

## BOB DYLAN AT MAXXI

***BOB DYLAN: RETROSPECTRUM* opens on December 16, and Rome will be the first ever European city to host the globally-renowned exhibition**

**More than 100 works by Bob Dylan, including drawings, paintings, and sculptures, will reveal new facets of one of the world's most important cultural figures**

**16 December 2022 – 30 April 2023**

<https://www.maxxi.art/en/> | #bobdylan | #retrospectrum

[press kit and pictures on maxxi.art/area-riservata/](https://www.maxxi.art/area-riservata/) password **areariservatamaxxi**

*In every picture the viewer doesn't have to wonder whether it's an actual object or a delusional one. If the viewer visited where the picture actually existed, he or she would see the same thing. It is what unites us all.*

Bob Dylan

Rome, 15 December 2022. The exhibition ***BOB DYLAN. Retrospectrum***, curated by **Shai Baitel**, opens on 16 December at **MAXXI** National Museum of XXI Century Arts. It is the first European retrospective dedicated to the visual art works of one of the most important icons of world contemporary culture. After being housed at the MAM in Shanghai and the Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum in Miami, the exhibition is now coming to Rome in a version completely redesigned to interact with the dynamic, futuristic spaces of Zaha Hadid's MAXXI.

On display are over **100 works** including paintings, watercolours, ink and graphite drawings, metal sculptures and video material, spanning Bob Dylan's 50-plus years of creative activity.

**Bob Dylan** said, "It's gratifying to learn that my visual works are going to be exhibited at MAXXI in Rome, a truly great museum in one of the world's most beautiful and inspirational cities. This exhibition is meant to provide perspectives that examine the human condition and explore the mysteries of life that continue to leave us perplexed. It's very different from my music, of course, but every bit as purposeful in its intent".

The works on display highlight the motifs that have always been part of Dylan's imagination as a musician and that also return in his paintings in the form of drawings and colours.

As he himself writes in the exhibition catalogue (curated by Shai Baitel and published by Skira), his visual artworks recount "the American landscape—how you see it while crisscrossing the land and seeing it for what it's worth. Staying out of the mainstream and traveling the back roads, free-born style". Huge metropolises, barren, endless landscapes, railroad tracks, open roads, cars, trucks, petrol pumps, motels, shacks, bars, shops, backyards, billboards, neon signs: as in his songs and poems, Dylan makes the depths of the US poetic in his paintings. "I chose images because of the meanings they have for me", he writes. "These paintings are up to the moment realism—archaic, most static, but quivering in appearance. They are the world that I see or choose to see or be a part of or gain entrance to. However, that's my doing".

"This career-spanning exhibition showcases Bob Dylan's unique approach to visual art and command of painting, drawing, and sculpting. It provides a special opportunity to view Dylan's creative journey across time and locations, including the steps at Rome's Piazza di Spagna as captured in the featured work "When I paint my Masterpiece", added curator **Shai Baitel**.

For the occasion, MAXXI's national public collection will be enriched by a work by Dylan. This work was created around the famous 1965 song *Subterranean Homesick Blues*, which features the first (and perhaps most famous) music video in history. In it, Dylan drops to the beat of the music a series of sheets of paper with the song's lyrics, which were written the night before by a group of friends including Allen

Ginsberg, who can be seen in the video. In 2018, Dylan rewrote these lyrics on 64 signs, which he set up to make up a wall beside the screen. The ***Subterranean Homesick Blues Series*** thus combines visual arts, words and music.

### EXHIBITION ITINERARY

The exhibition itinerary is divided into eight sections that trace Dylan's journey in the visual arts and, at the same time, bring us into contact with his creativity as a musician, poet and artist: **Early Works, The Beaten Path, Mondo Scripto, Revisionist, The Drawn Blank, New Orleans, Deep Focus, Ironworks.**

**Early Works** includes a series of drawings made in the 1970s in which Dylan took note of the reality around him, of every image at hand, drawing full-page figures and objects. These illustrations anticipate the 2018 works of *Mondo Scripto*, whereby the artist returned to the dialogue between music and visual art by producing a series in which the handwritten lyrics of his most representative songs are accompanied by original drawings recalling the titles or key moments of the songs themselves.

