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Museo nazionale  
delle arti del XXI secolo

## NUOVE AVVENTURE SOTTERRANEE

Stefano Graziani, Rachele Maistrello, Domingo Milella,

Luca Nostri, Giulia Parlato

curated by **Alessandro Dandini de Sylva**

*an exhibition conceived and produced in collaboration with Ghella*

The **exhibition project** and the **publication** tell journeys through the landscape, the fascination of the **underground**, contemporary **Italian photography**, an ancient company's **history**, and modern **patronage**.

**14 June – 25 September 2024**

MAXXI Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo – Spazio Extra  
Via Guido Reni 4A, Roma

[www.ghella.com](http://www.ghella.com) | [www.maxxi.art](http://www.maxxi.art)

Rome, May 28, 2024. Following the photographic exhibition in 2021 that, amidst archaeological finds and excavation machines, spectacular explosions, and forest landscapes, narrated the adventurous history of five major construction sites worldwide, the photographic campaigns commissioned by Ghella to some of the most interesting contemporary Italian photographers return. **From June 14 to September 25, 2024**, the Extra Space at **MAXXI, the National Museum of 21st Century Arts in Rome**, will host **Nuove avventure sotterranee (New Underground Adventures)** an exhibition curated by **Alessandro Dandini de Sylva**, featuring the works of **Stefano Graziani, Rachele Maistrello, Domingo Milella, Luca Nostri, and Giulia Parlato**.

**Alessandro Giuli**, President of MAXXI Foundation: "*We are delighted to once again welcome Ghella's enlightening photographic commission project to MAXXI. This project is the result of an ambitious, brave vision that recognises culture as a significant tool for institutional growth.*"

*Nuove avventure sotterranee represents a further step in the long-standing relationship between MAXXI and Ghella, crowned by the generous donation of 48 photographic works that have become part of the Museum's Collections. It is the virtuous example of a partnership between public and private aimed at supporting creativity."*

"*Nuove avventure sotterranee,*" explains **Federico Ghella**, Vice President of Ghella, "*is the second chapter of a project that aims to tell our story through the unfiltered perspective of a group of Italian artists. This cultural investment has allowed us to export not only our engineering expertise but also our culture to the world, and it has redefined the entire image of Ghella. As I look through the images in this collection, I realize how much beauty can be hidden in our everyday adventures.*"

**Ghella** is the oldest major Italian infrastructure company. Founded in 1894 and specialized in underground excavations, it built the tunnels of the Trans-Siberian Railway (1898) and the underwater metro tunnels in Sydney. Today, its construction

sites are active planetary, primarily focusing on **strategic infrastructure projects**. 2024 is particularly significant for the company as it celebrates its **130th anniversary**. The **exhibition at MAXXI** is one of the **specific projects** planned to commemorate this milestone.

For ***Nuove avventure sotterranee***, the five selected photographers freely documented the creation of major works in **Italy, Canada, Argentina, Australia, and New Zealand**. The exhibition features over a **hundred images**: those of artists who observed and interpreted the infrastructures, leaving a "poetic distance" between the construction sites and their representation, and those from **Ghella's** archives, documenting infrastructures built between the late 1960s and early 2000s. This contrast reveals the difference in the **language** of the two photographic corpuses: the archive photos, taken by engineers and technicians, show a certain unconscious aesthetic, while the works of **Graziani, Maistrello, Milella, Nostri, and Parlato** start from observation and lead to reflections on clichés of representation, the ambiguity of photographic documentation, excavation as a reading of intangible aspects of the landscape, the symbolism of the cave, abstraction, and much more.

*"Nuove avventure sotterranee is a project that addresses underground excavation as an extraordinary opportunity for a journey through the landscape, its history, and its evolving present,"* explains **Alessandro Dandini de Sylva**, the exhibition curator. *"The photographic campaigns that make up this collection are a valuable resource because they help renew the imagery of large infrastructural engineering sites, skillfully combining documentation and experimentation, and outline the direction of future urban transformations in the 21st century."*

Amid views of construction sites and cities alternating with fossil remains or mechanical components, tropical plants and rocky landscapes, workers at work, and nocturnal animals, the distance that the authors have left between themselves, and the infrastructures is a **space for research**, a context in which to reconsider and regenerate the imagery of **corporate photography**, hinting at **new narrative possibilities**.

In ***Nuove avventure sotterranee***, the photographs form a meditation on the **meaning of images**, reminding us that a photograph can be both a document and an act of imagination, a record, and a possibility.

The exhibition is accompanied by a **box set with six volumes**, designed by **Filippo Nostri** and published by **Quodlibet**. The **first five volumes** are introduced by a technical text on the construction site and contain a conversation between each artist and the curator about their photographic campaign. The **sixth volume** contains historical images from **Ghella's archive** related to active construction sites between **the 1960s and early 2000s**.

## The photographers

**Stefano Graziani** (Bologna, 1971) works at the intersection of photography, art, and architecture and brings an unconventional narrative to contemporary artistic discussion. His works have been exhibited internationally by institutions as the Fondazione Prada in Milan, the Venice Architecture Biennale or the European Art Biennale Manifesta. They are included in public and private collections such as CCA Montréal, Fondazione Prada, Milan, MAXXI Museo nazionale

delle arti del XXI secolo, Rome, Fondazione Fotografia di Modena, ICCD Istituto centrale per il catalogo e la documentazione, Mufoco Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea, Cinisello Balsamo. Graziani teaches at IUAV Venice, ISIA Urbino and NABA Milan and collaborates with architectural studios such as baukuh, Christ & Gantenbein, Office KGDVS, Piovenefabi, Kuehn Malvezzi, Onsite, Studio Mumbai, 51N4E. Among his most recent publications: Documents on Raphael (Mousse Publishing, 2021), Sverre Fehn Architecture (Buchhandlung Walther König, 2021) and Documents from Gordon Matta Clark private library (CCA Montréal, 2020). He curated Jeff Wall: Gestus, Writings on Photography and Art (Quodlibet, 2013).

