

Big

Emotion



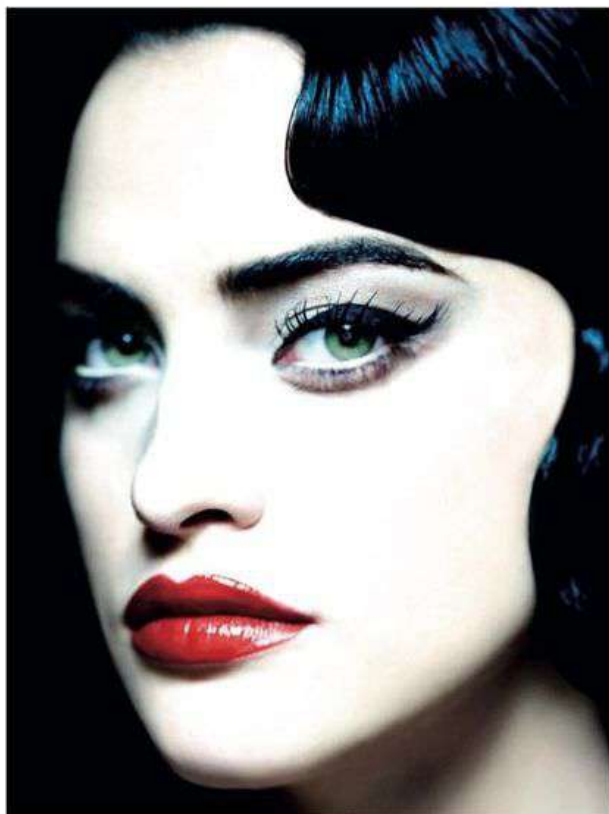
Ricordo di un grande fotografo



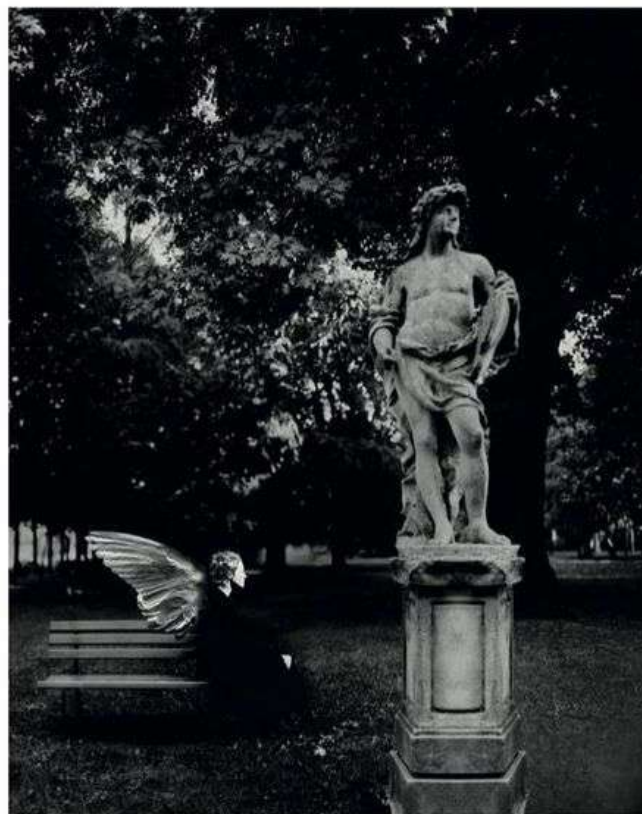
Giovanni Gastel

L'edizione 2021 si preannuncia all'insegna di tantissime novità ed opere inedite. Tra queste, lo stand in ricordo di Giovanni Gastel (da lui concepito per l'edizione del 2020, annullata per Covid), grande amante e sostenitore di MIA Fair di cui ricordiamo volentieri le sue parole:

"Questa Fiera rappresenta un'opportunità per confermare la vocazione internazionale di Milano a livello artistico e trasmettere attraverso le mostre e gli appuntamenti collaterali non solo conoscenza, ma passione per un campo che ha segnato tutta la mia vita".



