

Italy and the Italians. Through the lenses of the Magnum photographers

LONDON, The Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre
25 July – 12 August 2012

An artistic photography project promoted by Intesa Sanpaolo within the framework of the Progetto Cultura.

A contribution to reflection on Italy today.

London, 26 July 2012. For several centuries the Italian lap of the long journey through continental Europe known as the Grand Tour was a crucial stage in the moulding of the European cultured classes. The “Journey to Italy”, through the monuments of ancient Rome, the ruins of Pompeii and Herculaneum, through Turin, Venice, Florence, Bologna, Naples and Sicily, visiting the birthplace of some of the most staggering art and culture of the Continent, was considered an indispensable experience for the education of young Europeans.

In what is almost a revival of this erstwhile and captivating cultural tradition, **nine leading photographers from the Magnum Photos** cooperative have undertaken a reportage journey through Italy resulting in an intriguing snapshot of contemporary Italian reality.

The London edition of the photo mission, carried out over a period of six months, was entrusted to **Christopher Anderson, Harry Gruyaert, Mark Power, Mikhael Subotzky, Donovan Wylie, Richard Kalvar and Alex Majoli.**

The result of this lengthy labour are around **400 entirely original pictures**, displayed in the show ***Italy and the Italians. Through the lenses of the Magnum photographers.***

Curated by Gianfranco Brunelli and Dario Cimorelli, the exhibition is hosted in the prestigious venue of the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre from 25 July to 12 August, organised by **Intesa Sanpaolo** with the **patronage** of **Coni.**

The show was developed for the 150th anniversary of Italian unification within the framework of the **Progetto Cultura**, Intesa Sanpaolo’s ambitious multiyear programme that embraces a range of initiatives conceived and curated by the Bank to enhance the cultural and artistic assets that represent the peerless wealth of Italy. The photos were previously displayed at the Palazzo Reale in Turin and at Palazzo Zevallos Stigliano in Naples, where they were warmly received.

The Project is hallmarked by an approach to culture triggered by a full awareness that the role of a leading national bank is to contribute not only to economic growth but also, and inseparably, to the cultural and civil development of the country.

The exhibition *Italy and the Italians* does not propose a nostalgic reconstruction of landscapes, glimpses and views by now inexorably lost, but **instead aims to bring to life Italy and the**

Italians in 2012, offering a cue for reflection on the here and now. It also aims to tell the story of a country that has always revealed itself to be a heterogeneous set of numerous, different elements, in which history and the contemporary entwine, coexist and clash, where tradition comes up against innovation, urban structures against the new social demands, and landscape against industry in a constant succession of consistency and contradiction, harmony and discord.

The journey etches in the memory an image of the natural and the artificial landscape, of places and people. It's a tale that unfurls through what we might call the repositories of memory (hamlets, cities, squares, libraries) and the new gathering places; the relations and the habits of the Italians; the present and the future; social marginalisation and solidarity; research and minds.

The exhibition opens with **Christopher Anderson**, who trains his lens on the **Sea**, the element that embraces the peninsula and has spawned the history and civilisation of Italy. **Donovan Wylie** reflects on the **New Walls** that demarcate urban perimeters, modern boundaries in the shape of ring roads and flyovers, industrial districts and landfills, symbols of what is now a completely man-made residential reality. **Together** is the title of the section by **Richard Kalvar**, who offers a glimpse of what unites Italy, in terms of shared spaces and gestures that most people identify with: the bevy of grandparents at the beach on the mid-August bank holiday, coffee at the bar or a convivial pizza. **Mikael Subotzky** focuses on the **New Squares**, namely the gathering places, from shopping centres to discos, that seem to have replaced the old centre of public life – the *piazza*. In his reportage devoted to **Historical Places** **Mark Power** takes a journey through the treasures of a country that holds the world record for the number of UNESCO World Heritage sites. **The Artificial**, **Harry Gruyaert's** contribution, addresses the complex balance sought by modern society, poised between progress and nature. Finally **Alex Majoli** celebrates **Ingenuity**, the know-how to be found in the factories and the fields, in the labs and the workshops, bringing together the expertise and creativity that are the core of Made in Italy.

The exhibition will continue in Italy from September 21, 2012 to January 20, 2013 at Palazzo Leoni Montanari, a museum of Intesa Sanpaolo based in Vicenza and part of the network Gallerie d'Italia, and will be joined by the shots of **Bruce Gilden "We, the others"** as well as a video installation by **Paolo Pellegrin** featuring 150 portraits and voices of Italian boys and girls.

The catalogue of the photos, edited by Gianfranco Brunelli and Dario Cimorelli with essays by Marco A. Bazzocchi, Pippo Ciorra and Flaminio Gualdoni, is published by Silvana Editoriale.

FACTSHEET

Exhibition: Italy and the Italians. Through the lenses of the Magnum photographers

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