**Rachele Maistrello** (Vittorio Veneto, 1986) is an Italian visual artist. She studied at IUAV in Venice, École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris and Zürcher Hochschule der Künste in Zurich. His work has been exhibited in cultural institutions such as PAC Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea (Milan, 2023), Scuderie del Quirinale (Rome, 2023), Palazzo Reale (Milan, 2023), Kunsthalle Bratislava (2023), Ville Perochon (Niort, 2023), MAXXI Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo (Rome, 2022-2021), Benaki Museum (Athens, 2022), Centrequatre (Paris, 2022), Hamlet (Zurich, 2020), Kunstverein (Bielefeld, 2020), Inside-Out Art Museum (Beijing, 2019), Triennale Milano (2018). Her works feature in public collections including MAXXI Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo (Rome), Galleria Civica di Modena, MUFOCO - Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea (Cinisello Balsamo), Collezione Regione Emilia-Romagna, Museo Castromediano (Lecce).

**Domingo Milella** (Bari, 1981) studied photography at the School of Visual Arts under the mentorship of Stephen Shore. Thomas Struth was a key mentor. He currently lives between Bari and London. His works have been exhibited in cultural institutions such as Biennale Arte, Rencontres d'Arles, Museo Nazionale Romano, Foam Museum and Fondazione Museo Pino Pascali. His works are in numerous collections such as the Museo Pecci in Prato, the Margulies Collection in Miami, and Borusan Contemporary in Istanbul. His solo exhibitions include shows at Grimaldi Gavin in London, Tracy Williams Ltd in New York, and Doppelgänger in Bari. In 2014 he published his first book with Steidl, Domingo Milella, and in 2015 he was among the curators of the exhibition Tempo al Tempo at Roman Road Gallery in London. He recently exhibited his research on prehistory and the origin of art at the Fondazione Giancarlo Ligabue in Venice for the 2024 Art Biennale and won the Bryan Robertson Trust Award at the Royal Academy of Arts in London to continue his research on the primitive and abstraction.

**Luca Nostri** (Faenza, 1976) is a photographer, teacher, and curator of the project Lugo Land - Fotografia e territorio. He has exhibited his work in cultural institutions such as Rencontres d'Arles, MAXXI Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo, Pescheria Centro Arti Visive in Pesaro, Large Glass Gallery, Italian Cultural Institute in London and New York, American Academy in Rome, where he received a fellowship as an Italian Fellow in the Arts. His photographs are included in collections of institutions such as Linea di Confine per la Fotografia Contemporanea, MAXXI Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo, Photo Library of the American Academy in Rome, Victoria & Albert Museum. Since 2014 he has been a teacher and member of the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London, and since 2010 he has curated a series of educational programs for universities such as the University School of Design in Philadelphia and Bard College in Hannandale on Hudson.

**Giulia Parlato** (Palermo, 1993) is an artist based in London and Rome. She graduated in Photography at the London College of Communication and completed an MA in Photography from the Royal College of Arts in London. Her work analyzes the historical use of images as a document of truth, specifically in its scientific and forensic uses, and challenges this language, creating a new space in which a staged scenes take place. At a national and international level her work has been exhibited in collective and solo exhibitions including Triennale (Milan, 2023), Photo London (2022), Villa Bardini (Florence, 2022), Fotografia Europea (Reggio Emilia, 2022), Mucho Mas (Turin, 2022), Unseen Photo Fair (Amsterdam, 2021) and Gare Du Nord for Paris Photo (Paris 2019). You have received the Luigi Ghirri Award (2022), the BJP International Photography Award Second Place (2020), the Innovate Grant (2020), the Camera Work Award (2020) and the Carte Blanche Étudiants Award (2019). In 2021 her work was selected by

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CAMERA for the European Futures Photography program. Her works are preserved in public collections including the Donata Pizzi Collection, Panizzi Library, Palazzo Rasponi.

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### The curator

**Alessandro Dandini de Sylva** (Rome, 1981) is an artist, curator, and publisher. He has curated exhibitions and publications for cultural institutions such as the MAXXI Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo, the Museo Nazionale Romano and the MACRO Museo di arte contemporanea in Rome, the Centro Arti Visive Pescheria and the Musei Civici in Pesaro, the Fondazione Pastificio Cerere in Rome and the Fondazione Ermanno Casoli in Fabriano, SwitchLab in Bucharest and the Italian Cultural Institutes in Bucharest and London. He founded Aniene, a publishing project conceived in collaboration with designer Filippo Nostri, and Istmo, a visual research studio for industrial organizations that combines contemporary photography, documentation of advanced technology projects and artistic experimentation. He is the curator of the photography department at the Pescheria Foundation in Pesaro, the photography consultant at Ghella and the advisor for photography and publishing for the American Academy in Rome.

### Ghella

Founded in 1894, this year marks the 130th anniversary of Ghella: a global reality of primary importance in the construction of large public projects. Specialized in underground excavation, spanning 5 generations, Ghella has successfully constructed over 190 tunnels and connected more than 1,000 kilometers of subways, railways, highways, and hydraulic projects. Ghella's commitment centers around a business model focused on leaving a better world for future generations. With a rich heritage dating back to 1867, the company continues to grow with a renewed spirit of exploration, envisioning new possibilities and fostering progress. Ghella's community consists of 6,000 individuals living in 15 Countries, and operating across 4 Continents, primarily in Oceania, Europe, the Americas, and the Far East.

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