



The Good earth, postwar Italian landscape photography by Mario Giacomelli

I. I. (March 24, 2016)



With upbringings rooted in traditional values, the photographers of postwar Italy considered the landscape to be integral part of their lives and photographic practice. For these photographers, the Italian landscape served as a symbol for life, religion, and their reverence for their homeland. Ranging from the representational to the abstract, their depictions of their surroundings share an inclination towards experimentation with composition, contrast, and repetition.

The Good Earth features vintage photographs created by seventeen image-makers from towns and cities on the North and



Adriatic Coasts of Italy: Valentino Bassanini, [Gianni Berengo-Gardin](#) [2], Ulisse Bezzi, Augusto Cantamessa, Tino Carretto, Romeo Casadei, Arturo Crescini, Ferruccio Ferroni, Eros Fiammetti, Giuseppe Goffis, Carlo Monari, Enzo Passaretti, Santo Piano, Ezio Quiresi, Pietro Todo, Piero Vistali, and Umberto Vittori.

These photographers shared a familiarity with and affection towards their subject matter.

Their deep understanding of their surroundings allowed them to capture the landscape from the best positions at the ideal time of day to create stunning images.

These photographs highlight the patterns, textures, and natural light that make the Italian landscape unique. When the human figure appears in the photographs, their relationship with the land is key. They admire the ocean, walk the dirt paths, or harvest food.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of this collection of photographs is the wide range of emotions they elicit. From peaceful to foreboding, the landscape as depicted by these photographers is able to instill happiness, calm, fear, and wonder in its viewers.

The cornerstone artist of the exhibition, [Mario Giacomelli](#) [3](1925-2000) sought out and even sometimes created abstract qualities in the Italian landscape.

Giacomelli was a self-taught photographer. At 13, he left high school, began working as a typesetter and spent his weekends painting. After the horrors of World War II, he turned to the more immediate medium of photography. He wandered the streets and fields of post-war Italy, inspired by the gritty Neo-Realist films of [Vittorio De Sica](#) [4] and [Roberto Rossellini](#) [5], and influenced by the renewed Italian photographer Giuseppe Cavalli, eventually developing a style characterized by bold compositions and stark contrasts.

Shying away from more traditional and representational views of the land, Giacomelli's photographs transform the familiar into the foreign through distance, pattern, and stark contrast.

With formal training as a typesetter, Giacomelli's graphic compositions come as no surprise. His work can be found in the collections of the [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#), [6] the [Museum of Modern Art](#) [7], and the [Art Institute of Chicago](#) [8] and also in many internationally acclaimed museums permanent collection, including [Castello di Rivoli](#) [9] in [Turin](#) [10].

The Good Earth will be on view at the [Keith de Lellis Gallery](#) [11] through May 7, 2016.

Source URL: <http://test.iitaly.org/magazine/events/reports/article/good-earth-postwar-italian-landscape-photography-mario-giacomelli>

Links

[1] <http://test.iitaly.org/files/mario-giacomelli1458851739png>

[2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gianni_Berengo_Gardin

[3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mario_Giacomelli

[4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vittorio_De_Sica

[5] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roberto_Rossellini

[6] <http://www.metmuseum.org>

[7] <http://www.moma.org>

[8] <http://www.artic.edu>

[9] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Castello_di_Rivoli

[10] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turin>

[11] <http://www.keithdelellisgallery.com>