**LEONARD FREED**

**Text by Enrica Viganò**

Leonard Freed used to ask himself many questions. In his dense diaries he would jot down notes about the probing research he was carrying out on existence and the motivations of human life. His tool was his camera; his talent, an instinctual grasping of visual forms. His efforts were entirely directed towards people and hence focused on the mother of all questions: who are we?

He would gaze at the world in search of an answer both universal and individual. He would personally choose which themes to work on and get to their very roots – to the sap of human behaviour. And on each occasion he would explain something more, not just of the subjects portrayed but also of ourselves and his own Self: “my camera is my psychiatrist's couch”.

Leonard Freed launched his mighty challenge to the fourth dimension: time. “What I am trying to put in my photographs is the element of time. Time goes by and we need to be aware of it. Photography can give us this awareness”. It is likely that this crucially contributed to his falling in love with Italy, a place where present and past coexist and interact in a tangible and metamorphic way.

His love, which he would voice on every possible occasion, is witnessed by the over forty-five trips he took to Italy. Expressed through thousands of negatives, it was a genuine love story with the inhabitants of the peninsula that made each of his visits a unique and unrepeatable experience. His pilgrimage to Italy, which continued on and off for almost fifty years, was a source of life for him: it nourished his soul and provided him with endless material for his careful study of human nature – of which Italians according to him were one of the best expression.

Leonard Freed was not used to work by following current events; rather, he sought for a more contemplative dimension that would allow him to gather impressions, feelings and atmospheres revealing a subjective yet suggestive truth. “Basically, I think there are 'informative' photos and 'emotional' photos. I do not take informative photos: I'm not a photojournalist, I'm an author, and I'm not interested in facts. I wish to show atmospheres”.

Resolute and insatiable, he explored the world in search of himself, collecting moments he then made available to us. He did so humbly, without claiming to have come up with any absolute answers, but with a desire to offer parts of a whole: time, origins, aspirations, mistakes, relationships between individuals, religions, cultures and peoples.