



Aldo Fallai

From Giorgio Armani to the Renaissance

Photographs 1975 - 2013

Florence, Villa Bardini - Museo Stefano Bardini, 10 January - 16 March 2014

Press Release, 9 January 2014

Florence - within the framework of the 85th edition of **Pitti Uomo**, opening tomorrow at **Villa Bardini** and at the **Museo Stefano Bardini** are the two sections of the retrospective *Aldo Fallai. From Giorgio Armani to the Renaissance. Photographs from 1978 to 2013*, curated by the art historians **Martina Corgnati** and **Carlo Sisi**, formerly director of the Gallery of Modern Art of Palazzo Pitti, with **Luigi Salvioli**, AD of *Oltre la moda. Immagine e comunicazione*, responsible for the concept and organisation of the event.

Attending today's presentation for the press along with Fallai and the curators were **Michele Gremigni**, President of the Fondazione Parchi Monumentali Bardini e Peyron, **Sergio Givone**, Councillor for Culture of the Florence City Council, **Antonella Nesi**, Director of the Museo Stefano Bardini, **Raffaello Napoleone**, AD of Pitti Immagine, and **Roberto Riccio**, Director General of the Istituto Marangoni. The exhibition is promoted by Palazzo Vecchio with the sponsorship of the Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana, the collaboration of the Fondazione Parchi Monumentali Bardini e Peyron and the Istituto Marangoni, and the support of LineaPiù.

Aldo Fallai took the fashion world by storm at the end of the 70s largely as a result of his collaboration with **Giorgio Armani**. Together they created the most important advertising campaigns of recent decades, thus underwriting some of the most exhilarating chapters in the history of Made in Italy. Despite this, it is the first time that a monographic study has been devoted to this extraordinary photographer, one of the most gifted, original and famous in the world, in the form of an exhibition that illustrates his creative career in around 180 spectacular photographs, mostly in the Armani colours (white, grey, sand) quite a few of extra-large dimensions, and all reprinted under the artist's supervision.

The exhibition allows us to discover the creations and the interests of the artist in fashion and beyond, that is in the direction of the visual arts which - for a Florentine such as Fallai - have always represented the most natural and indispensable context, rapidly transforming themselves into truly inexhaustible magnetic fields and sources of inspiration. For this reason too, it is right and fitting that the exhibition should be set up in Florence, the birthplace in which Fallai continues to live, work and explore streets, corners, works and people in daring and thrilling *dérives*, harbingers of continual discoveries and, through these, of new images.

The exhibition is laid out in two separate venues: in Villa Bardini (Costa San Giorgio 2) the fashion photos, the advertising campaigns, situations fleshed out by professional models as well as ordinary people, in other words almost thirty years of creative symbiosis with Giorgio Armani; the itinerary continues in the Museo Stefano Bardini (Via de' Renai 37) with the *Renaissance* section curated by the Director Antonella Nesi.

More than anything, the images of Aldo Fallai allow the visitor to rediscover the excellence of Italian fashion at its finest and most innovative hour: the 80s, when Giorgio Armani invented an elegant and vaguely androgynous woman and a man with a sophisticated look, at times transgressive and at times narcissistic.

Playing with roles and situations, with models that were intriguing rather than beautiful and expressive rather than seductive, from this fashion Aldo Fallai reconstructed a world that goes beyond the garment to portray an entire society and a generation, with its feelings, its moods, its locations and its seasons. A world in which people always counted enormously: through the photographs we can intuit an intense labour of relation and complicity between the artist and the model. This is even more true in the case of the male model, the man of 80s fashion that Aldo Fallai narrated like no other Italian photographer of the time.

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Fallai's curiosity, his exacting taste, his love for beauty and also for the exaggeration of form to the point of the grotesque, have led him one campaign after another to probe between the interstices of the language in search of different effects. And so, for example, sometimes blurred atmospheres prevail in the narration of a young and nostalgic nineteenth-century femininity, while other times – and more often – the strong, direct lighting combined with the austerity of the black and white that Fallai has always preferred define a hard, sculptural style that appears to be inspired by certain cuts of avant-garde cinema, or by the heroism of a Leni Riefenstahl.

Then there are the nudes, the celebrities, the statues and the works of art revisited in audacious *d'apres*, in addition to the ceaseless study in quest of the form moved by the solicitous, amorous presence of the gaze that grasps or captures it at the right moment. Over the last ten years in particular, famous paintings such as **Pontorno's** *Deposition* in Santa Felicita have become pretexts for reinterpretation of an ironic, and sometimes even grotesque, slant which, focusing unexpectedly on a strong and deep colour, produces effects of an absolutely dramatic intensity that has set a new style.

The exhibition runs up to 16 March next. *Opening hours* and *ticket prices* (with reciprocal reductions):

Villa Bardini: 10.00 - 19.00 (closed on Monday); € 8.00, reduced € 6.00, schools € 4.00.

Museo Stefano Bardini: Mon/Fri/Sat/Sun 11.00 - 17.00, € 6.00, reduced € 4.50, schools free.

Biographical note

Aldo Fallai (Florence, 1943) lives and works in his native city and in Milan. With a diploma from the Florentine Istituto d'Arte, where he later taught, he opened a graphic design studio with the photographer Mario Strippini and began to approach photography himself. In the middle of the 1970s he met Giorgio Armani, who was making his debut as a designer at the dawn of the worldwide affirmation of Made in Italy, to which Fallai's photography made a fundamental contribution.

His first assignment from Armani was a reportage for "L'Uomo Vogue"; this marked the start of a collaboration that was to continue for a quarter of a century, in the course of which Fallai helped to build and consolidate the image of the designer's brands (Giorgio Armani, Emporio Armani, Armani Jeans). A famous reportage of 1976, pivoting on the topic of second-hand apparel, helped to make his name as a fashion photographer with a disenchanting, restive and unconventional style.

Having achieved international fame, Fallai also worked for labels such as Hugo Boss, Canali, Cerruti, Salvatore Ferragamo, Gianfranco Ferré, Calvin Klein, Valentino and Ermenegildo Zegna. His reportages appeared regularly in the Italian and international fashion press, in magazines including "Amica", "Anna", "Annabella", "Elle", "GQ", "Grazia", "Harper's Bazaar Italia", "Max", "Moda", "Mondo Uomo", "L'Uomo Vogue", and the English, Italian and Australian editions of "Vogue". In the early 80s Fallai worked with models of striking personality, such as Angela Wilde, Antonia Dell'Atte and Gia Marie Carangi.

At the same time he began to address the icons of the history of art and the portrait genre, which he bound to fashion in a highly personal synthesis; this strand of his work was to have notable developments, in particular as a result of his collaboration with the Istituto Marangoni. Tuscan Mannerism, Caravaggio, the Pre-Raphaelites and the exoticism of the French orientalists have been identified by the critics among Fallai's artistic benchmarks. He has published the photo books *Almost One Year* (1993), inspired by Federico Zeri and Kazunori Iwakura, and *In fabbrica* (2007), an intriguing interpretation of Italian entrepreneurial vitality.

Catalogue Polistampa (large format, 224 pages, price € 35.00).