

A MASTER PHOTOGRAPHER AT MAXXI

LUIGI GHIRRI. THINKING THROUGH IMAGES **Icons Landscapes Architecture**

300 shots, above all vintage prints, but also proofs, books, postcards, records and periodicals
for a comprehensive overview of the artist

from 24 April to 27 October 2013 | inauguration Tuesday 23 April

www.fondazionemaxxi.it

Rome, 23 April 2013. Over 300 shots, above all **vintage prints**, in a major retrospective presenting an undisputed master of Italian photography.

The exhibition **Luigi Ghirri. Thinking through images**, at MAXXI from **24 April to 27 October 2013**, has been organized by MAXXI Architettura, directed by **Margherita Guccione**, and curated by **Francesca Fabiani, Laura Gasparini** and **Giuliano Sergio**.

Born out of a collaboration with the **Municipality of Reggio Emilia** and the **Biblioteca Panizzi**, which conserves many of the original documents from Ghirri's archive (photographs, proofs, books, catalogues and negatives), the exhibition recounts the diverse facets of this complex and versatile artist.

"MAXXI is a cultural hub, open to all forms of expression: design, photography, fashion, film, dance", says **Giovanna Melandri**, president of the Fondazione MAXXI. "With this exhibition, with which I am particularly satisfied, we are paying tribute to one of the greatest and most complex Italian artists, celebrated throughout the world.

For this project, MAXXI has worked with the Biblioteca Panizzi and with the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, collaborated with the archive of the Ghirri heirs and obtained prestigious loans from CSAC in Parma, the National Institute of Graphics in Rome and from private collectors. This *cultural network* is one of the keystones of the museum's mission."

"With the exhibition dedicated to Luigi Ghirri, the museum is consolidating and explicating its mission to identify and promote the most significant and original artistic expressions from the middle of the last century through to the present", says **Margherita Guccione**, director of MAXXI Architettura. "In this sense Ghirri is a true innovator, an experimenter who invented a new approach to photography and looking at the contemporary landscape."

Luigi Ghirri. Thinking through images is a exploration of the work of the Modenese photographer (1943-1992) through his unmistakable photographs and through proofs for catalogues, books from his private collection, periodicals, reviews, collections of anonymous photographs, postcards and records, recounting his collaboration with the conceptual artists of the Seventies, his cultural and artistic references, his interest in music and his relationships with musicians such as the CCCP and Lucio Dalla. A Ghirri who was not only a photographer, but also a publisher, curator, theorist and cultural promoter, in constant dialogue with architects, musicians, writers and artists.

The exhibition is structured around **three thematic sections – Icons, Landscapes and Architecture** – and invites visitors to explore the various phases in Ghirri's artistic research: the everyday icons, the landscapes as places of attention and affection and architecture, both high and anonymous. The **vintage prints** conserved in the Fototeca Panizzi, MAXXI, the CSAC in Parma, the National Graphic Institute in Rome, the archive of the Ghirri heirs and in other private collections, constitute the central nucleus of the exhibition. They are flanked by a restricted selection of **new prints** (from the negatives held by the Fototeca Panizzi) that offer a further instrument for the study and understanding of his work. The exhibits will be accompanied by citations from Ghirri's texts, selected to draw attention to the quality of his writing and to facilitate the public's comprehension of his research through his own words.

“The decision to proceed on the basis of themes rather than chronology reprises a typically Ghirri-esque modus operandi: photography understood as an unfinished object, a gigantic work in progress and under constant development”, say the curators **Francesca Fabiani, Laura Gasparini** and **Giuliano Sergio**.

The publications and the exhibitions that Ghirri realised during the course of his life frequently contained a vast number of photographs; the photographer organized these images into “series”, frequently revising them, modifying the sequences, utilising photographs created for one project and repositioned within new contexts, perhaps years later. The **thematic configuration** is thus intended to shed light on Ghirri’s working practice, underlining not only his specific photographic technique, but also the way in which he looked at, selected, arranged and ordered the photographs, in search of a new critical approach to thinking about the image, to thinking through images.