Giovanni Gastel, Glamour, Alejandra Alonso



Giovanni Gastel, Untitled (Angel 47)

Giovanni Gastel per Rossana Orlandi

”

Io non amo essere fotografata,
ma quello shooting è stato
uno dei più belli io abbia mai fatto.

Quando Giovanni mi disse
che avevamo finito ci rimasi malissimo.
Non avrei più smesso.

Questo ritratto è uno dei miei più conosciuti
e usati. Ogni volta che lo vedo è una gioia.

La stessa che mi ha dato la nostra amicizia
e ancora mi dà.

Giovanni Gastel.

Uomo, fotografo,
amico prezioso

”



*Rossana
Orlandi*

Designer

In the 10 years since its foundation, MIA (Milan Image Art) Fair has become a point of reference for photography in Italy and around the world. Born in 2011 from an idea of Fabio Castelli, MIA Fair aims to highlight the role that photography has assumed among the expressive languages of contemporary art. Over the years it has become a point of reference for enthusiasts, collectors, photographers and gallerists in order to understand the trends and evolution of the photography art medium, which should be considered to all intents and purposes as one of the many facets and expressions of art. The 2021 edition promises to be full of novelties and new projects. Among these, the booth which will celebrate the memory of Giovanni Gastel. Giovanni Gastel conceived this exhibition for the 2020 edition, cancelled for the Covid emergency. He was a great lover and supporter of MIA Fair, whose words we gladly remember: "this Fair represents an opportunity to confirm Milan's international vocation at an artistic level and to transmit through exhibitions and side events not only knowledge, but passion for a field that has marked my entire life".

Fabio and Lorenza Castelli told us about these 10 years of tireless activity in a two-part interview.

How and why did Fabio Castelli come up with the idea of MIA Photo Fair 10 years ago?

FC: The idea came about once I had finished my entrepreneurial activity as Chairman of CASTEK, the name of my family holding company I shared with my brothers. From that moment on, I decided to start my second life in the name of art, which had given me such energy and pleasure when, as a collector, I collected works by authors who used different expressive languages. After a long path that allowed me to approach many artistic forms, each one linked to the other by connections that my life and my sensitivity indicated to me, I focused on photography, which I considered not only the most contemporary means of expression, but also the most interesting as it embraces many areas, from reportage to photography used as a language of contemporary art.

There are also practical aspects as to why it was at that very moment that I started thinking about the fair. Four years before 2011, when the first edition of MIA Fair took place, I had been invited to the contemporary art fair Art Verona to present my collection in a large space of 600 square metres, which I had decided to divide into several rooms as if they were large rooms. The exhibition was therefore called The Rooms of Photography. An exemplary collection and the history of its

collector. These were organised according to a logical thread that started from the inception of the collection, with the first room entitled "From graphics to photography" (as I said, my history as a collector has seen me passionate about different types of art, one of the most important of which was precisely graphics, from which I had borrowed a lot of knowledge), passing through Vintage and its surroundings, until you get to the history of the Polaroid and the printing techniques and print runs, the presentation of works belonging to different genres and much more. In short, a series of extremely useful information for those who wanted to approach the world of photography and to do so in a more attentive way, having useful and fundamental information for an aware collecting. This exhibition had an enormous number of visitors, and even I, who had had the pleasure of spending several hours at the fair and talking to people who were interested in the work of photography, realised how much interest and how many opportunities there were to meet the public by telling them about photography.

So I came back from the fair with a huge wealth of experience in the field, the result of long talks with visitors. Coincidentally, on the return journey, I met Gisella Borioli, the soul and founder of Superstudio, in a train compartment, who was also visiting the fair. Superstudio was a venue where important events were hosted, so I had the idea of starting to ask for some timid information on how to organise the event. The idea of organizing this fair and where to do it was then forming in me: a photography fair at Superstudio in via Tortona, in Milan. Whenever I discussed my idea with anybody, they all called me a crazy visionary and the opinions I initially collected were totally negative, but the more I talked about it, the more I was convinced that it could be interesting.

