

FRANCO
VIMERCATI
THE WORLD
IN A GRAIN
OF SAND
/IL MONDO IN
UN GRANELLO
DI SABBIA

curated by Susan Bright

Sala Aldrovandi
7th June – 10th September 2023

Press preview
Wednesday 7th June,
h. 12.00

Opening
Wednesday 7th June,
h. 18.00-21.00

On Wednesday 7th June, La Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea in collaboration with the Archivio Franco Vimercati and Galleria Raffaella Cortese inaugurates the first large survey exhibition in Rome dedicated to Franco Vimercati. Vimercati was one of the most important artist photographers of his generation, creating a unique conceptual and aesthetic photographic language. The exhibition is curated by Susan Bright and the lead essay is by art historian Doris Von Drathen allowing for two leading female contemporary voices to interpret the work anew. The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue published by Tlon with essays by Doris Von Drathen and Saretto Cincinelli. The foreword is by Susan Bright.

Franco Vimercati (1940-2001) was born in Milan where he lived and worked all his life. He trained as a painter at Brera Art Academy but switched his artistic practice to photography in 1973. After his first series *Le Langhe*, which featured 38 portraits of locals from the village from the Langhe region in Piedmont, all his photographs were taken in his apartment. They feature a limited selection of things that the family used in the home, tiles, floorboards or household objects all within reach of the artist. The beauty and fascination with the objects is the seemingly contradictory balance between intimacy, rigorous objectivity, banality and poetry that exists within the pictures. As an artist he valued process over the commerce and commodity of the art world.

Often done in series the photographs resemble the work of the American conceptual art of his contemporaries such as Jan Dibbets, Ed Ruscha or Douglas Huebler, and he was certainly influenced by the new artistic discoveries of minimalism and figures such as Ad Reinhardt, Robert Ryman, Agnes Martin and Giulio Paolini. Like much of the work of the time he wrestled with the twentieth century apparatus of photography and its essential qualities and, more importantly, its limitations.

This includes: working with film, dark room printing, sizing and seriality. With Vimercati, however, the intention was wider than rigorous investigations and experimental shifts based solely on the medium, and his work resonates on a more poetic register.

To look at one of Vimercati's photographs is to consider time. Taken in his apartment it is possible to see the subtle changes to the day, the scenes of the house and the artist himself reflected in the shadows and light reflected in the objects. In turn, the viewer must take time to look at the work to be in the moment with the images and to remove narrative connotations. In many ways the photographs resonate with the distilled labour, individuality, and craft of a hand knotted rug or the condensed musical notes of Johann Sebastian Bach - both of which the artist admired greatly. The collective body of work is so much more powerful and poignant than a one-off image.

The exhibition itinerary

The exhibition will feature most of the artist's oeuvre from 1974-2000. This includes over 100 works and a selection of objects which were the main subject of his photographs. Also on show are a selection of books and archival material from his personal archive. This provides a powerful insight into his working practice and is suggestive of his overall vision. Shown non-chronologically each room has a very distinct atmosphere revealing his methodical and precise approach to photographing objects and his masterful treatment of light and time. Vimercati removes the object away from still life signification and the objects are photographed purely for their own sake to see how they are transformed when captured at a certain time and in a certain way.

Shown for the first time in Italy are 60 of his soup tureen photographs taken between 1983-1992. During this time Vimercati took no other photographs. Displayed together it is not the sameness which is highlighted, but the differences. They create a space that shows a compendium of interminable traits and characteristics that collectively allow us to embrace and articulate the broader realm of photographic experience on a very personal and intimate level. This will be a very direct encounter with the work and highlight the intensity and range of emotional notes apparent.

On show is a documentary on the artist conceived by Elio Grazioli and directed by Dario Bellini.

"The photographs may look simple; but they hold deeper beauty and significant moments. His work foregrounds the conditions of visibility and embodies the focused labour of looking, prompting the viewer to think about photographic images and values. His work demands a slow contemplation. Photography, as we know it now, has come to privilege immediacy and exchange. With Vimercati one can understand his work as a desire to capture that ephemeral nature of the medium, but the photographs are also invested with the material and emotional value of the artist. The exhibition offers the opportunity to see his works anew within the context of the constantly shifting identity of the photographic medium." Susan Bright

The exhibition highlights the more poetic elements of Vimercati's work and although based in the photographic medium it attempts to understand his work more in line with the intensity of poetry or music where reaction is concentrated. As he said in 2000, *'I see my work as a galaxy, with stars that pulsate'*.

