



## PRESS RELEASE

# ***OBEY: The Art of Shepard Fairey***

The first solo exhibition in Italy by Shepard Fairey (OBEY) at Fabbrica del Vapore.

16/05/2024 - 27/10/2024  
Fabbrica del Vapore, Milan

**Press Conference**  
**May 15, 2024, 11:00 AM**

***OBEY: The Art of Shepard Fairey*** brings to Italy for the first time a museum exhibition entirely dedicated to **Shepard Fairey (OBEY)**, one of the **most influential and internationally recognized street artists**, whose art has shown the evolution of Street Art and its languages. The exhibition, on view from **May 16 to 27 October 2024**, in the Cattedrale spaces at Fabbrica del Vapore in Milan, offers the public an unprecedented opportunity to explore Obey's artistic universe.

The exhibition, curated by **Shepard Fairey** and **Wunderkammern** gallery in collaboration with **Deodato Group**, is co-produced with **Fabbrica del Vapore** and supported by the **City of Milan**. **Wunderkammern** oversees the exhibition's organization and curation.

*"This exhibition represents a journey, the first-ever in Italy, into the artistic universe of Shepard Fairey, one of the most influential international street artists, and proves the City's ongoing commitment to supporting and producing cultural initiatives that, through art, encourage reflections on universal themes such as peace, equality justice, environmental protection, and the universality of music. Especially during this historical moment, nothing is more important than emphasizing that, as the artist himself says, there is no us against them; there is only one us."*

Tommaso Sacchi, Councillor for Culture of the City of Milan

**The exhibition itinerary has been specifically designed for the Cathedral** of the Fabbrica del Vapore, envisioning the **area as a city**: from a central square, five different paths diverge, leading the viewer to discover the most representative themes of Obey's art through a rich collection of **works personally selected by the artist**. Alongside a body of the most significant work of his production, **numerous unpublished unique pieces** will be presented.

OBEY is the word that Shepard Fairey chooses as his artistic name, provocatively. OBEY is a term consistently used by the street artist throughout his artistic production, not to suggest unconditional and passive obedience to the observer, but to encourage critical thinking and disobedience to social conventions when necessary. From his early works to the most recent, the **PROPAGANDA section** is an expression of Shepard Fairey's socio-political commitment. Among his numerous works, HOPE stands out, created for Obama's election campaign, which in 2008 definitively established the artist's success on a global scale.

The works of OBEY have become **icons, serving as flags of hope and peace for the people**. In the **PEACE AND JUSTICE section**, one can find pieces such as *Defend Dignity*, the central image of the 2017 *We The People* campaign, used by protesters advocating for a more inclusive America. Shepard Fairey aligns himself with minorities in works such as *Embrace Justice*, *Muhammad Ali*, and *Voting Rights are Human Rights*, all prominently displayed in the exhibition. His desire is to reach a better and fairer future for all humanity, as reflected in his artwork *The Future is Equal*.

Another section of the exhibition is dedicated to the **ENVIRONMENT**. Through **harmonious compositions**, mainly characterized by floral motifs, Shepard Fairey evokes the image of a **delicate and fragile world, which each of us is called to preserve**. OBEY uses metaphors to depict our Planet: a woman with a tear-streaked face in the artwork *Tear Flame*, or a fragile cargo in the artwork *OBEY Cargo Fragile*. With *Paint it Black*, the artist denounces an increasingly polluted Earth, painted black, and suggests a better use of renewable energy sources.

**Music** has been, and still is, a **great source of inspiration** for OBEY: provocative songs by bands like the Sex Pistols, Black Flag, and Public Enemy accompanied Shepard Fairey's adolescence. Of this art form, OBEY particularly admires the accessibility and the ability to reach people's hearts and minds in a visceral and direct way. Shepard Fairey emulates the universal aspect of musical language and translates it into his own bold and provocative style. In the **MUSIC section**, the artist pays homage to musical idols such as Chuck D, Bob Marley, and Joe Strummer, reminding the viewer of the same values and messages they sang about in their songs. Noteworthy are the album covers, HPM (hand-painted multiples), which the artist conceived as if they were vinyl covers of his favorite artists. Many of them reference song titles, such as *Countdown to Armageddon* by Public Enemy and *Smash it Up* by The Damned.

