

BANGKOK THAT WAS

Photographs 1956-61

FABRIZIO LA TORRE

Editing & Text by François Bayle

Feb. 2019

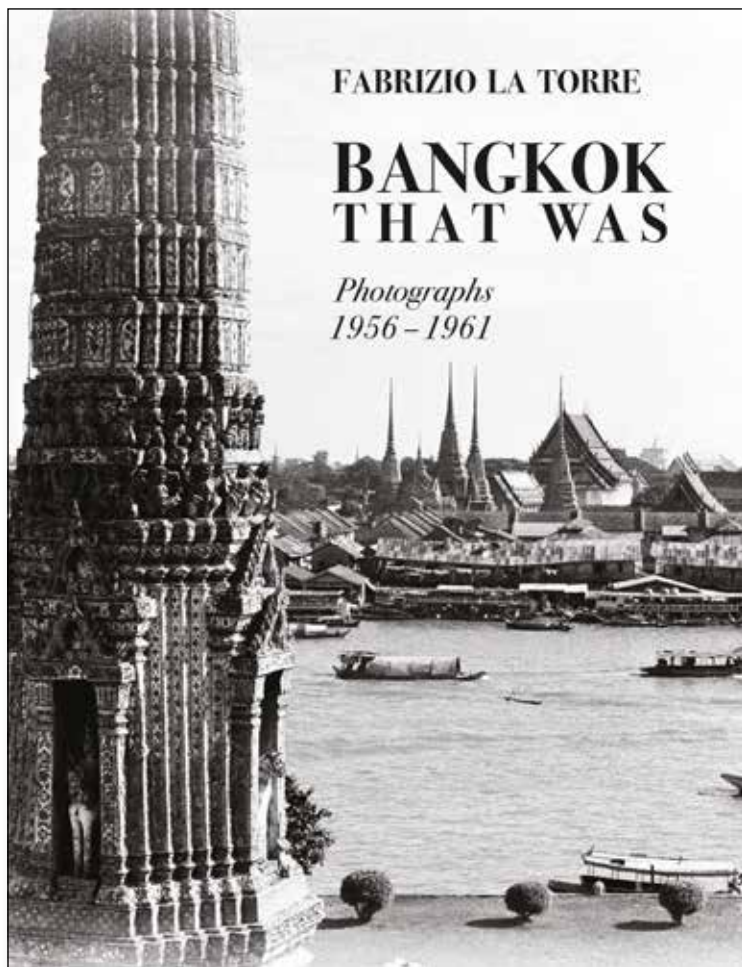
Serindia is delighted to present the Bangkok collection from the portfolio of one of Italy's finest photographers: discovered, collected and edited by his nephew.

