

PAOLO DI PAOLO. Mondo perduto

curated by Giovanna Calvenzi

A previously unseen exploration of the contradictions and hopes of the Italy of the '50s and '60s, narrated through more than 250 images of the greats of the worlds of film, art, culture and fashion and ordinary people

17 April – 1 September 2019 | MAXXI National Museum of 21st Century Arts

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Rome, 16 April 2019. He was the best loved photographer of Mario Pannunzio's magazine *Il Mondo*, in which, over the course of 14 years, he published 573 photos, reporting on Italy and the world. He portrayed film stars, writers, artists, the nobility and ordinary people. Famously, he explored the Italian coastline with Pier Paolo Pasolini, documenting Italian vacations.

Paolo Di Paolo (from Larino, Molise, class of 1925) was an extraordinary chronicler of the Italy of the '50s and '60s who recorded with delicacy, rigour and skill the country that was being reformed from the ashes of the Second World War.

MAXXI, the National Museum of 21st Century Arts, is dedicating a major exhibition to him and his extraordinary life. **PAOLO DI PAOLO. Mondo perduto** is curated by **Giovanna Calvenzi** and sponsored by **Gucci**. The exhibition is part of the museum's growing photography programme, fostered by **Giovanna Melandri**, President of the MAXXI Foundation (17th April - 30th June 2019).

The exhibition features more than 250 images, many of which are previously unseen, part of an immense archive (250,000 negatives, contact sheets, prints and slides) found by chance by his daughter **Silvia** in a cellar around 20 years ago.

Shortly after the closure of *Il Mondo* in 1966, Paolo Di Paolo, feeling that he was "no longer in tune with the times, with the society that was coming into being", abandoned his camera and at little more than 40 years old returned to his philosophical studies and the publishing world, launching a collaboration with the Carabinieri, for which he curated around 20 books and 43 calendars. Di Paolo turned over a new leaf and his wonderful, inestimable archive ended up forgotten in a cellar.

His daughter's discovery and the interest of **Alessandro Michele**, Creative Director at Gucci, and that of the President of MAXXI **Giovanna Melandri** and that of **Bartolomeo Pietromarchi**, director of MAXXI Arte, have led to the publication of the book *Paolo Di Paolo. Mondo Perduto, Fotografie 1954-1968*, which was presented at MAXXI in December last year, and this exhibition.

The exhibition

The exhibition has been organised in sections that intersect and establish dialogues with one another, rotating around a reconstruction of the newsroom at *Il Mondo*, with desks, lamps and images of Mario Pannunzio at work with his copyeditors.

The section **Society/Rome** presents the country emerging from poverty and illiteracy in the immediate post-war years with hopes and contradictions; a country in which young women wearing veils and carrying baskets on their heads at Campobasso lived alongside girls in shorts on the seafront at Viareggio, where the agricultural community coexisted with the Ferrari workshops, and donkeys were used as beasts of burden while passengers flew on the new airlines. Particular attention is paid to Rome: Di Paolo photographed the city's nobility and the sparkling international high society frequenting the capital, working with, among others, Irene Brin at *Harper's Bazaar*, but also the funeral of Palmiro Togliatti, with a weeping old lady in the foreground. **Society/World** features shots from his reportages from Japan, Iran and New York.

Particularly rich sections are devoted to **Artists/Intellectuals** and **Film**, with portraits of painters, poets, writers and film stars, mostly previously unseen and taken for pleasure. Lucio Fontana at the Biennale, Carla Accardi in Rome, Renato Guttuso on the Salita del Grillo, Mimmo Rotella creating one of his *décollages* in Piazza del Popolo, Ezra Pound, Tennessee Williams on the beach with his dog, Giuseppe Ungaretti with a cat in his arms, an unusual portrait of Oriana Fallaci “playing” at being a diva at the Venice Lido, Kim Novak ironing in her room in the Grand Hotel, Sofia Loren joking with Marcello Mastroianni in a studio at Cinecittà, Monica Vitti and Michelangelo Antonioni walking while reading a newspaper, and Simone Signoret and Yves Montand kissing at the Aventino. Then there are the “impossible” encounters captured for the weekly news magazine *Tempo*: Giorgio De Chirico together with Gina Lollobrigida, Salvatore Quasimodo with Anita Ekberg, Luchino Visconti with Mina, Nilde Iotti with Renato Rascel, and Alberto Moravia with Claudia Cardinale. With each of his portrait subjects, Di Paolo created a relationship based on empathy, trust and complicity that made every shot unique and unmistakable: “Many of his photos” - writes his daughter **Silvia Di Paolo** - “remained unpublished because they were so intimate that it would have been inappropriate to give them to the newspapers.” Like those of Yves Montand in Rome, Oriana Fallaci in Venice and Anna Magnani on the beach.

A special group of pictures in the **Film** section is dedicated to **Anna Magnani**. Anticipating that the paparazzi would be following her and knowing the courtesy and style of Di Paolo, the star invited him to her villa at the Circeo and, for the first time, allowed herself to be photographed with her son. Another group is devoted to **Pier Paolo Pasolini**, portrayed at Monte dei Cocchi in Rome, thoughtful at the tomb of Gramsci in the Non-Catholic Cemetery, at home with his mother and, in Basilicata, on the set of *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, where Di Paolo was the only photographer allowed in. This group leads to another, **La Lunga Strada di Sabbia**, a portfolio of 1959 documenting Italian vacations. Here, the magazine *Successo*, edited by Arturo Tofanelli, had the idea for an innovative pairing of Paolo Di Paolo and Pier Paolo Pasolini for the project. One of the most iconic images portrays Pasolini himself walking on the Cinquale beach at Viareggio while observing the young bathers.

In Paolo Di Paolo’s images, says **Bartolomeo Pietromarchi**, Director of MAXXI Arte, well-known and anonymous faces re-emerge from the past in previously unseen poses, presenting us with a surprising proximity and intimacy, with Di Paolo’s lens masterfully capturing moods, characters, vanity and truth.

“In the years of the spread of *humanist* photography along French lines, together with the images and scoops of the Rome paparazzi,” says the exhibition curator **Giovanna Calvenzi**, “Di Paolo found an independent, different, cultured path. He has the capacity of entering the world of art, literature and film with a light, and at times humorous, touch. He possesses a natural gift for seeing an overview of the situations he frames and an ability to place people in relation to space, in a kind of *circularity* of vision that obliges the observer to read his photographs starting with the subject and going on to discover all those elements that render that subject central and a protagonist in a wider narrative”.

The press kit and images of the exhibition can be downloaded from the Reserved Area of the Fondazione MAXXI’s website at <http://www.maxxi.art/en/area-stampa/> by typing in the password **areariservatamaxxi**

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