



THIS IS AMERICA

From Robert Capa to Martin Parr

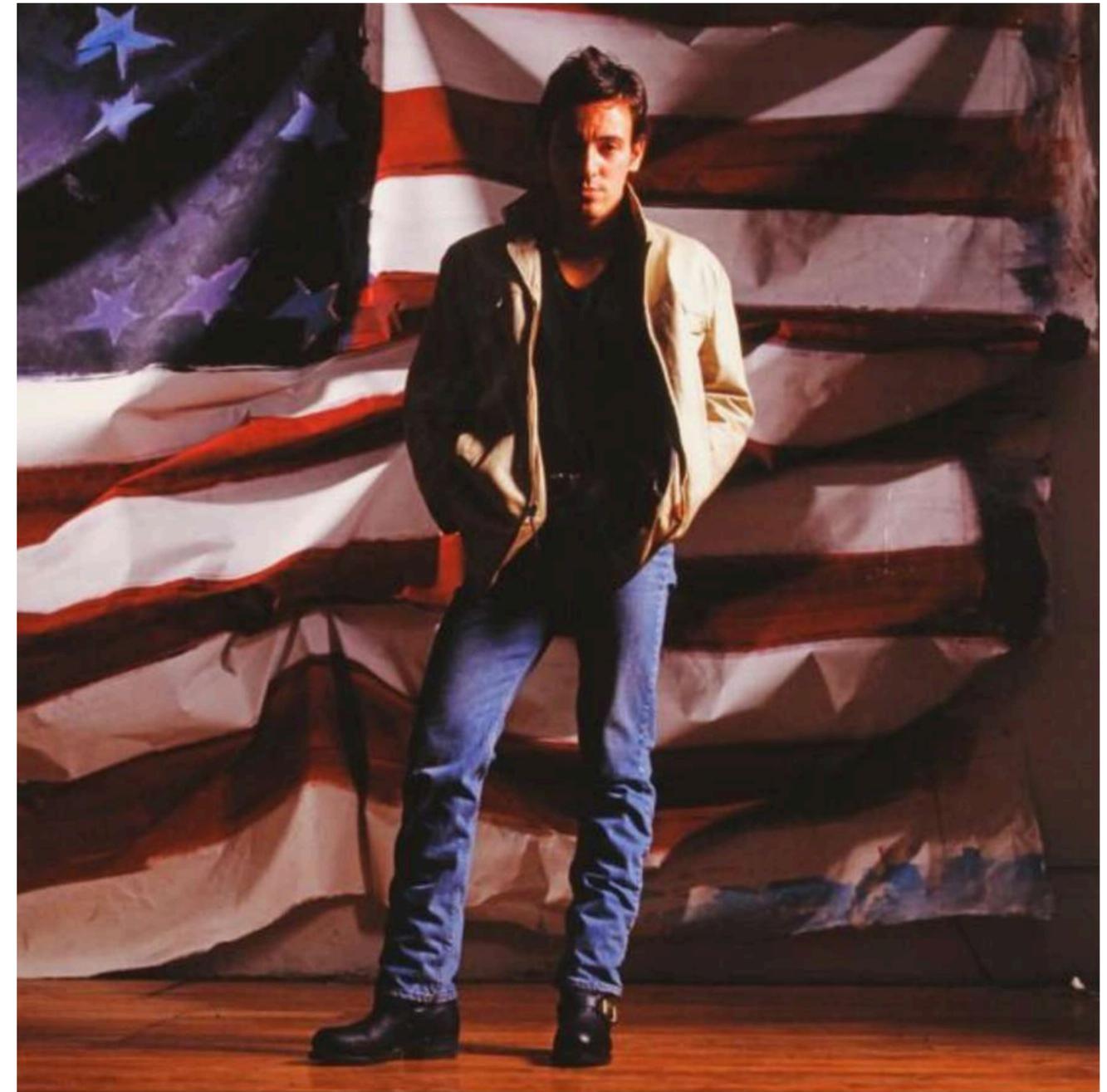
Not one America, but many.

Epic and propaganda, freedom and control, prosperity and precariousness: the exhibition explores these tensions through photography—from the 19th century to the present—and through pop and post-pop reinterpretations. The images are not intended to "explain" America, but to show **how America speaks about itself**: a constant oscillation between exaltation and criticism.