£28 softcover

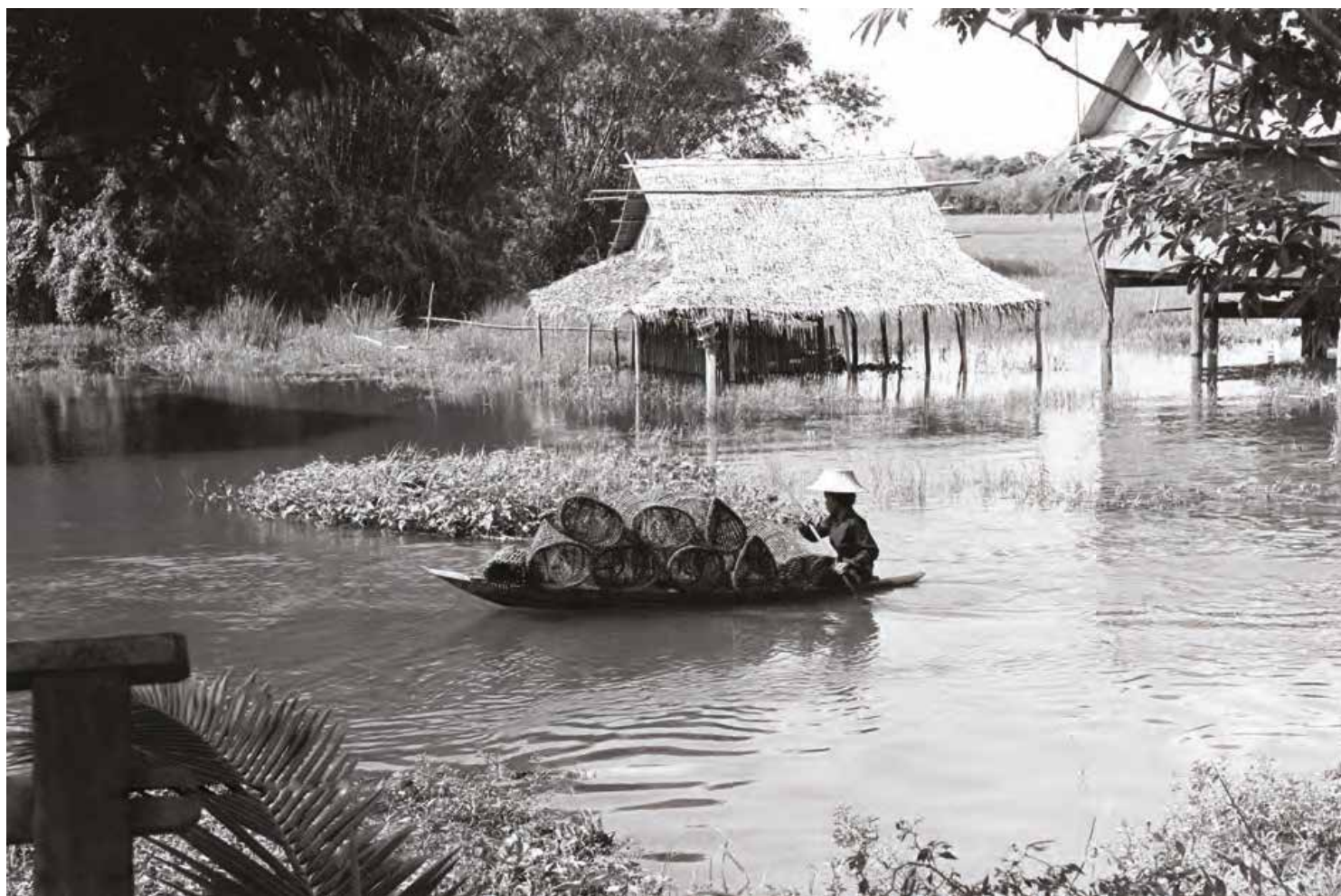
isbn 978-1-932476-91-0

260 x 200 mm; 148 pages

126 black & white and 10 colour photographs
highest quality reproduction



It was in 2008 that François Bayle discovered the huge treasure trove of stunning, evocative photographs which constituted the opus vivendi of his uncle Fabrizio. Unquestionably one of Italy's finest ever photographers, in 1968 he decided to stop. His vast travel portfolio lay dormant for 40 years until François worked with him during his last years to bring it back to life. This book clearly demonstrates what a worthy undertaking it has been!

