

franco vimercati
un minuto

Curated by Marco Scotini

PRESS RELEASE

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Galleria Raffaella Cortese is pleased to dedicate, in the year of the 25th anniversary of its opening, an extensive retrospective — as a tribute — to Franco Vimercati, the artist with whom the gallery first opened in 1995. *Un minuto [One minute]*, Vimercati's third solo exhibition in Raffaella Cortese's spaces, is curated by Marco Scotini and extends across all three exhibition venues in via Stradella, each dedicated to a decade of the artist's activity, from the 1970s to the year 2000.

Isolated (by vocation and destiny), shy and uncompromising, Franco Vimercati transforms the photographic act into a radical gesture of measuring time; this places him among the most rigorous and original conceptual artists in Italy and beyond. Remaining devoted, without ever straying from it, to the austerity and the intractable asceticism of the Seventies, Vimercati continues to develop — throughout the course of his practice — a unique approach to seriality and photographic sequence, refraining from the canon of the single and absolute image. But in doing so, his activity is as distant from the Bechers' systematic deduction as it is from Dibbets' temporal and one-way sequences. Vimercati's point of departure is to operate *in* time and *against* time (its passing, its consumption), in favor of *another* time, open to potential, to possibility.

The "minute" which the title refers to therefore alludes to the minimal character of Vimercati's production (black/white, reduced selection of objects, concentration on a few shots) as well as the opposition between the particular chronological limit and the immeasurable dilation of time, which is sensible in Vimercati's work.

The starting point of the exhibition is the seminal 1974 work *Un minuto di fotografia*, a sequence of 13 photographs in which Vimercati deconstructs the passage of the canonical unit of time measurement through the repetition of the unchanged dial of a large alarm clock, fixed at 2:46. A fundamental work not only because it is at the origin of Vimercati's own conceptual production but also because it inaugurates his conception of time that "dynamizes the inanimate" — to quote the fortunate expression that Luigi Ghirri had attributed to him. And that doubles Vimercati's temporality into a current image and a co-existing virtual one, which removes his work from the linearity of time in past, present, and future, as well as the idea of the image as a definitive representation, without alternatives, and given once and for all.

In this sense, the three exhibition spaces in via Stradella all open with images of an alarm clock (normal or upside down) taken by Vimercati in successive decades but all portraying the same object, with its hands accurately pointing to one hour or another, but which could remain fixed

at the same time – no matter what moment it is. The image of this mute object, assumed as the guiding compass for the exhibition, aims to mark an idea of return as well as that of the duration and continuity of Vimercati's entire practice, in the name of a conception of time in which the past becomes indistinguishable from the present. And within this history, it is also the Milanese gallery that reconstructs its own path, in the lasting relationship with the artist and his work.

The gallery space in via Stradella 7 presents masterpieces of the Seventies such as the famous 36 shots of *Untitled (Bottiglie d'acqua minerale)*, 1975, the minimal patterns of *Untitled (Piastrelle)*, 1975 and *Untitled (Parquet)*, 1977, the waiting spaces of *Untitled (Tele)*, 1976: all works in which the cumbersome presence of the ego is more radically set aside. But the gallery also includes lesser-known works such as *Untitled (Latte)*, the series of eight photographs from 1978 in which the same carton of milk, through imperceptible movements of the plane, stands out against a marbled, immovable, statuesque background. While the exhibition space in via Stradella 4 is devoted to the artist's production from the Eighties with its more marked attention to the photographic format – the toni of *Untitled (Brocca)* of 1980–81 – to variations of light and framing (although the entire and legendary of the *Zuppiera* (Soup Tureen) cycle has been excluded from the exhibition), the final exhibition venue in via Stradella 1 gathers the works of the Nineties in an attempt to return a pulsating galaxy of images that, starting from graphic layouts by Vimercati, appear sharp and out of focus, widen and shrink, become brighter or disappear in the dark.

On the occasion of the exhibition a book entitled *Franco Vimercati. Un minuto di fotografia [Franco Vimercati. One minute of photography]* will be published by Quodlibet. The volume, edited by Marco Scotini, includes texts by Paolo Fossati, Luigi Ghirri, Elio Grazioli, Javier Hontoria, Angela Madesani, and Simone Menegoi; it will be published during the exhibition period.

BIOGRAPHY

Franco Vimercati was born in Milan in 1940 and died there in 2001.

Important solo shows have been devoted to the artist: *Franco Vimercati. La fotografia, la vita. Un dialogo con Giorgio Morandi*, Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Madrid, Madrid (2019); *Franco Vimercati*, Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan (2016); *Die Dinge des Lebens / Das Leben der Dinge. Franco Vimercati & George Kubler*, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Dresden (2014); *Franco Vimercati. Tutte le cose emergono dal nulla*, Palazzo Fortuny, Fondazione Musei Civici Venezia, Venice (2012); *Fotografia Europa – Eternità. Il tempo dell'immagine*, Reggio Emilia (2009).

Among the group exhibitions: *Quand fonda la neige où ira le blanc. Opere dalla Collezione Enea Righi*, Palazzo Fortuny, Venice (2016); *L'Inarchiviabile/The Unarchivable*, FM Centro per l'arte contemporanea, Milano (2016); *The Lasting*, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Rome (2016); *Cantiere del '900. Opere dalle collezioni Intesa Sanpaolo*, Gallerie d'Italia, Milan (2015); *Addio anni settanta. Arte a Milano 1969/1980*, Palazzo Reale, Milan (2012); *Conceptual Art – The Panza Collection*, Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto, Rovereto (2010); *Italics – Arte italiana fra tradizione e rivoluzione 1968-2008*, Palazzo Grassi, Venice, and Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2008).