

Press Release

***TOSCANI CHEZ MAZZOLENI***

Curated by Nicolas Ballario

London, 26 April – 4 June 2023

**Private View: Tuesday 25 April, 6 – 8pm**

Mazzoleni presents ***TOSCANI CHEZ MAZZOLENI***, the first solo exhibition at the London gallery by the internationally celebrated **photographer and art director Oliviero Toscani**.

The show follows the major exhibition that took place at **Mazzoleni Torino between November 2022 and January 2023**. Bringing together a curated selection of photographs chosen by the artist himself, the London show presents **new and historical shots – printed on microcement using an innovative technique – to the UK art scene**. A special event with the participation of the artist at the **Embassy of Italy in London** will complement the exhibition, presenting his other ongoing project *Razza Umana* (Human Race) on 26 April.

Oliviero Toscani (b. 1942) is internationally known as the creative force behind some of the most famous magazines and brands, such as Polaroid, Porsche, Chanel, as well as Elle, GQ, Vogue, among many others, working in Paris, London, Milan and New York. However, Toscani has always gone beyond commercial goals, masterfully exploiting the medium of photography to support **his own version of contemporary humanism**. To Toscani, photography is communication, and *“communication, with its entire media, could really be at the service of the humanity. Being creative means researching the new language that we are looking for to symbolise and identify the human condition and the exertions of society, to understand and explain the new world that is racing towards us with the speed of a meteorite. They could be utilised to help enrich humanity in the laborious task of expressing itself better in this world, to connect with the rest of society and permit a better future.”* (Oliviero Toscani, speech presented at ADC NY and D&AD London Arts Directors Club, in *More than Fifty Years of Magnificent failures*, 2015).

Toscani’s institutional and corporate projects have brought themes of **social responsibility into mainstream media**, with campaigns promoting awareness of major social issues including road safety, anorexia, violence against women, religion, as well as racism and integration.

Among his most important collaborations, Toscani contributed to establish **United Colors of Benetton**’s image and identity as a globally recognizable brand. By shifting the communication strategy towards promoting messages of peace and tolerance, focusing attention on social issues such as AIDS, the death penalty, integration, and equality, Toscani was able to create striking and thought-provoking images. This is exemplified by ***San Francesco, 2019***, a shot that charmingly captures Toscani’s engagement with the topic of race. Referring to Saint Francis of Assisi – the 13<sup>th</sup>-century friar known for his ministry to the poor and underprivileged, and care for nature and animals – he celebrates diversity and promote equality.

Toscani is also known for challenging prejudices and conventions, as ***Manette*** (Handcuffs), **1989**, on display exemplifies, another work used for a United Colors of Benetton’s campaign. The subject represented allows the viewer to confront their own prejudices – especially relevant

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in the late 1980s when this photo was taken – by testing whose hand they assume to belong to the policeman or convict.

The final corpus of showcased works will be the photographs of the *Grande Cretto* (Great Cretto), **Alberto Burri's monumental masterpiece of Land Art** created in 1981, which covers part of the ruins of Gibellina, a Sicilian town devastated by a massive earthquake in 1968. Printed on monumental slabs of concrete for the exhibition – echoing the depicted subject – these shots were taken by Toscani for the "Louis Vuitton Fashion Eye" project in 2018, when he was invited among other photographers to shoot a city of their choice for a travel series. Toscani captures the *Grande Cretto* with high-angle and quadrangular shots, projecting the viewer into the labyrinthine space of intricate alleys, **skirting the line with abstraction.**

The project presented at the **Embassy of Italy in London** complements the show at the gallery. Since 2007, Oliviero Toscani has been curating *Razza Umana* (Human Race), a photographic project focusing on the different morphologies and conditions of human beings and representing all the expressions – physical, somatic, social and cultural – of humanity.

#### **OLIVIERO TOSCANI**

Oliviero Toscani is internationally known as the creative force behind the most famous brands in the world, creator of images that have changed the history of communication. His institutional and corporate campaigns have brought subjects of social responsibility into the mainstream.

Toscani was one of the founding professors of the Mendrisio Academy of Architecture, he taught visual communication in various universities and wrote books on communication.

After nearly six decades of publishing innovation, advertising, film and television, he is now interested in the creativity of communication applied to various media, producing editorial projects, books, television programs, exhibitions and workshops. He won numerous awards, such as the Golden Lion four times at the Cannes Film Festival, the *Grand Prix d’Affichage* twice, the *UNESCO Grand Prix*, the Saatchi & Saatchi *Creative Hero* Award and several Art Directors Club awards from around the world. The Academy of Fine Arts of Urbino awarded him the *Il Sogno di Piero* prize. He received the title of *Academic of Honour* from the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence and that of *Academic of Merit* from the Academy of Perugia. In 2021 he received the *Lorenzo il Magnifico* Career Award at the XIII Florence Biennale. In 2017 he obtained honorary degrees from the Academy of Fine Arts of Brescia and from the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo, and in 2018 from the University of the Arts in Zurich. Oliviero Toscani is an honorary member of the Leonardo Committee and of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts.

#### **MAZZOLENI**

Mazzoleni is a leading Post-War Italian and contemporary art gallery based in London and Turin. With over 35 years of activity, Mazzoleni focuses on a museum-calibre exhibition programme and participates in the main international art fairs, including Art Basel, Frieze, and TEFAF, as well as Artissima, Artefiera and Miart. Most recently, the gallery has expanded its reach towards new art scenes with its participation in Frieze Seoul, Art Abu Dhabi and Art Dubai. The Mazzoleni collection is exhibited in museums and institutions worldwide, such as: the Centre Pompidou and Palais de Tokyo in Paris; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation in New York; the Smithsonian Institution in Washington; The State Ermitage Museum in St. Petersburg; Tate and the Estorick Collection in London, as well as Museo del Novecento in Florence, the GNAM in Rome, MADRE Museum in Naples, Triennale Milano and Palazzo Reale in Milan, and the Venice Biennale. Mazzoleni represents the Estate of Agostino Bonalumi.

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

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