The result is a visual journey in which the symbol—often the flag—recurs like an echo, while at the center remains the paradox that spans faces, streets, power, and consumption.

The American flag is not a mere ornament here, but a true narrative device: an icon of identity and, at the same time, a screen onto which power, belonging, conflict, consumption, and protest are projected.

In this intertwining, the "American paradox" emerges — **strength and fragility, freedom and control, wealth and inequality, epic and trauma** — revealing how the flag can be both a national totem and a surface of friction: **capable of exalting and denouncing, celebrating and questioning.**



ANNIE LEIBOVITZ
Bruce Springsteen, 1984
33x48 cm

Black and White Photography Color Photography Contemporary Artworks

The exhibition presents an ongoing dialogue between **black-and-white photography, color photography, and contemporary artworks**. The interweaving of visual languages allows us to grasp the evolution of the American myth and its constant rewriting, from historical documents to pop culture, all the way to new digital experiments.

The project was conceived **in anticipation of the 250th anniversary of the Independence of the United States (1776-2026)**, a time of great celebrations in America and around the world: an ideal moment to reflect on the current meaning of those founding values—freedom, democracy, national identity—which today appear more complex and multifaceted than ever.



DOROTHEA LANGE
Pledge of Allegiance, 1942
43,2x55,9 cm



BARBARA PEACOCK
Nicole and Sven , 2018
88x116 cm

«A national flag is not just a piece of cloth, but a political emblem that symbolizes the state and its citizens—and in our context, the "American Dream." In the United States, the Stars and Stripes is ubiquitous, probably more so than the national flag of any other state, and naturally appears in thousands of photographs.»

MATTHIAS HARDER

Director of the Helmut Newton Foundation, Berlin

Excerpt from the exhibition catalog "American Beauty: From Robert Capa to Banksy," held in Padua from September 13, 2023, to January 21, 2024.



BURK UZZLE
Daytona Beach, 1972
33,8X26,7 cm



RUTH ORKIN
Boy with Flag, 1949
80x64,5 cm

«Already during World War II, one of the most famous and publicized war images of all time was the one of the American flag being raised on the island of Iwo Jima, immortalized by Joe Rosenthal in February 1945. That photograph, like the flag on the Reichstag in Berlin or the flag on the Moon, marks the transformation of the national symbol into a global myth.

Stefano Reia's collection brings together great names in the history of photography—**from Robert Capa to Berenice Abbott, from Diane Arbus to W. Eugene Smith, from Mitch Epstein to Alec Soth**—showing how the Stars and Stripes spans genres, eras, and languages. In each image, the flag becomes a mirror of American identity, oscillating between pride and criticism, belonging and distance.

On the outside, it symbolizes freedom and democracy, but also capitalism and imperialism; Inside, it unites, like an invisible glue, the diverse populations, religions, and ethnic groups between Alaska and Florida, between Washington and Hawaii. Herein lies its iconic power and its ambiguity: it is a symbol that unites and divides, celebrates and questions.

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Director of the Helmut Newton Foundation, Berlin

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W. EUGENE SMITH
Ku-Klux-Klan Rally, 1950
56x48 cm

