

FOTOGRAFIA EUROPEA 2024 'NATURE LOVES TO HIDE'

**Reggio Emilia
26 April – 9 June 2024**

**Press preview 26 April
Inaugural events 26–28 April 2024**

**Dedicated to the interconnections between humans and nature,
to the transformations human beings can undertake
beyond an approach of dominant control,
the 19th edition of the Reggio Emilia Festival
returns to make us reflect on an extremely pressing issue**

**Palazzo Magnani, Chiostri di San Pietro, Palazzo da Mosto, Villa Zironi,
Palazzo dei Musei, Biblioteca Panizzi, Spazio Gerra and the spaces of the
Circuito OFF host exhibitions by both established photographers and young
beginners**

Reggio Emilia, 28 February 2024. From 26 April to 9 June 2024, Reggio Emilia will once again observe the changes to the contemporary sphere through the eyes of great photographers and young beginners with the 19th edition of **FOTOGRAFIA EUROPEA**: the festival promoted and organised by **Fondazione Palazzo Magnani** and the **Municipality of Reggio Emilia**, with support from the **Emilia-Romagna Regional Council**.

Nature loves to hide is the theme chosen by the Festival's artistic board, once again this year made up of **Tim Clark** (editor of 1000 Words), **Walter Guadagnini** (photography historian and Director of CAMERA – Centro Italiano per la Fotografia) and **Luce Lebart** (researcher and curator, Archive of Modern Conflict).

Drawing on the paradox expressed in a famous fragment by Heraclitus, the title seeks to encompass the power of a nature that so often conceals its essence right before our eyes, while

increasingly revealing it in destructive ways, in a continuous process that may be understood as an oscillation between being and becoming. Through this edition's many prestigious solo and group exhibitions, Fotografia Europea 2024 sets out to explore the connections between concealment and discovery that dominate our relationship with nature, imagining new narratives, beyond an eco-centric conception and an attitude of dominant control that our species exercises over the planet, so as to understand the current dynamics and the new directions to be taken.

EXHIBITIONS

This year's landmark exhibition returns to the halls of **PALAZZO MAGNANI** with the first retrospective ever presented in Italy of **Susan Meiselas**: the American photographer best known for her work in the conflict zones of Central America (1978–1983) and in particular for her powerful shots of the Nicaraguan revolution. The exhibition, entitled **Mediations**, brings together a selection of works from the 1970s to the present day and, through the various forms that Meiselas adopted to expand her work – apart from traditional photo reportage, also installations, books and films – reveals her unique approach as a photographer, constantly questioning the status of her own images in relation to the context in which they are perceived, showing her moving through various scales of time and conflict, ranging from the personal to the geopolitical. In her works, the photographer engages subjects in a relentless exploration and development of narratives, often working over long periods and on a wide range of countries and subjects: from war to human rights issues, from cultural identity to the sex industry.

The rooms of the 16th-century **CHIOSTRI DI SAN PIETRO** will host no fewer than **ten exhibitions**. On the ground floor, opening visitors' eyes, is an exhibition capturing the infinite mutability of clouds, in a group show entitled ***Sky Album. 150 years of capturing clouds***, curated by Luce Lebart and Michelle Wilson, celebrating the vastness and beauty of cloud imagery and the uniqueness of this passionate practice of photographing the sky undertaken by scientists, amateurs and artists alike. More than 150 works recount this passion, dating back to the very dawn of photography, from French photographer **Gustave Le Gray** to Italian **Mario Giacomelli**, including works by American **Edward Steichen** plus two contemporary artists are invited to create an installation, Finnish **Anna Niskanen** and British **Kalev Erickson**. The exhibition is a co-production by Fotografia Europea and the Archive of Modern Conflict.

Next, **Helen Sear's** exhibition project, entitled ***Within Sight***, presents a series of multiple and composite works that explore the dissolution of the single lens perspective associated with the camera lens. Sear is a keen observer of the changing elements that make up a landscape, and restores the experience of being present in nature by combining hand-drawn or erased elements with photography, in conceptual work rooted in an interest in both magical realism and surrealism.

