



METRONOM

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THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Artists: **Martina della Valle, Annabel Elgar, Baerbel Reinhard**
Opening: **Saturday, April 16th 2016, 6 pm**
Dates: **april 16 – june 4, 2016**
Venue: **METRONOM I viale G. Amendola, 142 Modena**
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Hours: **tuesday – saturday 3 / 7 pm and by appointment**

Through the Looking Glass is the title of an exhibition that opens on **Saturday 16th April** with works presented for the first time in Italy by **Martina della Valle, Annabel Elgar and Baerbel Reinhard**.

Through a mental and imaginary mirror, the work of the three artists leads to an observation of reality not as individual images but as a specular quality that translates into a multiplicity, in which the visible and the symbolic are confused. Nature, understood as the environment in which we live, becomes the theatre that stages this passage, crossing between physical and mental places. Far from the dimension of dreams but close to fantasy and imagination, the works of della Valle, Elgar and Reinhard take up the challenge of using natural elements, places and objects, and transforming them symbolically, still make us perceived them as clear and accessible.

Wabi-Sabi, with necessary simplification, is the beauty of imperfect things, transitory and incomplete. **Martina della Valle's** diptychs reflect this underlying principle which is almost indefinable in words, being so much an integral part of Japanese culture. It was in fact during a trip to Japan that she came into possession of a box of negatives portraying still lifes of ikebana. Wear and tear and poor preservation, dust, twigs, fragments of leaves, are present within the negatives, giving that sense of corrosion and contamination, which enriches rather than devalues. The images of the vegetable compositions (flowers, branches, fruit, stones...) almost live again in the contact prints of the fragments, comprising diptychs which overlay images of a real and imagined world, a world that is not only found in the contact prints in 1:1 scale, but also in the wall installation in which the dimension of the ikebana is enlarged to the maximum digital scale and takes on a sculptural quality - even in its two-dimensional form.

Della Valle's wabi-sabi is without univocal definition, like **Baerbel Reinhard's** *heimat* referenced in the series **Punctum**. There is no equivalent translation for the word *heimat*, which in German, is linked to the concepts of home and birthplace, but also to a nature in the broader sense; not only physically, but also of internally, which is to say bound to an emotional dimension. *Punctum* is the intersection of these spaces in which the whole and the detail work together and mix, reflecting on how man experiences and perceives them. The detail, point, is inserted in a background which is not marginal, but constitutive and which includes small details of places in Germany and Italy, in an attempt to create a total synthesis. Individual parts of photographs are extrapolated and reassembled, creating a nature almost absolute in its fiction.

Annabel Elgar's journey follows that of the lunar fragments, brought back by the Apollo 11 and 17 missions. The Nixon administration gifted 270 *moonrocks* to various countries throughout the world. About 180 of them disappeared without trace, very likely on the black market or secreted away by collectors. The upshot was that in 1998 a federal USA law enforcement unit - called "operation lunar eclipse" – was created to locate these moonrocks. Annabel Elgar sets off on a fantastical voyage, in which the *moonrocks* are found, in a plethora of different contexts and localities.



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Through The Looking Glass presents the works by three artists that search for a relationship and an interpretation with the world, through a dimension that is nourished by ambiguity and contradiction: as you enter through the mirror, you emerge into a hidden and inaccessible place, where the ephemeral meets the evanescent. So the mirror is not a tool for a quest of identity, but an aperture to a world of possible transformation and intellectual speculation.

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MARTINA DELLA VALLE (Florence, 1981) She lives and works in Milan, Florence and Berlin. She took her Photography diploma in 2003 at the European Institute of Design (IED), Milan, and has collaborated as a photographer with international magazines, IED Milan and with the F16 Schule of Berlin. In 2007 she attended the Fondazione Ratti CSAV (Advanced Course in Visual Arts) in Como and took up a residency offered by the Dena Foundation at the Centre des Recollets in Paris. In 2009 she was invited to the Air Onomichi residence programme in Japan. In 2011 she had solo shows at the Kuhn Gallery (Berlin) and at METRONOM, and in 2012 was one of the participating artists at Madeinfilandia. In 2013 she exhibited at Galleria Artopia, Milan; Hochstrasse 45, Berlin; MIC, Faenza; MAXXI, Rome. On the occasion of Mois de la Photo 2014, she had a solo show at the Italian Cultural Institute in Paris.

ANNABEL ELGAR (London, 1971) She lives and works in London. She took an MA in Photography at the Royal College of Art and her work has appeared in numerous international exhibitions and various publications. Her most significant recent shows include *Contemporary Photography from North-West Europe* at the Fondazione Fotografia Modena, Italy and *Theatres of the real* at the FotoMuseum of Antwerp, a retrospective at The Museum of New Art in Detroit (2008), solo exhibitions at The Wapping Project Bankside gallery in London (2010) and *Interludio* at METRONOM, Modena (2011). She has taken part in various solo and group shows including Apex Art, New York; Zephyr, Raum für Fotografie, Mannheim; Viktor Wynd Gallery, London; The Wapping Project Bankside, London; The Lion & Lamb Gallery, London; Belfast Photo Festival and Creekside Open 2013, London. Moreover, she is among the 2014-2016 nominees for the Prix Elysée.

BAERBEL REINHARD (Stuttgart, 1977) She lives in Pistoia and works in Florence. She studied history of art and sociology in Friburg, Florence and Berlin, where she received a magister artium at Humboldt-University in 2004. In 2010 she completed her Three-Year Program in Professional Photography at Fondazione Studio Marangoni in Florence, where she actually works as a photography professor. From 2013 she is a photography teacher at Sarah Lawrence College in Florence. In addition to the curatorial practise, she participated in numerous collective exhibitions in Italy and worldwide. The more recent ones include *Bookshop*, a group show curated by Francesca Sani at Fondazione Fotografia in Modena at the end of 2014 and *Elementi di Geometrie sentimentali*, curated by Sergio Tossi for Egg Visual Art in Livorno - IT. In 2013 she was awarded as the best self-published book with *As above so below* at Centro Italiano della fotografia d'autore.