

B E N R U B I G A L L E R Y

MASSIMO VITALI – *NEW WORK*

ONLINE Exhibition Dates: September 18 – November 7, 2020



Benrubi Gallery is pleased to announce an ONLINE exhibition of new work by **Massimo Vitali**. As the COVID-19 pandemic rendered most public space around the world off limits, Vitali headed back to the beaches he has for so long documented. Since the end of the lockdowns in Italy, "the new normal" has become the go-to term to describe the reality of a world hit by COVID-19. It is a "new" way of living, full of precautions, hygiene measures and habits that seem to have changed our behavior, and eroded the sociability and proximity that characterize the human race. Massimo Vitali went to the beach once more, to observe the new normal. The densely

populated environment—one of his favorite subjects—once more proved to be curiously normal. The urge to be out in the open air, seeing friends, making the most of the sea and sun, diving into the water and leaving behind the worries of the week: all that is still there. A few masks, some nifty footwork to avoid strangers and maintain social distancing, and a mostly Italian rather than international population form the backdrop to these images. Nonetheless, those elements are not what first catches the viewer's eye. Just as the week's worries are left behind, this new normal that everyone is talking about did not make it to the beach. Instead, a sort of collective ritual of rebirth occurred, with the sea and sun seeming to repel the virus that has been mysteriously shadowing us for several months.

Massimo Vitali was born in Como, Italy, in 1944. He moved to London after high-school, where he studied Photography at the London College of Printing. In the early Sixties he started working as a photojournalist, collaborating with many magazines and agencies in Italy and Europe. It was during this time that he met Simon Guttman, the founder of the agency Report, who was to become fundamental in Massimo's growth as a "Concerned Photographer." 5 At the beginning of the Eighties, a growing mistrust in the belief that photography had an absolute capacity to reproduce the subtleties of reality led to a change in his career path. He began working as a cinematographer for television and cinema. However, his relationship with the still camera never ceased, and he eventually turned his attention back to "photography as a means for artistic research." His series of Italian beach panoramas, starting in 1995, began in the light of drastic political changes in Italy. Massimo started to observe his fellow countrymen very carefully. He depicted a "sanitized, complacent view of Italian normalities," at the same time revealing "the inner conditions and disturbances of normality: its cosmetic fakery, sexual innuendo, commodified leisure, deluded sense of affluence, and rigid conformism." (October Magazine 2006, no. 117, p. 90, How to Make Analogies in a Digital Age by Whitney Davis) Over the past 22 years he has developed a new approach to portraying the world, illuminating the apotheosis of the Herd, expressing and commenting through one of the most intriguing, palpable forms of contemporary art – Photography. He lives and works in Lucca, Italy, and in Berlin, Germany sometimes.

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