

# OPEN EYE GALLERY



Palermo, 1982. Nerina worked as prostitute and was drug-dealing. She was killed by the mafia because she did not respect the rules  
© Letizia Battaglia

## LETIZIA BATTAGLIA: BREAKING THE CODE OF SILENCE

22 FEBRUARY - 4 MAY 2014  
PRIVATE VIEW: 21 FEBRUARY 2014

[www.openeye.org.uk](http://www.openeye.org.uk)

Open Eye Gallery presents, for the first time in the UK, the intense work of Sicilian photographer and photojournalist Letizia Battaglia (born 1935 in Palermo, Italy). Featuring a large selection of her iconic black and white images, *Letizia Battaglia: Breaking the Code of Silence* opens from **22 February until 4 May 2014** and will guide the viewer along a journey into one of the darkest periods in post-war Italian history.

Drawing from Battaglia's personal archive, which comprises over 600,000 images, the exhibition showcases work spanning from the mid 1970s to the early 1990s, including stark documentation of the Sicilian mafia's violent reign of tyranny, as well as more recent projects. The exhibition offers a unique opportunity to approach her genre-defining photographic practice (often linked to that of American 'crime' photographer Weegee) and reflect on the role of photography as an individual and collective means for taking action, bearing witness, providing evidence and documenting history.

Battaglia took up photography in the early 1970s, when she realised that, as a journalist, it was easier to place her articles in newspapers and magazines if these were accompanied by images. After a short period spent in Milan where she met her partner and collaborator Franco Zecchin, Letizia Battaglia returned to Sicily in 1974. After relocating to Palermo and regularly contributing to the daily *L'Ora*, she became the pictures editor until the newspaper was shut down in 1990.

Over the years, Battaglia has recorded her love/hate relationship to her home-country with (com)passion and dedication, often putting her life at risk. By alternating stark images of death, graphic violence and intimidation connected to the Mafia with poetic still-life photos and intense portraiture of children and women, Battaglia provides a textured and layered narrative of her country.

Letizia Battaglia worked on the front-line as a photo-reporter during one of the most tragic periods in contemporary Italian history, the so-called *anni di piombo* – or ‘the years of (flying) lead’, as they say in Italian. “[These were] eighteen years in which the ferocious Corleonesi mafia clan would claim the lives of governors, senior policemen, entire mafia families and two of Battaglia's dearest friends: the anti-mafia judges Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino.” (Peter Jinks, *The Observer*, 4 March 2012).

The selected works on show at Open Eye Gallery illustrate this period and document Battaglia's attempt to come to terms with that history and reconcile the love for her country with the memory of these dramatic events.

Over the last two decades, Battaglia has persevered in her struggle against the mafia, a fight that she has pursued not only by means of her photographic work, but also as a politician and public figure, a publisher and as a woman.

**Open Eye Gallery**, Liverpool, is one of the UK's leading photography spaces. Under the direction of **Lorenzo Fusi**, this exhibition follows *Tim Hetherington: You Never See Them Like This* and *The Piers From Here: Alvin Baltrop and Gordon Matta-Clark*, which runs until 9 February.

#### **Editors Notes:**

For further press information, interviews and image requests, please contact Roz Arratoon or Emma Pettit at Margaret on 020 7923 2861 / [firstname@margaretlondon.com](mailto:firstname@margaretlondon.com)

Open Eye Gallery  
19 Mann Island  
Liverpool Waterfront  
L3 1BP

[www.openeye.org.uk](http://www.openeye.org.uk)

Phone: +44 (0) 151 236 6768

Email: [info@openeye.org.uk](mailto:info@openeye.org.uk)

#### **Letizia Battaglia: Breaking The Code Of Silence**

22 February - 4 May 2014

Private View: 6 – 8pm, Friday 21 February 2014

#### **Gallery Opening Hours:**

10.30am - 5.30pm

Tuesday to Sunday during exhibitions.

Closed on Mondays (except bank holidays) and during exhibition changeovers.

**About Open Eye Gallery:**

Founded in 1977 Open Eye Gallery is an independent not-for-profit photography gallery based in Liverpool. One of the UK's leading photography spaces, Open Eye is the only gallery dedicated to photography and related media in the North West of England. Open Eye has consistently championed photography as an art form that is relevant to everyone. It promotes the practice, enjoyment and understanding of photography by creating challenging and entertaining opportunities to experience and appreciate distinctive, innovative photographs.

As well as presenting a programme of international, high-quality exhibitions Open Eye houses a permanent Archive containing photographs dating from the 1930s to the present day.

In November 2011 Open Eye re-launched in a brand new purpose-built home in one of the city's most prestigious and prominent new developments on the Liverpool Waterfront. The gallery opens onto a large covered public square and is split over two floors. Open Eye Gallery hosts an international programme of cutting edge exhibitions showcased all year round, including periodic exhibitions reflecting on the gallery's Archive. Open Eye also commissions Wall Works - large-scale graphic art installations for the external facade of the gallery. The gallery's position at the heart of the regenerated Waterfront – next to the Museum of Liverpool and a stone's throw from Tate Liverpool and Albert Dock – cements its commitment to the city and its vibrant cultural life.

**About Lorenzo Fusi, Director, Open Eye Gallery:**

Lorenzo moved to Liverpool in 2009, when he was appointed as the International Curator of the Liverpool Biennial. He curated the 2010 and 2012 iterations of the biennial exhibition. During this time, he became first involved with Open Eye Gallery as a result of the institutional collaborations and cultural partnerships that characterise the UK biennial from its inception. Prior to this appointment, Lorenzo was Chief Curator at Palazzo delle Papesse and sms contemporanea (Siena, Italy). Lorenzo took his post of Director at Open Eye Gallery in Spring 2013.

**Image credit/caption:**

*Palermo, 1982. Nerina worked as prostitute and was drug-dealing. She was killed by the mafia because she did not respect the rules* © Letizia Battaglia.

- Ends -