

FONDAZIONE PRADA OSSERVATORIO: GIVE ME YESTERDAY

Fondazione Prada unveils Osservatorio, a new exhibition space dedicated to **photography** and **visual languages**, located in **Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan**, on 21 December, 2016.

Osservatorio is a place where trends and expressions in contemporary photography are explored, investigating the constant evolution of this medium and its connections with other disciplines and creative realms. At a time when photography has become part of the global flow of digital communications, through Osservatorio's activities Fondazione Prada will question the cultural and social implications of current photographic production and its reception. Fondazione is thus extending the range of tools and approaches through which it interprets and interacts with present times.

Extending across the fifth and sixth floors of one of the Galleria's main buildings, Osservatorio is located above the central octagon, at the level of the glass and iron dome that covers the arcades, realized by Giuseppe Mengoni between 1865 and 1867. The spaces, rebuilt after the Second World War after downtown Milan was bombed in 1943, have now been fully restored, providing an **800-square-meter exhibition space** that develops across two levels.

The Osservatorio's inaugural exhibition "**Give Me Yesterday**," curated by **Francesco Zanot**, runs from 21 December 2016 to 14 May 2017. The show includes more than 50 works by **14 Italian and international artists** (Melanie Bonajo, Kenta Kobayashi, Tomé Duarte, Irene Fenara, Lebohang Kganye, Vendula Knopová, Leigh Ledare, Wen Ling, Ryan McGinley, Izumi Miyazaki, Joanna Piotrowska, Greg Reynolds, Antonio Rovaldi, Maurice van Es), and explores the **use of photography as a personal diary** over a period of time ranging from the early 2000s through today.

In a context characterized by the pervasive presence of photography devices and an uninterrupted circulation of images produced and shared through digital platforms, a generation of young artists has transformed the photographic diary into a **instrument to focus on their own daily lives and intimate, personal rituals**. Familiar with work by artists such as Nan Goldin and Larry Clark in the United States, or Richard Billingham and Wolfgang Tillmans in Europe, the photographers presented in "Give Me Yesterday" turn the immediacy and spontaneity of documentary style into an extreme control over the gaze of those who observe and are observed. This creates a new diary in which instant photography is mixed with exhibition photography, imitating the repetitive cataloguing of the internet and employing the performative component of images to affirm individual or collective identities.

In the early 2000s, **Ryan McGinley (United States, 1977)** started this shift from an instant photography approach to a more accurate one that nullifies the credibility of a natural,

spontaneous diary. After having portrayed his friends in private, at times racy situations within their homes or in New York nightclubs, in his next series McGinley focused on a calculated representation that celebrates the naked body within the beauty of nature. This gave birth to a new kind of story that can assume grotesque connotations. This is the case with **Melanie Bonajo (the Netherlands, 1978)**, who photographed herself every time she cried, producing a paradoxical inventory of selfies; as well as with **Tomé Duarte (Portugal, 1979)**, who creates self-portraits while wearing his ex-girlfriend's clothes in an attempt to reconnect with her and his identity; or with **Izumi Miyazaki (Japan, 1994)** who shoots self-portraits in ironic and surreal situations. **Leigh Ledare (United States, 1976)** makes his own mother the protagonist of his shots, capturing her in intimate situations or posed portraits that express the complexity of familial relationships, simultaneously acquiring both an artistic and therapeutic value. The work of **Lebohang Kganye (South Africa, 1990)** also focuses on the maternal figure, but in a completely different perspective: the artist inserts her own image into old instant shots of her mother, who has passed away, emphasizing the archival nature of photography. **Maurice van Es (the Netherlands, 1984)** photographs objects and items of clothing tied up by his mother in their home, turning them into elegant, accidental sculptures. **Kenta Kobayashi (Japan, 1992)** explores the numerous transformative opportunities that digital imagery offers, manipulating them in such a way as to affirm their fragility and instability. **Vendula Knopová (Czech Republic, 1987)** reflects on the permeability between public and private spheres, using a codified imagery such as that of a family photo album. Through the creation of one of the first Chinese photography blogs, **Wen Ling (China, 1976)** daily documents the relationships, places and customs of a close circle of friends and family members. **Joanna Piotrowska (Poland, 1985)** applies the philosophy of German psychologist Bert Hellinger in order to investigate the theme of family trauma in a series of carefully conceived collective portraits, while **Irene Fenara (Italy, 1990)**, through an effort similarly based on scientific premises, points out the distance between the lens and the subject she photographs, comparing physical proximity and emotional closeness. **Greg Reynolds (United States, 1958)** presents – more than three decades later – photographs taken during summer camps promoted by an Evangelical Christian organization, which the artist abandoned in 1983 after coming out as a gay man. Only now does the artist realize that this photographic documentation allowed him to express a truth that was impossible for him to reveal publicly at the time. Between 2011 and 2015 **Antonio Rovaldi (Italy, 1975)** shot dozens of images of horizons which, when viewed together, express a personal vision of landscape and trace the outlines of an ideal journey to Italy.

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