the photographs of Francesco Noferini: observations from a friend, but not only, since the two-dimensional, three-dimensional, static and kinetic images are the basis of my professional and artistic activity. As a friend, I observe with satisfaction and gratitude his photographic work, in particular the shots of recent years, full of a new vision of existence; in them the human growth that emerges parallel to the professional and artistic one, brings his work in the high sphere of visual communication.

Francesco together with his wife Francesca, for my personal experience of their lives, have never separated the professional relationship from the human one, giving the latter, spontaneously, the precedence: this attitude was decisive for establishing around them a golden of sympathy and cordiality, often mitigated by their irony, instinctively used in relations with others as if to veil a natural one and hide it modestly.

Many of the works of the last five years are bearers of artistic innovations: highlighted by compositional "cuts", by the wise use of the alternation between chromaticism and black and white, applied with care in the choice of subjects, both human and naturedeath or in the various types of landscapes. Francesco shows the awareness of being an adult photographer, free from fashionable poses, letting his gaze be captured by the amazement of reality.

In the exhibition "the women and children of the Pissy quarry", Francesco, induces the observers to let themselves be involved from the magnetism of his images, experiencing the same astonished involvement that he experienced himself, when with his eye glued to the viewfinder of the camera he was able to realize those images that lash and lap together, our intelligence and our heart: they seem to urge us to "To know what is outside of us, to know ourselves".

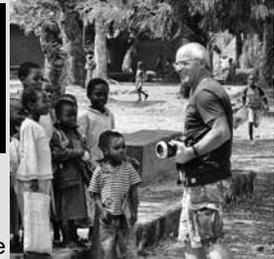
Traveling is not trivially about tourism, but about widening our knowledge and our conscience, consciously accepting what is dark, unknown, different, we make the highest cultural act, the only useful to "life".

Thanks Francesco for the photos you have given us in all these years.

Niccolò Niccolai

Academician Of Honor of the Academic College of Arts and Design

Francesco Noferini photographer known to the mugellano public for his exhibitions and for his graphic and publishing activities, he brings his photos to Florence at the Istituto degli Innocenti in an exhibition that tells the daily life of over 850 women and their children.



How did the idea for this exhibition come about?

Born from the desire to tell what many do not know, the daily life of women and children in a granite quarry, where life and dignity of the person has no value. Giving help to ensure that at least these children can live in a better environment, realizing a project to create classrooms and kindergartens to help these families.

What is in particular that binds you to the 'Orionini'?

Surely the friendship with the "mythical" Don Poggiali and the members of the Association. A sentiment of help for these people, after the trips you made you realize many things ... Africa is a great continent but life is truly a "hell" especially for the weakest.

Where do you hope this project can bring you in the future?

I would like it to become a message for all those who see Africans as "invaders". I would like for many people to understand the difficulties of these peoples, to be able to give practical help to ensure that these populations can live better in their territories.

Why is photography so important to you?

Because I can express my feelings and in this case, I think that with photography you can show what are the differences of peoples, bring to the knowledge the suffering and beauty, joy and pain that we all know but sometimes we turn the other way ...

... with this exhibition I wanted to show you the hardships and difficulties of these women with their children who "live" inside this cave.



Photographic journey in Burkina Faso Tale of Francesco Noferini  
written by Susanna Aiazzi

“HELP THEM IN THEIR HOME ”!  
... we do it already!

Africa hits you like a stomach punch, it stays in your eyes and in your heart forever, whether you want it or not. When I was asked to return to the Ivory Coast in 2016, almost six years had passed since my last time on the African continent. Few? Many? I do not know. I know that when I was asked to come back, I did not think about it too much. I answered yes. I said that I would gladly leave, that I would gladly lend my eyes, and those of my camera, to tell what the Association Assomis (Associazione Solidarieta’Missionaria Onlus) has been doing with humility and determination for many years, to talk about suffering but also many smiles.

Don Pasquale Poggiali, parish priest of the “Don Orione” mission, welcomed me to the Abidjan airport after a flight in which I had not been able to close my eyes.

