

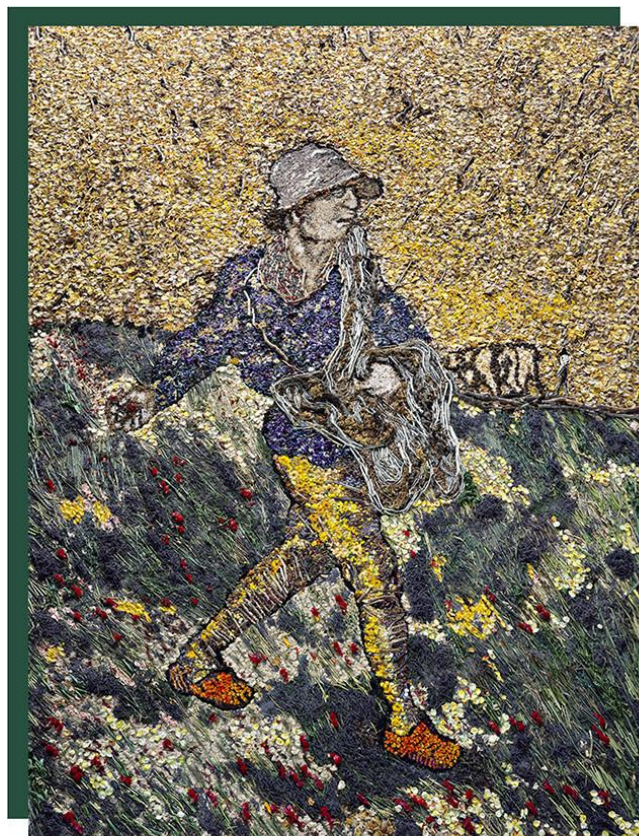
# L'ŒIL DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE

## Collezione Ettore Molinaro : Dialogues #31 : Vik Muniz / Inez van Lamsweerde

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Ettore Molinaro

January 9, 2024



This is the 31st dialogue of the **Ettore Molinaro Collection**. A dialogue very dear to me, because it closes the year and announces the months to come. A dialogue between different times and perspectives, and for this reason I wanted to combine two images that talk about photography and painting. I hope that this partnership, sometimes difficult and controversial, will instead be regenerating for all of us and will accompany us joyfully into 2024.

**Ettore Molinaro**

At fifty I decided to change my life, I left high finance, my successful career for more than two decades, and I re-enrolled at university, choosing the course of study I would have chosen as a boy: art. Once I graduated I traveled around the world for three years, visiting one museum after the other. It was my personal Grand Tour, my great journey into the world of images. And they were images that I could «come upon» in real life. One of these first encounters, absolutely decisive, was with the collection of the Kröller-Müller Museum, in Otterlo, Holland. Vincent Van Gogh's *The Sower* was there. After infinite reproductions, I could *encounter*, and I insist on this verb, the original image. I finally saw what for me was one of the most incredible «reversal» of colours in the history of art, that totally yellow sky, beyond the sun, that wheat sky, which joined a land brushed with blue, and on that land of sky and clouds walked a man and this man was sowing. I too would have reaped the fruits of his sowing, because ten years later, during a second Grand Tour within the photographic image, I would have met another sower naturally inspired by Van Gogh, but of a different nature. Stemming of a «different seed», I dare say.

I refer to the magnificent reinvention that Vik Muniz created in a church in Avignon, not far from the place where Van Gogh used to paint, recomposing his masterpiece thanks to a mosaic of seeds, dried petals, lavender ears, leaves, twigs. Now, at the beginning of the third millennium, photography looked at painting in peace, or rather recomposed it, adding the scent of flowers and wild herbs to its realism. And I felt Muniz's work strongly, and I wanted to «encounter» it every day in my collection, because I understood that it sutured not only a historical and cultural rift, the eternal conflict between painting and photography, but also one of my most intimate tears. Rediscovering the images of the great masters, I too recomposed my image, my sky and my earth, stitching together the cold, rational, visionary part of me – whereas finance needs to guess the future – to that equally intense, but more solitary, silent, sometimes melancholic part of me that sought immersion in art.

Over the years I would have looked for other equally powerful photographs, other doors that would connect photography and painting. So when, and not by chance, I returned to the Neatherlands, this time to Amsterdam, and I was faced with the monumental and fragile beauty of Jade, portrayed by Inez Van Lamsweerde, much courted fashion photographer, I had no doubts, that portrait had to be mine. Of course, I could have chosen another image of Inez, for example one of her famous ironic «boy» self-portraits, with a beard and moustache, taken in New York in 2010. But it would have been an obvious, almost imposed choice, given my long research on gender identity. I wanted something else. So when I saw the sculptural dress that wraps Jade, that precious fabric edged in white, I thought of the same dress painted by Hans Memling for his famous *Woman in Prayer*. Once again a contemporary artist had recalled and reinvented a classic, and Jade's inky face, impossible against the light of her skin, was another splendid chromatic inversion that joins together distant worlds. Day and night, together. The body we are born with and the body we rewrite throughout our lives. And painting and photography, both rivals and siblings, finally meet.

**Ettore Molinaro**

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