**The Beaten Path** is a portrait of the American landscape, a visual journey across the United States to the discovery of beauty, even in the forgotten places that form the backdrop to everyday life. The works show glimpses of motels and diners that are always open, abandoned amusement parks and vintage cars, and large buildings illuminated by streetlamps. In many cases, the road punctuates the scene with long highways that seem to unfold endlessly towards the horizon.

**Mondo Scripto** features some of Dylan's most famous lyrics, as personally transcribed by the artist and accompanied by his graphite drawings. These combinations of words and images testify to the existence of a deep and direct connection between his visual art and his written compositions. The pencil drawings make visible the dialogue between image and text, between past and present, which has changed the relationship between music and words thanks to the continuous creative flow that fuels Dylan's art. The *Subterranean Homesick Blues Series* is part of this series, which will enter the MAXXI Collection.

**Revisionist** is a series in which Dylan reworks the graphic design, words and colour content of famous magazine covers, from 'Rolling Stone' to 'Playboy', and transforms them into new large-scale screen-printed images.

**The Drawn Blank** is a sort of illustrated diary depicting snapshots of life on the road – portraits, historical places, panoramas and hidden corners. The series originated from a collection of charcoal pencil and pen sketches made between '89 and '92 during tours in America, Europe and Asia. Over the years, Dylan has modified the drawings several times, adding detail, colour and depth.

**New Orleans** immortalises the bond between Dylan and New Orleans, the birthplace of jazz; the city is located at the southern end of Highway 61, one of America's most famous roads (also known as 'The Blues Highway'), which runs north-south through the central part of the United States and passes through the places of Dylan's childhood. In every corner of New Orleans, the artist's eye identifies infinite cues for his works; for Dylan, the gestures and habits of its citizens are a source of inspiration that translates into scenes of daily life where a close-up look succeeds in creating a certain level of intimacy between the subjects portrayed and the observer.

**Deep Focus** features paintings with particular framings and image cuts, evocative and often mysterious compositions suspended between life and theatre and inspired by the documentary spirit of photography and cinema. The title of the series refers to a film technique in which the narrative is the result of the combination of foreground, background and backdrop, which are all in focus at the same time for details to be discerned at any depth.

**Ironworks.** The exhibition itinerary closes with a series of iron sculptures – functional structures composed of objects and tools put to new use that recall Dylan's childhood memories of the mining area of northern Minnesota, as well as the United States' iconic industrial past.

### Tickets:

Exhibition *Bob Dylan. Retrospectum*: Full price € 13.00 | Reduced price € 11.00

*Bob Dylan. Retrospectum* + MAXXI: Full price € 22.00 | Reduced price € 20.00

MAXXI: Full price € 12.00 | Reduced price € 9.00

**MAXXI PRESS OFFICE** +39 06 324861 [press@fondazionemaxxi.it](mailto:press@fondazionemaxxi.it)

## The Beaten Path, Bob Dylan

For this series of paintings the idea was to create pictures that would not be misinterpreted or misunderstood by me or anybody else. The common theme of these works having something to do with the American landscape — how you see it while crisscrossing the land and seeing it for what it's worth. Staying out of the mainstream and traveling the back roads, free born style.

*Bob Dylan*

In 1974 I played the first of many shows with The Band—maybe in eight years. We were in a hockey arena in Chicago. There were maybe 18,000 people there. The Band and I hadn't played publicly together since 1966 where our shows caused a lot of disruption and turmoil—a lot of anger. Now we were in Chicago starting up again. There was no way to predict what was going to happen. At the end of the concert we had played over 25 or 30 songs and we were standing on the stage looking out. The audience was in semi-darkness. All of a sudden, somebody lit a match. And then somebody else lit another match. In short time, there were areas of the arena that were engulfed in matches. Within seconds after that, it looked like the whole arena was in flames and that all the people in the arena had struck matches and were going to burn the place down. The Band and I looked for the nearest stage exit as none of us wanted to go down in flames. It seemed like nothing had changed. If we thought the response was extreme on the earlier tours we played, this was positively apocalyptic. Every one of us on the stage thought that we'd really done it this time—that the fans were going to burn the arena down. Obviously we were wrong. We misinterpreted and misunderstood the reaction of the crowd. What we believed to be disapproval was actually a grand appreciative gesture. Appearances can be deceiving.

