

Message from the Darkroom

CARLO MOLLINO

MESSAGE FROM THE DARKROOM



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carlo mollino' s 'musée imaginaire' of photography

'il messaggio dalla camera oscura' was first published in Italy in 1949 by Chiantore publishers.

Now, 57 years later, this rare and large folio volume is available in Italian and English language (as 'message from the darkroom').

Written in 1943 by Carlo Mollino (c. 1905-1973),

architect, photographer, designer, engineer, and according to Fulvio Ferrari (founder of the 'Casa Mollino' museum) complete man:

'he continued the tradition of those eclectic Italian Renaissance artists whose work expressed the harmonious coming together of science and art, logic and poetry, beauty and practicality'.

'message from the darkroom' is the most important contribution from the first half of the twentieth century to the acceptance of photography among the higher arts.

It was a revolutionary acknowledgment during an era in which photography was considered a purely mechanical art and endlessly reproducible.

The book opens with a brief and purely objective history of photography and continues with Mollino's subjective and insightful analysis on 'the message' of the various photographers.

Mollino gives the reader an idea of the adventurous nature of the early days of photography.

Among the history documents is the first photograph ever taken (by the French Nicéphore Niépce) and descriptions of the mechanics of having sitters maintain their still portrait pose for very long periods of time (in the beginning 14 to the later 1 1/2 hours).

It is in the explanation of the techniques various photographers use to convey their message: lighting, flou effects, focus,

perspective, and retouching...

mollino himself was an advocate of retouching, he often painted on his photos or negatives. most of his images have been revised, most bodies sculpted and reshaped to bring them to his ideal sense of beauty.

this book contains only 16 of his own photographs, instead mollino uses the work of 132 photographers and 9 painters to illustrate the evolution in taste over the years. he highlights the work of nadar and hill, atget, alvarez bravo and man ray to whom he dedicates specific chapters due to their innovative approaches.

'message from the darkroom' is no dry historical account and it includes many curiosities - namely its title.

'message from the darkroom' is a double-entendre and refers not only to the photographic process but to mollino's fascination with a continuation of existence.

he was interested in the occult, and it was his obsession with ancient egypt that led to the creation of 'casa mollino' . inspired by kha, a royal architect who designed and built his own tomb, mollino converted a 19th century villa overlooking the river po into his own kind of private pyramid. this allusion to the afterlife and egypt is further enforced on the frontispiece of the book which features an image of the powerful queen taia from the XVIII dynasty of egypt (1570 A.C.).

this new edition of mollino's book though relatively expensive (around € 130) is an indispensable and incredibly important

read for anyone interested in photography and carlo mollino himself. published by the new publishing house adarte who remain true to mollino's design for the first edition.

it is beautifully compiled and colour plates are pasted in by hand.

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