

BUILDING

Animalism Roger Ballen



opere esposte / exhibited artworks

BUILDING

Roger Ballen
Animalism

MIA Photo Fair BNP Paribas
15° edizione
19.03.2026 – 22.03.2026

Dal 19 al 22 marzo 2026, nell'ambito della quindicesima edizione di MIA Photo Fair BNP Paribas, BUILDING presenta *Animalism*, una selezione di ventiquattro opere del fotografo Roger Ballen (New York, USA, 1950, vive da oltre quarant'anni in South Africa), rappresentato in esclusiva in Italia dalla galleria.

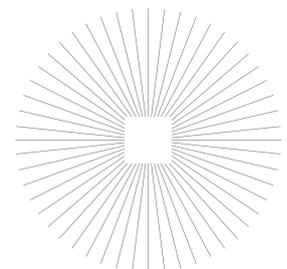
La mostra raccoglie oltre trent'anni di ricerca sul rapporto, profondo e spesso perturbante, tra esseri umani e animali. In linea con il tema *Metamorfosi* della fiera, le opere costruiscono un universo teatrale e claustrofobico in cui il confine tra comportamento umano e animale si dissolve, mettendo in luce le tensioni tra civiltà e natura e il lato più oscuro del subconscio.

Il percorso include le fotografie in bianco e nero delle serie *Outland* (1995–2000), *Shadow Chamber* (2000–2004) e *Boarding House* (1996–2016), in cui scenografie surreali e figure antropomorfe creano micro-drammi intensi e disturbanti. A queste si affiancano le immagini a colori di *Spirits and Spaces* (2016–2024), un nuovo capitolo della produzione di Ballen che amplia cromaticamente il suo universo visivo senza abbandonare la tensione psicologica tipica delle sue composizioni.

Due lightbox della serie *Theatre of Apparitions* (2008–2013), realizzate ispirandosi a dei vetri anneriti di una prigione femminile abbandonata di Johannesburg, creano un effetto di incisione mentale: figure spettrali e corpi frammentati emergono da superfici nere che richiamano pitture rupestri e trasmettono un senso di sospensione tra dimensione fisica e spirituale. Queste opere sono state selezionate per rappresentare il Sudafrica alla 59ª Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte – Biennale di Venezia.

Infine, il percorso include otto Polaroid (2024–2025), colorate a mano dall'artista. Il formato ridotto e la frammentarietà di queste immagini creano un registro intimo e immediato, in cui colore, improvvisazione e spontaneità dialogano con l'estetica tradizionale di Ballen, ampliandone la dimensione performativa e psicologica.

Animalism restituisce così la coerenza e l'evoluzione dell'immaginario "ballenesco": un teatro in cui spiriti, animali e ricordi si intrecciano, sospendendo lo spettatore tra meraviglia, inquietudine e riflessione sul lato più primordiale e subconscio dell'essere umano.



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Roger Ballen
Animalism

MIA Photo Fair BNP Paribas
15th Edition
19.03.2026 – 22.03.2026

From 19th to 22nd March 2026, as part of the fifteenth edition of MIA Photo Fair BNP Paribas, BUILDING presents *Animalism*, a selection of **twenty-four works** by photographer Roger Ballen (New York, USA, 1950; he has lived in South Africa for over forty years), who is represented exclusively in Italy by the gallery.

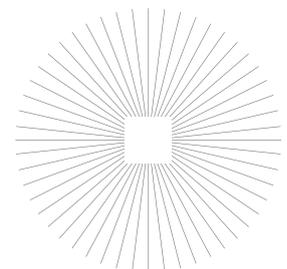
The exhibition brings together more than thirty years of research into the deep—and often disturbing—relationship between human beings and animals. In line with the fair's theme *Metamorphosis*, the works construct a theatrical and claustrophobic universe in which the boundary between human and animal behavior dissolves, highlighting the tensions between civilization and nature and the darker side of the subconscious.

The exhibition path includes black-and-white photographs from the series *Outland* (1995–2000), *Shadow Chamber* (2000–2004), and *Boarding House* (1996–2016), in which surreal scenographies and anthropomorphic figures create intense and unsettling micro-dramas. Alongside these are the color images from *Spirits and Spaces* (2016–2024), a new chapter in Ballen's production that expands the chromatic dimension of his visual universe while maintaining the psychological tension characteristic of his compositions.