With *Sea of Cortez*, **Yvonne Venegas** traces an intergenerational story poised between the experience of her own family – who inhabited the copper mines of Santa Rosalia, in Baja California, in the early 20th century – and that of an entire generation that exploited the territories around the Sea of Cortez. Her exploration draws on the help of the people she encountered on her path of investigation, expressing the sense of exploitation and the remnants that those mining tales left in their wake.

Indian photographer **Arko Datto** brings the looming issue of climate catastrophe and the refugees it generates to the attention of visitors through a photographic trilogy that has been running for nine years. The two chapters presented here, from the project *The Shunyo Raja Monographies* are entirely dedicated to the Bengal Delta area, considered one of the epicentres of change: they include portraits and landscapes mapping erosion and sea-level rise across India and Bangladesh, tracing the trajectory of displaced people and landscapes lost to a nature that demands ever more attention.

In the Cloisters, Venetian photographer **Matteo de Mayda** presents an installation made up of archive and reportage photos, satellite and microscope images, individual testimonies and scientific theories that form part of the project *There's no calm after the storm*, in which he investigates the long-term and less visible impacts of storm Vaia, which hit north-eastern Italy at the end of 2018. Created in the wake of the emergency, the project reflects on the fragile balance between human action and the resilience of ecosystems.

Jo Ractliffe's exhibition is entitled *Landscaping* and is entirely dedicated to the South African landscape, captured during long journeys along the south-west coast. In her black-and-white shots, Ractliffe reflects on the very concept of landscape, disowning the term in an attempt to remove her photographs from stereotypical conventions: to speak of landscape in terms of beauty, or conversely of ugliness, is to observe rather than participate, to reduce places to a concept rather than a lived experience. By the term 'landscaping', the artist tries to convey the idea of landscape as something active, also capable of preserving memories from the past.

In the large central corridor, **Natalya Saprunova** exhibits her project *Permafrost*, which tells the story of the life of the populations in the far north of the Asian continent. Here, on her long journeys in the company of her camera and notebook, the Russian-French photographer discovers places such as Yakutia and its indigenous peoples, including the Evenki reindeer herders and the Yakuti, sedentary herders of cows and horses. The soft colours of her shots convey the anxiety of these communities, witnesses to the symbiotic relationship with an extreme expression of nature that is today endangered by the consequences of industrialisation.

American photographer **Terri Weifenbach** in *Cloud Physics* explores the vital interconnection between our planet's clouds and the intimate forms of its biological life. The backbone of this work is a series of photographs taken at an American research institute to study and measure clouds,

their origin, structure, particles and reactions. The abstruse instruments we see are designed to express ephemeral atmospheric phenomena, but Weifenbach's camera – and her way of looking – portrays our earthly organic world as an unquantifiable mystery.

Lisa Barnard's exhibition ***An Act of Faith: Bitcoin and the Speculative Bubble*** leads us to reflect on the essentiality of nature in the creation of bitcoins: digital goods that, although immaterial, incur an enormous environmental cost. The British photographer documents the exploitation of geothermal energy in Iceland, which is necessary to support the mining process: the cold Icelandic temperatures allow the masses of heat generated by the hardware involved to be greatly reduced, helping to maintain an obedient microclimate.

Bruno Serralongue dedicates his project, titled ***Community Gardens of Vertus, Aubervilliers***, to the struggle – on a local scale, but linked to a broader awareness of the need to preserve liveable environments in the face of ecocidal projects – that a number of gardeners undertook in 2020 to oppose the demolition of more than 4,000 square metres of vegetable gardens in favour of a new construction for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. This takes place less than two kilometres from Paris itself, in Aubervilliers in Seine-Saint-Denis: the most populated department in France and the one where green spaces are already least common.

