

UGO MULAS

L'OPERAZIONE FOTOGRAFICA

Palazzo Reale, Milano - 10 ottobre 2024 > 2 febbraio 2025

Ugo Mulas. L'operazione fotografica
from 10 October 2024 to 2 February 2025 at Palazzo Reale in Milan

An extraordinary homage to the great photographer

Working on the relationship between the structure of the city and things and people, I thought of a work that I had in my mind to do for some time: it's a work on the city where I live, on Milan [...]. My idea is not for a book, but for an archive, a photographic archive of the city of Milan.
Ugo Mulas, Un Archivio per Milano

Ugo Mulas. L'operazione fotografica, one of the most extensive and detailed retrospectives to be devoted to one of Milan's most important authors, who was born in 1928 and passed away in 1973, is being presented at Palazzo Reale from 10 October 2024 to 2 February 2025. Promoted by the Municipality of Milan-Culture and produced by Palazzo Reale and Marsilio Arte in collaboration with the Ugo Mulas Archive, with the support of the Deloitte Foundation and Deloitte Italia, the exhibition offers an overall reinterpretation of the works of the great photographer, to whom the city is paying an extraordinary homage.

Over 250 images, many of which never displayed before, precious vintage photos, documents, books and films looking back over Ugo Mulas' entire production: from theatre to fashion, from the portraits of international artists, the protagonists of U.S. Pop Art, to intellectuals, architects and personalities from the world of culture and entertainment – such as **Dino Buzzati, Giorgio De Chirico, Marcel Duchamp, Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Arthur Miller, Eugenio Montale, Louise Nevelson, Gio Ponti, Salvatore Quasimodo, Giorgio Strehler, Andy Warhol** and many others – from cities to nudes, to jewellery. Along the exhibition route, which is structured into themed chapters, there emerges the profile of a “total” photographer, who tackled so many different subjects during his short, intense artistic experience, with the awareness that photography is not merely documentation, but a testimony and a critical interpretation of reality.

The exhibition, curated by Denis Curti, Director of Le Stanze della Fotografia in Venice, and Alberto Salvadori, Director of the Ugo Mulas Archive, proposes an unprecedented format that finds its main narrative core in the city of Milan, captured in its multiple facets. Ugo Mulas' relationship with Milan is a profound one, as is evidenced by his first photos from 1953 of the district of Brera and the famous Bar

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Jamaica, a meeting place for extraordinary personalities such as Piero Manzoni or Luciano Bianciardi, or the photos of the suburbs, the Central Station, dormitories and everyday moments. Today his visual documentation offers a precious contribution to our understanding of the cultural and artistic history of that period telling the story of the economic and social fervour in Milan in the second half of the 20th century, still remaining an essential part of his artistic legacy. In this sort of osmosis with the city, Ugo Mulas' production demonstrates the attempt to translate his conceptual vision and his capacity to read the world through the camera into images. In this regard, Milan offers itself as an excellent theatre to invite a profound acknowledgement of the creative act, which, to use the author's words, never corresponds to a simple recording, but rather to an «authentic cognitive operation» (Ugo Mulas. *La fotografia*, 1973). No photo is intended to capture simply an exceptional instant or a rare event, but rather forms an element of an extensive literary composition, an aware narration, a genuine “photographic operation”.

From this perspective, the exhibition presents many previously unpublished images of Milan through portraits of intellectuals, architectures, theatres, empty spaces, all forming a single scheme, within which, as the author himself declared, he found himself increasingly thinking and working. For the first time, **an entire section focusing on some of the most important protagonists of the design and architecture of the Milanese context** is presented, namely Gae Aulenti, Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni, Vittorio Gregotti and Gio Ponti, alongside various images of the artist **Fausto Melotti**, a sculptor and a dear friend of Ugo Mulas.

The close relationship between Ugo Mulas and the Milanese environment, which forms the thread running through the exhibition at Palazzo Reale, is translated and extended with the wide-ranging initiative **Ugo Mulas in the City**, which came about from the collaboration between Marsilio Arte and the city of Milan with the aim of telling of and celebrating Mulas' work by displaying his works in the locations, museums and institutions that most influenced his life as an artist.

The Pinacoteca di Brera, the Museo del Novecento, the Poldi Pezzoli Museum and the Marconi Foundation will host a selection of photographs by Ugo Mulas, offering an intellectual itinerary that passes through and connects up the locations that were fundamental to the photographer's artistic research, interweaving his life and his works, and inviting visitors to continue the itinerary outside the exhibition. Thanks to the network and the synergy of these contexts, some of which very much associated with the history of Ugo Mulas — we need only think of the portrait of Joan Mirò taken alongside the famous Portrait of a Girl by Pollaiuolo, in a room in the Poldi Pezzoli in 1963; or the portraits of artists whose works are on display at the Museo del Novecento; or the photographs of Brera and its district — it will be possible to enter a major polyphonic story that indissolubly interweaves Mulas' biographical and artistic path with the historical and cultural context of Milan.

The subtitle of the exhibition, “L'operazione fotografica”, draws its inspiration from one of the most important works realized by Mulas, *Le Verifiche* (1968-1972), fourteen images that were created from the author's

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rigorous conceptual reflection on the history of photography and its constituent elements. **For the first time, in the setting of Palazzo Reale, the studies that preceded the series will also be exhibited together with *Le Verifiche***, forming a genuine testament that still today provides us with the keys for interpretation to enter the aesthetic and conceptual universe of Ugo Mulas. A kind of mapping of photography with a homage to Niépce as its point of departure, one of *Le Verifiche* to which the exhibition will devote particular attention.

The exhibition is accompanied by the catalogue published by **Marsilio Arte** with essays by curators **Denis Curti and Alberto Salvadori**.

Ugo Mulas. L'operazione fotografica is a project to present the work of the great photographer to the public, the first stage of which took place in Venice, at Le Stanze della Fotografia, in 2023. The programme continues in the autumn of 2024 to Milan, where the exhibition is presented with an itinerary and an approach that are entirely unprecedented and specially designed for the city, thanks to the intense research work into the author's production that has enabled photos never exhibited before to be unearthed.

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TECHNICAL DATA SHEET

Internet sites

www.palazzorealemilano.it

www.marsilioarte.it

Socials

@palazzorealemilano @marsilioarte

Hashtag

#mulasmilano

Information and bookings

www.palazzorealemilano.it

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Milan, Palazzo Reale

10 October 2024 – 2 February 2025

curated by Denis Curti and Alberto Salvadori

Exhibition opening hours

From Tuesday to Sunday 10am-7:30pm, Thursdays closes at 10:30pm.

Last entry an hour before closing.

Closed Mondays.

CHARGES

Open: € 17.00

Full price: € 15.00

Discounted: € 13.00

BOOKINGS

Booking is not obligatory for access to the exhibitions, but is strongly recommended to avoid waiting. On the busiest days, such as Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, entry cannot be guaranteed for visitors who have not booked. The on-site booking offices are active during opening hours.

Booking is always obligatory for Groups.

Additional charges may be made for headphones. Pre-sale costs are not included.