Two lightboxes from the series *Theatre of Apparitions* (2008–2013), created from blackened glass found in an abandoned women's prison in Johannesburg, generate an effect akin to a mental engraving: spectral figures and fragmented bodies emerge from black surfaces that evoke prehistoric cave paintings and convey a sense of suspension between the physical and the spiritual realm. These works were selected to represent South Africa at the 59th International Art Exhibition – Venice Biennale.

Finally, the exhibition includes eight Polaroids (2024–2025), hand-colored by the artist. The small format and fragmentary nature of these images create an intimate and immediate register, in which color, improvisation, and spontaneity engage with Ballen's traditional aesthetic, expanding its performative and psychological dimension.

Animalism thus reveals both the coherence and the evolution of the "Ballenesque" imagination: a theatre in which spirits, animals, and memories intertwine, suspending the viewer between wonder, unease, and reflection on the most primordial and subconscious side of the human being.



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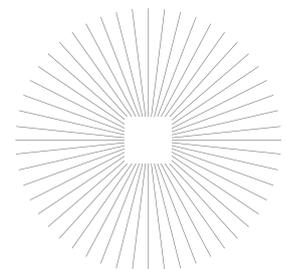
Ritratto di Roger Ballen, ph. Marguerite Rossouw

Nato negli Stati Uniti e residente a Johannesburg, **Roger Ballen** è uno dei fotografi più influenti della sua generazione, con oltre cinquant'anni di pratica. La sua ricerca combina fotografia, disegno, pittura, collage e scultura, dando vita a un linguaggio visivo unico, sospeso tra realtà, fantasia e subconscio. Le sue opere, spesso strane e provocatorie, invitano lo spettatore a esplorare territori psicologici profondi, dove il confine tra umano, animale e oggetto si dissolve.

Nei primi lavori emerge il legame con la fotografia documentaria, ma dagli anni '90 Ballen sviluppa uno stile definito "documentary fiction", caratterizzato da scenografie complesse e figure talvolta sostituite da oggetti, manichini o parti del corpo isolate. L'uso di animali, disegni e pittura arricchisce le immagini, creando micro-drammi inquietanti e poetici che raccontano la condizione umana in modo originale.

Le sue opere hanno ricevuto riconoscimenti internazionali, sono presenti in importanti collezioni museali e hanno trovato forma anche in cortometraggi legati alle sue serie fotografiche. Ballen ha inoltre fondato a Johannesburg l'Inside Out Centre for the Arts e il Roger Ballen Centre for Photography, dedicati a progetti artistici e programmi educativi.

Tra le pubblicazioni più recenti spiccano *Spirits and Spaces* (2025), il suo primo libro a colori, e *Inferno* (2025), sessantotto fotografie ispirate ai canti di Dante, che reinterpretano il poema attraverso il suo universo visivo unico. Questi lavori testimoniano la capacità di Ballen di evolvere senza mai perdere la coerenza della propria estetica, trasformando la fotografia in uno spazio teatrale, psicologico e profondamente suggestivo.



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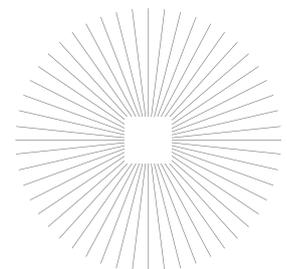
Portrait of Roger Ballen, photo by Marguerite Rossouw

Born in the United States and based in Johannesburg, **Roger Ballen** is one of the most influential photographers of his generation, with more than fifty years of artistic practice. His research combines photography, drawing, painting, collage, and sculpture, giving rise to a unique visual language suspended between reality, fantasy, and the subconscious. His works, often strange and provocative, invite viewers to explore deep psychological territories where the boundary between human, animal, and object dissolves.

In his early works, the connection to documentary photography is evident, but from the 1990s onward Ballen developed a style defined as “documentary fiction,” characterized by complex scenographies and figures sometimes replaced by objects, mannequins, or isolated body parts. The use of animals, drawings, and painting enriches the images, creating unsettling and poetic micro-dramas that portray the human condition in an original way.

His works have received international recognition, are included in major museum collections, and have also taken the form of short films connected to his photographic series. Ballen has also founded in Johannesburg the Inside Out Centre for the Arts and the Roger Ballen Centre for Photography, both dedicated to artistic projects and educational programs.

