

THE EUROPEAN FACE

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**PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY FROM THE
FIFTEEN MEMBER STATES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**TALBOT RICE GALLERY, EDINBURGH
8 OCTOBER to 4 NOVEMBER 1995**

THE COPENHAGEN 96 FERRY - M/S KRONBORG
(the quay by the Amalienborg Castle)
3 JANUARY to 4 FEBRUARY 1996



**TALBOT RICE GALLERY
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
OLD COLLEGE SOUTH BRIDGE
EDINBURGH**

IN COLLABORATION WITH
THE EUROPEAN UNION CULTURAL FORUM

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INTRODUCTION

The origin of this exhibition lies in the work of the European Forum and the Talbot Rice Gallery of the University of Edinburgh has curated it on behalf of the Forum. The Forum itself is a committee in Edinburgh originally formed on the initiative of Sir James Marjoribanks and Stanley Budd. Sir James had been British Ambassador in Brussels during the successful negotiation under Sir Edward Heath's Premiership of Britain's entry into the European Community. Stanley Budd was the first Director of the European Commission Office in Edinburgh. The purpose was to promote European projects of a multilateral quality. The Forum consists of the representatives of member states with a cultural or diplomatic presence in Scotland together with representatives of the Scottish cultural community. Cultural representatives from the embassies in London of member states without a presence in Scotland are also invited annually to a meeting of the Forum.

The Forum has promoted a good many different projects, large and small, but the **European Face** is one of the most ambitious. By its nature it is also one that focuses most clearly the central objective of the Forum's work, to promote and to explore in co-operation the idea of the European identity and the shared cultural heritage of the nations of the European Union. The Union may work economically. It may work politically, even diplomatically, but it really cannot work effectively until it also works psychologically; until its people can identify unselfconsciously both with their home nation and with the wider Europe of which it is part; until being European is part of the separate, individual identity of each of them.

But individual identity resides first in the face. The portrait is its icon. Our faces differentiate us absolutely. But they need to differentiate us because we are social creatures and so our identity is also shaped by the community we belong to and the people we interact with. In the European Union as in any human community, whether it be 360 million, or one hundred and fifty, diversity is absolute, but it is in the broadest possible sense the community we belong to and so is already part of the identity of us all.

An exhibition that reflects the European identity in this way must, therefore, even if only on a minute scale, reflect this diversity, but it must also hold it together in a sense of community. In organising this exhibition, the question was how to do these two things, how to capture this diversity and to convey this sense of community. The solution was to choose a portrait photographer from each of the member states.

Thus in the idea of the portrait, we hope at least we have captured the diversity of all the individuals represented. But to scale it up to match even in the microcosm the vast diversity of the European community, this diversity is multiplied by the diversity, even the idiosyncrasy of vision of the photographers. Some photographers record their friends, some the famous, others the anonymous people in the street. Finland is represented by a collection of photographs by Jan Kaila of just one individual, Britain by photographs by David Williams of the girls from one school.

In parallel to this, we hope the approachability of the photograph as art and the informality of so much that it is seen here as image will together echo the complex diversity, the web of interaction, that is the basis of any community. We hope too that this sense of community is reflected in the activity of the photographers themselves and in all the visible variety of their relationships with their subjects.

The result is a challenging view of the portrait, for even though underneath it all, the continuity of its traditional iconography is still present, the exhibition seeks to transcend the classic icon of individuality to find a metaphor for our collective sense of identity as Europeans.

The exhibition has been put together with the help and participation of representatives of all the member states, to each of whom we owe thanks. We also wish particularly to thank Gail Boardman who has been the executive curator of the exhibition. Her appointment was made possible by a grant from Edinburgh District Council whom we also wish to thank for their assistance.

Finn Andersen
Chairman
The European Union Cultural Forum

Professor Duncan Macmillan
Curator
The Talbot Rice Gallery
The University of Edinburgh

ITALY

AGNESE PURGATORIO

Agnese Purgatorio was born in Bari in 1964, where she lives and works. She has considerable professional experience as a photographer, and worked for a year in Brazil before returning to Bari where she has worked with the Galleria Spazio Imagine. From 1988 her interest in the language of the portrait has grown.

The importance of the 'double' in the work of Agnese Purgatorio is inescapable. Her couples, whether happy or ill at ease, alone in company or in visible unison, greet the camera directly. Her interest is neither in the glorification of her subjects, nor is it in anthropological research. She is more drawn towards a documentary objectivity which imbues her images of young faces—doubles of brothers, friends, engaged couples and people who share a common outlook—with an expressive force.

*'it's something going out of order
of the new world order'*

Caetano Veloso

ITALY



Dialogue no. 4

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Sincere thanks for practical and moral support in the creation of **The European Face** exhibition are due to:*

Mr Andreas Pawlitschek, Cultural Attaché, Austrian Institute, London

Mr Georges Vercheval, Musée de la Photographie, Charleroi, Belgium

Lars Schwander, Curator, The Photographic Centre, Copenhagen 1996

Finn Thrane, Museet for Fotokunst, Odense, Denmark

Stephane Crouzot and **Martine Beugnet**, L'Institut Français d'Ecosse, Edinburgh

Mrs Sikkan Park, Cultural Attaché, Embassy of Finland, London

Herr Hanno von Graevenitz and **Herr D. Bengel**, Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany, Edinburgh

Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart, Germany

Mr Constantinos Pasalis, Cultural Attaché, The Embassy of Greece, London

Christine Redmond, Director, Gallery of Photography, Dublin, Ireland

Luisella d'Alessandro and **Consolata Dorna**, Fondazione Italiana per la Fotografia, Turin, Italy

Dr Onofrio Speciale, Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Edinburgh

Paul di Felice, Café Crème, Luxembourg

Frits Giertsberg, Nederlands Foto Instituut, Rotterdam, Netherlands

Ms. Ines Coppoolse and **Ms. Lisbet de Bakker**, Royal Netherlands Embassy, London

Ms. Mercedes Gibson, Portuguese Embassy, London

David Balsells and **Mariona Fernández**, Primavera Fotogràfica, Barcelona, Spain

Jan-Eric Lundström and **Andrew Young**, Fotografiska Museet, Stockholm, Sweden

Edwina Simpson, Cultural Section, Embassy of Sweden, London

Sara Stevenson, National Portrait Gallery, National Galleries of Scotland

and to **Val Fiddes**, **Elisabet Thorin** and **Pat Fisher**.

ISBN 1-873108-10-9
Printed by Featherhall Press Ltd., Edinburgh



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