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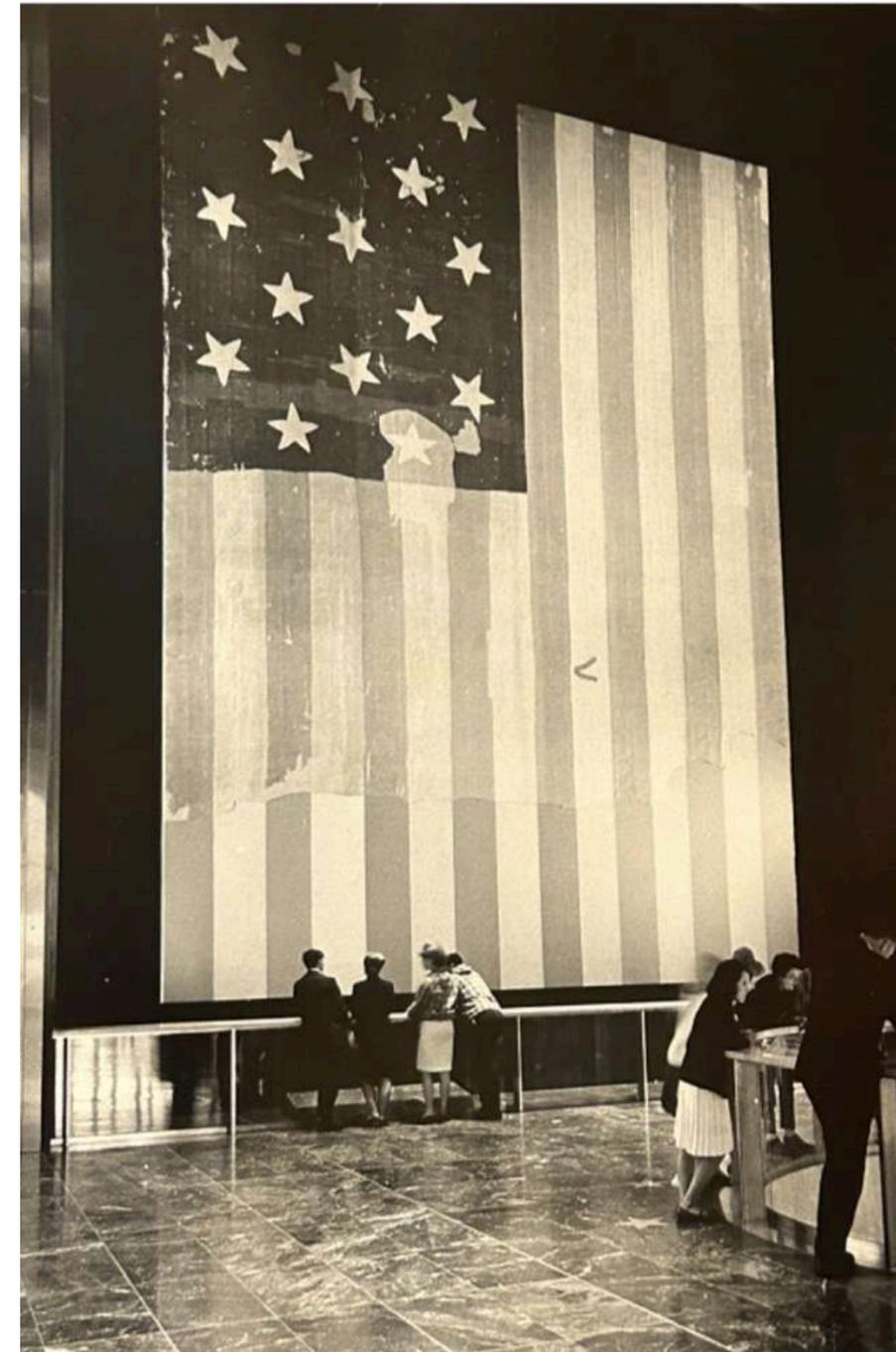
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Birth of the myth from the Civil War to the twentieth century

Photography was born alongside the modern myth of America. **Mathew B. Brady** and the other pioneers of the Civil War did more than simply document the conflict: they constructed, image after image, the epic of a nation looking back at itself in the mirror of its own founding trauma. From these shots, which transformed the war into a collective visual narrative, the language of national heroism took shape.

This "lexicon of the epic" returns a century later in **Joe Rosenthal's** iconic image of Iwo Jima, where the raised flag becomes a universal symbol of victory and sacrifice. This section thus explores the link between epic and propaganda, between historical truth and mythological construction: the birth of the American imagination as a visual narrative of itself.

