

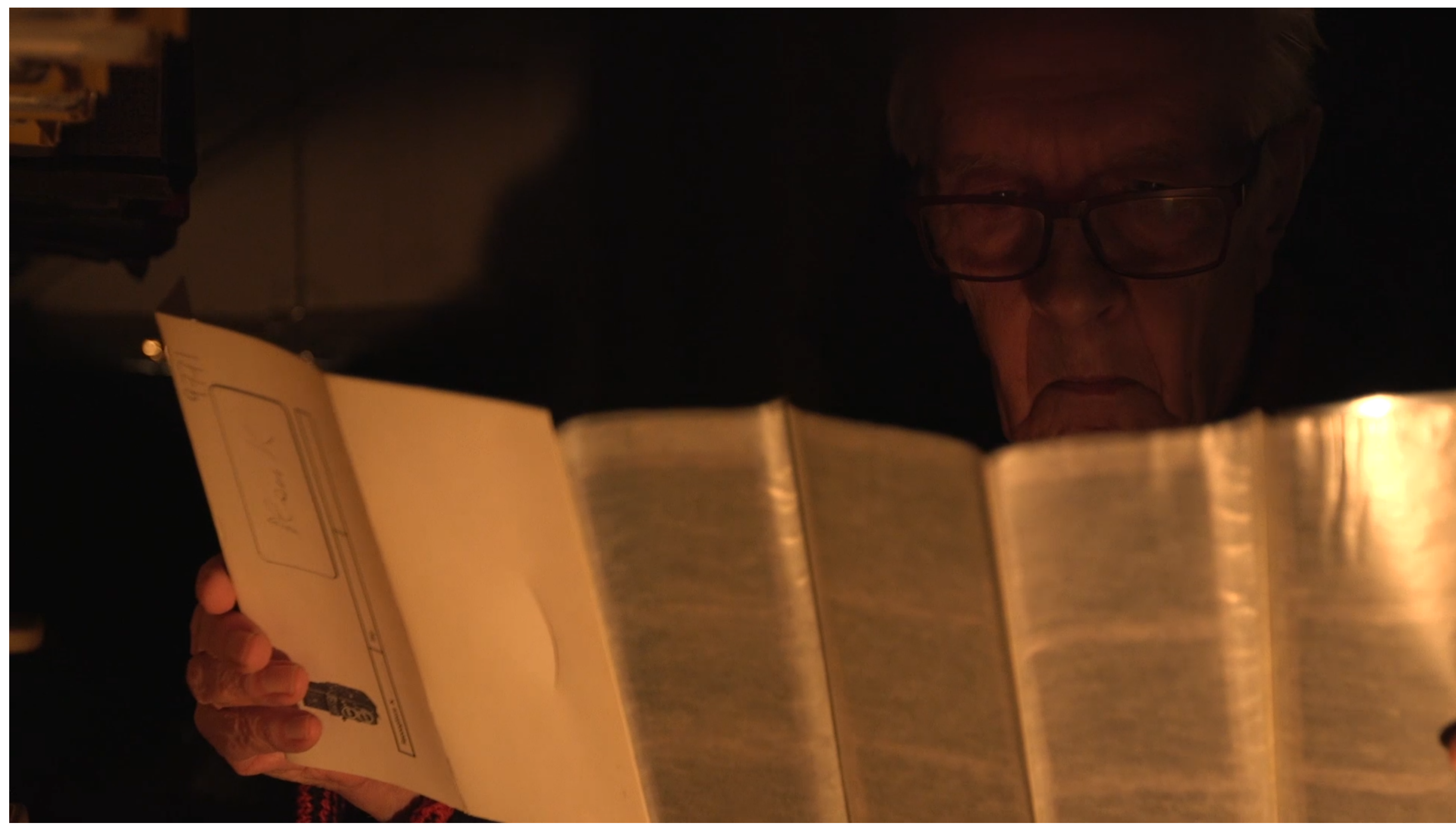
ENRICO CATTANEO



Enrico Cattaneo, Self-portrait, Gran Galà, Premiere at La Scala in Milan, 1960. Courtesy Enrico Cattaneo Photographic Archive

Journal #11 presents Enrico Cattaneo. *White Noise*, a film by Francesco Clerici and Ruggero Gabbai.

Enrico Cattaneo is and has been an experimenter and an eclectic photographer; his eye could hardly be categorized in one single field. He loved objects, he has been an art enthusiast his whole life and eventually became friends with all the artists who begun to ask for his services as a portraitist more and more, even if Enrico started with photo features and has been able to describe the outskirts of Milan like no one else. Enrico's house is covered from floor to ceiling with artwork, while smoke puffs mark his life. This documentary is a picaresque jazz ballad on the notes of his works and his private and public life, notes that are played throughout the silence of the ironic humanity of Enrico's gaze. A gaze that has arrived at the end of its journey.



ENRICO CATTANEO. WHITE NOISE

Francesco Clerici, Ruggero Gabbai

Italy, 2021, 32'

DIRECTORS' NOTE

Enrico is larger than life and larger than any film that portrays him. His experimental and ironic nature goes beyond the camera's eye and any attempt to honor him.

Before we were introduced, he didn't want a documentary to be made about him. Then, gradually and spontaneously, he changed his mind without declaring it.

We gathered around him, and he charmed Ruggero Gabbai, who, more persistently than me, managed to grasp his public presence during the Take Away exhibition. On that occasion, his spirit, generosity, and humble self-mocking humor surfaced more than ever.

