

VIAGGIO  
RACCONTO  
MEMORIA

# FERDINANDO SCIANNA

Galleria  
d'arte  
moderna 21  
Febbraio  
28  
Palermo Luglio  
2019

Mostra  
promossa  
da



Città di Palermo  
Assessorato Cultura

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*"I do not think I can change the world with my photographs, but I do firmly believe that a bad picture can make it worse."*

Ferdinando Scianna

On next 21<sup>st</sup> February a major anthological exhibition dedicated to Ferdinando Scianna is being opened to the public at the premises of the Gallery of Modern Art of Palermo. It has been curated by Denis Curti, Parla Bergna and Alberto Bianda, as its art director, and it has been organised by Civita. The exhibition features about 180 black and white photographs printed in different formats and it spans the entire career of the Sicilian photographer and develops along an articulated narrative path, built on different chapters and following different exhibition design arrangements. Ferdinando Scianna is believed to be one of the greatest masters of photography, not only in Italy. His interest in photography started back in the Sixties, when he began describing the culture and traditions of his native Sicily with his photos. His long artistic journey comprises several themes – current events, war, travel, popular religiosity – linked together by one common thread: a constant search for form in life's chaos. Over 50 years of stories have provided us with plenty of fascinating pictures: from Bagheria to the Bolivian Andes, from religious festivals – the debut of his career – to his work with fashion, which began with Dolce & Gabbana and Marpessa. Then followed his work as a photojournalist (he was a member of the Magnum photographic agency), photos of landscapes, and of some of his thematic obsessions such as mirrors, animals, objects, and finally by the portraits of his great friends, masters of the art and culture world, like Leonardo Sciascia, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and Jorge Louis Borges, just to name a few.

***"For a seventy-five year old photographer, a great anthological exhibition like the one in Palermo is a complex, fascinating and perhaps even arbitrary journey through the fifty years of his work and into his memory. Here we have already two key words of this exhibition and its***

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***accompanying book: Memory and Journey. The third key word, is Story. Over 180 photographs divided into three large chapters, each divided into nineteen different themes: this is what this exhibition aims to be, a Story, a Journey into Memory. The story of a photographer in over half a century of photography”, explained Ferdinando Scianna***

In this exhibition, Ferdinando Scianna has decided to put on display the most extensive anthology of his photographic work. With his usual and marked self-mockery, he has chosen to quote Giorgio Manganelli at the beginning of the exhibition:

***“An anthology is an authorised carnage, a bloodbath seen with favourable eyes by civil and religious authorities. A clean operation aimed to chew up books that go around the world under their author’s name to obtain some sort of stew, timbale, casserole ...***

Ferdinando Scianna wrote of his work: ***<<I see myself as a photo reporter. As such, Henri Cartier-Bresson is my special reference point, my master par excellence. In his view, a photographer must aspire to be an invisible witness, never stepping in to change the world and the moments of real life he reads and interprets. I have always clearly distinguished between images you happen to run into and those that are constructed. I have always felt I belong to those photographers who happen to run into images, those who tell you a story and tell a story about you, like in a mirror. Even when taking fashion photographs, I always happened to run into them through haphazard encounters with the world.>>***

Sections of the exhibition:

MEMORY, Bagheria – Sicily – Religious festivals;  
STORY, Lourdes – Children – Kami – Suffering;  
OBSESSIONS, Sleep – Things – Shadows – Beasts – Mirrors;  
Journey, America – Wanderings – Places;  
PORTRAITS  
RITUALS AND MYTHS, Ceremonies - Women - Marpessa

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To gain a deeper understanding of the contents of the exhibition and provide food for thought about the iconic scope of Ferdinando Scianna's photography, Civita Sicilia has designed an educational project aimed at school and adult groups and at families. It includes the usual guided visits in addition to visits/explorations and educational workshops to be booked. In an audio guide, also available in English, Scianna speaks in first person about photography and many other topics. It's a true parallel story, allowing us to get a closer look at his career as a photographer and at his personal life. A documentary film dedicated to the professional life of Ferdinando Scianna will be showed within the exhibition.

The exhibition will also be accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue published by Marsilio Editori.

ON 20<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY PUBLIC MEETING WITH FERDINANDO SCIANNA AND CURATOR DENNIS CURTI AT REAL TEATRO SANTA CECILIA TO PRESENT THE EXHIBITION AND ANSWER QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE. THEN, GUIDED VISIT TO THE EXHIBITION AND FERDINANDO SCIANNA IS SIGNING BOOK COPIES AT THE MUSEUM BOOKSHOP UNTIL 9.30pm.

**Ferdinando Scianna** was born in 1943 in Bagheria, Sicily. In the early sixties, when he was still very young in his hometown, he decided to embrace photography, so he started describing the culture and traditions of his homeland through his photos. Very soon he decided to start a career as a photographer thus disrupting his parents' projects who wanted him to become a medical doctor or a lawyer. Already the first portraits he took of people in Bagheria, which he photographed with a curious and involved look, were loaded with intensity.