In the **PALAZZO DA MOSTO** venue, this edition's commission project will be on display, together with an exhibition dedicated to photobooks and the two winning Open Call projects. The project for Fotografia Europea 2024, entrusted to **Karim El Maktafi**, is entitled ***day by day***, and focuses on the fascinating context of the 'inland areas': extremely heterogeneous regions, characterised by their remoteness from large urban centres, and which, despite occupying about three fifths of the national territory, are home to just under a quarter of the total Italian population. Specifically, the photographer's investigation was developed across vast portions of the Emilian Apennines, where El Maktafi examined the profound and fragile bond between humans and nature, bringing out elements of cultural heritage through lifestyles deeply rooted in the slow cycles of the natural mountainside environment.

The ***Index Naturae*** exhibition, curated by Stefania Rössl and Massimo Sordi (OMNE – North-Eastern Mobile Observatory), includes 116 photobooks published over the last five years dedicated to the theme of nature. The selection of the volumes on display, created by national and international photographers who joined the project put forward by OMNE, on the one hand represents a source of reflection on the current state of photography and publishing, and on the other it identifies a body of research experiences capable of offering very different points of view on the theme of the relationship between man and nature in the contemporary world, stimulating possible in-depth studies and experimentation.

The projects selected by the jury, from over 500 works by the artists and curators who participated in the Open Call, are those of **Marta Bogdańska** and **Michele Sibiloni**. Marta Bogdańska's project

SHIFTERS starts out from the assumption that only by rethinking the position of the human being in the world, and thus looking beyond the anthropocentric horizon, can a true and profound coexistence be achieved, one which therefore also includes animals. The work began with archive research and a collection of articles on animal spies in war and then relating this multifaceted history to that of their liberation and rights. Michele Sibiloni, on the other hand, stimulates a reflection on the future of world food and the precarious balance of natural ecosystems through the project **Nsenene**, curated by Marco Scotti, which documents the frenetic moments of cricket harvesting activities (Nsenene, in the local language) in Uganda, alternating with long periods of waiting and hope, the timing of which is increasingly less predictable due to climate change.

Re-opening for the 19th edition of Fotografia Europea is the splendid **VILLA ZIRONI**: a jewel of Art Nouveau architecture which will host the exhibition **Radici**, by **Silvia Infranco**, curated by Marina Dacci. Silvia Infranco has developed a research project that makes natural matter the subject and object of her works. Over recent years, she has focused on the study of herbaria, pharmacopoeia and archaic and ritual healing processes found in manuscripts and ancient printed texts. The exhibition develops her latest reflections on the relationship between humans and nature within the phyto-therapeutic approach, paying particular attention to the magical, symbolic and alchemic implications that have emerged over the centuries. Silvia Infranco's works are modulated in a variety of media (works on paper and board, artist's books, sculptures, Polaroids that often include the herbs themselves) and inhabit the spaces of Villa Zironi.

Embracing the festival are numerous other **partner exhibitions** gravitating around it, organised by the city's most important cultural institutions and hosted in their spaces.

At **Palazzo dei Musei**, *Zone di passaggio*, curated by Ilaria Campioli, proposes a reflection on the theme of darkness and night with the aim of recounting the important role that both play in the collective imagination. The starting point are the numerous works in nocturnal settings that Luigi Ghirri produced. These are places "lit in provisionally, or spaces that experience their own discreet semi-darkness and only temporarily become luminous in a festive manner," in which an alternative reading of reality is triggered. With regard to the history of the photographic process, the relationship between light and darkness is essential. For Ghirri, therefore, it is the flashes, the momentary intermittences like those of fireflies that express the ideal form of illumination, for they maintain the enchantment of darkness intact, preserving areas of dimness. The exhibition therefore features the work of several important international photographer who, starting with experiments on the medium and visibility of the late 1960s, use darkness in terms of narrative potential. As the philosopher Alain Badiou states "[...] the very contradiction of the night is that of offering shelter to what is exposed, invisibility to the beauty of the visible." Hence the authors in the exhibition move around this paradoxical shift offered by the cover of darkness, using it to try to recount what goes on there.