Among his most recent publications are *Spirits and Spaces* (2025), his first book in color, and *Inferno* (2025), a series of sixty-eight photographs inspired by the cantos of Dante Alighieri, which reinterpret the poem through Ballen’s unique visual universe. These works testify to Ballen’s ability to evolve without ever losing the coherence of his aesthetic, transforming photography into a theatrical, psychological, and deeply evocative space.





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Roger Ballen (1950)

EUGENE ON THE PHONE

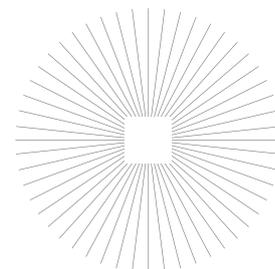
2000

stampa ai sali d'argento / *silver gelatin print*

40 x 40 cm

(55 x 55 con cornice / *with frame*)

edizione / *edition* 34/35



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Roger Ballen (1950)

SHEEP ON CUPBOARD

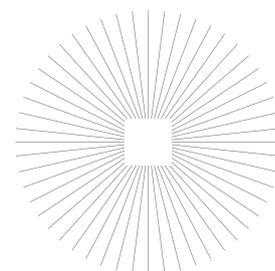
2003

stampa ai sali d'argento / *silver gelatin print*

40 x 40 cm

(55 x 55 cm con cornice / *with frame*)

edizione / *edition* 4/10





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Roger Ballen (1950)

BRIAN WITH PET PIG

1998

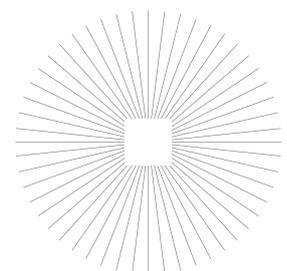
stampa ai sali d'argento / *silver gelatin print*

40 x 40 cm

(55 x 55 cm con cornice / *with frame*)

edizione / *edition* 16/35

stampa vintage, ultima disponibile / *vintage print, last one available*



BUILDING



Roger Ballen (1950)

CELEBRATION

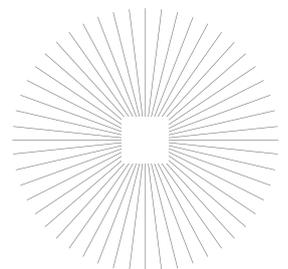
2007

stampa ai sali d'argento / *silver gelatin print*

50 x 50 cm

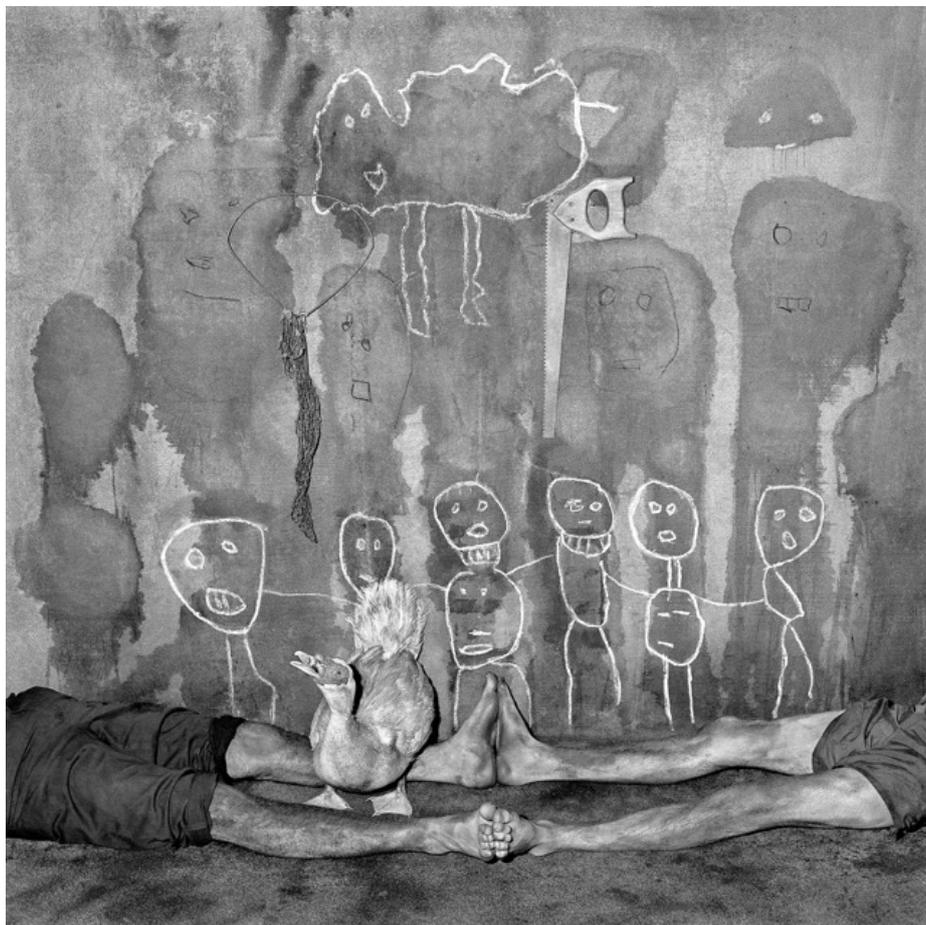
(65 x 65 con cornice / *with frame*)