Ruggero succeeded in interviewing him, and as often happened with him, in an act of self-sabotage, Enrico didn't take himself too seriously. Enrico disclosed his private dimension in the moments between his grumbles; his pictures and memories are a part of his professional talent and craft. Enrico was a chemist, a mathematician, and an alchemist.

He was a technician (in the Greek sense of *Techne*) playing with images as he played with people. He loved suburban spaces and outskirts as well as artworks.

Over the years we spent with him, his health conditions deteriorated, and just a week after our last visit, he passed away. We hadn't thought about a script or a structure while shooting, and the more we thought about it, the more I struggled to see the script as a

"device" where Enrico could be channeled.

By the moment we watched the footage, without any more chances of shooting with Enrico, we suddenly realized we already had what we needed. That was precisely Enrico: like a piece by Charlie Parker (which Enrico was very fond of), with a spontaneous but packed flow. There was no backstage nor a "we're rolling!" kind of setup: no rules or formalities.

The documentary, tailored to Enrico, could not have a standardized style or the usual length, but it should not even become so avant-garde that it could not be enjoyed. Enrico was dictating the tempo and the setups. He was pirouetting on that fine line called experimenting, a delicate kind of experimenting.

So the audio sometimes drops away, giving us the chance to modulate white noise, like a real universe but suspended, which was kind of like Enrico's life when we first met him. We interchange between hand-held and tripod-mounted camera shots, his moments of excitement, and breaks with a moment to reflect (usually with a cigarette or a cigar...).

The mistakes, the background voices, the shadows, the reflections—everything is in the film exactly like it was at Enrico's. That's because they are an integral part of the exchange with him, which is the heart of this project. Enrico would have certainly not edited them out; he would have handled them to turn them into language.

While I was editing the film, I was thinking about Enrico's gaze into the camera while he was looking at me during the shooting. I also thought that this film should have been a mirror-like reflection of that exact same gaze: we look at him and try to depict at least a fraction of what Enrico represents to us, to our city, and to photography.

FRANCESCO CLERICI

Director

A graduate in Art History and Criticism from the State University of Milan, Francesco Clerici has collaborated since 2009 with CICAIE (Confédération Internationale des Cinémas d'Art et d'Essai). He teaches Theories and Practices of Art Documentary at the University of Milan and holds courses for Italian universities and institutes (IULM, Raffles Milano, University of Roma Tre, Bicocca).

He collaborated with artist Velasco Vitali from 2009 to 2019 and, since 2018, with the National Museum of Science and Technology "Leonardo da Vinci" in Milan. His work is primarily dedicated to documenting intangible heritage and technical-scientific craft processes. His first feature-length documentary, *Hand Gestures*, was presented at the 2015 Berlin Film Festival in the FORUM section, where it won the FIPRESCI International Critics Award.

Since 2018, he has made a series of "documentary portraits" of personalities such as Gillo Dorfles, Enrico Cattaneo, Giancarlo Vitali, and Michele De Lucchi.

His works—ranging from augmented reality projects to short films, experimental films, and documentaries—have been presented at festivals around the world (London Film Festival, Viennale, RIDM Montreal, Sarajevo Film Festival, and many others), as well as at venues including the National Gallery of Art in Washington, the British Film Institute in London, the Irish Film Institute in Dublin, Cineteca Mexicana in Mexico City, Busan Film Center, Moscow Documentary Film Center, the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, Barbican, MART in Rovereto, MAXXI in Rome, and Palazzo Reale in Milan.

In 2018, the Grenoble Film Library dedicated a retrospective to his work.

His latest documentary films include *La Paz del Futuro* (co-directed with Luca Previtali) and *Enrico Cattaneo. White Noise* (co-directed with Ruggero Gabbai), both of which were presented at the Rome Film Festival in 2022. His experimental short *Even Tide* won the special jury prize at the Turin Film Festival in 2023. The short *The Ice Builders*, co-directed with Tommaso Barbaro and shot in the Himalayas, was presented at the 72nd Trento Film Festival in 2024, where it won two awards.

RUGGERO GABBAI

Director

He studied Film directing at Columbia University, where he graduated in 1993. His thesis project was his first documentary, *The King of Crown Heights*, aired on prime time by PBS America and distributed worldwide. His documentary *Memoria* - filmed in Auschwitz - was selected for The Berlin Film Festival in 1997 and won numerous prizes. Since then, Ruggero has directed more than 25 documentaries focusing on many subjects, such as *Io Ricordo*, a docu-fiction based on the testimony of the relatives of the victims of the Sicilian mafia. The film received the High prize from the President of the Italian Republic, Giorgio Napolitano.

His documentary *The Longest Journey* focuses on the compelling story of the Italian Jews of Rhodes who were deported from the Greek island to Auschwitz. The film has been selected at the 30th Jerusalem International Film Festival.

He directed *CityZEN*, a documentary about the notorious neighborhood known as ZEN, built on Palermo's outskirts. The film was selected at the Taormina Film Festival and broadcast by Sky Atlantic.

In 2018, Gabbai directed *La Razzia, Roma 16 ottobre 1943*, a documentary portraying the violent raid that brought to the deportation of more than 1.000 Italian Jews. The film was selected for the 13th Festival del Cinema di Roma, and Rai Cinema bought its rights. Ruggero directed the documentary *Being Missoni*, which is about the family and the style of a unique Italian fashion brand, broadcast by Sky Arte.