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Photobiennale 2018

The Italian Connection

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Normandy 1993, by Gianni Berengo Gardin **Courtesy Fondazinone Forma per la Fotografia**

For the 12th International Month of Photography in Moscow, Photobiennale 2018 has brought together photographers from different countries and epochs.

This year the Manege Central Exhibition hall is hosting eight exhibits, making this one of the most significant photography festivals in Russia. Among the selected exhibitors are three very different but equally famous Italian photographers, Gianni Berengo Gardin, Johnny Montada and Pier Marsili Libelli.

Poetics of Reality

"Just as the title of the exhibition, 'Poetics of Reality,' says, Gianni Berengo Gardin has always wanted to depict reality by finding poetry in it," curator Alessandra Mauro told The Moscow Times. Berengo Gardin refuses to be called an artist, but instead a photojournalist who

captures the poetry of important moments. For him, a photographer is an observer with an attentive and curious attitude towards reality. Despite having had over 200 solo shows during his long and flourishing career, for the first time around 100 of his photos are being exhibited in Moscow, showing the Italian beauty of the 1950s, 60s and 70s. The selection of photos includes those taken in Venice, the city where his career began; in Milan, where he started working on migration, labor and a series in a psychiatric hospital; and then photographs from his trips around the world. "The photos on display are an attempt to give an idea of Berengo Gardin's photography, its way of seeing reality and describing it," Mauro said.

Zero Gravity

The right corridor of the Manege Central Exhibition hall continues with the photos of another Italian photographer, Johnny Moncada, a descendant of a well-known aristocratic family who began his career as an advertising photographer. In the mid-1950s he switched to fashion photography and documented the golden age of "Made in Italy." But after Yuri Gagarin became the first man in the space, Moncada made a series of photographs dedicated to the famous astronaut and developed the image of a futurist woman. "Zero Gravity" shows models in avant-garde cosmic interiors, similar to the work of the most fashionable stylists of the 1960s in an unusual background made of plastic, mirrors, aluminum, and Plexiglas. "These photos capture the attitude Russians had towards the future, so I'm sure the public will appreciate the exhibition," Valentina Moncada, curator of the show and the photographer's daughter, told The Moscow Times. "In contrast with the international audience, Russians have seen the conquest of space in a spiritual way, and the photographs on display stress the aesthetic of the conqueror."

Photography as Performance

Before leaving space for other international photographers, Piero Marsili Libelli shows another side of Italy and its culture. "After meeting the film director Michelangelo Antonioni, Marsili Libelli decided to become a photographer and live for photography," curator Liya Chechik told The Moscow Times. In the 1980s and 1990s, Marsili Libelli moved to Rome where he shot stories about the most important European cultural, artistic and theatrical events. Those years brought this multi-faceted photographer well-earned renown, as can be seen at the show: portraits of Federico Fellini and Marcello Mastroianni, a report on the Romanian Revolution of 1989, stories of Syrian refugees in the Balkans or daily life in Mumbai. Despite the contrasting topics, the talent of the photographer can be recognized in both war and documentary photo stories as well as fashion shoots. The three exhibitions are supported by the Italian Institute of Culture in Moscow.

Photobiennale 2018 runs until May 27 at the Manege Central Exhibition Hall.

Moscow Manege. 1 Manege Square. Metro Okhotny Ryad. moscowmanege.ru/en

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