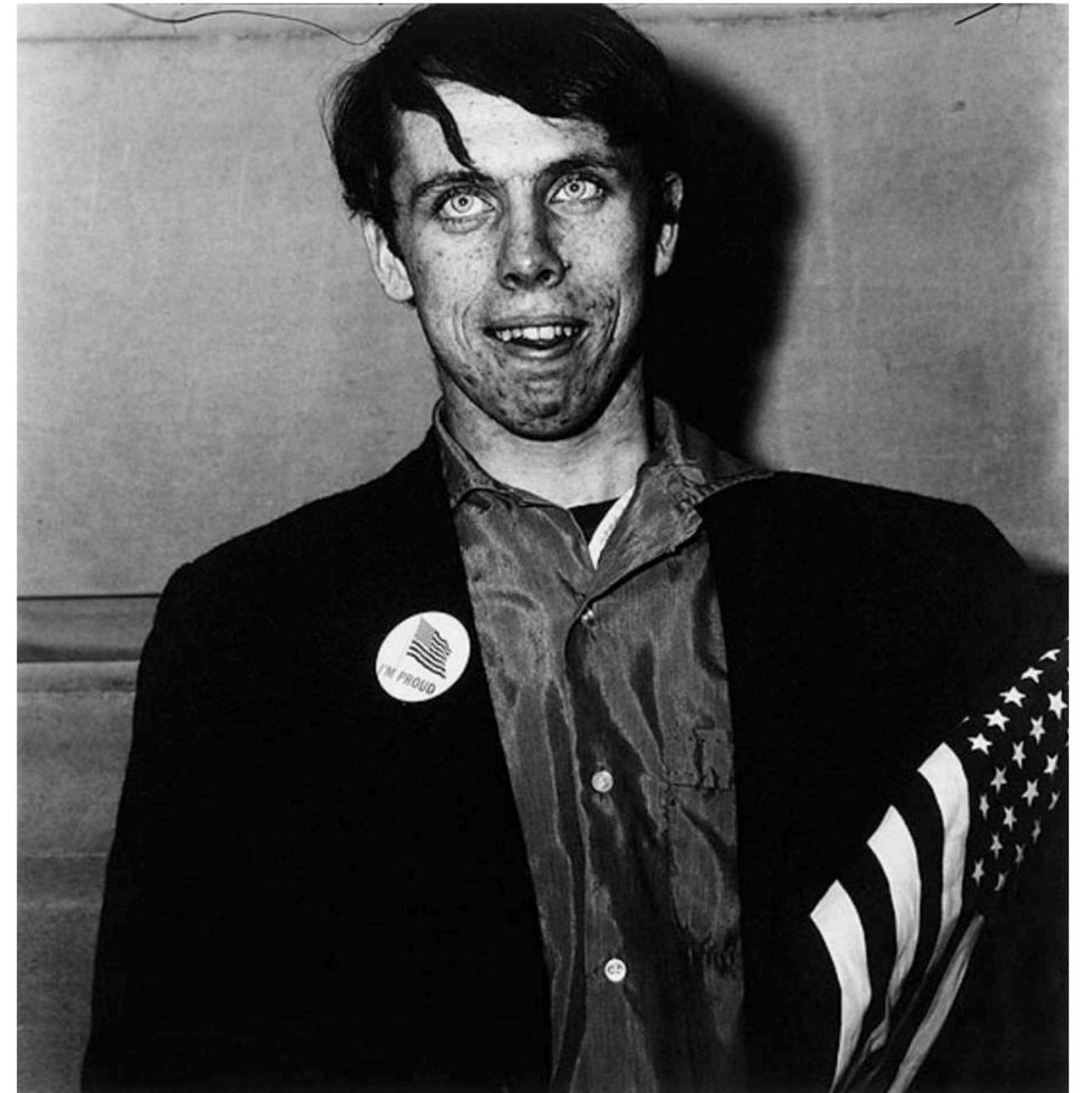


ARNOLD NEWMAN
Original Star Spangled, 1960
44,5x52 cm

We, the people. Street, everyday life, marginality.

By the mid-twentieth century, America was taking to the streets. Photographers like **Robert Frank, Garry Winogrand, Diane Arbus, Elliott Erwitt, Bruce Davidson, W. Eugene Smith, Vivian Maier, Jill Freedman,** and **Jamel Shabazz** captured a real, complex country, made up of faces, gazes, and contradictions.

It is the America of ordinary people, of disenchantment, of irony, of tenderness: a collective portrait that questions the national epic and brings it back to the realm of everyday life.



