



Tre Oci

MARIO DE BIASI

Photographs 1947 - 2003



Italians Turn Around, Milan, 1954

*“Wherever you encounter life you encounter beauty.
Suffice it to look around and you will see it:
even in a leaf, a stone, a balcony with flowers.
Even in the reflections in a puddle”.*

Mario De Biasi

This project, a broad retrospective curated by Enrica Viganò in collaboration with the Archivio Mario De Biasi, organized by Civita Tre Venezie with Admira and the Archivio Mario De Biasi in Milan, traces Mario De Biasi's complete output, from his debut as a photographer for the magazine *Epoca* to his final works.

The result of in-depth research in the Archive, the exhibition gathers over 250 photographs, most of which precious vintage prints, half of which never seen before. The exhibition is organized diachronically and is theme-based with ten sections, from the great historical events, to exotic journeys, from the portraits of powerful, famous people, to scenes from everyday life, to anonymous faces, also veering toward the conceptual and the abstract.

Among the many images never seen before, included here is the entire series of pictures of what is the most famous and perhaps the most beloved image by De Biasi: *Italians Turn Around*. The picture was taken in 1954 for the weekly 'fotoromanzo' magazine *Bolero Film*, and chosen by Germano Celant as the defining image of his exhibition "The Italian Metamorphosis 1943-1968" at the Guggenheim Museum in New York. A splendid Moira Orfei all dressed in white strolls through the center of Milan attracting the gazes of the people she passes by.



Italians Turn Around, Milan, 1954

The 1950s is one of the exhibition's core periods, with images of Italy in ruins after the war, but where you can also perceive the desire to be reborn and to rebuild. There are also the memorable views of New York, or the close-up views of the 1956 Hungarian Uprising under the bullet fire, one of them even hitting De Biasi, earning him the nickname *italiano pazzo* (Crazy Italian).



Iron Fence of the Portico of Sassari Cathedral, Sardinia, 1955



One Sunday in August, Milan, 1949



On the Austrian-Hungarian Border, 1956



Budapest, 1956

Two incredible assignments took place in 1964, and bear witness to De Biasi's stubbornness: one was in Siberia at a temperature of 65 degrees below zero, and the other amid tongues of lava as Mount Etna erupted.



Siberia, 1964



Siberia, 1964

In 1969, *Epoca* dedicated six issues to the Moon Landing and sent De Biasi with his international press pass to cover the various phases. The pass allowed him to personally witness the preparations for the journey together with all the staff, from the astronauts themselves to the technicians. He ate at the NASA cafeteria where the astronauts had their meals as well, and with the same sense of excitement he took pictures of both the people and the technological equipment.



*Astronauts Armstrong and Aldrin
at the NASA Cafeteria, Houston*



Paris, 1970

There are moments of lightness and intimacy as well, which De Biasi sought on all five continents, where he took pictures of people kissing, street barbers, lunch breaks, from London to Paris, from Rome to Vienna, from Cairo to Tehran, from Thailand to Brazil, and from Israel to Nepal. A photographic repertoire of group behavior that serves as a reminder to us all that we are part of one big family more than anything else.

Indeed, a special tribute is paid to the theme of the “lunch break” in a large-scale installation representing a map of the world on which 40 photographs (vintage and small in format) can be viewed, expressing the sense of universality in Mario De Biasi’s themes, extraordinary proof of an everyday, universal gesture. Pictures taken in every corner of the world revealing the community more than the distance between different cultures.



Installation “map of the world”

Also, on display are many of his most famous portraits, including those of Sophia Loren, Brigitte Bardot, Federico Fellini, Maria Callas, and images of his countless travels, especially to Hong Kong, South America, and India.



Fellini and Masina, Venice, 1955



Maria Callas, Venice, 1957



Brigitte Bardot, Venice, 1957



Soil Carriers, India, 1981



Mexico, 1968

The last section focuses on the photographer's love of nature, whose signs and forms he revisits, and portrays in photographs in the manner of "visual poetry": from his origins in the Belluno mountains to his adventures in exotic places, De Biasi underscores the endless love of nature he felt throughout his career. He was constantly re-examining the forms and signs that Mother Earth puts before us: his large-scale color and black-and-white prints converse with the mysteries of nature.

