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LETIZIA BATTAGLIA: PHOTOGRAPHY AS A LIFE CHOICE

Jakopič Gallery, Ljubljana

24. 5. 2022– 2. 10. 2022

PRESS RELEASE, Ljubljana, 17 May 2022

*You are warmly invited to attend the opening of the **Letizia Battaglia: Photography as a life choice** exhibition at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, 24 May 2022 in the Jakopič Gallery. The exhibition will be opened by Stefano Faggioli, director of the Italian Cultural Institute – Ljubljana.*



The exhibition *Photography as a Life Choice* at the Jakopič Gallery, curated by Francesca Alfano Miglietti, presents Letizia Battaglia's opus through almost 300 photographs, many of which have never been exhibited before and reveal the social and political context in which they were taken, published, experienced and interpreted.

“Revolutionary in her style and content, Letizia Battaglia ‘treated’ her work like a manifest, exposing her convictions directly, authentically, poetically and subtly, thus revolutionising the role of photojournalism. Her method and view were selective, and her subjects made her become a controversial myth in the world of photography, always attracted by images which were intensely real and immediate, her life was marked by a fervour for communal engagement at its heart. Battaglia’s view

was adept at never disregarding the shadow,” wrote the curator Francesca Alfano Miglietti.

Letizia Battaglia was primarily a nonconformist intellectual and photoreporter but also a poetic and political photographer, she was a woman who interests herself in what surrounds her and in what, distant from her, intrigues her. She always felt herself not to be a photographer, but a person who took pictures.

Letizia took her photos always in ‘close up’- from the girl with the ball to the dead body of the politician Piersanti Mattarella, from the Sicilian streets to the portraits of her beloved women and girls. Battaglia thought: *“With the telescopic lens photography can be stolen, but I don’t like that stuff. I want to be seen, recognised, I want to be equal to the persons whom I photograph”*.

The *Photography as a Life Choice* exhibition in Jakopič Gallery brings together images which help to convey the strongly radicalised ideas that characterise the whole work of Letizia Battaglia. Her way of photographing people, places, and events, for example, never gets bogged down in clichés, but makes a continuous social criticism by questioning the

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visual assumptions of contemporary culture.

The exhibition is accompanied by catalogue *Letizia Battaglia. Fotografia come scelta di vita*, published by Marsilio Editori in 2019 and edited by the curator Francesca Alfano Miglietti, who also wrote the introductory essay for the publication. The book, alongside Battaglia's 300 photographs, also presents her wider work in photography, her political and social engagement, and her work in film and theatre. The monograph will be available at the Jakopič Gallery during the exhibition. Two documentary films will be on view in the gallery: *La Mia Battaglia* (produced by Lumpen, directed by Franco Maresco) and *Amore Amaro* (directed by Francesco G. Raganato).

Credit photo: Little girl with a soccer ball, La Cala neighborhood, Palermo 1980 © Letizia Battaglia

Text of the curator Francesca Alfano Miglietti on the occasion of the exhibition in Ljubljana:

THE DAYS OF BATTAGLIA*



(*last name Battaglia also means “the fight or battle”)

Credit photo: Letizia Battaglia, Palermo 1 dicembre 2018 © Roberto Strano

Revolutionary in her style and content, Letizia Battaglia ‘treated’ her work like a manifest, exposing her convictions directly, authentically, poetically and subtly, thus revolutionising the role of news photography. Her method and view were selective, and her subjects made her become a controversial myth in the world of photography, always attracted by images which were intensely real and immediate, her life was marked by a fervour for communal

engagement at its heart. Battaglia’s view was adept at never neglecting the shadow.

Letizia Battaglia always felt herself not to be a photographer, but a person who took pictures. Pier Paolo Pasolini was the subject of her first take, and in 1974 she responded to an invitation from the director of the newspaper L'Ora, Vittorio Nisticò, and became a witness of what was going on in Palermo, and in Sicily. Battaglia’s photographs were dramatic and symbolic icons of events involving the Mafia, and those of the depiction of Mafia bosses accused at the *Maxi trial*, including judge Giovanni Falcone, who collected disclosures of the *pentito* Tommaso Buscetta, as well as the image

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of Giulio Andreotti accused of having collaborated with the *Cosa nostra*. These photographs were exhibited around the world and won prestigious international recognition, including the Eugene Smith Grant. From the girl with the ball to the dead body of the politician Piersanti Mattarella, from the Sicilian streets to the portraits of her beloved women and girls, everything was always in 'close up': "With the telescopic lens photographs can be stolen, but I don't like that stuff. I want to be seen, recognised, I want to be equal to the persons whom I photograph".

During the course of her career, in collaboration with the agency *Informazione fotografica*, she founded the *Centro di Documentazione Giuseppe Impastato* in 1979 and in the 1980s the *Laboratorio d'If*, in which she mentored photographers and photojournalists from Palermo. Her work has been exhibited in Italy, Eastern Europe, France (in the Centre Pompidou in Paris), the United Kingdom, the USA, Brazil, Switzerland and Canada.

