

VIAGGIO
RACCONTO
MEMORIA

FERDINANDO SCIANNA

Musei 22
San Settembre
Domenico 2018
Forlì 6
Gennaio
2019

"I'm no longer sure, although once I was, that we can improve the world with a photograph. However, I'm still convinced that bad photographs make it worse"

Ferdinando Scianna

On 22nd September 2018, in the exhibition rooms of Complesso di San Domenico in Forlì, a great anthological exhibition dedicated to Ferdinando Scianna will be opened. The exhibition is curated by Denis Curti, Paola Bergna and Alberto Bianda, art director of the exhibition, and it is organized by Civita Mostre. With about 200 black and white photographs printed in different formats, the exhibition spans the entire career of the Sicilian photographer and develops along an articulated narrative path, built on different chapters and following different exhibition design arrangements.

"The Cassa dei Risparmi Foundation of Forlì is delighted and proud that an artist of such international standing as Ferdinando Scianna has chosen the San Domenico Museums to debut his most complex and comprehensive exhibition. This important retrospective exhibition features a top quality visit itinerary specially designed for our premises. It confirms that our Foundation was right when four years ago we decided to combine large-scale figurative art exhibitions with a cycle of comprehensive and authoritative photographic exhibitions. Above all, however, we were right in our aim to promote events that not only have a tourist-cultural appeal, but also – as Scianna writes of his own art – "the possibility of telling human stories". Indeed, all the great photographic exhibitions promoted by our Foundation were in fact a source of inspiration and the subject of debate during the Week of Good Living, which every year, at the end of September deals with topics related to Equitable and Sustainable Wellbeing. We may not be able "to improve the world with a photograph" – quoting Scianna again –, but photography can undoubtedly provide us with food for thought for an open and participatory reflection on the world around us, stated Roberto Pinza, President of the Cassa dei Risparmi Foundation of Forlì.

After its debut in Forlì (at the Complesso di San Domenico), promoted by the Cassa dei Risparmi Foundation of Forlì and Civitas srl concurrently with the Week of Good Living, the exhibition will be presented in several other cities, in Italy and abroad, starting from Palermo (Galleria d'Arte Moderna) and Venice (Casa dei tre Oci) in 2019.

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Ferdinando Scianna is one of the greatest masters of photography, not only in Italy. His interest in photography started back in the Sixties, when he began describing the culture and traditions of his native Sicily with his photos. His long artistic journey comprises several themes – current events, war, travel, popular religiosity – linked together by one common thread: a constant search for form in life's chaos. Over 50 years of stories have provided us with plenty of fascinating pictures: from Bagheria to the Bolivian Andes, from religious festivals – the debut of his career – to his work with fashion, which began with Dolce & Gabbana and Marpessa. All this was followed by his work as a photojournalist (he was a member of Magnum photographic agency), photos of landscapes, and of some of his thematic obsessions such as mirrors, animals, objects, and finally by the portraits of his great friends, masters of the art and culture world, like Leonardo Sciascia, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Jorge Louis Borges, just to name a few.

“For a seventy-five year old photographer, a great anthological exhibition like the one held in Forlì is a complex, fascinating and perhaps even arbitrary journey through the fifty years of his work and into his memory. Here we have already two key words of this exhibition and its accompanying book: Memory and Journey. The third key word, is Story. Over 180 photographs divided into three large chapters, each divided into nineteen different themes: this is what this exhibition aims to be, a Story, a Journey into Memory. The story of a photographer in over half a century of photography”, explained Ferdinando Scianna

In this exhibition, Ferdinando Scianna has decided to put on display the most extensive anthology of his photographic work. With his usual and marked self-mockery, he has chosen to quote Giorgio Manganelli at the beginning of the exhibition:

“An anthology is an authorised carnage, a bloodbath seen with favourable eyes by civil and religious authorities. A clean operation aimed to chew up books that go around the world under their author’s name to obtain some sort of stew, timbale, goulash ...

Ferdinando Scianna wrote of his work: ***I see myself as a photo reporter. As such, Henri Cartier-Bresson is my special reference point, my master par excellence. In his view, a photographer must aspire to be an invisible witness, never stepping in to change the world and the moments of real life he reads and interprets. I have always clearly distinguished between images you happen to run into and those that are constructed. I have always felt I belong to those photographers who happen to run into images, those who tell you a story and tell a story about you, like in a mirror. Even when taking fashion photographs, I always happened to run into them through haphazard encounters with the world.***

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Exhibition sections:

MEMORY, Bagheria – Sicily – Religious festivals and holidays

STORY, Lourdes – Children – Kami – Suffering

OBSESSIONS, Sleep – Things – Shadows – Beasts – Mirrors

JOURNEY, America – Wanderings – Places

PORTRAYS

RITUALS AND MYTHS, Ceremonies – Women – Marpessa

In an audio guide (in Italian and English) available to all visitors, Scianna speaks in first person about photography and many other topics. It's a true parallel story, allowing us to get a closer look at his career as a photographer and at his personal life.

A documentary film dedicated to the professional life of Ferdinando Scianna is also part of the exhibition.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue published by Marsilio Editori.

