

AD *Portfolio*

Royals homes in Kuwait, Portugal, Morocco, the USA, and Massimo Listri's poetic and grand photography

**FRANZ XAVER
MESSERSCHMIDT VI,
AUSTRIA, 1994**

"I took this photo in Vienna, emphasising the idea of showcasing the vibrant life of a marble piece. [Johann Caspar] Lavater's physiognomy was the foundation for all my work on the Messerschmidt sculptures. I believe that finding the beauty and the hidden energy behind a work of art is a form of expression."

Poet of Images

Through his lens, Massimo Listri – one of the best interior and architectural photographers in the world – shares the visual splendour and poetry of one-of-a-kind places

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*f*inesse, harmony, and majesty are some of the words that best describe Massimo Listri's work. The photographer's career, which spans three decades, has led him to exceptional places. From the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence and the Palazzo di Ostankino in Moscow to the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna and the Biblioteca dei Girolamini in Naples, Listri uses his camera to reveal the intimacy and unique atmosphere of monumental spaces.

"The place that impressed me most is Pio Clementino Museum, inside the Vatican Museums," he confesses. In 2014, he was the first contemporary artist to exhibit his work inside the 18th-century rooms of the Vatican Museums, where the unique papal collection of classical marble statuary is nestled.

Listri's photographs of palaces, libraries, museums, homes and gardens aim to "show what many do not know how to see," according to the photographer. Even if there is no human presence, every image is a fascinating piece that documents history with an underlying sense of soul.

"What made me become a photographer is the rapidity of expression that the camera allows," Listri says. His technique and appropriate use of symmetry and rigour help viewers grasp the essence of a place, and see and feel it in a few seconds. This characteristic makes Listri's images mesmerising.

One particular encounter marked a turning point in the photographer's professional path: "Meeting the publisher Franco Maria Ricci in 1981 was really decisive," he says. At that time, Listri – who was not yet 30 years old – made black-and-white portraits of important figures of the 20th century, such as Jorge Luis Borges, Pier Paolo Pasolini, René Clair and Federico Zeri. Once Listri started to collaborate with Ricci, interior spaces became his new focus.

His shots of empty spaces, abandoned chapels and aristocratic residences, as well as well-known palaces (the Venaria Reale and the Royal Palace of Naples), museums (the Musée Jacquemart-André in Paris and the Museo degli Argenti in Florence) and libraries (the Morgan in New York, library inside the Palácio Nacional de Mafra in Portugal and the Archive of the Indies in Seville) are meant to invite viewers to observe in a different way, to discover something that they would not have seen at first sight. Bringing to light what is hidden in the often-obscurantist banality of daily life and celebrating humanity through culture are at the centre of Listri's work.

A true seeker of beauty, Listri approaches photography in the same way he approaches any fine art. "My inspiration is antique painting," he says. For many years, he studied Piero della Francesca, Caravaggio and Vermeer. From them, he learned how to use natural light and contrast to shape spaces, and how to create the perfect composition. When contemplating his shots, there is no doubt that Listri's photographs are art.

PALACE OF QUELUZ, PORTUGAL, 1992

"I took a photo of this particular perspective in the throne hall because I loved the contrast between the floor's black and white chequered look and the rest of the space. The floor has a geometrical style that is both unique and beautiful architecturally."





**PALAZZO SERRISTORI,
ITALY, 2014**

"This is a photo of the empty blue ballroom of a palace in Florence, before it underwent restoration. I usually prefer taking images of spaces before they are restored, because the original soul of the space still exists."



PALATINA LIBRARY, ITALY, 2011

"During the 19th century, Biblioteca Palatina, in Parma, was built in a very sophisticated neo-classical style. This photograph reflects the relationship between the books and the space in which they are held."



VATICAN MUSEUMS, 2011

"Musei Vaticani, or the museum of sculpture, as I consider it. I think it is the most beautiful museum to walk around and visit ancient sculptures. I just love the space. I am the first artist to take photos in the Vatican museum – this is a great honour."



SANT'IGNAZIO CHURCH, COLOMBIA, 2016

"Two years ago, I was exhibiting some of my works in this church in Bogotá, but there was linen covering the upper portion of the space. Curiosity got the better of me, so I explored what was beyond the linen. I was rewarded with a vaulted ceiling which resembled a heavenly sky – a fantastic surprise that contrasted with the whiteness of the walls."



**CASTELLO DI STUPINIGI,
ITALY, 2012**

"The play of light lends a metaphysical feeling to the space. Located in Torino, Castello di Stupinigi has a typical baroque architectural style, complete with a large ornamental chandelier central to the composition of this photo."



**PALAZZO DEL QUIRINALE
COFFEE HOUSE, ITALY, 2015**

"Last year, I was invited to Palazzo del Quirinale, the Italian presidential palace. It was the first time that artists had ever exhibited in the Roman palace and met the man himself. This coffee house is not situated inside the 18th century palace, but in the garden."



**ROYAL PALACE OF
AMSTERDAM, THE
NETHERLANDS, 1992**

"I was inspired by the Royal Palace, which took the place of the old Town Hall in Amsterdam. I wanted to capture the contrast between the beautiful green wall sphere and the white marble."