edizione / *edition* 3/10





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Roger Ballen (1950)

SQUAWK

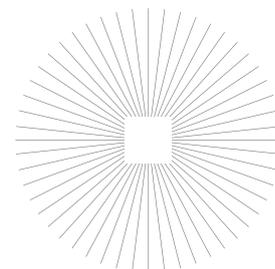
2005

stampa ai sali d'argento / *silver gelatin print*

40 x 40 cm

(55 x 55 cm con cornice / *with frame*)

edizione / *edition* 4/10



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Roger Ballen (1950)

GIRAFFE HOUSE

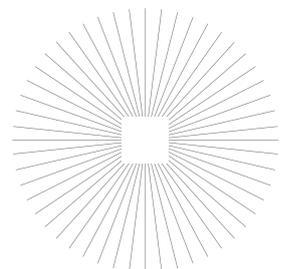
2007

stampa ai sali d'argento / *silver gelatin print*

40 x 40 cm

(55 x 55 cm con cornice / *with frame*)

edizione / *edition* 2/5





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Roger Ballen (1950)

BROKEN BAG

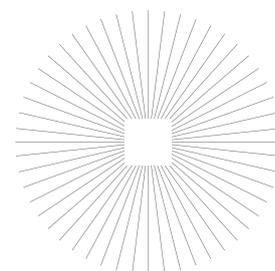
2003

stampa ai sali d'argento / *silver gelatin print*

40 x 40 cm

(55 x 55 cm con cornice / *with frame*)

edizione / *edition* 18/20



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Roger Ballen (1950)