OBEY: The Art of Shepard Fairey is a compendium of Obey's art from its beginnings to the more sophisticated works typical of recent years' production. Shepard Fairey's technique, after over three decades, has never lost its punk rock spirit. Alongside geometric shapes and a minimalist palette, predominantly composed of red, black, and beige, the new works feature more harmonious compositions and warmer colors, which serve as a pleasant decorative device to balance increasingly provocative messages. Emblematic of the **NEW WORKS section** are pieces like *Swan Song* and *Icon Stencil with Flames Study*, representing the latest evolution of the OBEY sticker, born from the combination of psychedelic colors. These and other unpublished works, produced in 2024, are exhibited and presented to the public for the first time at this museum exhibition. Despite a more complex elaboration, the essence of Obey's iconic

and identifying subjects remains unchanged, and with them, the artist hopes that his art will continue to stimulate deep reflection and motives for positive change in the audience.

The catalog ***OBEY: The Art of Shepard Fairey*** is published by **Skira Arte**, with texts by **Tommaso Sacchi**, Councillor for Culture of the Municipality of Milan, **Maria Fratelli**, Director of Special Projects Unit at Fabbrica del Vapore, **Edoardo Falcioni**, and **Giuseppe Pizzuto**, Curator and Director of Wunderkammern.

The exhibition is curated by **Shepard Fairey** and **Wunderkammern** gallery in collaboration with **Gruppo Deodato**, co-produced with **Fabbrica del Vapore**, and promoted by the **Municipality of Milan**. Organization and curation by **Wunderkammern**. Main Sponsor: **BOEM**, Sponsors: **Urban Vision Group** and **MTN**, Radio Partner: **Radio 105**, Media Partner: **Artuu Magazine**, In collaboration with: **Rinascente**, Technical Sponsor: **BIG Broker Insurance Group / CiaccioArte**.

## **OBEY AND MILAN**

Thanks to an idea from **Urban Vision Group**, Obey's **solo show will transcend the boundaries of the exhibition space to also exist within the city**. The creative-tech media company, led by CEO Gianluca De Marchi, will digitize Obey's street art. True to its mission of making creativity, culture, and art accessible to a broad and diverse audience within the urban context, **Urban Vision Group will display a selection of works from the exhibition on its digital billboards throughout Milan**.

Finally, **Shepard Fairey** will gift the City of Milan his **first mural in Italy in the Gallarate district** at via Adolfo Consolini 26. Conceived as part of his artistic residency at Fabbrica del Vapore, it will be realized within the framework of the **urban art festival "Manifestival"**, promoted by the **Arrigo and Pia Pini Foundation** with the support of Orticanoodles and Wit Design. The mural is a manifesto of **PEACE**, a theme deeply felt by both the artist and the community of citizens in the Gallarate neighborhood, who have been involved in selecting the topic to propose to the artist.

### **Show Information**

Artist: Shepard Fairey (OBEY)

Title: OBEY: The Art of Shepard Fairey

Location: Cattedrale - Fabbrica del Vapore, Via Giulio Cesare Procaccini, 4, 20154 Milan

Dates: May 16th - October 27th, 2024

Hours: Tuesday to Sunday, 10:00 AM - 7:30 PM

Thursday, 10:00 AM - 10:00 PM

Last entry one hour before closing.

For info and tickets: [www.obeymilano.it](http://www.obeymilano.it)

Promoters: Municipality of Milan  
Co-production: Fabbrica del Vapore  
Organization: Wunderkammern and Gruppo Deodato  
Main Sponsor: BOEM  
Sponsors: Urban Vision Group, MTN  
Radio Partner: Radio 105  
Media Partner: Artuu Magazine  
In collaboration with: Rinascente  
Technical Sponsor: BIG Broker Insurance Group / CiaccioArte

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### **Wunderkammern**

Wunderkammern is the leading urban art gallery in Italy with branches in Milan and Rome. The gallery has been operating in the sector for over ten years, representing and promoting established, mid-career, and emerging artists whose works are strongly related to public space. The gallery and its artists explore themes related to wonder, paradox, the connection between the interior and exterior, the conventional and the non-conformist, the private and the public sphere.

Wunderkammern carries out territorial projects in collaboration with important national and international museum institutions. The gallery directors are Giuseppe Pizzuto, Dorothy De Rubeis, and Deodato Salafia.

### **Deodato Group**

The Deodato Group is one of the leading international players in the contemporary art sector. Founded in 2010 by Deodato Salafia, it includes the brands Deodato Arte, Wunderkammern, Deodato.Tech, Phyi.io, Love Spot Galleries, and Artuu Magazine. With more than 10 physical galleries throughout Italy and Europe, it has active projects in both the artistic and digital fields. Forward-thinking, the Deodato Group focuses on technology and development and is constantly seeking innovative solutions for the art world. The galleries of the Deodato Group represent internationally renowned artists such as David LaChapelle, Liu Bolin, and Shepard Fairey. Deodato.Gallery S.p.A. is listed on Borsa Italiana S.p.A. on Euronext Growth Milan.