Accompanying the photographs are many other materials from the archive: books, original issues of *Epoca*, telegrams, including those sent by Enzo Biagi and Arnoldo Mondadori, notebooks, and two audiovisuals. These are Laura Leonelli's interview in which Mario De Biasi talks about his experience as a photographer, and a projection of images selected by his daughter Silvia De Biasi, who is also head of the Archive, that concern the photoreportages Mario De Biasi carried out for the supplements published by *Epoca* devoted to the wonders of the world.

In addition to being a great photographer, Mario De Biasi, an art and painting enthusiast, was also a skilled draftsman.

De Biasi was a compulsive artist, who made drawings everywhere and about anything. He created brilliant, hypnotic series of the color images of suns, fish, hearts, eyes, heads, and so on. A universe of strong colors and endless imagination.

The exhibition aims to cast light on every aspect of De Biasi's masterful work, which is why it is accompanied by an original installation that not only comprises blow-ups of his photographs, but reproductions of many of his colorful drawings as well.

The exhibition is accompanied by a bilingual catalog published by **Marsilio** with essays by Enrica Viganò, Denis Curti and Angelo Ponta, and biographical notes by Silvia De Biasi.





BIOGRAPHY



Mario De Biasi (Sois, Belluno, 1923 - Milan, 2013) began taking photographs in 1945 after he discovered a handbook on photography techniques amidst the rubble in Nuremburg, where he had been deported to work as a radio engineer. After returning to Italy, he had his first solo show in 1948, and in 1953 he was hired as a professional photographer on the staff of the magazine *Epoca*.

He worked for Mondadori's historic weekly magazine – considered the Italian *Life* magazine – for over thirty years, creating hundreds of covers and carrying out numerous assignments around the world, documenting not only the news or the beauty of places and landscapes, but also natural catastrophes and wars. His photographs of the 1956 Hungarian Uprising earned him the nickname of *italiano pazzo* (Crazy Italian). After retirement he continued to take pictures with a passion for everything that drew his insatiable curiosity.



His images were used to illustrate articles, special issues of magazines, and over one hundred books, which can be added to the numerous photography exhibitions both in Italy and abroad. In 1994 his famous *Italians Turn Around* was used for the poster of the exhibition “The Italian Metamorphosis, 1943-1968” at the Guggenheim Museum in New York. In 1982 he received the Saint Vincent Award for journalism, and in 2003 he was awarded the title of “Master of Italian Photography” by the FIAF (Federazione Italiana Associazioni Fotografiche). His photographs are exhibited in countless museums and have joined important institutional collections, including the recent acquisition by the Metropolitan Museum di New York. His name is listed in the Famedio of the Monumental Cemetery of Milan.



Ballet, Rimini, 1953

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Production: Marsilio Arte in collaboration with Admira and Archivio Mario De Biasi, Milan

Curator: Enrica Viganò

Dimensions of the exhibition: approx. 600-700 m²-180 linear meters

Availability exhibition: from Spring 2022

Works:

- 216 framed photographs (vintage, later, estate);
- 40 photographs with black passepartout ("map of the world" installation) for a total of 256 photographs (the print of the "map of the world" will have to be reproduced)
- books, magazines, and archive documents
- video "Fotografie dall'Italia e dal mondo" by Silvia De Biasi
- video "Intervista a Mario De Biasi" with Laura Leonelli to be requested from the Miro film studio

Installations:

- no. 13 artex canvases of various sizes with blow-ups of images and drawings
- no. 1 Dibond panel (Moirà Orfei)
- Panels and captions in Italian/English (*upon request*)
- Installation files of the "map of the world"

Total insurance value: € 770.600

Contatti: Alberta Crestani. Mail. a.crestani@marsilioarte.it