Luigi Ghirri is a fundamental figure in the photography of the second half of the 20th Century. he profoundly influenced international visual culture, above all through his capacity for imaging photography as a means of accessing the world and its representations.

His research drew on various sources that led him to explore new subjects and directions: amateur photography, assemblages mixing reality and representation, the everyday, landscapes, and high and popular architecture. The world, for Ghirri, is a spectacle of which the photographer has the task of deciphering, interpreting and translating. His photographs remind us today that his importance far outstrips his fame.

After closing at MAXXI the exhibition will be staged in other museum setting including, in the May of 2014, the prestigious setting of the Chiostrì di San Pietro in Reggio Emilia, during the European Festival of Photography.

Catalogue: Electa

MAXXI – National Museum of XXI Century Arts

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opening hours: 11.00 – 19.00 (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Sunday) | 11.00 – 22.00 (Saturday)

closed Mondays, 1 May and 25 December

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Luigi Ghirri. Thinking Images.

Icons Landscapes Architecture

24 April – 27 October

Francesca Fabiani, Laura Gasparini, Giuliano Sergio, *curatori della mostra*

Luigi Ghirri (Scandiano, Reggio Emilia 1943-Roncocesi, Reggio Emilia 1992) is one of the major figures of Italian photography. He has had a profound impact on visual culture internationally mainly because of his ability to imagine the pursuit of photography as a privileged access to the world and its representations.

His research feeds on many contributions which led him to explore new subjects and directions: amateur photography, the montages that blend reality and representation, daily life, landscapes, designer architecture and ordinary ones.

The world for Ghirri is a spectacle that the photographer has the task to decipher, interpret and translate.

Aware of the ambiguity of the medium, since the early 70's Ghirri shared the nullification of photographic aesthetics proposed by the avant-garde, transforming the crisis of photography into a unique opportunity to rethink it.

Moving freely between objects, fragments, reproductions, spaces, buildings, the photographer operates a "dismantling" of the progressive big collage that appears in the frame, reducing it to signs, icons, and recurring images of extraordinary simplicity. The apparent simplicity actually reveals a very attentive position: Ghirri always refused the creative claim of "artistic" photography by opting for a language close to that of the amateur, which expresses itself firstly through the use of commercial colour photography, using reduced prints and forsaking all technical virtuosity in favour of a more direct though mediated view of the world. The lack of interest in the image in itself explains the organization of work in "series" as a linguistic system in continuous elaboration, the photo series are designed to be rethought and reinterpreted every time to give life to new perceptive itineraries.

In this research Ghirri explores with curiosity all those situations that amplify the ambiguity of the visual universe: shop windows, billboards, transparencies, filters, overlays, windows and gates, shadows and mirrors, changes in scale, night scenes, fog and snow, and again the maps and atlases which depict an imaginary journey into the world of signs.

But the journey is also one in the real landscape. Ghirri seems to indicate that the space at the edge, that of the ordinary, without qualities or peculiarities, reshaped by globalization and visual standardization, that seems to have lost all identity is the real landscape to be analyzed in search of a more authentic vision that goes beyond stereotypes and clichés. The task of the photographer becomes the search for persistent residual identity in places to know and re-know, through the photographic instrument, thanks to that feeling of affection that seems the only way to get in tune, with the aim of understanding them.

His sublime landscapes, extraordinary images of the ordinary, designer buildings and the most uninteresting ones, are thus recomposed in a measured and participative vision of those places through an exploration in colour that becomes more felt and refined.

Ghirri's is a complex itinerary, whose influence far exceeds the (rather limited) local and temporal context in which he operates his visual "revolution".

The exhibition presents more than 300 photographs, vintage prints and materials, Ghirri's itinerary, articulated in themes: Icons, Landscapes and Architectures are three possible paths to explore the "Ghirri universe". The thematic rather than chronological organization - takes its cue from the Emilian photographer's peculiar way of interacting with images which, through the organization of his work in "series", leaves room to the combined potential of the signs.

This itinerary guided by associations and references therefore offers an open and reversible reading of Ghirri's work, revealing not only his photographic technique, but the way he looked, chose, ordered and thought by images.

