



APERTURE

SNAPSHOT: Paolo Ventura

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By Anna Carnick

Aperture is pleased to present the second installment of “**SNAPSHOT**,” a new series of interviews with photography’s luminaries inspired by the Proust Questionnaire. This week, we spoke with one of our favorite artists, **Paolo Ventura**.

The Italian-born, Brooklyn-based photographer builds intricate, miniature sets from found objects (often flea market finds) and shoots them to appear life-size, creating haunting, narrative series.

“Venice 1943,” an excerpt from his new series *L’Automa*, is featured in the latest issue of [Aperture](#) magazine. Ventura is also included in the new Aperture-Library of Congress co-publication, [Photographic Memory: The Album in the Age of Photography](#), which is the subject of tomorrow’s [panel discussion](#) at the Aperture Gallery.

Ventura’s work is presently on display in the Italian national pavilion at the Arsenale at the Venice Biennale. He is also part of [Otherworldly: Optical Delusions and Small Realities](#), on view now through September at the Museum of Art and Design, NYC.

AC: What is your present state of mind?

PV: Very content. I’m under a pergola of grapes that are just starting to emerge.

How do you describe your personality?

Shy.

What do you think is your greatest strength?

My imagination.

What is your definition of beauty?

A farmhouse in Tuscany during the twenties or thirties.

Name your greatest hero or heroine.

When I was little, Tin Tin. When I was a teenager, the Corto Maltese. And now I’m too cynical to have a hero.

What do you believe is your greatest achievement as an artist so far?

My most recent show [*L’Automa*] at the Museo Fortuny in Venice. It has always been one of my favorite museums.

What is the greatest challenge you’ve faced as an artist?

Dealing with gallerists.

Your greatest personal achievement?

Becoming a father.

What is the biggest life lesson you've learned so far?

I've always been against school. "life lesson" sounds too scholastic for me. I'm not sure life *teaches* you lessons.

If you weren't a photographer, what would you be?

A police detective.

Who is your favorite artist, of any genre?

Piero della Francesca. I just saw the *Madonna del Parto* in Monterchi and it was stunning.

What is your favorite photograph?

A photograph by Ernst Haas. It's an image of the return of the German veterans from a Russian gulag in the early fifties, and among the crowd there is a woman showing a photograph of her son to these returning veterans. It is communicative, direct, deep, strong. It challenges you—makes you think. It's what photography can be when it's really good. It's also aesthetically nice to look at.

Name a person—living or dead—you'd really like to meet.

Lee Miller.

Do you have a mentor?

My wife, Kim.

The natural talent you wish you'd been born with?

To play music.

For what fault do you have the most tolerance?

I have a twin: I spent nine months sharing a tiny space, so I'm very tolerant of other people.

Your favorite motto?

Ite missa est. (Go—the mass is over.)