ONE ARM GOOSE

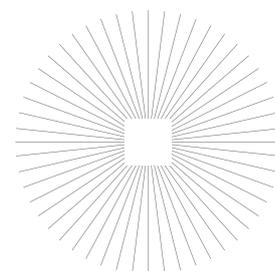
2004

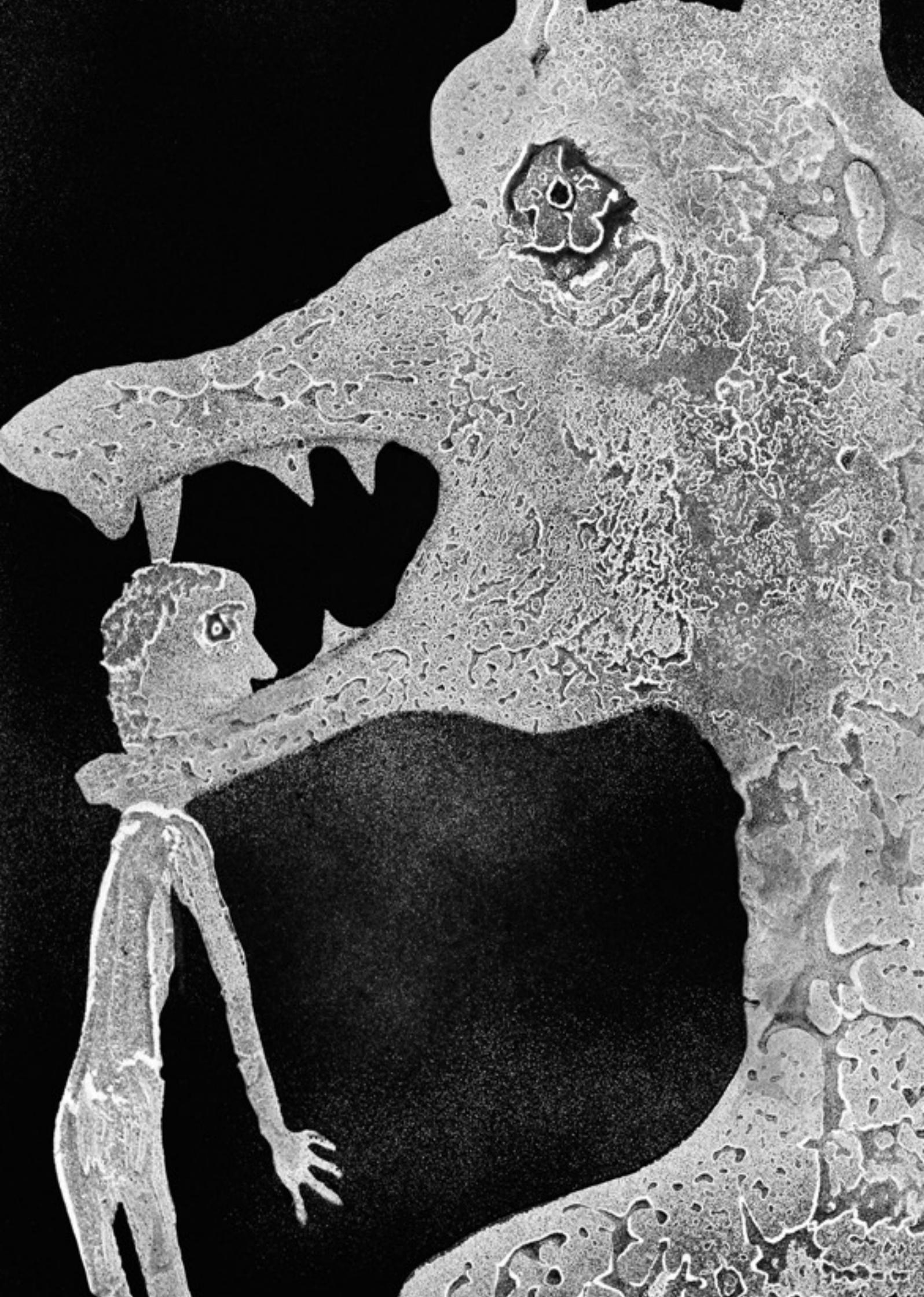
stampa ai sali d'argento / *silver gelatin print*

40 x 40 cm

(55 x 55 cm con cornice / *with frame*)

edizione / *edition* 19/20





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Roger Ballen (1950)

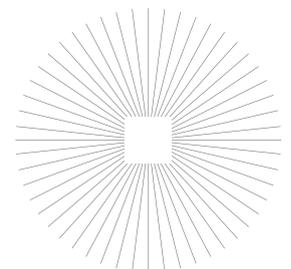
CHOMP

2010

immagine stampata su tessuto, retroilluminata / *image printed on cloth, backlit*

138 x 99 x 8 cm

edizione / *edition* 1/2



BUILDING



Roger Ballen (1950)

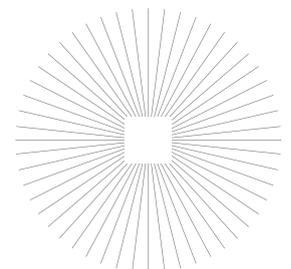
HIP HOP

2010

immagine stampata su tessuto, retroilluminata / *image printed on cloth, backlit*

128 x 99 x 8 cm

edizione / *edition* 1/2





BUILDING



Roger Ballen (1950)

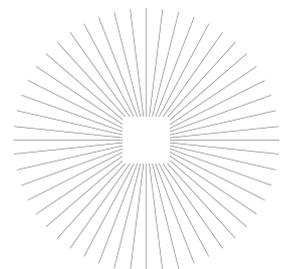
UNTITLED

2025

inchiostro d'archivio su pellicola Polaroid / archival ink on Polaroid film

10,8 x 8,8 cm

(30 x 30 cm con cornice / with frame)



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Roger Ballen (1950)

