

A PORTAL INTO

A DIFFERENT ADVENTURE

MASSIMO LISTRI

There is something quintessentially Italian about Massimo Listri's work. His large scale photographs depicting either grand or domestic, vast or intimate, simple, humble or sumptuous interiors, always take the viewer on a mystical journey that transcends the mere depiction of space, and projects the viewer onto a fantastical Pindaric flight.

The absence of any human presence enhances the slight uneasiness the viewer feels when confronted with his multiple picture planes. This infinity of depths and possibilities can only be imagined and dreamt of; a sort of empty theatrical stage ready for any type of performance; **each work a portal into a different adventure.**

It is this pervasive sense of suspension that makes his work differ dramatically from his German contemporaries. Several of them study and portray empty interiors, although they underline the abnegation of the humankind in a much more definitive solution.

While the works by the so called 'Dusseldorf School Photographers' (for example: Candida Hoffer, Andreas Gursky, Thomas Ruff and Elger Esser) share with Listri's similar interests in subject matter, their scale, composition and use of light serve to alienate the viewer from the space depicted, creating a cold and mysterious barrier between man and his surrounding world.

In Listri's interiors on the other hand, the lives, passions, fortunes and misfortunes of the men and women that have inhabited them, pervade the composition; the light is extremely romantic, inviting and at time sensual, setting a stage for the viewer's own imagination. They can be perceived as stills from a very cinematic vernacular in the tradition of Italian filmmakers like Visconti, Pasolini and Fellini.

Listri the artist in fact follows in the very tradition of centuries of Italian art (he is after all a Florentine himself), from Giotto to Mantegna and to de Chirico, where the use, and at times obsession with linear perspective has been seen as an attempt to create order, building a bridge

Text: Filippo Tattoni-Marcozzi / Image: Sammezzano in Tuscany, Italy

Palazzo del Quirinale Coffee House



between the natural and the supernatural.

His endless corridors and enfilades of rooms invite us to take a journey into new worlds, connecting our past, present and future with something sublime and intangible.

His meticulous attention to minutiae and details is exquisite. One can smell the dust on the ancient books resting on the shelves of the Palatine Library of Parma, feel the cold drafts in the Castle of Schwetzingen in Baden Wurttemberg or the warmth of the air in the colourful Mexican Yucatan courtyards.

In mid April, a new retrospective exhibition will open in Parma showcasing 60 of his most powerful works. The show, produced in collabo-

ration with his long term friend and supporter Franco Maria Ricci (also the publisher of many of Listri's books - I counted at least 50, one more stunning than the next) invites the viewer to escape his own mundane reality and meander through the spectacular rooms of unconventional places, from the Royal Palace of Naples, the Quirinale Palace in Rome (residence first of Popes, then Kings and now of The Italian President), to the glorious rooms of the Uffizi Museum in Florence, the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. This sublime journey takes one through the corridors of the Vatican Museums, into splendid temples of knowledge like the Apostolic Library of the Vatican, the Marciana Library in Venice and onward through the Kemsmonster Abbey Library in Austria and the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York... and more stops in Portugal, Spain, Moscow and Paris, to name just a few!