After these experiences, I decided to create a photography fair, which was missing in our country. In my opinion, it was time for photography to stop being ancillary to other artistic languages. The purpose of the fair should have been to give the public the elements to become aware of this evolution. To this end, at MIA Fair cultural events are organised ad hoc as part of the cultural program, and exhibitors are chosen among the ones able to contribute to the growth of the culture of photography in the broadest sense.

In its first editions, MIA Fair stood out from the traditional pattern of Italian and international art fairs because of its original format: a stand for each artist - each artist had his own catalogue, then galleries were given the opportunity to propose collective or monographic projects, then there were the Codice MIA and Proposta MIA sections... So how has the fair evolved over these 10 years?

FC: The experience I described was matched with the request of many authors and artists who asked me how they could get to know a gallery, how to present themselves to the public, what I thought of their work. It was a question that had become almost daily. It was a strong need on the part of a great many photography professionals, who saw the advent of the Internet as an epoch-making change in their profession (from journalists to advertising photography professionals, to fashion photographers). Characters who saw their professionalism overturned with the advent of the Internet and the consequent change in the world of advertising and communication, where their work became different. The photojournalist was replaced by some young local with a mobile phone, of course the artistic vision was missing but also the cost was completely different (it is one thing to finance a professional photographer, to finance his presence on location and also to keep in mind the risks he had to run...). The possibility of receiving images from local people who were already on site changed the way of doing this kind of work. The same applies to advertising, where printed paper is reducing effectiveness in the communication system. The advent of the internet, with all its techniques, led to a differentiation. So all the photographers who found themselves having to try their hand at a new activity saw in art the possibility of being able to express themselves and give vent to their creativity.

The Proposta MIA section was an answer to their questions: a scientific committee selected these authors, who could then exhibit in the booths at the fair and present themselves to gallery owners who were scouting at the fair. It would also be nice to write a book about this initiative, telling the evolution of the exhibitors who presented themselves and then found their way through a gallery that represented them or a magazine that hosted them, to the international market.

Another method of presentation, with different aims but always centred on the author, even if supported by the gallery, were the portfolio reviews which for the first time presented as interlocutors not curators or photographic critics but major international collectors. The name of this section, which we have repeated almost every year, is Codice MIA (MIA Code). About ten collectors were invited to each edition. The aim was to make the authors tell and explain the reasons for their stylistic choices and to bring to the fair top-level personalities coming not only from Italy but from all over the world (United States, Mexico, France, Germany, Russia, England, China) who enjoyed meeting the artists and talking to them, supported by their passion. Each artist who signed up had around twenty minutes to meet three collectors of his choice

in a confrontation which, however it went, was always a source of great satisfaction for both parties.

These are the two sections that have been continued over time. The pandemic then forced us to stop for two years, forcing us to cancel the fair a few days before, when everything was already ready and a wonderful exhibition on Italian artists of the 1970s, entitled *La fotografia di ricerca in Lombardia e in Italia (Research Photography in Lombardy and Italy)*, was already installed at Palazzo Pirelli. The exhibition had the patronage of the Lombardy Region and a section dedicated to vintage photographs, but after a few days it had to shut down and remained open from April to July without any visitors and was visible online.

So we are back after two years, from 7 to 10 October, with the 10th edition.

Since 2018, the coordinated image of the fair has been entrusted to an artist each year, who takes care of the communication campaign. What led you to this choice?