After the French military base, the sea is in front and everything seems the same to what we left at home and to which we are accustomed: the highway, the crowded beaches, the African restaurant, the sports facilities, the Moossou bridge. We are at home, as the French left it. We arrive at the center Don Orione di Bonouà after an hour’s drive, tired of



the trip but happy to be there once again. The gravel paths and green meadows, the sober but functional construction, contribute to further decrease the gap between our home and their home. Arrived in the center Don Orione, however, we leave our home, we forget it by looking at these women and these men who devote their time and energy to those who need them, and who do it without asking anything in return, without ever giving up because of tiredness, anger, despair. Yes, because in Bonouà, there are opportunities to surrender every day. In moments when you feel lost, helpless and angry, many things happen. Because the Ivory Coast, if you look at it from inside, is above all suffering, the scars of years of violent civil war are not yet healed and the country still lives today a profound political, economic and social crisis.

The following morning, at dawn, we leave for "our mission". On the square, waiting for us, two pick-ups loaded with everything necessary to deal with travel

We arrive in Katiola in six hours, useful to do a little 'talk about friends of the Association who have passed here before us, bringing concrete help and a lot of hope. To welcome us we find the Italian nuns, called with affection "suorine" (little nuns). Here they run a school with hundreds of children. The nuns thank us for the clothes, the medicines and the other few things we brought to them. We hold back an hour, they gladly tell us about their daily life and we happily listen to them.



The boys enter and leave the school, they are happy. Everyone is happy here. It might seem a contradiction but it is so. They smile so much that you almost feel guilty. Yes, because you are not able to grasp, as they do, the joyous side of that world. Think of all the times you could smile and you do not.

A small group approaches us, to thank us. They do it an innumerable amount of times. We shake hands, lowering just with my head. I have their eyes on me and I feel a lump in my throat as I shake their hands. I know I'm helping them, but I also know that it will never be enough. I would need someone to say to me: "Hey, you're doing the right thing, no matter if it will never be enough, solidarity does not set clear goals, it's a way of life".

I look at my traveling companions, the people who invited me to come back to Africa. I think they "do it right" every day for years. I wonder if they, too, sometimes asked themselves if it was enough.

After resting one night, we leave Katiola to reach the savannah area, Korhogo. Two sisters and a cheerful group of children meet us smiling. They tell us about their successes, many succeed in attending high school thanks to the scholarships they get with donations. Education will undoubtedly reduce the distance between peoples, and this, I tell myself, is another help to their home. What does it matter if it will not be enough? On the streets of Korhogo the dust of the streets is mixed with the smoke of the discharges of the scooters, which roam without a



precise trajectory, up and down towards an unpredictable destination. An important meeting awaits us in the morning. The Prefect of the town is waiting for us to discuss a project: the construction of a small hospital serving the weaker population. Few details, the definition of the location, the resources available.

The serious journey begins however the next day, when we leave in the direction of Ouagadougou, capital of Burkina. We always move during the day to avoid ambushes by robbers arriving from the nearby province of Gnagna, a territory in the hands of corruption. The streets are a real nightmare. Dusty, disconnected and trafficked by trucks in bad conditions. We find several broken down on the side of the road or even in the middle, to block it. For the first time I feel like a stranger, under the wary looks of the frontier soldiers. The crumbling barracks frame the officials who control passports. After more than two hours of waiting with their eyes on me, I start to worry, then with a distracted and indolent look, they give us the entrance. Thus we enter more and more into suffering Africa. We find a rugged landscape with some green patches in correspondence to the waterways, villages of clay houses, disorder, deforestation and pollution. The worst of modernization haunts misery. Timid intervals of less devastated villages attenuate anguish.

The goal of the day is to reach the capital, but without being surprised by the night. A breakdown, an unexpected delay can make the journey very dangerous. We drive in turn for 16 hours with a few stops. A military checkpoint forces us to an unexpected stop, luckily much more hasty.



A quick check of documents and permission to enter the city. Once again to welcome us are the sisters who, at 10 pm, open the doors of the hotel they run, where, members of groups and humanitarian associations find accommodation. Many of the projects for Burkina find their creators here, among these people who come from different countries, have different cultures but are equally motivated. A different, generous humanity, far from the selfishness to which unfortunately we are accustomed. It is not difficult to start a conversation, people who feel close, you seem to know them forever. Let's talk a bit. A family from Canada tells us about their project: a school in the village on the outskirts of the city. They want to make it happen themselves, father, mother, two children and a friend.

