

ROMANO CAGNONI / THE PHENOMENON OF LIFE



Curated by Benedetta Donato e Serena Del Soldato / text by Benedetta Donato

LABottega is pleased to present *The Phenomenon of Life*, the first tribute exhibition dedicated to Romano Cagnoni, one of the most important photojournalists of the twentieth century, who died in January this year. The exhibition, curated by Benedetta Donato and Serena Del Soldato, wants to retrace, with an unprecedented look, the professional and human experience of the author who defined himself as "Total Photographer".

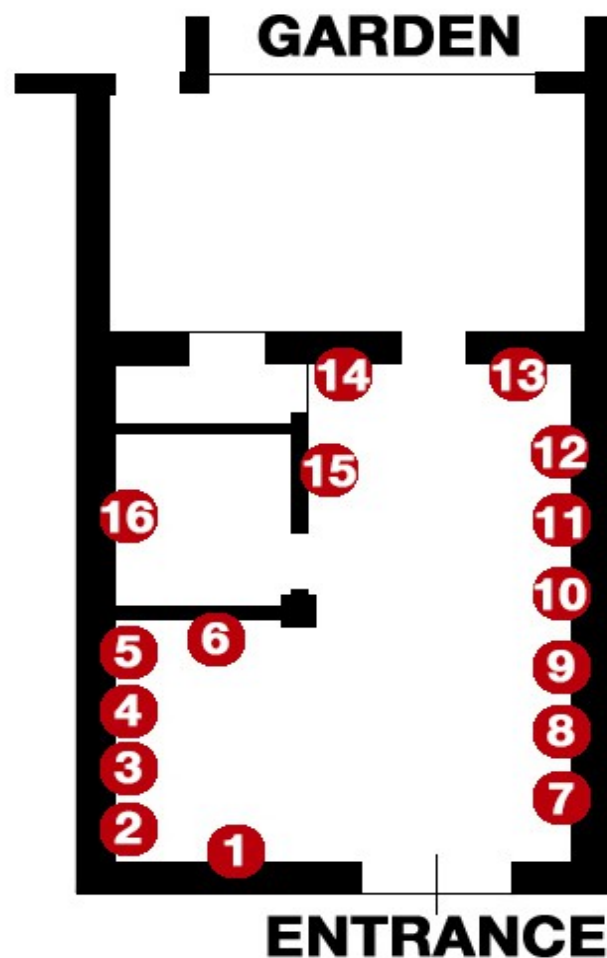
As Cagnoni has repeatedly stated: «Total Photography tells the story of man, the relationship with himself, with his neighbor and the society in which he lives».

Staying true to the kind of photojournalism, which has always shared the fundamental importance of the image in the information, for the undeniable impact that it is able to give back, his objective has always focused on the existence that he chose to tell.

The planned exhibition aims to make the work of Romano Cagnoni even more known and understood, known for images that have now become part of our collective memory, such as the photographs taken in Biafra during the civil war in Nigeria, the portrait of President Ho Chi Minh in North Vietnam or New Guinea, whose poetry of a pregnant girl walking on a stilt house is immediately remembered.

Romano Cagnoni – Biography

Romano Cagnoni is an international, award-winning photographer, known as one of the foremost photographers of the 20th century. His photographs have been featured on the cover and front page of nearly every significant news magazine and paper in Europe and the United States. He is most known for his documentary work of the wars and conflicts around the globe. Throughout his career he has delineated intellectually stimulating images of ourselves, the conditions that define our existence and our very hopes of transforming it. The first time he picked up a camera was in the early days after the war, assisting a local photographer to carry heavy equipment into the many sculptor studios of Pietrasanta. Never having opened a book of photography, he took photos of what he liked and began to sell portraits of beach-goers along the Tuscan seaside. His professional career began when he moved to London in 1958. Not long thereafter, he met Simon Guttman (who initiated Robert Capa into photography) and they began to work together to cover cultural subjects for quality papers. After having success with the campaign for the Labour Party when Harold Wilson became Prime Minister, Cagnoni along with James Cameron, were the first western non-communist journalist allowed into North Vietnam during the tumultuous years of the war and Life Magazine published, on the cover, the President Ho Chi Minh. Cagnoni started to plan and produce world wide stories on his own. He covered Biafra, the civil war in Nigeria, which was published in large spreads on different issues in Life Magazine and earned him the USA Overseas Press Award, the Chile of Allende, with writer Graham Greene, the return of Peron in Argentina, The Yom Kippur war in Israel, the war in Cambodia, the war in Yugoslavia shot with a large format camera, The Chechen War, where he set up a studio during the fighting to photograph the warriors. And numerous other stories. After living and working in London for thirty years, he returned to his home town of Pietrasanta, surrounded by the landscapes that shaped his youth. Finding the environment so changed, he began to photograph in and around the place of his birth. The series that resulted, "Upside Down Memories" is technically intriguing due to surfaces that seem to have been painted with multiple layers of colors and a certain rhythm of shapes that lead the viewer to believe Photoshop was used. However, the only help he needed in order to photograph these memories was the "phantom of painting". Most recently, Cagnoni is broadening the very concept of how one views photography. He is developing photographic structures, which he calls: Electroluminescent bas-reliefs where the perception of reality is reconfigured, in an attempt to rearticulate traditional aesthetics and thereby establish an aesthetic that can respond to contemporary issues and circumstances. Cagnoni has had more than 45 solo shows world wide, won many awards and published 16 books. He, along with Henry Cartier- Bresson, Bill Brandt, Don McCullin and Eugene Smith, was recently credited in the book, Pictures on a Page by the former Sunday Times editor, Harold Evans as being one of the most famous photographers in the world.



THE PHENOMENON OF LIFE
ROMANO CAGNONI

- [1] - Blocco Biafra - Heads, Biafra, 1970
- [2] - Blocco Vietnam -034, Ho Chi Minh, 1965
- [3] - Blocco Vietnam -Film 3, Ho Chi Minh, 1965
- [4] - Blocco Vietnam -Film 25, North Vietnam, 1965
- [5] - Blocco Vietnam -061, North Vietnam, 1965
- [6] - 130, British Museum, London, 1968
- [7] - Blocco Iugoslavia - 012, Sarajevo, 1992
- [8] - Blocco Iugoslavia - Film 48, Sarajevo, 1992
- [9] - Blocco Iugoslavia - Iugoslavia, 1991
- [10] - Blocco Iugoslavia - 015(c), Vukovar, 1991
- [11] - Blocco Iugoslavia - Film 6, Mostar, 1993
- [12] - Blocco Iugoslavia - 014(b), Mostar, 1993
- [13] - 056, Turin, 1978
- [14] - 110, London, 1976
- [15] - 122, Bangladesh, 1971
- [16] - GALAXY, EARTH CHILDREN

