

DOCUMENTARY PHOTOS, ITALIAN-STYLE

How should photography respond to Fascism and its aftermath? An ambitious exhibition, opening September 6 at New York University's Grey Art Gallery and Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò, features images made by 60 Italian photographers in the period from the height of Mussolini's rule through Italy's post-war economic boom. Curated by Enrica Viganò, "NeoRealismo: The New Image in Italy, 1932-1960" has already toured Europe. Its arrival in New York City has inspired two companion shows opening in September at New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Howard Greenberg Gallery. All three exhibits, along with the catalogue of the Grey Art Gallery show, offer a chance to explore work by Italian documentary photographers little known in the U.S.

The term "Neo-realism" is associated with the cinematic trend started in

"NEOREALISMO: THE NEW IMAGE IN ITALY, 1932-1960"

September 6-December 8, 2018

Grey Art Gallery
100 Washington Square East
New York, NY 10003
www.greyartgallery.nyu.edu

NEOREALISMO: THE NEW IMAGE IN ITALY, 1932-1960

Text by Enrica Viganò, Martin Scorsese,
Gian Piero Brunetta and others
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the 1940s by Vittorio De Sica, Roberto Rossellini and other directors who used non-professional actors. "NeoRealismo," however, begins in 1932, the year the Fascist government opened a photo show in Rome, at a time when Mussolini had eliminated the free press. Still images produced by Istituto Luce—a film studio opened by the Fascists to make propaganda—show proud, strong workers. These are juxtaposed with images by independent photographers documenting poverty and hardship. A section of the exhibition is devoted to photos from the 1950s by Cecilia Mangini, Gianni Berengo Gardin, Alfredo Camisa and others who explored the cultures and customs in provinces from north to south. These regional distinctions were starting to blur as economic opportunities in rapidly industrializing cities lured people away from rural villages.

The Grey Art Gallery show will include posters and clips from films of the period, and several magazine layouts in which the exhibited photos originally appeared. These magazines often showed urbane and light-hearted subjects, capturing the optimism of an improving economy. Less than 15 years after the end of authoritarian rule, photography clubs had sprung up and fostered debates about what photography should be. Many photographers began to branch out from strictly documentary work. The show encompasses artfully framed images of daily life by Mario di Biasi, Piergiorgio Branzi and Roberto Spampinato.

Grey Art Gallery director Lynn Gumpert says the show "explores how Italian photographers conveyed daily political realities during these three decades, a subject that is particularly resonant today."

—HOLLY STUART HUGHES

BELOW: "When Snow Means Bread, Milan, 1956" by Sante Vittorio Malli. A new show looks at how Italian photographers responded to Fascism and Italy's post-war recovery.

