

**Between Photography and Artistic Practice: New Narratives of Colonial
Photographic Heritage across Africa and Europe**

Curated by Lorenzo Maida and Costantino Paonessa

Between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, photography played a central role in shaping public discourse surrounding the European colonization of African territories and the southern and eastern Mediterranean. For a long time, these images remained confined to public and private archives, facilitating and reinforcing the erasure of a traumatic past marked by violence and oppression. Since the 1990s, however, they have become privileged subjects—and objects—of scholarly inquiry, driven by the work of historians, anthropologists, archivists, and, above all, artists. In doing so, they have re-emerged at the centre of debates on the so-called colonial legacy.

For many scholars and practitioners, colonial photographs have served—and continue to serve—as critical points of departure for reinterpreting, translating, recontextualizing, and narrating, through a wide range of artistic practices, the violence inflicted upon local populations by European colonial powers; the legal and cultural construction of asymmetrical relationships among the various individuals living in colonized territories; and the biographies of those who were photographed and represented.

The immediacy of the visual medium has also fostered the development of new artistic and interpretative languages through which colonial photographs can be re-signified. Novels, exhibitions, graphic novels, and podcasts are only some of the formats that transform these images into spaces, opportunities, and tools for reflecting on the colonial past.

The dossier invites scholarly, artistic, and curatorial contributions that examine, from an interdisciplinary perspective and within a long-term chronological framework (1840–1975), emerging artistic languages engaging with colonial photography and its material and immaterial legacies across Europe, the Mediterranean, and Africa.

Possible, though not exhaustive, themes include:

- Digital practices aimed at the deconstruction and decolonization of photographic heritage;

- Artistic curatorial and exhibition practices involving works created from and/or through colonial photographs in museums and public or private archives;
- Practices of reinterpreting colonial images in literature and the arts;
- The role of collectives and/or independent groups in creating spaces for the sharing, study, and reworking of colonial photographs;
- Artistic practices engaging with images as sites of conflict and encounter.

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Deadlines

- Abstract submission (max 400 words + short bio): **15 November 2026**
- Notification of acceptance by curators: **20 November 2026**
- Full article submission (Italian, English, or French, with 100-word abstract in English + 5 keywords): **15 January 2027**

Please send abstracts to: abstract@africaemediterraneo.it