The results of the open call of **GIOVANE FOTOGRAFIA ITALIANA #11 | PREMIO LUIGI GHIRRI 2024**, promoted by the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, in partnership with several international festivals, gives rise to *Contaminazioni*: the group show curated by Ilaria Campioli and Daniele De Luigi that features the shots of the seven artists selected by the international jury: Claudia Amatruda with *Good Use Of My Bad Health*, Benedetta Casagrande with *All Things Laid Dormant*, Noemi Comi with *Proxidium*, Massimiliano Corteselli with *Contrapasso*, Camilla Marrese with *Field Notes for Climate Observers*, Cinzia Romanin with *Transcendence* and Alessandro Truffa with *Nioko Bokk*. The seven selected projects propose a reflection on what intermediate spaces are, the zones of contamination and mutual transformation between humans and the rest of creation, using broad and stratified materials and approaches, in which the photographic medium becomes part of the reflection itself.

During the opening days Giovane Fotografia Italiana will award several prizes, including the Luigi Ghirri Prize, worth €4,000. The prize winner will also have the chance to exhibit a larger version of his or her project in a solo exhibition at the Triennale Milano (winter 2025). Under the title *Nuove traiettorie. GFI a Stoccolma* ('New Trajectories. GFI in Stockholm'), promoted by the Italian Cultural Institute in Stockholm, one artist from among the seven selected will also have the opportunity to carry out a period of study and research, during which they will have to produce an artistic project to be exhibited in a show curated by the Institute. Three finalists will also be selected to participate in the Photo-Match portfolio reading programme as part of Fotofestival Łódź in June 2024 thanks to the partnership with the festival and a scholarship to cover travel and accommodation expenses. Finally, Photoworks together with Dalby Forest, Forestry England are offering two photographers a week-long immersive and ecological artist's residency in the heart of Dalby Forest, North Yorkshire, UK, complete with mentoring, an introduction to the team and forest ecosystems as well as networking opportunities.

The photo library of the **Panizzi Library** participates in the 2024 edition with an exhibition that restores visibility to the collection of **Linea di Confine per la Fotografia Contemporanea**, based in Rubiera, which from 1990 to 2023 carried out photographic surveys throughout the regional and national territory. Today, the collected shots are housed in the Photo Archive of the Panizzi Library so as to be preserved, valorised and returned to citizens. In particular, this edition will display the two interpretations that **Paola De Pietri** in 1994 and **Walter Niedermayr** in 1996 gave of the River Secchia expansion basins. Paola De Pietri decided to carry out her observation by flying over the river park area aboard a hot-air balloon, so as to obtain images midway between that offered by the common topographical map, that of the plane and that of the visitor's gaze. The photographer Walter Niedermayr then produced a series of diptych works, through which he questions the fate of areas subjected to intense economic exploitation and then subsequently converted to host sports and educational activities, observing how parks represent our romantic claim to find our own image of 'unspoilt nature'.

Within the framework of the permanent dialogue between nature and artifice that runs through the arts, **Spazio Gerra** presents the exhibition **NEW THEATERS OF THE REAL. Collaborating with AI**, presenting five different positions of contemporary photography that open the gates of creation to various modes of collaboration through generative artificial intelligence. The works by **Xavi Bou, Antti Karppinen, Markos Kay, Katie Morris** and **Pierre Zandrowicz** lead to a profound reflection on AI's contribution as a tool for understanding the processes underpinning nature and indeed human creativity itself, while also assessing the risk that it may instead be yet another means of alienation, distancing humans even further from the chance of belonging to a unified whole.

Demonstrating and reinforcing the cultural liveliness that characterises Reggio Emilia during the Festival, other cultural institutions will be presenting related projects, such as the **Collezione Maramotti**, which is displaying **Silvia Rosi's** first Italian institutional solo exhibition, entitled *Disintegrata*. Specifically conceived for the Collection, the exhibition includes twenty new photographic works, some moving images and a nucleus of archive photographs collected by the artist in Italy – mainly in Emilia-Romagna – between 2023 and 2024. Rosi travelled the territory to collect hundreds of ordinary photographs, shots from family albums that recount the everyday lives of those who, having arrived from Africa before the year 2000, portrayed themselves and their lives in various contexts. The exhibition explores, restores and humorously stages an imagery of the notion of 'Italianness' across contemporary territory.