LC: We decided to entrust the communication campaign to an artist in order to offer a promotional showcase to emerging authors or those who had created a project of particular interest to us. Photography, like any art form, is intended to offer reflection, so we identified projects that would draw attention to topics of interest. The first author we chose in 2018 was Siwa Mgoboza, proposed by the African Artists' Foundation (organiser of the Nigerian LagosPhoto festival), a young South African artist, not known in Italy, who was chosen with the intention of presenting an emerging artist from another continent. The second was Rune Guneriusen, who creates installations in nature with man-made objects, creating an interweaving between natural places and human presence, chosen to focus attention on the man - nature relationship. For the tenth edition of MIA Fair we have chosen the British photographer Rankin who has always stood out, throughout his long career, for his bold approach behind the lens. In this moment of change and transformation in which gender is being discussed, we have chosen a portrait that offers an "unprecedented face of undefined gender" also for our event.

A very significant part of the fair is reserved to prizes for photographers, starting with the ever-present prize from the main sponsor BNL Gruppo BNP Paribas. A fair oriented not only towards the commercial dimension but also to reward the quality of the proposals.

LC: Awards are opportunities for visibility that artists must learn to seize. Unhoped-for

opportunities can arise, and every chance must be seized. The main prize of our event, the BNL Gruppo BNP Paribas Prize, confirms the banking group's constant commitment to the development of contemporary art in Italy, and of photography in particular, for its ability to recognise and immediately recount reality, on the one hand, and, on the other, that of having become a new language of contemporary art, thus testifying to its role as a company committed to the dissemination of culture and knowledge as factors of individual and collective growth. The next edition of MIA Fair has been confirmed as an absolutely unmissable appointment for the world of photography, and one to which many protagonists in the sector should adhere. In fact, we have opened numerous new collaborations and confirmed existing ones, presenting various exhibitions and awards. In line with the principles of reinforcing our role as a high-level cultural platform where photography in its most profound aspects can be discussed, MIA Fair has conceived the New Post Photography prize in 2020, aimed at promoting the most creative trends and artistic research in the world of contemporary photography. The jury, composed of art curators, has selected 34 authors - 15 for the first edition and 19 for the second - whose projects will be presented in two separate exhibitions to be shown at MIA Fair next October, one for the 2021 edition and one for the 2020 edition, which could not be held due to the pandemic.

Cultural events are therefore an essential part of the fair and include talks by prestigious guests such as the late Philippe Daverio, Stefano Boeri, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Patrizia Re Rebaudengo, Massimo Recalcati, Patricia Urquiola...

FC: In order to bring all the information about photography to the fair and illustrate its evolution to our collectors, visitors and public, we needed a rich panel of protagonists from the world of culture to help bring that knowledge.

Partly because of my natural curiosity to tackle different topics, we used the formidable medium of photography to access new branches of science and unexpectedly involve areas not so directly related.

For example, we used the subject of collecting to delve into the world of psychoanalysis, also thanks to a particularly successful format that

for many years now has been staged at MIA by Sabrina Donadel, a very good Sky journalist who talks to couples of collectors, any couple that has to share decisions on the choices of their collection, with all the anecdotes that can be triggered by the discussions and the behavioural patterns of the two components; These have always amused and interested not only the public but also the gallerists who intelligently attended the interviews to understand what the interests of the collectors, who could be their potential clients, might be. Never before has it been as clear as in these interviews that the psychoanalytical aspect of the world of collecting is very interesting: passions, methods of approach, the reasons for a certain purchase are part of dynamics that can be probed to try to interpret how the psyche moves. In addition, Massimo Recalcati gave a spectacular *lectio magistralis*, whose incredible eloquence captivated the audience. Another example concerns neuroscience: also for this edition, for the third consecutive year, we are collaborating with the University and the Centre for Advanced Technologies for Wellbeing and Health of the San Raffaele Hospital, with whom we are organising round tables and experiments.

Taking our cue from Franco Vaccari's performance at the 1971 Venice Biennial, in which the artist presented a photo booth inviting the public to leave a sign of their passage (among other things, with this work Vaccari cleared photography through customs in contemporary art), we have re-proposed the same machine at the fair. However, it will not be used to take selfies, but to allow visitors to admire the works of art by wearing five devices developed by the San Raffaele Research Centre (skull caps, glasses with sensors, sensors on the arms, etc.) that accurately monitor body parameters (heartbeat, temperature, direction of gaze on the image being presented). ...): a real 'photograph' is taken, obtained by revisiting the same observed image in which the viewer's attention is displayed while admiring it.

