

Rome

Patrick Faigenbaum

FRENCH ACADEMY OF ROME, VILLA MEDICI

Viale Trinità dei Monti, 1

October 4–January 19



Patrick Faigenbaum, *Famille del Drago, Rome, 1987*, gelatin silver print, 29 x 26 1/4".

At the heart of Patrick Faigenbaum's oeuvre are works that skillfully reveal the background and character of his subjects, whether ancient classical busts shot in Roman museums or the aristocratic Italian families he photographed in their homes during the 1980s. Now, Faigenbaum returns to Rome with a vast anthological show at the French Academy, where he had a fellowship from 1985 through 1987. Curated by Jean-François Chevrier and Jeff Wall, the exhibition retraces his entire creative path.

Together, his images constitute a thorough, enlightening documentation of specific social and political identities, sharpened by the photos' hushed atmospheres – which evoke a sense of suspended space and time—as well as their strongly pictorial quality, achieved thanks to his skillful deployment of nuanced grays. Those qualities remain intact in his work from subsequent years, where interior scenes alternate with outdoor views, and the contrast of black and white becomes an unexpected symphony of color. The exhibition, which began as a collaboration with the Vancouver Art Gallery (where it opened in March 2013), brings together approximately one hundred works by the photographer that were created from the time of his residency at the Villa Medici to the present. Despite their thematic heterogeneity – Faigenbaum's subjects range from the human figure to urban and natural landscapes to still life – the works share one dominant element: a fascination with the passing of time. In some instances, this interest is distilled through explicit and easily identifiable visual references—for example, an architectural detail, or a furnishing accessory, or sections of Paris and Prague, Bremen and Barcelona. In other instances, his interest in time emerges through layered iconographic and iconological evocations that are harder to pinpoint – for instance, via his use of color, light, and perspective in a way that evokes the figurative tradition of classical painting. It's a process that continuously recurs in Faigenbaum's creative practice, wherein he maintains a distance from contemporaneity to lend his work a more specifically historical bent.

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.

— Pier Paolo Pancotto