

ENGLISH

GALLERIA CONTINUA

SAN GIMIGNANO BEIJING LES MOULINS HABANA ROMA SAO PAULO PARIS DUBAI

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# HIROSHI SUGIMOTO

## *Viaggio in Italia*

24/11/2023 - 13/02/2024

Tuesday - Saturday 11.00 - 19.00

Galleria Continua is pleased to present for the first time in its exhibition spaces in Rome, inside the prestigious hotel The St. Regis Rome, one of the central figures of the international artistic scene, Hiroshi Sugimoto. *Viaggio in Italia*, is the title of the exhibition accompanied by a critical text by Ilaria Bernardi: it starts from the interiors of some historic theatres (including Bologna, Sabbioneta, Mantua); then it retraces part of the Italian stages of a famous journey done in the sixteenth century by four Japanese delegates, also known as the "Four Boys" or "Tenshō ken'ō shisetsu (The Tenshō Embassy to Europe)"; before ending in the boundless spaces of the Amalfi sea.

*Theaters* is a project that started in 1976 and it has led the artist for more than forty years to photograph the interiors of cinemas and theatres all over the world. In 2013, after a break of almost 15 years, Sugimoto resumed working on this subject matter, including for the first time in his shots the stalls and the gallery as well as the illuminated screen

of the theatre and therefore extending the view out into the public space. The works exhibited in the gallery are included in the wake of this most recent research. In *Theaters* the exposure time used for photography corresponds to the projection time of the film. This allows Sugimoto to capture the duration of the entire film in a single shot, transforming the screen into a white rectangle capable of illuminating the theatre and its architectural beauty, as well as revealing details that are barely perceptible in the semi-darkness. Just like in his *Seascapes*, where the seas represent a past that is regenerating and repeating itself - each time becoming richer in experience and history - the artist delegates to the viewer the responsibility of rousing the memory contained in a magical white space.

*Seascapes* is a long-standing series of panoramic views. Divided equally between water and sky, the horizon line is always placed at the exact same height; it marks the exact contact point between Earth's surface and the sky,

representing the limits of our mental and visual perception while also instilling a sense of eternity. The frame, taken with a 19th century style large format camera using black-and-white film, captures the passing of time, giving us images full of mystery made to be admired and contemplated. " (...) Mystery of mysteries, the water and the air are right there in front of us in the sea. Every time I look at the sea, I feel a calming sense of security, as if I were visiting my ancestral home; I am embarking on a journey of observation", declares Hiroshi Sugimoto.

In the summer of 2015, the artist was in Italy to carry out his project on theatres. Visiting the oldest surviving opera house in Europe, the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza designed by Andrea Palladio, he comes across the Quattro Ragazzi for the first time. This is how Sugimoto talks about the genesis of the project. "(...) Pointing to one of the fresco panels (the foyer has a beautiful fresco that runs along the walls just under the ceiling), the director of the theatre explained to me that it showed a group of envoys from Japan welcomed into the theatre when they visited Vicenza while passing through Rome in 1585, the year the theatre opened. After careful observation I could distinguish, with almost absolute certainty, four Japanese-looking people in the front row. They were the famous young envoys, the four boys, of the Tenshō mission in Europe. Immediately a strong interest arose in me in tracing the travels of the four boys around Italy. I began to investigate their movements and discovered that after landing in Livorno they went to Pisa and Florence,

via Siena to Rome, and then from Assisi to Venice. I had photographed the Pantheon in Rome, the Leaning Tower of Pisa and the Cathedral of Siena, all buildings that were already there when the four boys arrived in Italy. Almost by chance, I realised that I was seeing the same buildings that the four boys had seen. Voices from a distant time reached out to me: 'we want to see through your eyes the same places we once saw in Europe', they said. The voices could have come from the realm of the dead rather than from some corner of my mind, they mixed, they resonated, they made themselves heard only by me like an echo. Having until then only followed the footsteps of the four boys by chance, I consciously decided to visit and photograph other places they had visited. Chance had turned into necessity. I had no idea how faithfully I could recreate 400 years later the way things looked back then. (...) I visited the places of the origin of my spirit and I took a journey in order to have visual confirmation, which I reveal here in this exhibition".

As we read in Ilaria Bernardi's text, "the underlying idea of the photographs exhibited in this exhibition at Galleria Continua / Roma, St. Regis Rome is to win against time, cancelling its flow, eternalising it and crystallising it in a specific moment".

**Hiroshi Sugimoto** was born in Tokyo in 1948. In 1970 he graduated from Saint Paul's University in Tokyo and subsequently, in 1974, from the Art Center College of Design in Los Angeles. In that same year he moved to New York and today he splits his time between Tokyo and New York. A multifaceted figure, he has developed his artistic practice

mainly through photography, sometimes associated with sculptural objects, architecture and experimental exhibition installations. Grouped in thematic cycles that develop over a long period, Hiroshi Sugimoto's photographs are an instrument of investigation into the photographic medium itself, through which to hide or reveal the thin line that separates reality from appearance. His research presents itself as a reflection on time, which passes through both the working procedure and the choice of subjects, crystallised in an instant and made eternal by the artist's shot with an almost visionary intuition.

Sugimoto has exhibited in museums around the world, his works are housed in prestigious collections: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery, London; National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo; Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; MACBA, Barcelona; Tate Gallery, London. Among the major solo exhibitions we remember those organised at the Himeji City Museum of Art, Himeji (2022), the Château de Versailles (2019), the Kyoto City KYOCERA Museum of Art, Kyoto (2020), the Kyoto City KYOCERA Museum of Art, Kyoto (2020), the Royal Museum of Fine Arts of Belgium in Brussels (2018), the Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Foundation in Turin (2017), the Multimedia Art Museum in Moscow (2016), the Photography Foundation in Modena (2015), the Palais de Tokyo in Paris (2014), the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York (2013), the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo (2012), the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh (2011), the Neue

Nationalgalerie in Berlin (2008), the de Young Museum in San Francisco (2007), the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington D.C. (2006), the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo (2005), the Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain in Paris (2004), the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao / Deutsche Guggenheim in Berlin (2000), the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (1995). In 1988 he received the Mainichi Art Prize, in 2009 the Praemium Imperiale of the Japanese Art Association; in 2001 his work was awarded with the prestigious Hasselblad Foundation International Award, in 2014 with the Isamu Noguchi Award, in 2017 with the Centenary Medal of The Royal Photographic Society, in 2018 with the National Arts Club Medal of Honor in Photography. Until 7 January 2024, the Hayward Gallery in London will host *Time machine*, a large solo exhibition by the artist. In 2024, the exhibition will then travel to UCCA Center for Contemporary Art, in Beijing and to the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney.

Galleria Continua is located inside the prestigious The St. Regis Rome hotel. Since 2018, it has presented works by international artists of the calibre of Loris Cecchini, Pascale Marthine Tayou, Sun Yuan & Peng Yu, Hans Op De Beeck, and Ai Weiwei, to name a few. Together they also collaborate with Città dell'Arte Fondazione Pistoletto with which they often host workshops and talks for school children. Since 2022, Galleria Continua has been an active part of Arte di Vivere, the festival dedicated to art, music and cuisine for the city of Rome organised by the St. Regis Rome.

For more information and photographic material on the exhibition: Silvia Pichini Press Office and Communications  
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