Once again this year, **Speciale Diciottoventicinque**, the training project promoted by Fotografia Europea, is back with its thirteenth edition to accompany young photography lovers on a path that allows them to learn, share and come to grips with the world of photographic art, creating a true collective exhibition project. **Erik Messori**, photojournalist and co-founder of the CAPTA collective, accompanied the young participants throughout ten encounters where he decided to open up to multiple disciplines, aware that a visual project can now be constructed and enriched through a range of different languages.

The third edition of the **FE+SK Book Award**, the prize dedicated to photographic books, conceived by Fotografia Europea together with Skinnerbook – a publishing house in Jesi (province of Ancona) specialising in contemporary photography – has just come to an end. Among the more than 230 nominations received, the jury, made up of Chiara Capodici, Tim Clark and Milo Montelli, chose **Benedetta Casagrande's** project *All Things Laid Dormant*, with this motivation: "for its evocative and poetic power, for its coherence, and the maturity of the language used that make it a work ready to become a book."

In addition to the exhibitions, the Festival is enriched by a calendar of events that will accompany visitors from the opening days – 26, 27, 28 April – through until 9 June.

In addition to meetings with artists, the programme also includes discussions with **Mariangela Gualtieri**, poet and writer, and **Marco Paolini**, playwright and writer, both in dialogue with

Loredana Lipperini, writer and journalist. Plus book presentations, book signings, portfolio readings and [PARENTESI] BOOKFAIR, the space dedicated to independent publishers.

The third edition of Fotofonia, the musical side of the Festival, curated by Max Casacci (producer and founder of Subsonica), is entitled *Urban Souls* and is dedicated to the history, present and future of an Italian music capable of fusing black and soul roots with the complexity of contemporary urban languages, through both melody and words.

The evening of Friday 26 April will open with the very young Neapolitan band Thru Collected: a group that oscillates between the most contemporary metropolitan languages, and will end with a live performance by Casino Royale, the band that was the first to trigger an authentic revolution, succeeding in fusing melodic incisiveness with the urgencies of hip-hop culture. Casino Royale's guest will be another 'urban soul' – Venerus: a famous Milanese music producer, multi-instrumentalist and singer-songwriter, now considered the leading protagonist of a certain 'urban' scene. On Saturday 27 April, the focus will shift to Piazza San Prospero for a DJ set by Venerus himself, who will transform the square into a colourful dance hall with no space-time boundaries. Starting the evening will be the very young rapper, Alda.

Also at this third edition of Fotofonia, after the previous appearances by Mario Tozzi and Stefano Mancuso, science and the battle for the environment will be coupled with music. On Sunday 28 April, at 6 pm at the Teatro Cavallerizza, marine biologist, popular scientist and television personality Mariasole Bianco (Kilimangiaro, Rai3) will talk about the mysteries and astonishing curiosities of the great ocean over a carpet of natural sounds created by Max Casacci, who has been engaged for years in transforming the sounds and environments of nature and the metropolis into music and rhythm.

Once again for this edition, **CIRCUITO OFF** – the collective and independent event that enriches the Festival with a countless series of exhibitions scattered throughout the city – presents projects by **professional photographers alongside young people with** no previous experience, enthusiasts and associations who will address the theme of the fragile balance between man and nature by exhibiting their shots in shops, restaurants, studios, courtyards and private homes, historical venues and art galleries. Part of this circuit is also the **OFF@school** project, involving **schools throughout the province of Reggio Emilia**. That of **4 May** is the evening dedicated to the Circuito Off, and during this event the winner of the **Max Spreafico Prize will** be announced, winning the opportunity to put together a new exhibition and exhibit it during next year's edition of Fotografia Europea, in 2025.

Special Sponsor for the 2024 edition is confirmed as **Iren**.

Further info available from fotografiaeuropea.it

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