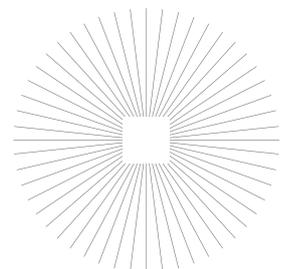
UNTITLED

2025

inchiostro d'archivio su pellicola Polaroid / archival ink on Polaroid film

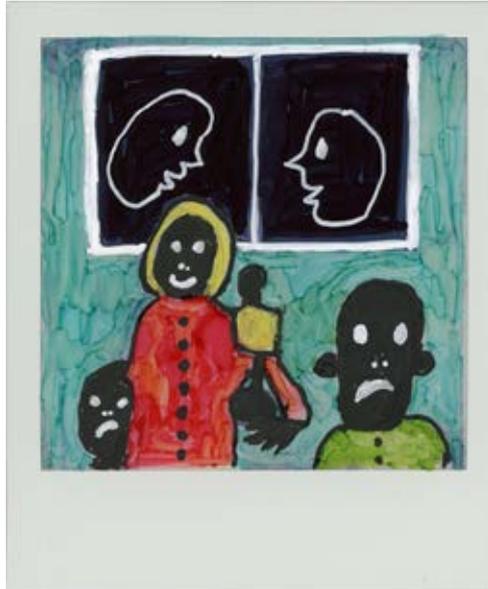
10,8 x 8,8 cm

(30 x 30 cm con cornice / with frame)





BUILDING



Roger Ballen (1950)

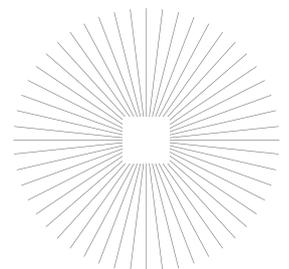
UNTITLED

2025

inchiostro d'archivio su pellicola Polaroid / archival ink on Polaroid film

10,8 x 8,8 cm

(30 x 30 cm con cornice / with frame)



BUILDING



Roger Ballen (1950)

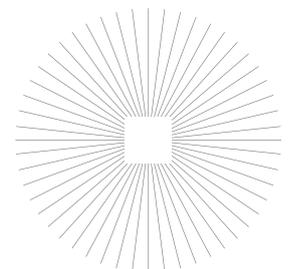
UNTITLED

2025

inchiostro d'archivio su pellicola Polaroid / archival ink on Polaroid film

10,8 x 8,8 cm

(30 x 30 cm con cornice / with frame)





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Roger Ballen (1950)

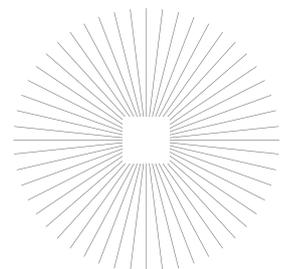
UNTITLED

2024

inchiostro d'archivio su pellicola Polaroid / archival ink on Polaroid film

10,8 x 8,8 cm

(30 x 30 cm con cornice / with frame)



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Roger Ballen (1950)

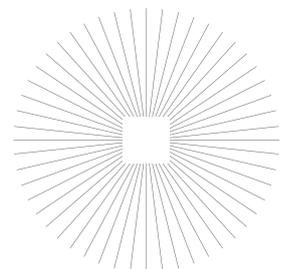
UNTITLED

2025

inchiostro d'archivio su pellicola Polaroid / archival ink on Polaroid film

10,8 x 8,8 cm

(30 x 30 cm con cornice / with frame)





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Roger Ballen (1950)

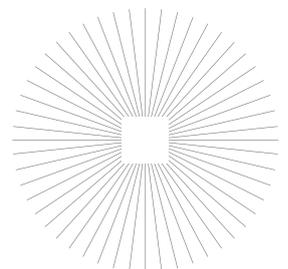
UNTITLED

2025

inchiostro d'archivio su pellicola Polaroid / archival ink on Polaroid film

10,8 x 8,8 cm

(30 x 30 cm con cornice / with frame)



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Roger Ballen (1950)

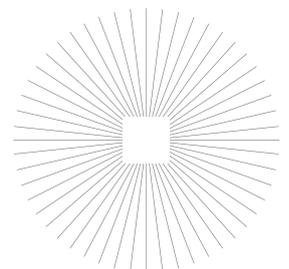
UNTITLED

2025

inchiostro d'archivio su pellicola Polaroid / archival ink on Polaroid film

10,8 x 8,8 cm

(30 x 30 cm con cornice / with frame)





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Roger Ballen (1950)

