

# Landscapes of Silence: Antonioni in London, California, Barcelona, and Ferrara

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Antonioni's three English-language films all achieved success, but *Blow-Up* remains the one I love the most. It is literary — of course, it comes from Julio Cortázar's short story. It is an old film, in the sense that we still want a story; and it is a new film, in which we no longer care about the story at all. It is, after all, an image about images.

These are some pictures I took when I visited London. They were taken in Maryon Park, where Antonioni filmed the scene in which the photographer witnesses a murder. Nearby lies the tennis court that appears in the final sequence. On a Saturday morning, the park was quiet — people playing tennis, walking their dogs, resting.

Sixty years ago, perhaps the most important film in the history of cinema — at least to me — was born here. Even now, it remains uncertain whether the murder ever took place, or whether it existed only in the photographer's imagination.



Figure 1: Maryon Park, London.

After *Blow-Up*, Antonioni went to California, where he filmed *Zabriskie Point* in Death Valley. Death Valley is my favorite national park. Here are some pictures I took at Zabriskie Point and Badwater Basin. When I arrived at Badwater, the sun had already set. Between the sky and the earth there was complete silence. The apparitions scattered in the distance, petals on a wet, black bough.

Antonioni made *Zabriskie Point* after Mai 68. To return to Death Valley after all that fire is to confront the silence that follows. What I felt there can perhaps be summed up by Eliot's words:

This is the way the world ends  
This is the way the world ends  
This is the way the world ends  
Not with a bang but a whimper.

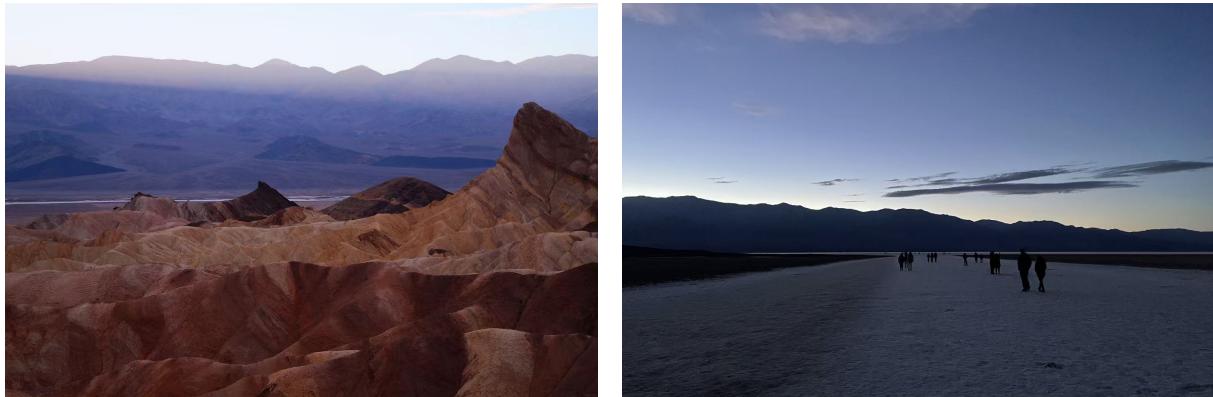


Figure 2: Zabriskie Point and Badwater Basin, Death Valley National Park, California.

Now let us return to Europe. Antonioni shot part of *The Passenger* in Barcelona. Among Gaudí's works, I prefer Casa Milà to the Sagrada Família. The rooftop stands at the interface between the city and the sky, as if along the ridges of Catalonia. There, on the rooftop — under the gaze of the chimneys — Locke and the nameless girl decide to head south.

In the end, in a small hotel in Andalusia, the camera replaces the man, seeing replaces being, and the boundary between self and world dissolves. Such a story could only happen in the South — or perhaps only in Andalusia.

Finally, I arrived in Ferrara. Antonioni was born here, and here he rests. The Certosa di Ferrara was the place where he often walked as a young man. The landscape of the Po Valley shaped all his films, and now he will forever gaze upon the people who pass along the river.

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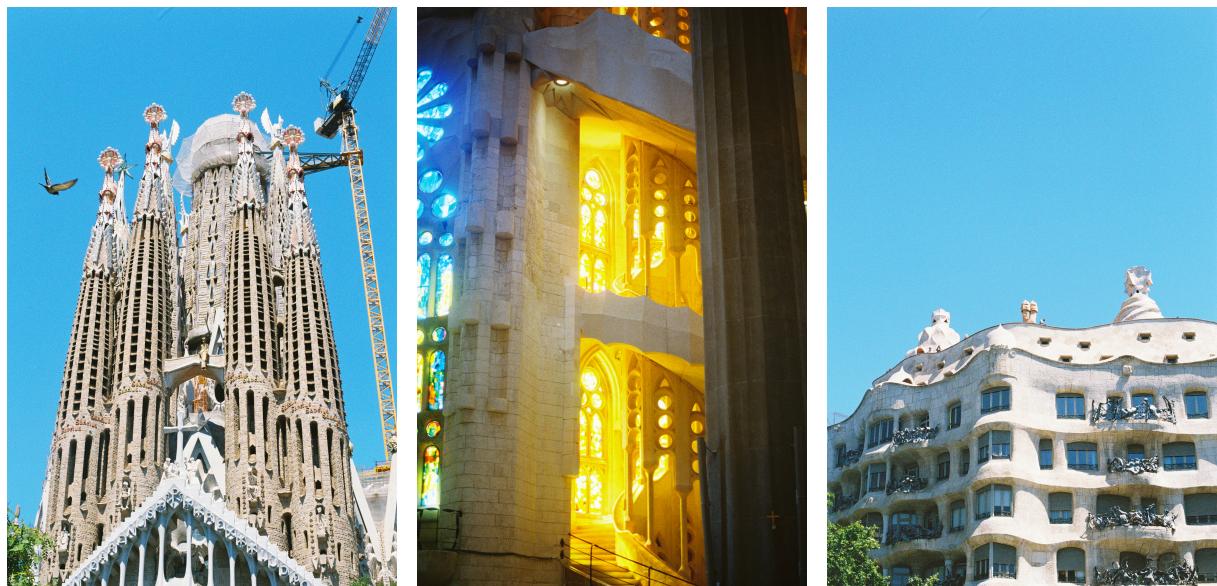


Figure 3: Sagrada Família and Casa Milà, Barcelona.



Figure 4: Certosa di Ferrara, where Antonioni rests.