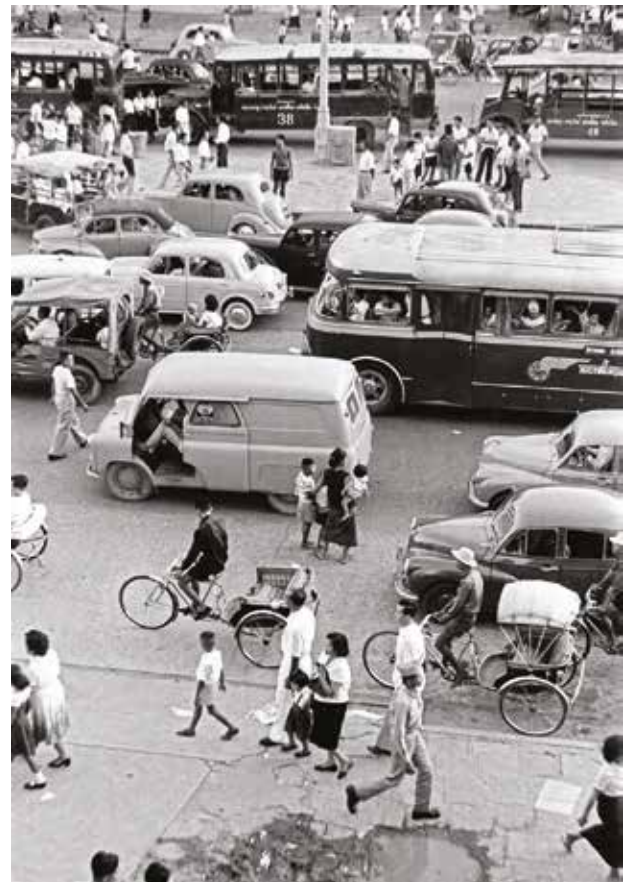




FABRIZIO LA TORRE (b. Rome 1921; d. Brussels 2014), Italian photographer and great art enthusiast, lived in Bangkok from 1956 to 1961. Having gone there to work in a newly established company, ItalThai Industrial, he took a series of photographs in Thailand depicting the everyday life of the Thais at the time. Using a neo-realistic, intimate style which characterises all of his work, in his own country, Italy, or during a 6-month tour in Canada and the USA, La Torre was able to capture those simple, sincere moments which tell exactly the story of an era.

Bangkok That Was, published on the occasion of a 2018 double exhibition of this artist in the National Museum Bangkok and in Serindia Gallery, is the first book drawn from the Asian photographs of Fabrizio La Torre. This is a tender portrait of the soul of a place and its people that once was, yet which can still be found to this day. The book concludes with *Travel Diary*, containing other Asian photographs taken among the Hmong people of Northern Thailand, as well as of Hong Kong, Japan and Nepal.







BANGKOK THAT WAS *Photographs 1956-61*

Photographs and commentary by Fabrizio La Torre

Editing & Text by François Bayle

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Fabrizio, like other members of his family, was artistic, but never claimed to be so. His chosen medium was photography. Following time in the Navy, he spent two years from 1946 until 1948 in South America in search of employment. He returned no richer than before, but with his eyes full of the marvels hidden in distant lands. He swore that he would never travel so far again without a good camera and the requisite rolls of film.

His next opportunity came in September 1955, travelling the length and breadth of the USA and Canada, from New York to California, from the snowy wastes of the Far North to the banks of the Saint Lawrence. His camera captured the detail and essence of this "New World". In August 1956 his longed-for "great adventure" finally happened: he got a job in a public works company which had been commissioned by the World Bank to dredge and clean the Chao Phraya, the great river which flows through Bangkok. For him it was a five-year long opportunity to discover Thailand and part of Asia at a time when mass tourism did not yet exist.

As he said himself, this stay made a profound impression on him, giving him a serenity, a sense of balance which rapidly translated into an acuteness of vision. When he returned to Rome, marked by his Asian experience, he was able to capture the everyday life of his contemporaries with remarkable humanity and affection.

At the end of the 1960s success came to Fabrizio. His photos had been noticed, gallery owners and publishers offered to exhibit and publish his photographs. Should he now acknowledge himself an artist? Instead stopped all photographic activity, gave away or sold his cameras and put away his archives in crates where remained hidden for 40 years! Fortunately both they and Fabrizio's art have been rediscovered and re-established and, thanks initially to the support of HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco, have been internationally acknowledged and exhibited.

Hopefully there is more to come from this wonderful archive!

It is not easy to recognise the Thai capital in this expanse of little houses as far as the eye can see, the horizon clearly visible, and flat, not a skyscraper in sight, no "condos". As for the rural scene below... *Bangkok that was!*