DIANE ARBUS
Patriotic Young Man with Flag ,1967
61x58 cm

Rights & Dissent. Marches, Slogans, Identities

In the years of great civil wars, photography becomes a tool of testimony and commitment. The images of **Leonard Freed**, **Stephen Shames**, **Nina Berman**, **Stephanie Keith**, **Mark Peterson**, and **Lauren Greenfield** tell the story of the voices and bodies that took to the streets to demand justice, equality, and freedom. It is the time of civil rights, feminism, LGBTQ+ activism, and the struggle against war and state violence: an America looking in the mirror and questioning itself.

In this landscape of protest, the American flag appears, sometimes brandished, sometimes burned or folded, as an echo of a deeper conflict—between identity and belonging, between the "us" proclaimed by the Constitution and the many "us" demanding recognition. A national symbol and a sign of dissent, the flag permeates the images as a reflection of the tension between founding ideals and lived reality.



LEONARD FREED
Support America's Police, 1970
46x56,5 cm

Power & Trauma. War, Police, 9/11

From Vietnam to 9/11, photography reveals the dark side of American power. The shots by **James Nachtwey, Thomas Hoepker, Jerome Delay, and the collective work *Flag of Honor*** traverse scenes of conflict, violence, and mourning, conveying the fragility of a nation alternating between control and vulnerability.

The images show soldiers, civilians, and wounded cities: the state that protects is also the one that strikes. In this space of ambiguity, patriotism intertwines with loss, defense with injury. Photography thus becomes a language of compassion and denunciation, a way to measure the distance between power and the lives that suffer its impact.



JAMES NACHTWEY
Alabama Female Prison, 1994
56,5x66,5 cm

Consumption & Entertainment. Pop, brands, propaganda

With Pop and Post-Pop, American art transformed its symbols into objects of desire, brands, and global icons.

From **Andy Warhol** to **James Rosenquist**, **Robert Indiana**, **Shepard Fairey**, **Banksy**, **Vanessa Beecroft**, **Liu Bolin**, and **Zhang Huan**, the collective imagination was reinterpreted in an ironic, advertising-oriented, and serialized way.

America itself became a brand: everything could be sold, replicated, consumed. Beneath the glossy surface of the images, questions arose about the power of the media, the relationship between freedom and consumption, and between national identity and spectacle.



JEFF KOONS
Flag, 2020
90x100 cm

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BERENICE ABBOTT
New York Stock Exchange, 1934
57X47 cm



BERENICE ABBOTT

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HENRI CARTIER - BRESSON
Woman with American flag, 1947
61,5X51 cm



HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON

ELLIOTT ERWITT
Crowd at Armistice Day Parade, 1950
46.5X60 cm



ELLIOTT
ERWITT

LARRY FINK
Democratic Convention, 1988
61X65 cm



LARRY
FINK

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MARTIN PARR
fotografia
1998



MARTIN PARR

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MARK PETERSON
Acts of Charity, 2013
70X100 cm



MARK PETERSON

AMERICAN BEAUTY

From Robert Capa to Martin Parr

LAURIE GREENFIELD
American Flag Woman, 2015
68X101 cm



LAURIE GREENFIELD

AMERICAN BEAUTY

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NAOMI HARRIS
Hillary Voter, 2017
101,6X134,6 cm



NAOMI HARRIS

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MR. BRAINWASH
Recovery Plan, 2000
66X87 cm



MR. BRAINWASH

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ANDRES SERRANO
Blood on the Flag, 2001
56,4X48,6 cm



ANDRES SERRANO

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JOTA CASTRO
Oil Shame, 2003
58X59 cm



JOTA
CASTRO

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SHEPARD FAIREY
We The People are greater than Fear, 2017
68X98 cm



SHEPARD
FAIREY

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Grazie

Loans and
selection of works

Kr8te

Creative direction
and coordination

Beside Arts

Kr8te

creative art experiences



Kr8te is a private art foundation that aims to create collections of unique artworks, developed around a theme or concept that stimulates reflection, learning, and inspiration—from academia to school students.

Through broad-ranging artistic projects, KR8TE fosters a dialogue that spans time, offering the public an educational and engaging experience.

Beside Arts is a publishing company specializing in the creation of creative, cultural, and entertainment content and projects.

The projects are realized through exhibitions and editorial formats, with an innovative or classic approach depending on the target audience. It works with many important museums, publishers, and exhibition venues in Italy and Europe, developing and producing cultural content (always scientifically accurate) that appeals to a wide audience.

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