CURIOUS CAT

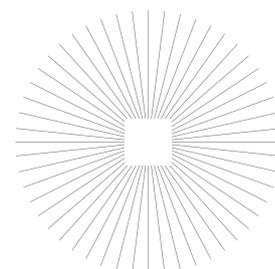
2023

stampa con pigmenti d'archivio su carta Hahnemühle fotografica perlata di cotone
archival pigment print on Hahnemühle cotton pearl photo paper

80 x 80 cm

(84 x 84 cm con cornice / *with frame*)

edizione / *edition* 2/5



BUILDING



Roger Ballen (1950)

CLOSER

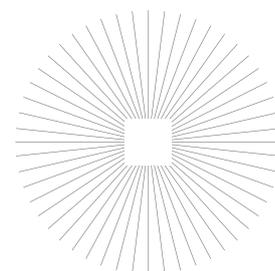
2022

stampa con pigmenti d'archivio su carta Hahnemühle fotografica perlata di cotone
archival pigment print on Hahnemühle cotton pearl photo paper

80 x 80 cm

(84 x 84 cm con cornice / *with frame*)

edizione / *edition* 2/5





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Roger Ballen (1950)

EVACUATE

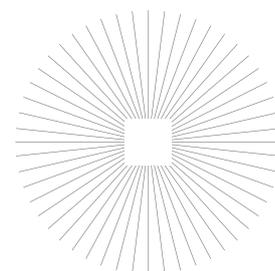
2019

stampa con pigmenti d'archivio su carta Hahnemühle fotografica perlata di cotone
archival pigment print on Hahnemühle cotton pearl photo paper

80 x 80 cm

(84 x 84 cm con cornice / *with frame*)

edizione / *edition* 3/5



BUILDING



Roger Ballen (1950)

DESPONDENT

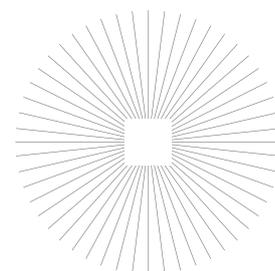
2020

stampa con pigmenti d'archivio su carta Hahnemühle fotografica perlata di cotone
archival pigment print on Hahnemühle cotton pearl photo paper

80 x 80 cm

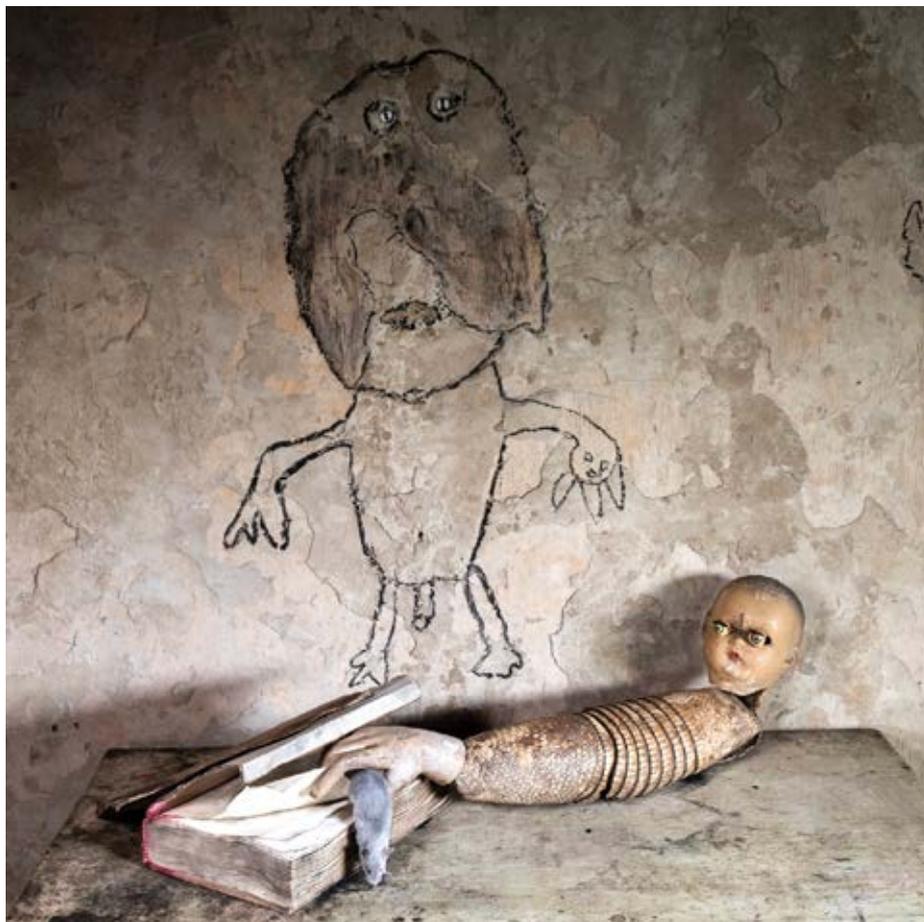
(84 x 84 cm con cornice / *with frame*)

edizione / *edition* 2/5





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Roger Ballen (1950)