After Falcone's death in 1992 she decided to stop taking pictures of the violence perpetrated by the Mafia. She moved for a period to Paris, and only after having exhibited all over the world, it was in the first few years of the 2000s that her photographs finally made their way to Palermo.

A number of monographs were dedicated to her and her presence in the world of film: in 2008, Wim Wenders wanted her in a *cameo* role in the *Palermo Shooting*, and she also appeared in *Gli uomini di questa città non li conosco - Vita e Teatro di Franco Scaldati* [I don't know Men from this City – the Life and Theatre of *Franco Scaldati*] (2015). She also appeared in the film *La mafia non è più quella di una volta* [The Mafia Is No Longer What It Used to Be] by Franco Maresco, in 2019, the year in which the director Kim Longinotto dedicated to her the documentary *Letizia Battaglia - Shooting the Mafia*.

From 2000 to 2003 she was the Editor in Chief of the *Mezzocielo* women's bimonthly, born from her idea in 1991. In 2017 she opened and headed the *Centro Internazionale di Fotografia* in Palermo within the *Cantieri Culturali della Zisa* cultural centre. It was half museum half photographic school and gallery. At the end of May 2022, Italian national television broadcasted the series *Solo per Passione, Letizia Battaglia fotografa*, directed by Roberto Andò and dedicated to her.

She passed away in the late evening of 13 April 2022, at the age of 87 years old.

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MY BATTAGLIA

With my Letizia Battaglia it was love at first sight.

My Letizia Battaglia is a sweet and combative woman, and every time we met I gave her some lipstick I had bought for her.

My Battaglia is a woman with whom I shared beautiful exhibitions, secrets, poetry and gin and tonic. We started to work together with the *Gli Invincibili (The Invincible)* in the exhibition space NonostanteMarras in Milan, and continued with *Sguardo di donna: Da Diane Arbus a Letizia Battaglia (Woman's View: From Diane Arbus to Letizia Battaglia)* in the *Tre Oci* gallery in Venice, and then in the great exhibition *Letizia Battaglia: Fotografia come scelta di vita (Letizia Battaglia: Photography as a Life Choice)* presented at *Tre Oci* in Venice, at Palazzo Reale in Milan, at Mole Vanvitelliana in Ancona.

My Battaglia often asked me: "Why do you care so much about me?"

With my Battaglia we worked together on a book about girls, with my text and another one by Massimo Recalcati.

My Battaglia always asked me about Cesare and Giuditta.

My Battaglia cooked for me and made sure that Valentina would take me for dinner to a nice place.

My Battaglia would tell me about her projects.

I invited her to give a lecture at the PAC Museum (Contemporary Art Pavillion) in Milan, telling her that it was a museum that had previously been blown up by the Mafia and years later rebuilt. When I pointed out to her that the Mafia boss responsible, Totò Riina, was now in prison, and she would now be talking about her photos in that same place, she began to cry.

My Battaglia taught me to be afraid.

My Battaglia held me by the hand and talked to me in my ear.

My Battaglia will never die.

Francesca Alfano Miglietti, 2022

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COLOPHON

Production: Muzej in galerije mesta Ljubljane, Tre Oci // **Photographer:** Letizia Battaglia // **Curator:** Francesca Alfano Miglietti // **Research and collaboration in selecting from the Letizia Battaglia archive:** Maria Chiara Di Trapani with participation by Marta Sollima // **Curator (Galerija Jakopič):** dr. Marija Skočir // **Expert support:** Anna Colussi (Tre Oci), Julija Hoda (MGML) // **Graphic and exhibition design:** Bojan Lazarevič (Agora Proars) // **Exhibition production:** Tehnična služba / Technical Service MGML, O.K.vir // **Scans and prints:** Linke.lab // **Frames:** Cornici Degan // **English translations:** Polonca Mesec, Michael Haggerty, Sylvia Notini // **Catalogue:** Marsilio Editori // **Documentaries:** Amore Amaro (directed by **Francesco G. Raganato**, produced by **Todos Contentos y Yo Tambien**), La Mia Battaglia (directed by **Franco Maresco**, produced by **Associazione Culturale Lumpen**) // **This project was made possible by:** Mestna občina Ljubljana // **The project was supported by:** Tendercapital, Italian Cultural Institute – Ljubljana // **Media sponsor:** TAM-TAM

For further information on the exhibition and about press statements, please contact:

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ABOUT THE USE OF THE PHOTOS OF LETIZIA BATTAGLIA FROM THE PRESS MATERIAL:

The “© Letizia Battaglia” credit line must appear on all materials when the works of Letizia Battaglia are used.

No photograph may be cut or altered without a written agreement following presentation of the print layout.

Press shoots are permitted provided they are supervised by MGML staff. Only the images provided can be free: if the exhibition is filmed/photographed, they must be incorporated within a context.

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