This exhibition will be accompanied by an illustrated catalogue produced by La Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea with essays by Doris Von Drathen and Saretto Cincinelli and a foreword by Susan Bright, published by Tlon.

Franco Vimercati (Milano 1940 - 2001).

Important solo and two persons shows have been devoted to the artist, amongst others: *Vimercati - Morandi. Ripetizioni differenti*, Casa Morandi, Bologna (2021); *Franco Vimercati. Un Minuto*, Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan (2020); *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); *Fotografie dal 1973 al 2001. Un viaggio verso la purezza dell'immagine*, Villa e Collezione Panza, Varese and Associazione Culturale Borgovico 33, Como (2008); *Deposizione*, San Fedele Arte, Milan (2002); Galleria Milano, Milan (1991); Galleria Martano, Turin (1991); Studio Marconi, Milan (1984); Galleria Civica Arte Moderna, Modena (1975).

Among the group exhibitions: *At the Studio*, Collezione Giancarlo e Danna Olgiati, Lugano (2023); *Ideias. O legado de Giorgio Morandi*; Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, San Paolo and Rio de Janeiro (2021); *Surface Matters, A photographic collection on ceramic*, MUT - Mutina for Art, Fiorano Modenese (2018); IT, Fondazione Rolla, Bruzella, Svizzera (2017); *Quand fondra 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); *Utopie quotidiane*, PAC Padiglione Arte Contemporanea, Milan (2002); *Every Day - 11th Biennale of Sydney*, Sydney (1998); *Fotomedia*, Rotonda della Besana, Milan (1975).

The work of Franco Vimercati is managed by the Archivio Franco Vimercati founded in Milan by Martino Vimercati, Liliana Dematteis and Bruna Dell'Agnello in 2015.

Dr Susan Bright is an international curator with a specialisation in lens-based media. She has curated exhibitions in Europe, The Americas and Australia. She has been commissioned to curate large scale exhibitions for Tate Britain, The National Portrait Gallery (London), Princeton University Art Museum, Lismore Castle Arts (Ireland) and Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea (Rome). Additionally, she has been lead curator for festivals in Spain and Germany. She has published seven books with publishers such as Tate, Thames & Hudson and Aperture.

Galleria Raffaella Cortese opened its first exhibition space with a solo show dedicated to Franco Vimercati in 1995. Based in Milan's Città Studi district since its inception, the gallery holds its current headquarters in Via A. Stradella, 7 and has two storefront exhibition venues on the same street.

Unfolding across the three spaces and allowing artists to present their works in different contexts, as well as presenting multiple shows at the same time, the gallery's exhibition program aims to establish and nurture dialogue between the practices of artists across different generations and origins.

The gallery represents a transgenerational group of 30 global artists working across different media, with renowned dedication to the representation of women artists and long-standing

collaborations with major public institutions. The artists' practices are centered on critical themes such as individual, political, and national identities; the body, language, and literature, as well as issues of feminism and femininity.

Through its long-standing commitment to the advancement and promotion of photography, installation, and time-based media such as video and performance art, Galleria Raffaella Cortese has established itself as a pivotal member of the Milanese and Italian contemporary art scene. The gallery was one of the first to introduce the work of pioneering American women artists to the Italian contemporary art market in the '90s and championing the work of women has become a defining aspect of the gallery's identity over the years. Another focus of Galleria Raffaella Cortese's exhibition program has been developing the careers of Italian artists, both acting as a site of experimentation for younger generations as well as bringing underrepresented late career artists to the forefront.

In 2022 Raffaella Cortese opened Aedicula, a second exhibition space in Albisola Superiore (Liguria) a window on contemporary art that showcases two special projects per year.

Doris Von Drathen is an independent art historian and critic born in Hamburg. Based in Paris since 1990, she has held teaching positions at the École des hautes Études in Paris, the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam, the Architectural Association in London, and for several semesters at Cornell University, New York State. She regularly has lectured at Columbia University, NY, and University of Alvaro Alto at Helsinki and she is professor at the École Spéciale d'Architecture in Paris, since 2007.

Known for her transversal approach, Doris von Drathen has published her research: *Vortex of Silence – Proposition for an Art Criticism Beyond Aesthetic Categories*, 2004; followed by her monographs such as: *Rebecca Horn – Sculptures*, 2005 and *Drawings*, 2006; *Pat Steir – Installations*, 2006 and *Paintings*, 2007; *Rui Chafes*, 2008; *Nalini Malani*, 2010; and *Painting Space – Fabienne Verdier*, 2012; *Felice Varini*, 2013; *Kimsooja* 2015; *Rui Chafes* 2017; *Susumu Shingu*, 2018; *Ali Kaaf*, 2022; a publication of her research on spatial forces in contemporary art, *Freiraum* is forthcoming.

