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Mimmo Jodice

Attesa. 1960-2016

**Re_PUBBLICA MADRE (ground floor) and third floor
June 24th to October 24th 2016**

Press preview: June 22nd, 12 noon

Official opening: June 23rd, 7 p.m.

Curated by Andrea Viliani

The MADRE museum is pleased to present *Attesa. 1960-2016*, **the fullest retrospective exhibition ever devoted to Mimmo Jodice (Naples, 1934)**, one of the undisputed masters of contemporary photography. In a **retrospective layout specially designed by the artist for the spaces of the MADRE museum**, the exhibition presents **over one hundred works, divided into various interrelated sections.**

In these works, which have helped to define the development of photographic research internationally, Mimmo Jodice explores the world around us, dwelling on the threshold of an **indefinite time, in which past, present and future are interwoven.** In this way Jodice delineates a **dimension placed beyond the passing of time and the coordinates of space, being suspended in the dimension – both physical and metaphysical, empirical and contemplative – of waiting.** This waiting is also matrix of his strictly analogical practice of photography: waiting as the patient research into lighting, often early in the morning, capable of detecting the essence of the subject, or waiting as the equally patient balancing of whites and blacks in the darkroom. And if, since 1980, the human figure – until then a recurrent presence – has disappeared from these works, Jodice has attained the ineffable eternity and absolute clarity of images in black and white, rendered by the revelatory gaze of a camera which becomes a “time machine” (or, rather, a machine for surpassing time), in his fascinated scouring of the world, of that which is closest to the *underbelly* of Naples on the shores of the Mediterranean, with its ancient

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civilizations that have disappeared, and so coming down the uncertain boundaries of the globalized megacities. Each of these shots becomes the **supreme celebration of humanity, captured by observing reality in all its physical expressions, transfigured into a *photographic reality*** that, while ignoring different eras and contexts, coincides with the **constant reinvention of photography itself, liberated from a merely documentary interpretation, free to express its representative and cognitive potential.**

In the **Re_PUBBLICA MADRE gallery on the ground floor** – close to the street onto which the museum faces – a selection of images from the series dedicated, in the Sixties and Seventies, to the city of Naples, is staged in the format of a great film projection (*Teatralità quotidiana a Napoli*-“**Daily theatricality in Naples**”, 2016). This ranges from the recording of forms of social gatherings, such as marches organized by the Communist Party or popular festivals (the latter being the subject of the volume *Chi è devoto?*, 1974, with a preface by Carlo Levi and entries by Roberto De Simone), the living conditions in mental hospitals and prisons, the dynamics of work in factories, including the Bagnoli works, and the denunciation of child labor or mechanisms of social exclusion in street life in the *bassi* (slums) and outer suburbs of Naples. These were the years of Jodice’s extensive and profound photographic interpretation of reality (to which the journal “**Progresso fotografico**” devoted a special issue in 1978, followed by the volume *Mezzogiorno. Questione aperta* in 1975). Without reducing these images to simple documentation, through them Jodice expressed the inner significance of his age and his city, captured in their irreconcilable contradictions, with an aesthetic concern that results in an ethical and democratic anthropological commitment to common objects, everyday habits, collective behaviors, the residues of history, ideologies and faiths. A lucid analysis elevated to a baroque hymn, a lyric epistemology, and a social and cultural chiaroscuro: “everyday theatricality in Naples.”

After starting in the Re_PUBBLICA MADRE gallery, the exhibition continues on the **third floor**: here the beginning and the end of the exhibition are devoted to coeval **experimental research: the incunabula of a photography that embodies a conceptual investigation of the potential of photographic language**: In *Vera Fotografia* (“**True Photography**”, 1979), the image of the artist’s hand as it writes the words of the title in pen and then transfers them to the photographic paper as a true inscription in pen. Likewise, the same hand does not depict but makes a cut (*Taglio*-“**Cut**”, 1978) and a burn (*Bruciatura*-“**Burn**”, 1978). In subverting the interpretation of photography as a mere recording of reality, Jodice opposes it or overlays it with a three-dimensional element covering the photographic reproduction (*Ferrania*, 1976, *Carta d’identità*-“**ID Card**”, 1978, *Vetro*-“**Glass**”, 1978, *Corrispondenze*-“**Correspondence**”, 1979), as well as tearing/juxtaposing, saturating/desaturating various photographic images, so creating phantom landscapes that are the result of original space-time combinations (*Fracture*, *Interrupted Landscape*, *Horizon*, *Tears*, *Moments Superimposed*). Bodies likewise mutate through

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reflections, so shedding their claim to consistency and singularity, (*Autoritratto*-“Self-Portrait”, 1963, *Autoritratto con Emilio Notte*-“Self-Portrait with Emilio Notte”, 1972, *Frammenti con figura*-“Fragments with a figure”, 1968), or by playing with the parameters and mechanisms of photographic image production (*Nudi stroboscopici*-“Stroboscopic Nude”, 1966, or *Studio per un nudo*-“Study for a nude”, 1967, in which the final image is “completed” by proof copies of its other possible versions). This leads finally into the self-analysis of his own instrument (*Macchina fotografica*-“Camera”, 1965) and the countless transformative events in the print phase (*Chimigramma*-“Chemigramme”, 1966). From this emerges all the conceptual and compositional freedom of a photographic practice that Jodice began, as an autodidact, in the late fifties, not with the use of camera or film but an enlarger, and then with the extra-photographic concepts of time (exposure) and degree of brightness. This freedom is also evident in the way the artist reshapes his identity: enhancing the modernist value of the process compared to the product, and at the same time, and notably in advance, investigating the logic of post-modern and appropriationist citations in 1978, in the project *Identification* at the Studio Trisorio in Naples. Here Jodice re-photographed not only the images but also the aesthetics of other photographers, such as **Richard Avedon, Bill Brandt, Walker Evans, André Kertész, Ralph Gibson and Christian Vogt**, exploring the possibilities of photographic “dilation or narrowing, development or reduction.”

