

10 FEBRUARY – 17 APRIL 2017

MARIO CRESCI

LA FOTOGRAFIA DEL NO, 1964 – 2016

Curators: M. Cristina Rodeschini and Mario Cresci

GAMEC – Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Bergamo

Opening: Thursday, 9 February, 7 p.m.

From 10 February to 17 April 2017, GAMEC – Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea in Bergamo is presenting the first major anthological exhibition devoted to the photography of Mario Cresci (Chiavari, 1942), whose artistic figure can be considered one of the richest and most complete in terms of intents and outcomes starting in the Sixties.

Curated by M. Cristina Rodeschini and Mario Cresci, the exhibition offers a **complete overview of the artist's language, from the beginning of his work through today, underscoring the topicality of his research in the context of contemporary art trends.**

Cresci uses the language of photography to explore aspects tied to memory, perception and analogies, in a **suggestive analysis that becomes an invitation to engage in an unprecedented way with reality and places, considered the repository of relationships, memories and traces.**

The exhibition examines the artist's production, from his first experimentation with geometry to his anthropological investigations into the Lucanian culture of the late Sixties, and on to projects devoted to examining photographic language and the equivocality of perception, in an **exhibition itinerary laid out in twelve sections that highlight formal analogies and conceptual correlations among the various works, thereby focusing on the unfolding of his production and language in a way that is not necessarily chronological.**

There will also be a **revisitation of some of his most famous installations, juxtaposed with more recent works, through the search for a layout studied for the different exhibition spaces;** the installations will present heterogeneous materials that do not pertain solely to the photographic technique, because from the very beginning Cresci has created composite works characterized by the freedom that runs through drawing, photography, installations and the video experience.

The exhibition aims to present the artist's work by highlighting this ongoing and profitable exchange between art, graphics and photography, the latter understood as the medium of artistic research yet also as a theoretical reflection connected with other fields of knowledge and disciplines. Cresci's profound reflection on the potential of the language of photography has always been developed in a fast-paced dialogue with the latest artistic research.

The title of the exhibition, *La fotografia del no*, alludes to Goffredo Fofi's book *Il cinema del no. Visioni anarchiche della vita e della società* (Elèuthera, 2015), which largely reflects the artist's ideas regarding photography, understood as a privileged medium – but not the only one – because of his life decisions and relationships with others. For Cresci, photography is a “global act that cannot be circumscribed within the individual picture”. It cross-breeds, becoming the subject of texts and it is also the subject of teaching, in the quest for a dialogue with the younger generations, which he feels is crucial.

The exhibition is composed of the following sections.

Ipsa ruina docet, 1996–2016

With a brand-new staging of the relationship between classic and modern, and eliciting reflection on the meaning of models in the humanist culture, Cresci reinterprets the fascinating educational arsenal represented by the nineteenth-century models of the Accademia di Belle Arti G. Carrara, feature in 1996 in an emotional installation at the Teatro Sociale in Bergamo (*Opus Gypsicum*, from the “In scena” series).

Geometrie, 1964–2011

Cresci's vocation for experimentation and the unnatural use of the photographic language emerges in numerous variations on the theme, through the use of geometric forms such as circles, squares and crosses, which from Suprematism to Minimalism the artist reassesses through distortions and deformations. Series such as “Geometria non euclidea” (1964) and “Accademia Carrara (1994), as well as works such as *Rotazione tra cielo e terra* (1971) and *Geometria Naturalis* (1975–2011), give way to very alienating images that lead the observer to focus on the mode of representation rather than content.

Cultura materiale, 1966–2016

The projectual use of photography offers an interpretation – not stereotyped – of the rural reality of southern Italy, bringing out the signs and meanings that link the individual episode (the product, the face, the domestic interior, the road, the animals) to the territory that encompasses it. Cresci develops research on local artisanal production and lower-class design through original methods that do not overlook the creative and experimental aspect – as in the famous *Interni mossi* (1966–1978) and *Ritratti reali* (1972) – and the sometimes playful one (as in his *Rayogrammi* and his revisitations of *Scanprint* and *Coesistenze*, 2016).

