

Photomonitor:

TEMPO AL TEMPO. ART FROM ANNO DOMINI TO RONI HORN

Reviewed by [*Gaia Tedone*](#)



Domingo Milella
Nemrut Dagı, Turkey, 2014.
Courtesy of the artist and Roman Road



Domingo Milella
Kizildag, monument of Hartapu, Turkey, 2013.
Courtesy of the artist and Roman Road

Domingo Milella

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A curious art historical mash-up takes place at Roman Road, revealing the prolific dialogue between past and present that has shaped Domingo Milella's artistic research until now. In the exhibition, his photographic work is set in close dialogue with a Renaissance painting by Bartolomeo Vivarini (c.1460), remnants of antique sculptures, and works by contemporary artists including Roni Horn, Darren Almond and Thomas Struth. What emerges is a multi-layered narrative, which reflects the rich texture of Milella's photographic prints and the cultural stratifications they condense.

Index (2004-2011; 2012-2013), his most substantial body of work to date, depicts the exploratory journeys the artist undertook to various cities and archaeological sites in Italy,

Mexico and Egypt, amongst other locations. A sequence of forty-five photographic prints, produced in two distinct work cycles, is presented together for the first time in a grid arranged in chronological order.

A skyline view of the artist's hometown in Bari, Italy (2004) marks the origin of his personal quest, while the undecipherable inscriptions on the Tomb of Areyastin in Turkey (2013) testify the ungraspable quality of his findings. Throughout the sequence, a number of landscapes appear consumed by geological fractures and natural breaches, whilst others are crowded with human activity, baring the strata of dwellings, monuments and remains. Each photograph is carved out of time in the moment of its exposure and acts as a trace of the artist's presence. In few instances, Milella has inscribed himself into the landscape, standing in front of the majestic monument of Hartapu, in Turkey, or gazing at the life-size heads of Nemrut Dagi's statues. It is through the search of a physical and cultural contiguousness with the past that he negotiates his own stance in the present.

The grid operates as an index of Milella's refined photographic language. As with the letters of the alphabet, the gaze freely moves across it in search of possible semantic combinations, guided by the consistent colour palette and the compositional rigour. Such formal and dialogical interplays extend in the gallery space as the photographs meet the painterly surface of Vivarini's depiction of St. Catherine, and the marble bulk of a sea snail from the second half of the sixteenth century. As the exhibition continues in the apartment adjacent to the gallery, the fleeting essence of time is approached from a closer perspective. While Roni Horn attempts at its figuration, by portraying the subtle changes passing through a woman's facial expression, Darren Almond mocks with visual abstraction, by means of a wall panel of synchronised digital clocks whose numbers are illegible. The timeless character of the landscape, as suggested by Struth's meditative photograph of a forest in China, returns as a plausible counterpoint to the drive towards acceleration and virtuality that characterises the contemporary moment.

The selected works contextualise Milella's attempt to come to terms with the relationship between time, man and landscape addressed in his photographic surfaces, where the marks

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of nature and those of civilisation often blend. The exhibition appears as a timeline of his cultural references and photographic vision, which has been informed by a consistent dialogue with artists and artworks across different historical epochs. Despite the self-referential tone, there is scope for a broader reflection, which posits artistic subjectivity as a deliberate aesthetic choice, which resists the fixed categories of art history and puts the problem of mediums' obsolescence into perspective.