

MAI 36 GALERIE

Luigi Ghirri

Nothing Old Under The Sun

Vernissage: Thursday, March 21, 6pm
Exhibition Duration: March 22 – May 25, 2024
Opening Hours: Tue-Fri, 11 – 6.30pm; Sat 11 – 5pm

Taking photographs is above all restoring a sense of wonder – like observing the world through an adolescent eye – reversing the saying from Ecclesiastes ‘there is nothing new under the sun’, since in fact there is nothing old under the sun. And so we look first into the world itself, and then at the plate, and then into the final image, to discover the wonder of the gesture that had been achieved, to consider nothing insignificant, and to see in landscape, in a point of space, in a moment of life, or in a slight change of light, the possibility of a new perception. Seeing a landscape as if for the first time and last time determines a feeling of belonging to every landscape in the world ... landscape is not where nature ends and the artificial world begins; it is rather a passageway that cannot be delimited geographically, or better, a place of our time, our epochal cipher. – Luigi Ghirri [The Complete Essays 1973-1991, There is nothing new under the sun (2), 1988, p. 186.]

For Luigi Ghirri the phrase ‘*There’s Nothing Old Under The Sun*’ encloses many of the meanings and motivations that have always accompanied his work. The exhibition encompasses a precious selection of photographs spanning multiple series by the artist, the earliest of which is from 1974: *Modena (Serie: Il Paese dei Balocchi)*, the most recent from 1990: *Bitonto (Serie: Paesaggio Italiano)*.

Walking the streets of Modena, the small town where the artist had lived since the early 1970s, or driving around the surrounding countryside; Ghirri was interested in capturing Italian life and landscape in its various articulations: piazzas, facades of ordinary houses and ruins; their doors, windows, wall colors, tiles; in short – parts of the everyday – which, to him, precisely because they appeared so anonymous and forlorn at times, seemed to be waiting for someone to give them an identity. In his quest, Ghirri visited many popular places such as urban parks or seaside resorts – a fairground in Modena, Capri, an island in the Tyrrhenian Sea, as well as many beaches along the Adriatic coast.

Ghirri's formative years as a topographer brought an essential quality in terms of scale and measurement to his photographic work, a subtle interplay between the immediate, the intermediate and the infinite, that raised the question of what photography stands for when it's not about focusing, the essential decision about what is part of the picture and what is not. Views of views, snippets within snippets, pictures within pictures.

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Through time, Ghirri became increasingly concerned with this dual reality. Putting us face to face with the reality of familiar environments, that which our eyes encounter, and seeing it with the astonishment of those viewing it for the first time.

Ghirri's view is a complex one, telling the tale of a remaining world that does not elude him. While apparently recording the visible, Luigi Ghirri's photographs – from the conceptual to 'magic realism' – reveal a plurality of languages. This perhaps stems from an ingenuous desire for a return to a state of purity, a ground zero of vision that challenges and suggests a new way for us to read and interpret everything we encounter.

Born in Scandiano in 1943, Luigi Ghirri spent his working life in the Emilia Romagna region, where he produced one of the most layered bodies of work – marking the start of something entirely new in the history of photography and the visual culture. Luigi Ghirri was at the height of his career when he passed away in 1992. To this day, his photographs are exhibited extensively both in Italy and abroad.

Some of the most notable museum exhibitions in recent years were held at the Castello di Rivoli in Turin (2012), the MAXXI Museum in Rome (2013), and the Instituto Moreira Salles in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro (2013). In 2018 the first major retrospective of his work outside of Italy opened at the Museum Folkwang in Essen and later traveled to the Museo Reina Sofía in Madrid and the Jeu de Paume in Paris. Luigi Ghirri's work can also be found in many public collections: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, the Museum of Photography at the University of Parma, the Musée Reattu of Arles as well as the Fotomuseum, Winterthur. For autumn 2024 a retrospective of his work is planned at the MASI Lugano.