OFFENDER

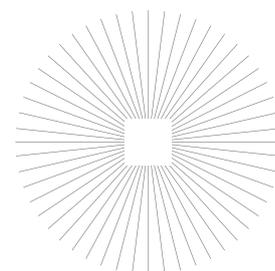
2019

stampa con pigmenti d'archivio su carta Hahnemühle fotografica perlata di cotone
archival pigment print on Hahnemühle cotton pearl photo paper

80 x 80 cm

(84 x 84 cm con cornice / *with frame*)

edizione / *edition* 2/5





BUILDING



Roger Ballen (1950)

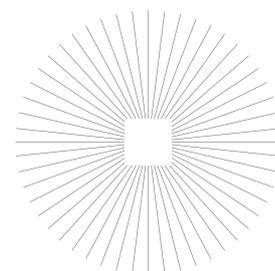
DOORWAY
2023

stampa con pigmenti d'archivio su carta Hahnemühle fotografica perlata di cotone
archival pigment print on Hahnemühle cotton pearl photo paper

80 x 80 cm

(84 x 84 cm con cornice / *with frame*)

edizione / *edition* 2/5



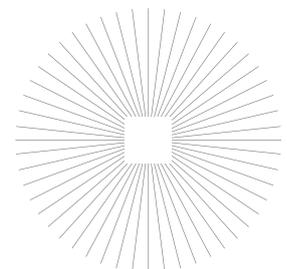
BUILDING

BUILDING è un progetto dedicato all'arte nelle sue più varie forme di espressione situato nel centro di Milano. Nata nel 2017 dalla visione di Moshe Tabibnia, **BUILDING** è incentrata su una ricerca artistica, storica e contemporanea, volta verso una nuova idea di galleria d'arte, in cui cultura e mercato avanzano paralleli.

BUILDING si presenta come una costellazione composta da diversi spazi e progettualità, in cui giovani protagonisti della scena internazionale, artisti affermati e storicizzati, così come artigiani e designer si incontrano in un'ottica di scambio intergenerazionale e sconfinamento di discipline, mirando ad una costante sperimentazione e creazione di cultura.

In questa visione si inseriscono inoltre: **BUILDING BOX**, un progetto espositivo annuale situato all'interno di una delle vetrine di **BUILDING**, fruibile dall'esterno 24 ore su 24, 7 giorni su 7, che ospita a cadenza mensile opere legate tra loro da un fil rouge temporale;

BUILDING TERZO PIANO, uno spazio che nasce dal desiderio di esplorare la creatività in tutte le sue sfaccettature e la cui identità si svilupperà nel tempo seguendo una programmazione indipendente.

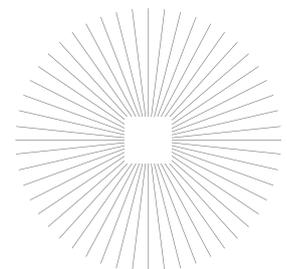


BUILDING

BUILDING is a project dedicated to art in its many forms of expression, located in the center of Milan. Founded in 2017 from the vision of Moshe Tabibnia, **BUILDING** is centered on artistic research—both historical and contemporary—aimed at a new idea of the art gallery, where culture and the market advance in parallel.

BUILDING presents itself as a constellation composed of different spaces and projects, where emerging figures from the international scene, established and historically recognized artists, as well as artisans and designers meet within a perspective of intergenerational exchange and the crossing of disciplines, with the aim of constant experimentation and the creation of culture.

This vision also includes: **BUILDING BOX**, an annual exhibition project located inside one of **BUILDING**'s display windows, visible from the outside 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, which hosts works on a monthly basis connected by a temporal fil rouge; and **BUILDING TERZO PIANO**, a space born from the desire to explore creativity in all its facets, whose identity will develop over time through an independent program.





BUILDING

via Monte di Pietà 23, 20121 Milano

www.building-gallery.com