Icons

The conceptual research is a starting point that allows Ghirri to build a new language that explores habitual places to reveal the icons that populate the contemporary world. Shop windows, advertisements, images of images, postcards and paintings that interact with reality, from Paesaggi di Cartone, Km 0.250 and

Kodachrome, as well as the playgrounds of Il paese dei balocchi, the skies of Infinito and the people in moments of leisure, Diaframma 11, 1/125, luce naturale, are images that investigate the processes of seeing, but at the same time involve the viewer for their evocative capacity, icons of a collective memory. Postcards, paintings, prints - collected harmoniously in the Still-life series compose an imagery of signs that interact with shadows, mirrors and objects.

Landscapes

In landscapes the icons are still present but the horizon expands. The warehouses, service stations, anonymous suburbs of Italia aiatati, depict a society that Ghirri looks upon with affection and awe, combining the artificial landscapes of In Scala with the perspectives of Vedute to seek a new identity outside of the stereotype. Through projects such as Viaggio in Italia and Esplorazioni sulla via Emilia, he was among the main promoters, in the 80's, of the renewal landscape photography that involved an entire generation of photographers. Taking on the iconographic tradition of Italy, Ghirri regenerates it with simple images, in which panoramas are interspersed with churches, theatres, interiors, piazzas, the "frames" of the gates.

Architectures

The architectures, like icons, are a constant instrument of narration for Ghirri. The photographer builds a kind of inventory of anonymous building types in Catalogo and reflects on their interaction with green spaces in Colazione sull'erba. He interprets designer architecture in an intellectual dialogue with the architects, revealing the perspectives of the villas and gardens of Versailles and Caserta with a solemn and unique lightness. The look on interiors opens an intimate dimension on the inhabited spaces, from the Atelier of Giorgio Morandi to the studio of Aldo Rossi, ending in the exhibition, with Identikit, of a self-portrait narrated through the objects, books and spaces of his own home.

A rich documentation presented in Ghirri's interactive bulletin boards and "desk", showcases his extensive work not only as a photographer, but also as an editor, curator, cultural theorist and animator, in constant dialogue with musicians, writers, artists and intellectuals.

Next to the photos are a few quotations from the Ghirri's writings which accompany the visitor in the discovery - through words and images - of the density and the depth of his thought.

ARCUS: INTERVENING IN SUPPORT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

In the month of February 2004, the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities was responsible for the constitution of Arcus SpA, a limited company devoted to supporting art, culture and the performing arts, in accordance with Law No. 291 of 16 October 2003. 291. The company capital is wholly underwritten by the Ministry of the Economy, while the company's day-to-day activities are based on the programmes established by annual decrees adopted by the Minister for Cultural Heritage and Activities – who also exercises the shareholder rights – together with the Minister for Infrastructures. Arcus may also develop independent projects.

Arcus's declared aim is that of providing innovative support for significant and ambitious projects within the world of cultural heritage and activities and its possible interrelations with the country's strategic infrastructures.

Within the ambit of Arcus's mission, supporting projects entails identifying important initiatives, contributing to the completion of planning, intervening in organizational and technical aspects, participating – where appropriate or necessary – in the financing of the project, monitoring its development and contributing to its successful outcome

It is important that Arcus's modus operandi is clearly understood, as explained above: the company intervenes to provide organizational and financial support for significant projects, but in no way is it comparable to an agency for the distribution of funding, nor may it be numbered among the "scattershot" distributors of public or private funds.

Arcus is, therefore, an original instrument for the support and launching of significant and innovative projects within the panorama of Italian culture. Economic support, where provided, must be seen as wholly instrumental within the ambit of a cultural project that is conceptually valid and operationally shared.

In more detail, Arcus provides assistance for initiatives relating, for example:

- to the establishment of projects for the restoration, redevelopment and improved fruition of the cultural heritage;
- to the preservation of the landscape and cultural heritage through actions and interventions also designed to mitigate the impact of existing or forthcoming infrastructures;
- to support the programming, monitoring and evaluation of interventions in the cultural heritage sector;
- to promote planning within the cultural heritage and activities sector and that of the performing arts;
- to identify and support projects valorizing and protecting cultural heritage through interventions with significant technological contents;
- to support projects relating to cultural tourism in the broadest sense of the term;
- to promote the birth and constitution of cultural catchment areas in relation to emblematic examples of cultural heritage within the ambit of an integrated and systemic vision capable of linking local cultural heritage, infrastructure, tourism, allied industries and transport;
- to intervene in the broad-based sector comprising initiatives designed to render the cultural heritage fully accessible to the differently able.