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In 1961, he started university in Palermo to study Literature and Philosophy while his passion for photography started to take a form. He followed the classes of the famous critic Cesare Brandi and showed his photos to Enzo Sellerio who introduced him to the cultural universe of Bresson. During those years his political opinions were being shaped, which became crucial for the development of his photography together with the bond with his land of origin and Sicilian tradition.

Some two years later, he encountered someone who would become a key figure for his professional and personal life, that is the writer Leonardo Sciascia. When he was only twenty-one, they published together the essay *Feste religiose in Sicilia* which was awarded the prestigious Nadar prize. The book proved to be very controversial mainly because of Sciascia's texts which showed the materialistic essence of those religious celebrations. Yet, also the photos of the young Scianna made a strong impression.

"Photography was a way to tell the story of human affairs. My teacher told me this, and introduced me to a certain way of seeing things, of reading, of thinking, of situating myself in relation to the world."

On the wave of the success of the book, Scianna moved to Milan where he was hired at the magazine *Europeo* as photojournalist; then he became a specialist correspondent and then correspondent from Paris, where he lived for ten years. In Paris he also began to successfully write and worked for many newspapers, including *Le Monde Diplomatique* and *Quinzaine Littéraire* among others. "I happened to be writing more than photographing, but I knew I was writing as a photographer," states Scianna.

It was in the French capital city that Henri Cartier Bresson came in contact with and highly appreciated his work, so in 1982 he invited him to apply and join the Magnum Photos he had established in 1947. Scianna went back to Milan and quit his job at the *Europeo* to focus on photography. "The agency is the tool of a group of independent photographers. The more you can use this tool, the better this organization capitalizes on your work. Magnum keeps surviving by following the egalitarian utopian tenets of its founders.

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Quite mysteriously, it manages to keep the most violent contradictions together”.

In Milan, he worked for various newspapers. He also started to photograph for two young emerging designers, Dolce & Gabbana. This was a casual meeting, which would lead to one of the most successful partnerships in fashion photography. Scianna was asked to create a catalogue by placing the beautiful model Marpessa in the context of his Sicily. Scianna managed to masterfully mix the visual registers of the fashion world with his photojournalist experience, thus creating an original result that broke away from the glossy monotony of fashion photography. This success would lead him to work for prestigious international fashion magazines and create other fashion photo-services where he would skilfully combine fiction with authenticity.

This sudden and unexpected turn opened up Scianna’s photographic world to new experiences, in parallel to his more traditional photojournalism experience, namely advertising and commercial photographs. At the same time, he never neglected social reportage, portraits, and journalism:

“Now, with unchanged passion, fun and irony, I work in the most diverse fields. I do a bit of fashion, some advertising, reportage, and more than ever I try to make portraits. Also, I retrieve material from my photographic archives for numerous projects. In my exhibitions, I make no distinction between photos coming from my work as a photojournalist and fashion photos, for example. I arrange all of them seamlessly, which, at the end of the day, is what I do everyday in my work”

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## Title

FERDINANDO SCIANNA  
*Journey Story Memory*

## Running

From 21 February to 28 July 2019

## Venue

Palermo, Galleria d'arte Moderna "Empedocle Restivo"  
Via sant'Anna 21

## Curated by

Paola Bergna  
Denis Curti  
Alberto Bianda, Art Director

## Opening Hours

Tuesday to Sunday 9:30 am to 6:30 pm  
Ticket office closes at 5:30 pm  
Closed on Monday

## TICKETS

€ 10.00 Full price

€ 7.00 reduced price for groups (at least 15 people), visitors aged 19 and 25 years, senior citizens (65 and older) and holders of special discount cards (valid in Italy).

Free Admission for visitors under the age of 18, school groups and one escorting teacher, disabled people and their escorts, accredited journalists, students of the Palermo School of Fine Arts, ICOM members, tour guides.

Special price Exhibition + Museum € 12.00

Rental audioguide, available in Italian and English: € 2.00.

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## Info and booking

091.8431605

[info@gampalermo.it](mailto:info@gampalermo.it)

[www.gampalermo.it](http://www.gampalermo.it) ; [www.mostraferdinandoscianna.it](http://www.mostraferdinandoscianna.it)

To book guided visits for adult and school groups

091.8431605 [didattica@gampalermo.it](mailto:didattica@gampalermo.it)

## Press office Civita

Antonio Gerbino, phone 335 413512

Rosanna Piscione, phone 091.8431605

Email: [press@gampalermo.it](mailto:press@gampalermo.it)

Barbara Izzo, tel. 06 692050220;

Email: [b.izzo@operallaboratori.com](mailto:b.izzo@operallaboratori.com)