Trisorio site-specific, 1979

For his solo show at the Studio Trisorio in Naples in 1979, Cresci created the work entitled *Campo riflesso e trasparente*, which confirms the artist's ability to create a language for observation and for research into the photographic medium.

Roma '68

This is devoted to the experience of the student demonstrations of 1968 in Rome, exemplified by the cycles and performances that criticize militarism and political power.

Time out, 1969–2016

The leading figures in this great collective installation, composed of 1,000 transparent cylinders, are the images published on Instagram and collected thanks to the “call” the artist launched in autumn 2016. The idea takes up a 1969 work, *Environnement*, presented at the Galleria Il Diaframma in Milan, directed by Lanfranco Colombo, which the artist enclosed a thousand images representing the consumerism of the era in a thousand cylinders.

Attraverso l'arte, 1994–2015

This is an investigation into the relationship between photography and art, which has been crucial in Cresci's research since his debut as an artist. The section includes works such as the “Vedere attraverso” (1994–2010) and “Fuori tempo” (2008) series, which feature some of the most famous portraits at the Accademia Carrara in Bergamo.

Baudelaire, 2013

In 2013 Cresci redeveloped Étienne Carjat's portrait of Charles Baudelaire from 1862, in a work (*I Rivolti*) composed of forty-six copies of the poet's face, one for each year of his life. Printed on cotton paper hand-folded differently from one copy to the next, the photographs offer the spectator an ever-different image of Baudelaire's face, in an overall vision that highlights the relationship between the involuntary geometries created by the folds in the sheets and the interface of the clean surface of the back with the printed one on the front.

Transizioni, 1967–2016

Through a psychological process very close to forms of identification, what emerges is the sense of personal involvement that puts the artist in touch with the sense of living and with owned objects (*La casa di Annita*, 2003), with abandonment and existential transitions (*Via Garibaldi 19*, 2015 and *Le cose disposte*, 2014–2016). This path starts from afar, with the series of "Interni" in Barbarano Romano (1978–1979), in which evanescent self-portraits, against the backdrop of valuable upholstery, heavy and filled with surreal lights and shadows, sometimes projected on television screens, become the pretext to visualize temporal connections, the relationship between cause and effect, affinities and differences.

D'après di d'après, 1985

Drawing approaches photography in this series – after which the section is named – in which Cresci creates "copies of copies", starting from the images of masters that are part of the historic memory of photography. For Cresci, the concept of copies becomes an inventive pretext for new paths of signs, veritable "maps" of an imaginary journey that permits the birth of others and yet other agains, never ending".

Metafore, 2013–2016

Cresci's research discovers a further transition, opening up to the drama of the migration of people, pushed by war, violence and hunger (*Icona*, 2016). In the images of the figures wrapped in thermal blankets, used when the migrants were saved, the artist reconstructs the plasticity of sculpture to launch a transfer of meaning, above and beyond the moment of representation. This transition is also present in large works such as *Elementa e Incandescenze* (2016), on seemingly distant but powerfully metaphorical themes.

Video, 2010–2016

The exhibition itinerary is supplemented by several video works that complete the variables of formal expressions and content in the vast artistic research of Mario Cresci. They go from the video *Segni nei segni di segni* (2010) to the revisitation of Michelangelo's *Pietà Rondanini* in the work entitled *In aliam figuram mutare* (2016).

The exhibition is accompanied by a **volume** – edited by M. Cristina Rodeschini and Mario Cresci, published by **GAMEC Books** – structured to reflect the sections of the exhibition: **taking up the theme developed in each room, the publication offers a continuous transit of languages, temporal crossovers of and with different fields of knowledge, in order to stimulate interpretations and reflections for an open reading of Cresci's work.**

Each section features the words of critics, curators and art historians who have collaborated with Cresci: Bruno Valerio Bandini, Corrado Benigni, Enzo Biffi Gentili, Maria Francesca Bonetti, Alessandro Castiglioni, Martina Corgnati, Enrico De Pascale, Nicoletta Leonardi, Luca Panaro, Alessandra Pioselli, Marco Romanelli, Marco Senaldi, Roberta Valtorta, Mauro Zanchi, Claudia Zanfi.