These themes will be supported by round tables in the cultural program of the fair during the *Arte e Scienza* format, in which professors of philosophy and aesthetics from the Università Vita-Salute San Raffaele will talk about the different interpretation of the work made by a critic compared with the direct emotions of a non-professional viewer.

MIA Fair has not only been held in Italy: in 2014 it also conquered the Asian market of Singapore. Can you tell us how that experience went, the similarities and the differences compared to the Italian one?

FC: It was a very interesting experience, very tiring! We used it as a teaser for the edition that would come the following year, the 2015 Expo: we were interested in Singapore to prepare the Asian and international public. In Singapore we had the idea, taken up again this year but only for one section of the fair, of bringing photography and design together. The proposal has been very successful: hence the new name of MIA Fair, which for the Singapore edition became MIA&D Fair, with the addition of the "D" taken from Design, in which these two artistic and creative forms dialogued.

The experience went well and we have always promised ourselves to repeat it: in the future we plan to take the fair abroad again.

In a globalised world, and especially in a country like Singapore, which is extremely advanced, with a very high level of quality in its education system and a great sense of civic duty, I have certainly found different customs and traditions, but not in the enjoyment of art. Art is the language that is most able to interact and converse with any cultural form and foster the commonality of all peoples.

It would be quite different to meet with countries that have very different cultures, such as in an Islamic country or in the Arab world, where there are different customs and different interests even in the most playful aspects. To hold a fair in the Arab world we should think more about their interests, their cultural identity and not go against their value system. For example, we should absolutely abolish nudity, which is present in our stands.

The 2020 edition was cancelled due to the Covid-19 epidemic, but this did not demoralise you. On the contrary, the fair was rethought to adapt to the new scenario and enriched with two new sections. Can you tell us about the difficulties you encountered and how you managed to overcome them?

LC: There were a lot of difficulties, not only for us but for everyone. We have reacted to make this forced stop an opportunity to create something new. At the start of the lockdown in March 2020, we had to deal with our exhibitors who, like us, were ready to set up the event, but who found themselves blocked with us 15 days before the opening. Thanks to the collaborative relationship and trust that we have built up over 10 years, we have reorganised the tenth edition for October with 90% of the 2020 exhibitors, added new sections, exhibitions and awards. Setting the date was very complicated, we put it off until it slipped into October, a choice that turned out to be a happy one. Unlike other trade fair operators, we did not choose to create an online version of the fair as we believe that the physical

aspect and human contact is essential, so we developed our own new online platform that aims to expand the commercial reach of MIA Fair in favour of our exhibitors. We have therefore decided to pursue a development strategy called phygital, i.e. PHYSICAL + DIGITAL, which accompanies the physical presence of the exhibitor, which is essential for us, with a new digital presence that will allow the works set up in different architectural environments viewed online. Physical empathy is difficult to reproduce online, even if we must not forget that the web allows us to open up new relationships and offers a communication space for spreading culture.

This year, celebrating the tenth anniversary of MIA, you will feature the new section MIDA - Milan Image Design Art, in which photography dialogues with design, and Beyond Photography - Dialogue, where photography is confronted with a single work made in other media.

LC: The next edition will see the exhibitors present in the consolidated Main Section

and in the publishing section, joined by two new sections, which move along the lines of different artistic codes involving different media to offer the public the widest possible panorama of the current state of photography and its prospects.