The following morning, recovered the strength, we resume functional meetings for Assomis activities. To welcome us, an African parish priest, kind and elegant in his dark tunic that will accompany us from Burkina to Togo. The program plans to join a group of friends of our association, who will arrive in the night with the last AirFrance flight from Paris. We decide to approach the airport for dinner, also to have a look at the city. International restaurants are located between Grande Yennanga and Avenue Nkrumah that run parallel from the center to the airport, and that's where we go.

We know that Burkina is unstable, it is certainly not a safe country and



the checkpoints on the main roads do not seem effective, so the noise of the shots that we hear at about 9:30 pm, just finished dinner, scare us. Gunfire and explosions suggest a coup d'état, a revolt. We look at each other without having the slightest idea of what to do. We are not prepared for such events. A boy reaches us on a scooter and shouts the alarm. "Come on, go back to the hotel, we're dead, they've taken people hostage, you go to your hotels, soon!"

Our hotel is not very far from there. Firearm shots are even clearer, but we have no alternative. Without information, with little knowledge of the city, with the awareness of being targets of jihadist terrorism, everything is very complicated. The group of Italians with whom we must meet does not arrive, with the phone we can not have information, nothing at all. Hours of tension. Then they inform us that the plane has been diverted to Togo, the airport of Ouagadougou has been closed with the prohibition of overflight of the capital.

Activating contact with friends gives us a little serenity, but the tension remains high. We are looking for news, we want to understand if it's over, whether it's terrorism or military confrontation between factions. Finally, the TV, after hours of waiting, communicates with laconic precision the balance of the terrorist attack.

A massacre, 27 dead, 33 wounded, about 150 hostages of 18 different nationalities released after a long gun battle: this is the tragic (but still temporary) balance of the terrorist attack that took place tonight in Ou-



gadougou, capital of Burkina Faso. A group of armed people stormed the Hotel Splendid and the café-restaurant "Le Cappuccino", frequented by Westerners and in particular by UN personnel. Four terrorists are killed. The attack, triggered by the explosion of two car bombs, was claimed by Aqim.

From home come calls from family members that we try to reassure. It was an attack, but it's all over. We're fine. We are, in spite of ourselves, inside the news. We learn of the death of that Canadian family, just known and already lost. The night does not help, between the need to sleep and the need to be alerted, the wake has the upper hand. This is also Africa, where such a serious attack does not change the uncertain rhythm of a country accustomed to blood and death.

Let's start according to the program. A thought to those innocent dead, to those citizens of the world who had decided to lend a hand to these people and were not allowed by that religious fanaticism that also finds in a large part of the population, support and consensus.

We are moving towards a granite quarry, following the instructions of a local priest Jean Baptiste Dzankani. An infernal circle where 850 women, many with little ones, break stones with their hands, with the air stuck with the fumes of stacks of car tires and garbage.

The hole of the devil that takes away life from a piece of bread. 3 - 4 dollars for a day of work, if work can be called. There are several Tuscan projects that are used to reduce the suffering of this piece of humanity



deprived of all dignity, a slave to poverty, guilty only of being born down here. The school is a mean of removing at least children from the devil's hole, with the ambition to put a piece to the creation of a generation that can, with knowledge, redeem itself. With the school leaders we agree to support the expansion of the number of classrooms.

As insufficient as it is, to remove even only 50 children between 2 and 6 years of age from the quarry, it is something we must do. The quarry makes us forget the attack. It is extraordinary how one can bear the tragedies thanks to other tragedies.

Sugerir un cambio

In the hotel we are tormented by the distress of all the good things that are missing in Burkina, for what is bad, which is a lot, too much, unacceptable. We rely on African wisdom.

If you want to go in a hurry go alone, if you want to go far go together. At the end of this trip, which I will hardly forget, I am sure that all the people I met, the stories I heard and the experiences I experienced, have helped to change my way of looking at the world, to grasp the essence of human values, solidarity, giving without expecting anything in return, but just that serenity and peace that you feel grow inside.

I try, with my work to tell that incomprehensible joy of the poor, the disinherited, the last, which ultimately, so incomprehensible, believe me, it is not.







