

Linda Fregni Nagler

Hana to Yama

Vistamare, Pescara

Opening 21st April 2018, 6.30pm

23rd April – 26th October 2018

At 6.30pm on Saturday 21st April, Vistamare will be inaugurating an exhibition of work by Linda Fregni Nagler. Fregni Nagler's art explores the origins of the contemporary gaze and focuses on the medium of photography and its history. Her practice combines the making of art, active scholarship and the collecting of art.

For many years Linda Fregni Nagler has been collecting photographs from the so-called "School of Yokohama" which emerged during the Meiji era (1868-1912), coinciding with the opening of Japan's frontiers and the country's modernization. During the period in which it was produced, Yokohama Shashin or "Yokohama Photography" became very popular in Europe. The photographs, which were hand-coloured in a process that required at least an entire day's work, were sold to wealthy foreign travellers for whom they reflected an idea of Japan as a land of uncontaminated exoticism. Many Yokohama Shashin photographs, and especially those made in the photographers' studios, represent staged and anachronistic versions of a world that was already vanishing. The negatives were often swapped with and sold to other photographers, so even today it remains hard to attribute a photograph to a particular author. It was these very peculiarities that first sparked Linda Fregni Nagler's intense interest in this photographic genre: the *mise-en-scène* of a dying world; the rediscovery, via photography, of a hand-crafted iconographic tradition; the commercial and non-artistic nature of the genre; the difficulty of establishing the authorship of individual photographs; and the element of manual intervention involved in a technique based on mechanical reproduction.

The exhibition's title, *Hana to Yama* (Flowers and the Mountain), refers to the two groups of photographs presented (all from the archive that the artist has built up over the past 10 years), and two recurring themes typical of Yokohama Shashin: flower sellers and views of Fujiyama. Fregni Nagler has re-photographed the original images, printed them in the dark room and hand-coloured them, after long research in order to identify contemporary materials and pigments comparable to those used in Yokohama Shashin. In her own studio, the artist has, in fact, established a production process that mirrors that of the Japanese photographers' studios. Copies, which in this case are reproductions of antique images produced in series (another frequently recurring theme in her work), are the trigger for an altered gaze, changing the way we regard material previously considered primarily of historical interest. The first of the exhibition's two groups of images portrays the so-called "Flower Sellers" (the title that they are given in the original captions and which was, far from coincidentally, always in English), the street vendors who attracted the attention of western visitors thanks to the architectural forms of the portable structures in which they transported their flowers. In his celebrated account, *Japan: Described and Illustrated by the Japanese* (1897), Francis Brinkley describes such flower vendors as "veritable walking bouquets". The exhibition's second group of images is composed of numerous vistas of Mount Fuji. Most of them are anonymous photographs taken in spots that guaranteed the best view of the mountain. Fregni Nagler has assembled the images into groups that very evidently share the same viewpoint – each photograph having been taken in the same spot and representing the same subject – but the space represented remains enigmatic and timeless: these are images that could easily have been captured at different moments over the course of one day, or months and years apart. Emblematic of the series is *Fuji from Otometoge*, a work composed of 10 photographs of the mountain, all portraying Mount Fuji from a single favoured viewpoint. In Linda Fregni Nagler's work, the original attempt – as sophisticated as it was artificial – to render the photographs more realistic by hand-colouring them is represented by uniform fields of colour, small samples, or sections which, inspired by art conservators' colour references, are left in black and white in order to reveal the range of greys in the underlying print.

Linda Fregni Nagler (Stockholm, 1976) lives and works in Milan. She graduated from Milan's Brera Academy of Fine Arts in 2000. In 2004 she completed a diploma in Visual Arts at the Fondazione Ratti, in Como, with Jimmie Durham. In 2006 she frequented the Cinematographic Photography course at the Escuela Internacional de Cine y Television in San Antonio de Los Baños, Cuba. In 2013 she was invited to the 55th Venice Biennale "The Encyclopedic Palace", curated by Massimiliano Gioni. In 2015 she enacted her performance *Things That Death Cannot Destroy* (part 7), at Moderna Museet in Stockholm. In 2007 she won the New York Prize. In 2008 she was awarded a residency at the Dena Foundation in Paris, followed, in 2014, by a residency at IASPIS in Stockholm. In 2016 she was awarded the Premio Acacia. In 2017, together with Cristiano Raimondi, she curated "Hercule Florence – Le Nouveau Robinson" at the Nouveau Musée National de Monaco.

Open Mon: 10.00am – 1.00pm | Tues-Fri: 10:00am – 1:00pm | 4:30pm – 7:30pm

