

NICOLE GRAVIER

Fotoromanzo (Photonovel)

Exhibition at Villa Medici
February 25–May 4, 2026

With the support of the ERMES ERMES Gallery, Rome



VILLA MEDICI

From **February 25 to May 4, 2026**, Villa Medici is presenting **Fotoromanzo (Photonovel)**, the first exhibition in Italy devoted to the French artist and photographer **Nicole Gravier**, and particularly to her iconic series *Myths & Clichés* (1976–80), which reveals the audacious world of a pioneer of visual misdirection.

Born in Arles in 1949, Nicole Gravier moved in the early 1970s to Italy, where she discovered the influence of the photonovel in popular culture. In the *Myths & Clichés* series, she appropriates its codes — dramatic poses, narrative sequences, stereotyped pictures — the better to deconstruct them. Photo booth pictures, postcards, found images: everything becomes material with which to dismantle clichés, undo facile narratives, and lay bare the mechanisms that shape our gaze.

Her work falls within the “semiotic” trend in art. Like Roland Barthes in *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* (1976), Nicole Gravier questions the way in which signs produce meaning, create myths, and lend themselves to misdirection. By cutting out, recomposing, and replaying images, she dissects visual narratives, undermines the text, and humorously reveals the procedures involved in constructing the fiction of femininity. Her approach reveals the mechanisms of symbolic domination and invites everyone to ask themselves what they think they are seeing. Her work finds a particular echo in the Italian feminist revolution of the 1970s, which questioned the power of language and of the image, in line with artists and theorists such as Carla Lonzi, Mirella Bentivoglio, and Tomaso Binga.

Presented at Villa Medici in parallel with the exhibition **Agnès Varda, Here and There: Paris – Rome**, Nicole Gravier's work engages in dialogue with that of Agnès Varda; both reveal the hidden narratives of everyday life and the ability of women to reappropriate their own images.





Nicole Gravier

Nicole Gravier (b. 1949, Arles) is a French artist based in Arles. She taught artistic anatomy at the Academies of Fine Arts of Bergamo, Naples, and Florence and at the Brera Academy of Fine Arts in Milan until the end of 2017. Gravier studied at the Aix-en-Provence Academy of Fine Arts and the Brera Academy in Milan, where she graduated in painting. Abandoning traditional artistic practices in the 1970s, she explored photography as a tool for analysing and decoding anonymous, popular, or everyday pictures, such as portraits taken in photo booths or postcards. The new images propagated by mass media, particularly television and magazines, inspired her ironic view of the art world and the female condition.

The exhibition is presented with the support of

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