The volume also includes a text by M. Cristina Rodeschini and an afterword by Mario Cresci.

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Opening Hours

Monday–Sunday 10 a.m. – 7 p.m. / Thursday: 10 a.m. – 10 p.m. / closed Tuesday

The ticket office closes an hour before the exhibitions.

Admission

Full price: € 6 / Reduced admission: € 4 / Schools: free

Family ticket 1+1: € 7.50 / Family ticket 2+1: € 12 / Family ticket 2+2: € 15

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Biography

Mario Cresci (Chiavari, 1942), a unique artist and photographer, was one of the first of his generation to apply and unite the culture of projects with experimentation in visual languages.

His complex work became rooted in multidisciplinary studies starting in 1964, the year he started to attend the upper-level course in Industrial Design in Venice. In 1968 he moved to Rome, where he came into contact with Pascali, Mattiacci and Kounellis. He photographed Boetti and Turin's Arte Povera group during the set-up of the exhibition entitled "Il percorso", curated by Mara Coccia at the Studio Arco d'Alibert. In 1969, at the Galleria Il Diaframma in Milan, he designed and staged the first photographic *Environnement* in Europe, in the name of the dualism between wealth and poverty.

Starting in the Seventies, he blended the study of photographic language with the project concept, showing an interest in cultural anthropology, and in Basilicata he executed projects that were central for the development of photography in Italy, among which the book *Matera, immagini e documenti*, published in 1975.

He won the Niépce Prize for Italy in 1967 and took part in the Venice Biennale a number of times (1970, 1978, 1993, 1995); since 1974, some of his photographs, along with those of Luigi Ghirri, have been part of the MoMA collection in New York.

Cresci is the author of multiform works characterized by freedom of research through drawing, photography, the video experience and installation. Cresci developed various themes and types of experimentation in his works over the years: from shifts in meaning to variations, analogies, and the relationship with the landscape and places of art, such as the site-specific works pertaining to his research in recent years, stemming from an organic comparison with certain places and their unique historical, cultural and aesthetic aspects. In fact, for Cresci photography is never an end to itself, singular and self-sufficient, but is always part of a story in images that can bring together knowledge and beauty, field research and visual emotion.

The experimental project of the workshop-artistic training school with art, multimedia and design, conceived for the Region of Basilicata, brought him closer and closer to teaching, which, starting in the late Seventies, became an integral part of his work as an artist.

He directed the Accademia di Belle Arti G. Carrara from 1991 until 1999, and his interdisciplinary programming included numerous cultural activities dedicated to young artists, such as "Arte & Impresa", "Clorofilla" and "Accademie in Europa", in collaboration with GAMEC in Bergamo.

Cresci taught at the Politecnico di Milano, the University of Naples – L'Orientale, the Department of Humanities in Parma, the IED and NABA in Milan. Between 2004 and 2011 he also taught the two-year specialization programme in photography at the Accademia di Brera in Milan. Currently, he teaches at ISIA in Urbino and the Fondazione Fotografia in Modena. For a number of years he was visiting professor at the École d'Arts Appliqués in Vevey (Switzerland).

The re-establishment of the sense of landscape and construction of the photographic image made him one of the key artists in the "Viaggio in Italia" exhibition that Luigi Ghirri organized at the Pinacoteca Provinciale in Bari in 1984.

His most important exhibitions include the anthological exhibition "Le case della Fotografia, 1966–2003" at the Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea in Turin (2004); "Sottotraccia. Bergamo. Immagini della città e del suo territorio" at the Elleni Gallerie d'arte (2009); the travelling project entitled "Forse Fotografia" at the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Bologna, the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica in Rome and the Palazzo Lanfranchi in Matera (2010–12); "Ex-post. Orizzonti momentanei" at the Museo d'Arte in Gallarate (2014); the two shows "In aliam figuram mutare" at the Castello Sforzesco in Milan and "Mario Cresci. Ri-Creazioni" at Camera in Turin (2016).

He has published numerous books on a variety of subjects, as well as essays – including theoretical works – on photography and visual communication.