To achieve its aims Arcus draws on resources detailed in article 60 of Law 289 of 27 December 2002 (Financial Law 2003). The legislation provides for 3% of the funding for infrastructures being devoted to expenses relating to interventions safeguarding and in favour of cultural heritage and activities. Arcus is identified as the recipient structure for these funds. Furthermore, in accordance with article 3 of Law No. 43 of 31 March 2005, the above-mentioned percentage is increased annually by a further 2%. Moreover, the company may receive finances provided by the European Union, the state and other public and private bodies.

Arcus also works to bring potential stakeholders into contact with the various projects. When necessary, therefore, the company contacts foundations with banking origins or otherwise, local authorities, exponents of local bodies and civic society, the universities and private individuals in order to aggregate around the initiatives increasing resources and coordinated financing.

Arcus's ambitious project is therefore that of becoming the "glue" that renders operative the systemic capacity for the promotion and planned support of initiatives designed to enhance the cultural heritage and activities, with a view to ever better conservation, fruition and valorization. By taking appropriate measures, Arcus favours the necessary convergence of the various stakeholders, thus contributing to the success of the various cultural projects identified.



Alcantara and MAXXI: Artistic Excellence and Creativity

A timeless material, unique of its kind and with vast expressive potential, Alcantara partners with art and architecture to open itself up to new interpretive languages.

After the success of the initiative *CAN YOU IMAGINE? Progetto Alcantara*[®] - MAXXI, an experimental research that became an exhibition open to the public from October 7 to November 13, 2011, the partnership between the Italian company that has been producing the homonymous trademark material for nearly forty years and the national Museum of 21st century arts goes on.

If the first phase of the multi-year project involved 11 top international designers who were asked to interpret the qualities of Alcantara in as many installations, the second step requires that the same qualities of the material are highlighted according to a specific topic by international designers under 35, chosen through a **contest by invitation that on May 15, 2012 announced the 8 finalists.**

Sebastian Herkner (Germany), **Lanzavecchia + Way** (Italy & Singapore), **Mischer' Traxler** (Austria), **Society of Architecture** (Korea), **Matteo Zerzenoni** (Italy), **Vittorio Venezia** (Italy), **Paradisi Artificiali** (Italy), **Mana Bernardes** (Brazil): these the eight finalists.

The projects will be exposed next November 2012 in the exhibition *Shape Your Life! Progetto Alcantara – MAXXI*, curated by **Giulio Cappellini** Art Director of Alcantara and **Domitilla Dardi** MAXXI Architecture Design Curator.

Considering the increasingly nomadic and dynamic concept of living, that sees us spend more time *out* of the house than *in* the house, the challenge of the exhibition is precisely to interpret the new scenarios of (con) temporary lifestyles, that “outside” where we now spend most of the time. The task of the young designers is therefore to create “equipped habitats”: objects and environment covered in Alcantara where people can “feel at home when they are out of the house”.

SHAPE YOUR LIFE! Progetto Alcantara[®] - MAXXI confirms the lively partnership between the interdisciplinary MAXXI museum and a company that firmly believes in research and in constant dialogue with creativity.

Alcantara was founded in 1972. The company's managing headquarters is in Milan while the manufacturing plant and the research centre are located in Nera Montoro, in Italy's Umbria region. Alcantara is a unique and innovative upholstery material, the result of a unique and proprietary technology that is the choice of companies which are leaders in their various fields of application.

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Alcantara has attained “Carbon Neutral” certification: in order to do so, it recorded a 49% reduction of carbon dioxide emissions in one year derived from the material's entire manufacturing process and the balance was compensated for by financing international projects related to renewable energy. Furthermore, as of 2009, the Company Sustainability Report documenting the process carried out by Alcantara in regards to this theme has been made publicly available.

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