In the **three wings of the third floor** there then follow – in strict contiguity and continuity between the three different time frames of **past (first section), future (second section) and present (third section)** – works from **all of Jodice’s major series since the eighties**, evoking a circular time, cyclically recurring on itself and on his inspirational motives.

In the **first section** we proceed from the **cultural roots of the Mediterranean (a research project begun in 1985)** to the **epiphanies of everyday (Eden, a 1995 series presented on display in a new and original version)**.

Finally, in the **third section**, the **comparison between the faces and bodies of contemporary Naples and the masterpieces in the collections in the National Museum of Capodimonte (Transiti-“Transits”, 2008)** we turn to the **relation between the enchantment of the natural landscape and the phantasmagoria of the contemporary metropolitan city**.

The **second section**, placed **at the center of the exhibition**, embodies the visionary and meditative matrix of all Jodice’s achievement, the creation of *a real beyond reality*, tracing an **emotional and intellectual correspondence in twentieth-century Surrealism** (evoked in the exhibition by **René Magritte’s work *L’amour*, 1949**). This is displayed fully in the **new cycle *Attesa* (“Waiting”)**, placed by Jodice as the ideal culmination of the exhibition but also, at the same time, as its generating fulcrum and its eternal return: in the space-time of waiting for a future that

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never comes, Jodice no longer recognizes space or time as real, but recreates them, while the world and history, transfigured into the black and white of a sublime morning in the darkroom, now appear to be only the memory of what they were, are or will be: the photographic ghost of an eternal instant from the world, of its endless day, in which the majestic fleetingness of the ruins of Palmyra descends, for example, into the fragile grandeur of the Twin Towers of New York.

For the first time in an exhibition Jodice also finally sheds light on the **sources of inspiration of his research**, represented by a number of **works selected by the artist himself: two masterpieces of Mediterranean archaeology** (the white marble sculpture of the *Compagno di Ulisse* (“Companion of Ulysses”) and the bronze bust of *Artemide* (“Artemis”), from the hypothetical museum of the *mare nostrum* that Jodice evokes in his works on archaeological subjects) seem to presage, through the catalogue of antiquarian fragments of copperplate etchings by **Giovanni Battista Piranesi**, their future photographic synthesis. The abstract ferocity of *Eden* oscillates between *Natura morta con testa di caprone* (“Still life with goat’s head”, 1645-1650) by **Jusepe de Ribera** and the quiet of the still lifes of **Giorgio Morandi**, while Jodice’s landscapes seem to find a welcoming assonance in the metaphysical *Piazze d’Italia* by **Giorgio de Chirico** (*La grande torre*-“The big tower”, 1932-38) or in the silent, abridged, minimal city scenes by **Mario Sironi** (*Paesaggio urbano*-“Urban landscape”, 1920).

After training at the Academy of Fine Arts in Naples (where, thanks to its director, the painter Emilio Notte, in 1970 Jodice launched the first experimental courses in 1970, and from 1975 to 1994 taught the first photography course at an Italian academy), the artist held his first solo exhibition in 1967, at the bookstore La Mandragola, followed in 1970 by the exhibition *Nudi dentro cartelle ermetiche* at the Galleria Il Diaframma in Milan (with a presentation by Cesare Zavattini), followed by a second exhibition in 1974. In 1968, he exhibited in Urbino at the Teatro Spento. In 1971 he met Cesare De Seta, with whom he shared a studio in Naples until 1988, while through his cooperation with the gallerists Lucio Amelio and Lia Rumma he began that relationship with the Neapolitan artistic environment that would then be the subject of the volume *Mimmo Jodice. Avanguardie a Napoli dalla contestazione al riflusso*, 1996. Jodice is the author of **numerous other monographic volumes, many present in the exhibition**, including *Vedute di Napoli*, 1980, which concluded his “social period” and marked the start of his research into spatiality characterized by the exploration of collective memories and archetypes and metaphysical voids.

Jodice has had solo exhibitions at some of the world’s most important museums, and his works are in the collections of institutions such as University Art Museum, Albuquerque; Museum Photographic Archive, Barcelona; Institute of Modern Art, Detroit; Musée Cantini, Marseille; Museo della Fotografia Italiana, Cinisello Balsamo-Milan; Galleria Civica d’Arte Moderna, Modena; Canadian Center of Architecture and McCord

Museum, Montreal; Museum of Photography, Moscow; Aperture Foundation, New York; Metropolitana di Napoli, museo MADRE and Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples; Bibliothèque Nationale-Cabinet des Estampes, MEP Maison Européenne de la Photographie and FNAC-Fond National d'Art Contemporain, Paris; Museum of Art, Philadelphia; Centro Studio e Archivio della Comunicazione, Parma; Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica, Rome; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, GAM-Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea and the Castello di Rivoli-Museo d'arte contemporanea, Turin; MART-Museo Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Trento e Rovereto; Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; Museum of Art, Tel Aviv; Library of Congress, Washington. Finally, the artist has received various awards, such as the 2003 *Premio Antonio Feltrinelli* from the Accademia dei Lincei, in 2006 an honorary degree from the Università Federico II of Naples; in 2011 he was appointed a *Chevalier de l'Ordre des Art et des Lettres*, and in 2013 and 2016, received an honorary degree from the Accademia di architettura in Mendrisio and the Accademia di Belle Arti in Macerata.

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