



Hervé Guibert
Sienna, 1979
Vintage gelatin silver print
© Christine Guibert
Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie, Paris

Hervé Guibert » Voyages en Italie

Exhibition: 30 Jan – 5 Apr 2025
Wed 29 Jan 18:00

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Hervé Guibert
Le chat, Villa Médicis, Rome, 1988
Vintage gelatin silver print
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HERVÉ GUIBERT
Voyages en Italie
OPENING ON WEDNESDAY JANUARY 29, 2025 FROM 6 PM TO 9 PM
EXHIBITION FROM JANUARY 30 TO APRIL 3, 2025

Les Douches la Galerie is delighted to present *Voyages en Italie*, a new exhibition dedicated to Hervé Guibert. Through portraits of his friends, his lovers, and still lifes of intimate objects, made between 1979 and 1990, the exhibition shows the central role Italy played in the journey of the writer-photographer, both as a source of aesthetic inspiration and as a realm of creativity.

Hervé Guibert was a writer. Hervé Guibert was a photographer. Between the two, the connection is powerful and the result delightful. When a phrase strikes in one of his books, it flutters into an image. When a whimsical humor shakes a sentence, it ripples through a photograph. When melancholy appears in the title of a novel (*Le mausolée des amants* [*The Mausoleum of Lovers*]), it resurfaces in the caption of a photo (*Le départ* [*The Departure*]). The exhibition of Hervé Guibert's Italian photographs uniquely illustrates this incessant interplay. Here and there, he wrote about Italy, and like a companion who never lets go of his hand, his photographic journey is of a twin nature: an echo, a stereophony, without ever being able to pinpoint the origin of its music.



Hervé Guibert
Les escaliers, Eugène, Villa Médicis, Rome, 1988
Vintage gelatin silver print
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For centuries, traveling to Italy has been as much a cultural pilgrimage as a touristic one, inspiring painters, architects, musicians, at least one filmmaker (Roberto Rossellini and his eponymous film), and several writers (Stendhal, among others). Hervé Guibert, brings a literary as well as an intense photographic resonance to his voyage in Italy—both untimely and exiled. Over time, from the Villa Medici in Rome, where he lived from 1987 to 1989, to the island of Elba, where he has been buried since 1992, through jaunts in Sicily and escapades in Florence, he created a carousel of black-and-white images. This black-and-white is Hervé Guibert's *The Red and the Black*, as Stendhal described his Julien Sorel: beautiful, supremely beautiful, with eyes "that, in quiet moments, revealed both thought and fire".

The photographs are frosted, all taken with the small Rollei 35 camera gifted to him by his father, and they exude an erotic temperament. As is customary with Guibert, immodesty is modesty. Portraits of his friends and lovers capture the joy of simply being present: Thierry the magnificent, nude or draped in antique style; Mathieu the sphinx reclining in a chair; Eugène the acrobat performing a handstand; Christine as a benevolent ghost. A self-reflection in the glass of a window is not a self-portrait but a questioning of his visage, in the school of Rembrandt.

There are a few landscapes in silhouette, many intimate objects arranged as still lifes: an invitation to scrutinize life, its uneasy tranquility. For example, Hervalino's desk, as nicknamed by his friend Mathieu Lindon, at the Villa Medici: a ream of blank paper, a vaguely handwritten page, an open book with its bookmark scattered, a small painting of a couple embracing at the edge of a chasm, a toy soldier raising its lance, and a more intriguing, alarming object—a knife (stiletto? letter opener?) stuck into the table's wood. A presumed gesture of impatience, anger, or a way to anchor his melancholies, his madness?

Guibert once wrote: "I will always resist being a photographer: this attraction frightens me, it seems it could quickly turn into madness, because everything is photographable, everything is interesting to photograph, and from a single day of life, one could carve out thousands of moments, thousands of small surfaces, and once you start, why stop?"

The devil probably, is in the details, but so is the angel. The Italian light in Hervé Guibert's photographs is a light a giorno, a supernatural annunciation that always beams obliquely, like in a southern Vermeer. The photographic snapshot becomes a pictorial moment, where indirect sunlight geometrizes the space, cutting it into a mosaic of shadows and glimmers. More thoughts of Goethe's last words on his deathbed. What did he say? «Mehr Licht» or «Mehr nichts»? More light or more nothing? It is not a matter of confusion. Light and nothingness are the same. On the margins of Goethe, Hervé Guibert's Italian photographs offer a lesson in shadows, a nocturne, a vital refrain that helps us live.



Hervé Guibert
Eugène faisant le poirier, Ile d'Elbe, 1988
Vintage gelatin silver print
© Christine Guibert
Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie, Paris



Hervé Guibert
Le panier de fraises, Santa Caterina, 1990
Vintage gelatin silver print
© Christine Guibert
Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie, Paris



Hervé Guibert
Ombre de C. et main de H.G., Santa Caterina, 1990
Vintage gelatin silver print
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