Photography will be the common thread among the stands of the new sections. In the MIDA - Milan Image Design Art section, projects that create a dialogue between photography and design will be presented. Collector's items and research design objects produced by well-known contemporary and historical designers in limited editions have been selected and combined in curatorial projects with photographic works. In the MIDA section there will be Parallel, an exhibition curated by Mosca&Partners, by Valerio Castelli and Caterina Mosca, with a selection of objects created by contemporary international designers, limited editions, art-design, innovative research projects that think in terms of environmental sustainability, and artisans who produce small series of very high quality, which relate to works of photography. Among the exhibitors already confirmed are Emmanuel Babled (Glass Design + Photo Project) with Valentina Zanobelli (Photography)



Donatella Izzo, *Silent Time*, 2021

Michele De Lucchi (design) with Tom Vack (photography), Mario Trimarchi (design) with Santi Caleca (photography).

The first, curated by architect Nicola Quadri, a Nordic design connoisseur and expert, focuses on Scandinavian design and photography, with works that underline the play of contrasts in tastes and styles that marked the design of the Nordic school in the 20th century. The other, curated by Alessandro Stefanini, is a Wunderkammer of curious and ironic transformable Victorian furniture that dialogues with the equally ironic eye of the great photographer Elliott Erwitt. Other exhibitors participating in the new section are Arionte Arte Contemporanea, Atelier Relief in Paris/Brussels, BABS Art Gallery, Deodato Arte, Galleria 1968 Photography - Primo Piano, Galleria Paola Colombari, Red Lab Gallery. Moreover, after the success of 2019, Beyond Photography section returns, the format that aims to underline what 'photography' means today, especially in relation to the world of contemporary art.

The new Dialogue section, curated by Domenico de Chirico, is reserved for galleries with an activity focused on the promotion of the most recent generations of international artists, whose exhibition project - conceived ad hoc - is a dialogue between photography and a single work made with other media such as sculpture, installation, painting and video. From this perspective, Beyond Photography - Dialogue is a privileged meeting place that places photography at the centre in a way that, by requiring it to open up to contemporary forms of "dialogue", legitimises its specificity and removes it from the confines of its history. Among the exhibitors taking part in the section we mention: Galleria Michela Rizzo, Marignana

Arte, Window Projects from Tbilisi, KUK Gallery from Cologne, Photo& Contemporary and Bianchi Zardin.

How do you imagine the next editions of MIA Fair?

FC: I reflect almost every day on the future of MIA Fair.

Every day, new information is added about this tsunami that has hit us and whose gravity we perceive without having yet found adequate solutions to all those problems it has produced. Many changes are taking place, many activities have been greatly downsized, others have sprung up and developed, some have disappeared and others have taken their place. There has certainly been an attempt on the part of the art world to replace the physical world with the virtual one, and this is also due to the tendency to try to eliminate all forms of intermediation.

For me, a collector who is 'differently young', less accustomed to the use of digital technology than those who are now in their thirties, the physical world is fundamental. However, I think it is the same for younger collectors, even if they are more willing to make up for the absence of the physical. Certainly we need to think about change and also assess the "state of the art" of art: how are the galleries? How are the artists? How have they experienced this pandemic? Many artists who were able to support themselves in their daily lives were able to have moments

of introspection and the pandemic stimulated their creativity and led them to create new and interesting works, while others suffered enormously and saw their artistic vein exhausted. How much and in what way could the galleries survive these years of blockade? We will see how this evolves over time.

For this edition there were contingencies due to the pandemic that made it impossible for some galleries to be present. We hope that from the next edition everything will be simpler and that everything will return to normal. We will certainly implement the presence of digital media for the next editions, but it is not yet clear to what extent: we are still working on the final design.

Both you and your father are the contact persons of the Amalago artistic and cultural committee for photography. What projects would you like to develop with the Association for the promotion of art and photography on Lake Maggiore?

LC: Photography is par excellence the medium that allows a territory to be narrated, including its people and traditions, so we could think of a selection of exhibitions by authors who have focused on the lake, or we could organise an award with an artist's residence to produce a site-specific project. The language of art photography can convey the values, history and special characteristics of a territory. Artists can interpret places and people, enhancing the identities and peculiarities of the communities of Lake Maggiore. The association can be the privileged interlocutor of these projects, making them accessible to residents and tourists.



Silvio Wolf, Cambio di Orizzonte, 1977