

Gianni Berengo Gardin *

(Santa Margherita Ligure, Genoa, 1930 - Genoa, 2025)

Gianni Berengo Gardin developed a passion for photography in his youth. He shot his first images in Rome during the period of the German occupation and his camera was soon confiscated. At the end of the war his family moved to Venice, and Berengo resumed taking photographs with that same camera, which would become his first tool of expression.

A passionate bibliophile, Berengo Gardin photographs in order to tell stories. He often organizes his photographs in thematic series, making the book an ideal format. His numerous published volumes, nearly two hundred in number, begin with *Venise des Saisons*, 1965, a personal interpretation of Venice in a melancholy tone that contradicts its stereotypical touristy image. Although Berengo Gardin has made some of his work abroad, because of his personal involvement in Italy's cultural, political, and social events, his photographs document a considerable portion of the country's history. While the photographs shot in Tuscany as early as 1967 manage to communicate the essence of Italy and its nature as a place where the human presence is an unavoidable and constant element, it is with the images published in *Morire di classe*, 1969, that Berengo Gardin demonstrates his true capacity to confront the contradictions of a society hovering between modernity and disconcerting backwardness. With Carla Cerati, Berengo Gardin went to numerous psychiatric institutions to document not illness, but rather the inhumane conditions imposed on patients.

The photographs in the collection cover a broad time span, from 1953 to 1990, and are representative of some of the themes that connote Berengo Gardin's research. In addition to the aforementioned series, they include a selection of fragments of life captured in Venice, Milan, Rome, Paris, Berlin, and Seville. He also addresses other themes, such as the reality of work and the presence of nomadic Roma encampments within Italy. Berengo Gardin has also frequently turned his camera toward himself. In *Lido di Venezia, Autoritratto con Caterina* (*Venice Lido, Self-Portrait with Caterina*), 1962, he photographs himself with his wife. The contrast between the iconic fixity of the faces and the wreck of a truck used as the backdrop sets in motion a dialogue related to the human desire to thwart the passage of time, suggesting a reflection on the very nature of photography. (MB)

Additional Works in the Collection

Ca c'est Paris, 1953, gelatin silver print, 10.64 × 14.14 inches

Paris, Along the Seine, 1953, gelatin silver print, 14.89 × 10.01 inches

Waiting Room, 1954, gelatin silver print, 10.64 × 14.89 inches

September Sunday, 1958, gelatin silver print, 9.46 × 14.89 inches

On a Speedboat, 1958, gelatin silver print, 14.93 × 10.05 inches

Wedding in Santa Marita del Giglio, 1958, gelatin silver print, 10.01 × 14.89 inches

Vatican City, 1959, gelatin silver print, 14.93 × 10.60 inches

Venice, 1959, gelatin silver print, 11.82 × 15.76 inches

Milan, 1960, gelatin silver print, 9.93 × 14.93 inches

Vaporetto, 1960, gelatin silver print, 10.01 × 14.74 inches

Tuscany, 1965, gelatin silver print, 10.87 × 14.89 inches

Calabria, 1966, gelatin silver print, 10.05 × 14.97 inches

Florence, Psychiatric Hospital, 1968, gelatin silver print, 9.97 × 14.97 inches

Florence, Psychiatric Hospital, 1968, gelatin silver print, 9.81 × 13.59 inches

Ugo Mulas, 1969, gelatin silver print, 11.82 × 15.56 inches

Under the Mountain (Bergamo), 1969, gelatin silver print, 11.82 × 15.76 inches

Seville, EasterWeek, 1970, gelatin silver print, 11.82 × 15.76 inches

Giuseppe Marchiori, 1971, gelatin silver print, 11.82 × 5.56 inches

Vercelli, 1972, two gelatin silver prints, 9.97 × 14.97 inches

London, 1977, gelatin silver print, 10.01 × 14.89 inches

Great Britain, Ascot Races, 1977, black and white gelatin silver print, 10.01 × 14.89 inches

Rome, 1977, gelatin silver print, 10.01 × 14.89 inches

London, 1977, gelatin silver print, 10.01 × 14.89 inches

Berlin, 1982, gelatin silver print, 9.97 × 14.97 inches

Trento, Nomad Campsite, 1984, gelatin silver print, 10.01 × 14.58 inches

Rome, 1987, gelatin silver print, 10.01 × 14.89 inches

L'aquila, 1990, gelatin silver print, 10.60 × 14.89 inches

Modena, 1994, two gelatin silver prints, 10.05 × 14.89 inches

Nomad Campsite, 1995, gelatin silver print, 10.05 × 14.89 inches

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