

Dayanita Singh. Archivio
Archivio di Stato di Venezia,
Refettorio d'Inverno
17 aprile / April -
31 luglio / July, 2026
Monday - Friday, 12 - 6 pm

A cura di / Curated by
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Press Kit



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ARCHIVIO

Dayanita Singh

For more than twenty-five years, Dayanita Singh has been quietly, patiently, and persistently photographing Italy. This long-duration engagement has unfolded without spectacle, without proclamation, almost as a parallel archive — one that has grown through friendship, trust, and the slow sedimentation of looking. From Venice to Bologna, from Florence to Milan, from Naples to Turin, Como, and Rome, Singh has approached Italian cities not as monuments to be recorded but as living organisms to be listened to.

Crucial to this long engagement has been the role of friendship. Access — to private houses, hidden libraries, family collections, storerooms, and spaces otherwise inaccessible — has been granted to her not through institutional commission alone, but through relationships cultivated over decades. Friends have opened doors; they have entrusted her with their histories, their interiors, their silences. In doing so, they have become, in a profound sense, her patrons.

This patronage is not economic in the classical sense, though it echoes the Italian tradition of artistic support. It is a patronage of care and reciprocity. Singh cares for the spaces and lives she photographs; in return, her friends care for her unfolding practice. The exchange is subtle but foundational. The archive that emerges from her Italian years is therefore not institutional but intimate — built on trust, sustained by mutual attention.

What emerges from twenty-five years of photographing Italy is therefore not a survey, nor a documentation, but a relational cartography. It is a map drawn through attention, through patience, through return. Singh's Italian archive does not claim authority over these cities; it inhabits them lightly. It listens more than it declares.

And perhaps this is the quiet radicality of her gaze: in places burdened by history, she finds the present. In cities saturated with representation, she uncovers anonymity.

The Archive as a Living Form

Dayanita Singh's work unfolds at the intersection of photography, book-making, architecture, and memory, persistently challenging the conventions through which images are classified, preserved, and made meaningful. Over the course of more than three decades, Singh has redefined not only the status of the photographic image, but also the very idea of the archive itself. In her practice, the archive ceases to be a neutral repository of the past and becomes instead a living, mutable form — one that is activated through sequencing, circulation, and intimate encounters with viewers.

Photography has long been bound to archival logic. From its earliest institutional uses — scientific documentation, ethnography, surveillance, and state administration — the photograph has been invested with evidentiary authority. It promises fixity, permanence, and truth. Singh does not reject this history; rather, she reworks it from within. Her images retain a deep respect for photography's capacity to bear witness, yet they resist the static and hierarchical structures that traditionally govern archives. In her work, photographs do not merely record; they migrate, recombine, and generate meaning through their relations with one another.

Andrea Anastasio

