

Luigi Ghirri. *The Map and the Territory*



LUIGI GHIRRI
Lido di Spina. 1974
Fotografía color. 13 x 19 cm.
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DATES:	26 September 2018 – 7 January 2019
PLACE:	Sabatini building, Floor 3.
ORGANIZATION:	Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in collaboration with Folkwang Museum (Essen) and Jeu de Paume (Paris)
CURATOR:	James Lingwood
COORDINATION:	Fernando López

The Map and the Territory is the first major Luigi Ghirri retrospective to go on show outside the artist's native Italy. The focus of the exhibition rests on the 1970s, a key period in the expansion of the suburbs and the service economy, the emergence of conceptual art and the mainstreaming of Pop and its strategies of appropriation. Framed inside this context, Ghirri, who used tools and processes from amateur photography — a small Canon camera, colour film — began to photograph the suburbs of Modena, thus creating an unmatched body of work inside the prevalent art photography of the time.

The end of that decade would culminate in two significant moments in Ghirri's career: the publication, in 1978, of the meticulously sequenced photobook *Kodachrome*, and in 1979 the unveiling of his first major exhibition, *Vera Fotografia*, at the Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione (CSAC) in Parma.

This exhibition is structured around two key notions: “territory” and “map”, ideas which reflect the world and the way it is represented. The selection of works here reprises the poetic cartography of the 1979 show, which, across fourteen series divided into themes, surveyed a compendium of the places Ghirri travelled through: houses in the suburbs; the landscape of signs in the provincial Italy of that era; the relationship between artificiality and nature in the gardens of Modena; modern advertising images; the simulated world of amusement parks; those who photograph and those who are photographed; details of maps taken from an atlas, and so on.

Ghirri’s training as a surveyor and draughtsman shaped his frontal view of reality, with a pronounced approach to scale and measurement: “Rather than making photographs, my aim was to create charts and maps which at the same time were photographs”. Equally, he acted as a barometer in a vernacular territory which transformed as new forms of housing, leisure and publicity proliferated. “I’m interested in fleeting architecture, the world of provinces, objects which everyone calls kitsch but which for me have never been that way; they are objects which are laden with desires, dreams and collective memories [...] windows, mirrors, stars, palm trees, atlases, armillary spheres, books, museums and people seen through images”.

Ghirri was constantly fascinated by representations of the world in the form of reproductions, photos, posters, models and maps and the way they are embedded in reality, as signs that become part of a city or landscape. The mediation of experience through images in Italy, at that time swaying between old and new, became for Ghirri a territory of endless investigation: “a great adventure in the world of thinking and looking, a wonderful toy that miraculously manages to combine our adult awareness and the fairy tale world of children...a never-ending journey through great and small, through variations and the realm of illusions and appearances, a labyrinthine specular place of multitudes and simulation”.

For further information:

PRESS OFFICE

MUSEO REINA SOFÍA

prensa1@museoreinasofia.es

prensa3@museoreinasofia.es

(+34) 91 774 10 05 / 06

www.museoreinasofia.es/prensa

