

Francesca Woodman: *Italian Works*

Private View 5:30–7:30pm, Saturday 15 September 2018

Exhibition 15 September–15 December 2018

Victoria Miro Venice, Il Capricorno, San Marco 1994, 30124 Venice, Italy



Francesca Woodman
From Eel Series, Venice, Italy, 1978
Gelatin silver estate print. 20.3 x 25.4 cm, 8 x 10 in
© Charles Woodman, courtesy Victoria Miro, London/Venice

Victoria Miro is delighted to announce an exhibition of works made in Italy by the celebrated photographer Francesca Woodman (1958–1981), including examples from the *Eel Series*, created in Venice in 1978.

Born and raised in the United States, Francesca Woodman considered Italy her second home. She lived in Florence for a year as a child, attending second grade at a public school there, and spent her adolescent summers in Antella, Tuscany, where her parents purchased a farmhouse when the artist was 11 years-old. Shortly after this, at the age of 13, Woodman created her first self-portrait, and the genesis of her work until her death in 1981, aged just 22, is intrinsically linked to Italian art and culture.

This exhibition is comprised of Italian images, including those Woodman made in 1977 and 1978, during the year she spent in Rome at the Rhode Island School of Design's European Honors programme. This year proved pivotal to her artistic development, and the works from this period emphasise the integral influence of Italian art and culture on her aesthetic vision. One of the key influences of Italian art on Woodman's work was in her precise use of composition, which became more sophisticated during her time in Rome. She explored perspective and consciously used formal strategies learnt from her study of Florentine masters, particularly Giotto and Piero della Francesca, and classical sculpture.

In addition to immersing herself in the study of historic painting and sculpture in Rome, Woodman made strong connections with Italian artists her own age. She became friends with Giuseppe Gallo and Enrico Luzzi, and through them discovered the Pastificio Cerere, an abandoned pasta factory transformed into an art space that housed the studios of artists who became known as the 'San Lorenzo Group'. It was in the cavernous spaces of the Cerere that she made some of her most iconic images. She also befriended the young painter Sabina Mirri, who became one of her favourite models.

Also crucial to her development in Rome was Woodman's association with the Maldoror bookstore in Via di Parione, which specialised in avantgarde literature of the twentieth century as well as more obscure books on subjects including the fantastical and the grotesque. Woodman spent hours in the shop, learning more about early twentieth-century artistic and literary movements. Her first Italian solo exhibition took place in the bookshop's basement gallery space.

The exhibition will explore Woodman's fusion of Italian classicism with aspects of narrative and performance. In Italy Woodman extended her development of classical subject matter, predominantly the female nude and tropes of still life and classical composition. At the same time she was enhancing and extending her use of narrative and performative strategies. This is evident in her use of series of images, crucially in *Self-deceit*, 1978, which features scenarios where Woodman refers to classical and surrealist sculptural poses using her own naked body and a single prop, a rough-edged piece of mirrored glass. Further important series Woodman worked on during this time include the *Angel* series, which she commenced in Providence but extended in works made in the Cerere, and *Eel Series*, 1978, likely created in Venice on one of her frequent visits to the city.

Bringing these diverse works to Venice for the first time reveals the ways in which Italy and its culture underscored the development of an artist whose work has garnered exceptional public and critical interest in the 37 years since her untimely death.

Born in 1958 in Denver, Colorado, **Francesca Woodman** lived and worked in Providence, Rhode Island, New York and Italy until her death in 1981. Significant posthumous solo presentations include *On Being an Angel*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2015–2016), touring subsequently to Foam, Amsterdam (2016), Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, Paris (2016), Moderna Museet, Malmö (2016–2017) and Finnish Museum of Photography, Helsinki (2017); *Francesca Woodman*, Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco (2011–2012), touring to Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2012); *Francesca Woodman: Retrospective*, Sala Espacio AV, Murcia, touring to SMS Contemporanea, Siena (both 2009); *Francesca Woodman: Providence, Roma, New York*, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome (2000); *Francesca Woodman*, Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris, touring to Kunsthal, Rotterdam, The Netherlands (both 1998); Centro Cultural de Belém, Lisbon, Portugal (1999); The Photographers' Gallery, London (1999); Centro Cultural TeclaSala, L'Hospitalet, Barcelona (1999–2000); Carla Sozzani Gallery, Milan, (2001); The Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin (2001) and PhotoEspaña, Centro Cultural Conde Duque, Madrid (2002). Woodman's work is represented in the collections of major museums including The Metropolitan Museum of Art; The Whitney Museum of American Art; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Detroit Institute of Arts; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago and Tate/National Galleries of Scotland. Current exhibitions include *Life in Motion: Egon Schiele / Francesca Woodman*, Tate Liverpool, UK until 23 Sep 2018.

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