Saretto Cincinelli is an art critic and curator, born in Montevarchi (AR) in 1956. He collaborated with Flash Art (Milan) and Ars Mediterranea (Barcelona), his writings have appeared in various monographs, including: Tony Cragg, BSI Art Collection, Zürich 2007; Daniela De Lorenzo, La Galleria, Valencia, 2008; Paolo Parisi, Museo Pecci, Prato 2009; Soulages XXI^o Siècle, Musée de Beaux Art de Lyon 2012/13; /Uncinematic. George Drivas, Galleria Nazionale, Rome, 2017. Between 2007-2012 he co-directed the annual review L'evento immobile promoted by Casa Masaccio (San Giovanni Valdarno) and Man (Nuoro). He curated the first solo exhibition in Italy by Mark Lewis, Man Nuoro and Museo Marini Florence, 2009 and David Claerbout, Mart Rovereto, 2012-13. He collaborated with the Director Cristiana Collu to the Galleria Nazionale of Rome's new exhibition project, *Time is Out of Joint*, opened in 2016 and currently on display. Among the most recent exhibitions: Robert Morris, Galleria Nazionale, Rome, 2019/20; Andrea Santarlaschi, Casa Masaccio, 2019/20; Emanuele Becheri, Museo 900, Florence, 2020; Giorgio De Chirico, Palazzo Blu, Pisa 2020/21, Andature. Chiara Bettazzi, Daniela De Lorenzo, Museo Marini, Florence, 2021, Surplace Chiara Bettazzi, Galleria Nazionale, Rome, 2022.

Public Info

**Galleria Nazionale d'Arte
Moderna e Contemporanea**
viale delle Belle Arti 131
Rome

Accessible Entrance
via Gramsci 71

Opening Hours
Tuesday to Sunday
9.00 am – 7.00 pm
last entry 45 minutes
before closing time

Tickets
full price: € 10.00
concession: € 7,00 | € 5,00 | € 2,00

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Press Info

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List of Works

Un minuto di fotografia
1974

Senza titolo
(Bottiglie di acqua minerale)
1975

Senza titolo (Piastrelle)
1975

Senza titolo (Parquet)
1977

Sei tondi
1978

Senza titolo (Latte)
1978

Senza titolo (Brocca)
1980-1981

Senza titolo (Fiori)
1983

Il ciclo della zuppiera
1983-1992
Serie da 6 elementi

Il ciclo della zuppiera
1983-1992
Serie da 60 elementi

Senza titolo (Vaso)
1994

Capovolte
1995-1997

Esposizioni multiple
1999

Dittico (Lattiera)
2000

Senza titolo (Lattiera)
2000

List of objects

Vaso (Proust)

Zuppiera

Bicchiere

Ferro da stiro

Moka

Lattiera

Sveglia

Vase (greco)

Rolleiflex

Cow (vaso di colla)

Artist's books

"Josef Sudek"

"August Sander.
Menschen Ohne Maske"

"Morandi"
Lamberto Vitali
Catalogo Generale

"Taccuino"
J. Krishnamurti

"Il libro del tè"
Okakura

"L'arte del tappero orientale"
J. Eskenazi

"Albrecht Dürer.
The complete engravings,
etchings & dripoints"

"Liriche cinesi"

"Correzione"
T. Bernhard

"Il tempo ritrovato"
M. Proust

"Ugo Mula - La Fotografia"

"Sulle Langhe"
1974

Artist catalogues

Cataloghi di mostre di tappeti
J. Eskenazi
Late 90s

Copertine per *Ipsso Facto*,
rivista d'arte a cura di
Elio Grazioli
2000

“*Galleria Civica Arte
Moderna, Modena*”
Catalogo
1975

“*Studio Marconi, Milano*”
Catalogo
1984

“*Galleria Milano, Milano*”
“*Galleria Martano, Torino*”
Cataloghi
1990

“*Franco Vimercati: Opere*”
Catalogo
2012

“*Der Terrinen-Zyklus*”
Catalogo
2014

“*Die Dinge des Lebens*”
Catalogo
1983-1992

Artist's notes

Foglio di appunti
1981

Foglio di appunti
1985

Foglio di appunti
1989

Foglio di appunti
1991