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Ferdinando Scianna was born in Bagheria, Sicily, in 1943.

He began to take photographs of his native city when he was still very young, in the early sixties, telling about the culture and traditions of his homeland with his pictures.

Very early on, he decided to become a photographer, thus disrupting his parents' projects who wanted him to be a lawyer or a doctor. The very first photos of the people of Bagheria, portrayed by Scianna with a curious and participatory tone, are loaded with intensity.

In 1961, he enrolled in Literature and Philosophy at the University of Palermo, while his passion for photography became more and more structured. He was a student of the great critic Cesare Brandi and showed his photos to Enzo Sellerio who helped him learn about Bresson's cultural universe. During these years, his political conscience was being shaped, which, together with his bond with his homeland and Sicilian tradition, was key in the evolution of his photography.

About two years later, he met the writer Leonardo Sciascia, a meeting that would prove fundamental for his professional and personal life. Scianna was only 21 years old when, together with Sciascia, published the essay *Feste Religiose in Sicilia*, a book awarded with the prestigious Nadar Award. The book, highlighting the materialistic essence of religious festivals, and Sciascia's texts in particular, created much controversy. However, the photos by a still young Scianna exerted a significant impact too.

"Photography was the possibility of telling a human story. My teacher made me understand this, by introducing me to a certain way of seeing things, of reading, of thinking, of placing oneself in the world"

On the strength of the book's success, Scianna moved to Milan where he worked as a photojournalist for the *Europeo*, then as a special and news correspondent from Paris, where he lived for 10 years. While in Paris he also began to write with great success. He would write for several newspapers, including *Le Monde Diplomatique* and the *Quinzaine Littéraire*. "I happened to be writing more than photographing, but I knew I was writing as a photographer," states Scianna. In the French capital, his work got special appreciation from Henri Cartier-Bresson, who in 1982 invited him to apply to join the Magnum Photos agency, which he had founded in 1947. Scianna went back to Milan and resigned from his job with the *Europeo* to fully devote himself to photography: "The agency is the tool of a group of independent photographers. The more you can use this tool, the better this organization capitalizes on your work. Magnum keeps surviving by following the egalitarian utopian tenets of its founders. Quite mysteriously, it manages to keep the most violent contradictions together".

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In Milan, he worked for various newspapers. He also started to photograph for two young emerging designers, Dolce & Gabbana. This was a casual meeting, which would lead to one of the most successful partnerships in fashion photography. Scianna was asked to create a catalogue by putting the beautiful model Marpessa in the context of his Sicily. Scianna managed to masterfully mix the visual registers of the fashion world with his photojournalist experience, thus creating an original result that breaks away from the glossy monotony of fashion photography. This success would lead him to work for prestigious international fashion magazines and create other fashion photo-services where he would skilfully combine fiction with authenticity.

This sudden and unexpected turn opened up Scianna's photographic world to new experiences, in parallel to his more traditional photojournalism experience, namely advertising and commercial photographs. At the same time, he never neglected social reportage, portraits, and journalism:

“Now, with unchanged passion, fun and irony, I work in the most diverse fields. I do a bit of fashion, some advertising, reportage, and more than ever I try to make portraits. Also, I retrieve material from my photographic archives for numerous projects. In my exhibitions, I make no distinction between photos coming from my work as a photojournalist and fashion photos, for example. I arrange all of them seamlessly, which, at the end of the day, is what I do everyday in my work”.

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INFORMATION SHEET

Title

FERDINANDO SCIANNA
Journey Story Memory

Date

22nd September 2018 through 6th January 2019

Venue

Forlì, Musei San Domenico
Piazza Guido da Montefeltro

Curated by

Paola Bergna
Denis Curti
Alberto Bianda, Art Director

Opening hours

Tuesday to Friday: from 9.30 am to 6.30 pm
Saturday, Sunday and holidays: from 10.00 am to 7.00 pm
24th and 31st December: from 9.30 am to 1.30 pm
1st January 2019: 2.30 pm - 7.00 pm
Closed every Monday and on 25th December
Ticket office closes one hour before exhibition closing time

Tickets

An audioguide (available in Italian and English) is included in the price of admission.

Open € 13.00

Standard € 12.00

Discounted € 10.00 for groups of minimum 15 people, university students, holders of concession cards.

Special Discounted ticket € 5.00 for schools and visitors up to 18 years of age

Joint Ticket € 15.00 for admission to the exhibition and to the other local museums (Pinacoteca civica and Palazzo Romagnoli)

Free for children under 6, one group leader, two accompanying teachers per school class, disabled individuals with one accompanying person, journalists and tour guides showing their ID card, holders of ICOM card.

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Guided tours

(must be booked for groups of max 25 people)

Schools €55.00 (1 hour estimated visit time)

Groups €90.00 (1 hour estimated visit time)

In a foreign language €110.00 (English and French)

Booking fees

€1.50 for standard, discounted tickets, and groups

€1.00 for special discounted tickets and schools

Admission

Individual visitors: booking recommended

Groups and schools: mandatory booking, min. 15 – max. 25 people

Information

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