

From December 6 at the Museum di Roma in Trastevere

**The exhibition LOU DEMATTEIS
A JOURNEY BACK/UN VIAGGIO DI RITORNO
(Fotografie in Italia, 1972-1980)**

For the first time will be presented in it's complete set-up the visual tale of American photojournalist Lou Dematteis' four journeys in search of his roots
More than 100 photographs are shown, most of them previously unpublished.

Roma, 5 dicembre 2023 – It will be hosted from December 6, 2023 to March 24, 2024 at the Museo di Roma in Trastevere, the exhibition **LOU DEMATTEIS. A Journey Back/Un viaggio di ritorno (Photographs in Italy 1972-1980)**, dedicated to the photos taken in Italy by Italian-American photojournalist LOU DEMATTEIS.

The exhibition, curated by Claudio Domini and Paolo Pisanelli, is promoted by **Roma Capitale, Assessorato alla Cultura - Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali**, produced and realized by the cultural association **Errata Corrige**, in collaboration with **Big Sur, Officina Visioni, Cinema del Reale**, with the contribution of **Fondazione Home Movies-Archivio Nazionale del Film di Famiglia, Archivio Franco Pinna**. Museum Services by **Zètema Progetto Cultura**.

A Journey Back/Un viaggio di ritorno is the visual diary, expressed through photography, of four trips Dematteis made to **Italy in 1972, 1977, 1979 and 1980**. The exhibition develops an itinerary of more than **100 mostly unpublished photographs**, selected from the thousands taken by Dematteis in Italy and reproduced mostly by **silver gelatine prints**.

During those four journeys, Dematteis confronted a reality hitherto only imagined, and traversed the length and breadth of the Peninsula, touching – in addition of his paternal grandparents' countries of origin, between Piemonte and Liguria – **Milano, Venezia, Bologna, the coasts of Romagna, Firenze and Tuscany, Roma, Napoli and the Amalfi Coast, Lucania and Calabria, pushing as far as Sicily**.

An initiatory *Grand Tour*, approached by the author with enthusiasm and curiosity, moving only by train, which the exhibition itinerary seeks to restore both chronologically and geographically, to also highlight the process of rapid transformation of Italian society in those years.

Through that experience Lou Dematteis has the opportunity to verify the effectiveness of photography as a form of **communication and political action**, to finally adopt it as a professional and life choice in the immediately following years, when he will become a full-fledged photojournalist for the **Reuters New Pictures** agency.

What Dematteis's Italian photos document, in addition to a cross-section of almost ten years of our society, is **also the gaze** of a young American, of radical ideas and in conflict with the political choices of his home country, who seeks answers in his own anagraphic origins, in the face of a profoundly different culture and political-social context.

In them we find the **essence of Italy at that time**, the "official" one, the popular battles for rights and life in the streets, the daily life of ordinary people, social rituals, the factory and the school,

the "moonlight labor" and the hard work of the peasants, in a carousel of faces and places that solicit memory and collective imagery.

In these photographs, almost half a century after those shots and that Italy, in addition to the evidence of the historical document, with a photojournalistic flavor, there is the "**emotional document**," *the way we were*, the consciousness of what has been irretrievably lost.

The entire path of the exhibition will be punctuated by the words of the beat poet **Lawrence Ferlinghetti** (1919-2021), in short excerpts from his verses and diaries, who like Lou Dematteis, of whom he was a good friend, often reflected on his relationship with his Italian roots. Included in the exhibition itinerary, a **short documentary film** made for the occasion by **Paolo Pisanelli** and **Matteo Gherardini**, will tell through the author's words his professional and human story, and the "journeys back" to his second homeland.

LOUIS FRANK DEMATTEIS Biographical note

Is born in Palo Alto, California, in 1948, Louis Frank (Lou) Dematteis was one of five brothers and sisters in an Italian American family very proud of its heritage.

Dematteis has been greatly influenced by the American social documentary photographers Lewis Hine and Jacob Riis, and by the Depression-era work of Dorothea Lange, made for the U.S. *Farm Security Administration* and her documentation of the Japanese American internment in the U.S. after the start of WWII.

He starts to be involved with photography after graduating in Political Science by experimenting during a journey in Italy with the narrative effectiveness of image.

As most of the colleagues of his generation, he has been influenced by the photographers of *Magnum Photos*. He learned to anticipate the "decisive moment" from the great French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson of *Magnum*.

He worked for international newsmagazines and newspapers, and later as a staff photographer for *Reuters News Pictures*, Dematteis has documented many important stories around the world.

From 1985-90 during the height of the U.S.-backed Contra war, he was based in Managua, Nicaragua.

In 1986, his photographs of downed U.S. soldier -of-fortune Eugene Hasenfus received international recognition, including a citation from *World Press Photo* and inclusion in *The New York Times* and *National Press Photographers Association's Pictures of the Year*.

In the 1990s Dematteis documented Vietnam during its opening to the world after years in isolation after the end of the Vietnam War, and in 2008 he published a book showing the devastating environmental and health effects of oil exploitation by Texaco/Chevron in the Ecuadoran Amazon. At the beginning of the 2000 Millennium he started making documentary films. In 2010 he finished *Crimebuster: A Son's Search for His Father*, dedicated to the life and career of Louis B. Dematteis, Lou's father who was a famous District Attorney and Judge in Redwood City, California, and a pillar of Italian American Community.

He has published several photo books including: *Nicaragua: A Decade of Revolution*, 1991. *A Portrait of Vietnam*, 1996. *Crude Reflection: Oil, Ruin and Resistance in the Amazon Rainforest*, 2008. San Francisco; *Lowriders*, 2016.

He has exhibited his photographs around the world and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art purchased seven of his photographs for their permanent collection.

In the Summer of 2023 the *Festa di Cinema del reale e dell'irreale* shows his anthological exhibit *Five From One. Cinque paesi, cinque storie* in the Corigliano d'Otranto castle.
He lives in San Francisco where he produces feature and documentary films on subjects of social importance.