



TWENTYNINE
ARTS IN PROGRESS

MILANO
29 ARTS IN PROGRESS gallery

JUNE 7 – JULY 14, 2017
hosts the exhibition
“In viaggio”
by
GIAN PAOLO BARBIERI

The exhibition “In viaggio” gathers a selection of thirty photographs by Gian Paolo Barbieri, including vintage gelatin silver prints and polaroids, taken since the eighties during his journeys to tropical paradises such as Tahiti, Madagascar, Seychelles and Polinesia.



29 ARTS IN PROGRESS gallery of Milan (via San Vittore), pays tribute to one of the most acclaimed masters of contemporary photography, **Gian Paolo Barbieri** and, in particular, to the “*tropical*” series of his long-term career that led him, since the eighties, to exotic and distant places, in the attempt to collect unprecedented portraits of a pure humanity and nature, temporal fragments bound to vanish for ever, passing frames of an overwhelming metamorphosis and fatal ruin.

Barbieri finds himself, perhaps for the first time, utterly alone behind the camera, confronted with a subject who neither need nor conceive any alteration or setting.

What is left is the quality of attention and the candour of a gaze capable of penetrating the inner nature of a subject.

Nevertheless the photographer has lost the romantic illusion of a pure, uncontaminated nature inhabited by uncivilized tribes: time has passed and the flow of things endlessly drags forms and languages along into nothingness. Thus the void left by what is for ever lost is filled with sense of aesthetics, taste and several allusions to history of art.

The photography of Barbieri shares some common features with the visual arts of the Baroque period such as a certain hypertrophic physical appearance, urge for monumentality, ecstatic vocation, the symbiotic relationship between form and light and the feeling of the Sublime; it also shares with Gauguin some passionate flights towards the past and the unbearable sweetness of a contemplative nature.

The relationship between Barbieri and history, notably with history of art, is manifest and disenchanted.

Among contemporary photographers, Barbieri is certainly one of the few who resorted to creativity with more prowess and bravery, unconcerned, yet pleased to remove the boundaries between true and false, artificial and actual space. At this stage images lead the game as well as reality. In distant worlds, hovering above the ridge of beauty.

The aim is no longer that of discovering new worlds and taking advantage of a supposed cultural superiority. Barbieri is trying to approach them, lovingly and painfully, before they disappear, and write their names upon the water: perhaps on the same rising wave that will shortly wreck his subjects. He is trying to tell us that sometimes unattainable things are closer than what we clearly assume as close, imbued as they are with a familiarity based on contact and the breath of an accurate and sophisticated celebration of art.

Biography

Gian Paolo Barbieri was born in 1938 in via Mazzini, in the very centre of Milan, to a family of fabric wholesalers. It was in his father's fabric warehouse that he learned the skills that were to be so invaluable to him in his career as a fashion photographer. As in the case of other great creatives, such as Armani, it was the theatre that exerted such a powerful attraction on his imagination as to induce him to enrol from 1956 to 1957 in the acting school at the Filodrammatici Theatre in Milan. He was later given a minor non-speaking role in Luchino Visconti's *Medea* with Sarah Ferrati and Memo Benassi.

The American cinema of the fifties provided him with an important starting point: the plays of Tennessee Williams and actors of the calibre of James Dean and Marlon Brando, as well as actresses like Lana Turner and Ava Gardner, beautiful women illuminated by a very special kind of light that made them even more alluring.

The cinema gave him a sense of movement and the opportunity to take Italian fashion out on location, giving it a different soul.

Seizing a chance to go to Rome at the height of the *Dolce Vita*, he earned his keep by photographing up-and-coming starlets, but not for long before he then moved to Paris, where he met the *Harper's Bazaar* photographer Tom Kublin, whose assistant he became for a short but intense period.

In 1964, he opened his own studio in Milan and started working in fashion, making sample books and succeeding in getting his photography work published in *Novità*, the magazine that subsequently became *Vogue Italia* in 1966. From that time on, he started working with the publisher Condé Nast, with his work also featuring in *Vogue Paris* from 1973 onwards.

In 1968, he won the Biancamano Award for best Italian photographer, while the German weekly magazine *Stern* included him in its listing of the world's fourteen best international fashion photographers.

In the meantime, he also started working on advertising campaigns for such major brands as Elizabeth Arden, Chanel, Dolce & Gabbana, Mikimoto and many others, managing to transform what he portrayed into ideal images, with continuous references to the silver screen of the thirties and forties.

A fundamental milestone in his career came from his experience with *Vogue Italia* and the great Italian fashion designers, including Valentino, Versace, Ferré and Armani, whose creations he interpreted in the eighties, years when Italian *prêt-à-porter* and Made in Italy set out and conquered the world.

In the eighties, he travelled several times to such tropical paradises as Tahiti, Madagascar, the Seychelles and Polynesia, creating amazing books of photography to narrate places and lifestyles that are light years away, yet always employing his usual impeccable flair. Although the photos were shot outdoors and are often immediate or fleeting, they come across as so 'perfect' that they seem to be studio work, succeeding in combing the spontaneity of his subjects and the places where they live with an elegance and a style that have always been his hallmark. As a result, he succeeded in blending the spontaneity of ethnographic photography with the glamour of its fashion counterpart. These photos were chosen by David Bailey to be shown in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Kunstforum in Vienna and to be considered to be in every respect works of art.

His photographs are exhibited in several museums, among which the National Portrait Gallery of London and the Multimedia Art Museum of Moscow.

GIAN PAOLO BARBIERI. *In viaggio*

Milano, 29 ARTS IN PROGRESS Gallery – Via San Vittore 13

June 7 – July 14 2017

Opening by invitation: Tuesday 6th June, 6 PM

Timetables: from Tuesday to Saturday, 11.00-19.00.

Other days on appointment

Free entrance

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Press release and images: <http://29artsinprogress.com/project/in-viaggio-gian-paolo-barbieri-solo-show/>