

29 ARTS IN PROGRESS gallery

"I've always imagined the world in black and white but, I've learnt to appreciate the many shades that give it colour."

Gian Paolo Barbieri describes his creative vision which at times is in colour, and other times not, but the energy that fills his photographs always renders his work contemporary. *Unconventional* brings together 25 shots, for the most part unseen, taken by Barbieri between the 1960's and the 2000s which together tell the story of his work.

Colour takes over and becomes the centre of his attention, captivating and stunning and revealing a different side to the photographer.

Always careful when it comes to the composition of an image, the use of colour is for Barbieri a challenge, a way to always be in the game, observing the world with a different gaze but, above all, to truly reveal his imagination, describing it down to the last detail.

If the use of black and white gives space to multiple imaginary scenes, a way of recreating different subjects and atmospheres to his liking, the use of colour reveals every precise detail. In fact, it invites the viewer to immerse himself completely in the artist's world, this time in colour, acting as a guide that illuminates reality, to interpret reality in the artist's own unique way. The rhythm of his nuanced and varied lighting chooses colours based on the intention of the photograph just as the vibrant play of light and colours is the leitmotif of this exhibition.

Barbieri experiments, invents and then deconstructs in order to then recompose to his liking that which surrounds him: he borrows scenes and subject from paintings he has always admired, from films that still keep you glued to the screen, from poems that he can't help reciting. With an unbridled fascination for references and quotations, he knows that through his gaze he is able to create a new, parallel dimension, the fruit of his imagination, as impossible as it is convincing.

Gian Paolo impresses us with his use of unexpected materials: the plastic that clothes the model Frauke Quast in water, the gas masks in Venezuela, the plexiglass decorated with tiny diamonds from which Isa Stoppi's face emerges. In fact, his photography has never been a realist photography. The world he describes is always emphasising something else: Barbieri uses the camera to paint an emphatic theatre. He interprets, translates and creates, forcing the audience to dream reality.

He has never followed trends, always managing to maintain his own identity whilst being flexible to new ideas and solutions suggested by social and cultural changes. Barbieri never forgets that fashion will always mean the staging of desirability. The woman is always at the centre of this staging, animated by a playful and irreverent irony which is never fully revealed. "The spell – as Baudrillard said – is comprised of that which is hidden."

Yet again, as he himself affirmed, "the essence is emotion" and to this end goal he has assigned harmony and rhythm, light and shade in constantly evolving images, unified however by his skill for staging and visualising scenes built upon cultural lessons that have punctuated his life.

"Photography", wrote Susan Sontag, "is an attempt to enter into contact with another reality or, to make claims on it " and Barbieri surprises yet again colouring his own *unconventional world*.

Giulia Manca

GIAN PAOLO BARBIERI: UNCONVENTIONAL

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