For this series of paintings the idea was to create pictures that would not be misinterpreted or misunderstood by me or anybody else. The common theme of these works having something to do with the American landscape—how you see it while crisscrossing the land and seeing it for what it's worth. Staying out of the mainstream and traveling the back roads, free born style. I believe that the key to the future is in the remnants of the past. That you have to master the idioms of your own time before you can have any identity in the present tense. Your past begins the day you were born and to disregard it is cheating yourself of who you really are.

My idea was to keep things simple, only deal with what is externally visible. These paintings are up to the moment realism—archaic, most static, but quivering in appearance. They contradict the modern world. However, that's my doing. The San Francisco Chinatown street stands merely two blocks away from corporate, windowless buildings. But these cold giant structures have no meaning for me in the world that I see or choose to see or be a part of or gain entrance to. If you look half a block away from the Coney Island hotdog stand, the sky is littered with high rises. I choose not to see them either. Down the road, across the highway from the Cabin in the Woods is a manicured golf course. But it has little meaning compared to the seemingly worthless shack which speaks to me. The Alabama Side Show is surrounded by woods in all directions. The side show happens to be in a clearing and you go there by dirt road. I chose to paint the side show instead of the endless woods. There are countless other works where this is also true.

All the iconography is used in a semi-conscious way. I chose images because of the meanings they have for me and patterns can be seen in the repeating images—roads, shacks, piers, automobiles, streets, bayous, railroad tracks, bridges, motels, truck stops, power lines, farmyards, theater marquees, churches, signs and symbols, etc.—all establishing a certain type of compositional value. I would say the purpose is plain, non-experimental or exploratory. [...]

There was a conscious attempt to dismiss consumer culture or popular culture, including mass media, commercial art, celebrities, consumer or product packaging, billboard signs, comic strips, magazine advertising. The Beaten Path works represent a different subject matter from the everyday imagery of consumer culture. There is nothing to suggest these paintings were inspired by the writings of Sigmund Freud or that they were based on any mental images that occur in dreams, no fantasy worlds, religious mysticism or ambiguous subject matter. In every picture the viewer doesn't have to wonder whether it's an actual object or a delusional one. If the viewer visited where the picture actually existed, he or she would see the same thing. It is what unites us all.

## Beyond Generations - Shai Baitel

“All I can do is be me — whoever that is.”

*Bob Dylan, in a May 1965 interview*

From the Silent Generation to the Baby Boomers to Millennials, each generation is forced to confront the essence of their identity. These generations come of age as a shadow of their forebearers, at once forming themselves in opposition to their elders, and at the same time find themselves shaped by parenting, ubiquitous technologies, and economic residue. This generational tension between parent/child mirroring and the urge to self-define in opposition to family has been considered by many writers and thinkers. Advocating for the cyclical nature of history, Mark Twain wrote that “history doesn’t repeat itself, but it often rhymes.” Walter Benjamin, in a more ominous tone, developed a metaphor that he called the “Angel of History.” He described how this angelic figure is propelled, by turmoil and tumult, forward “into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.” History is fickle, turbulent, seldom tidy, and often poetic. In the complicated and uncertain historical moment in which we are currently living, we seek out the work of artists who can connect us to the past and present, reminding us of the promise of continuity and a hopeful future. Bob Dylan is one of these voices.

Dylan grew up in Duluth, Minnesota listening to blues and country music on the radio, and later rock and roll. As a member of the Silent Generation, Bob Dylan is a symbol of American culture and one of the most respected artists of our time. His enduring work has spoken to generations past and continues to speak, with growing resonance, to the emerging generation of today. Forming himself against a generation that valued conformity, unity, and cohesion, Dylan preferred to acknowledge the imperfect, complicated, and challenging aspects of life. This preference extends to his artistic process. He often improvises performances, creating something wholly new from one night to another. Only by embracing the uncertainty of life can one truly live. While in high school, he performed covers of Elvis Presley and Little Richard. Music was his life, and though rock and roll spoke to him, it didn’t speak for him. He had yet to find the genre that he would make uniquely his—indeed, no genre could contain him. Fusing the vernacular of folk music with the rock and roll of his youth and the worlds of poetry and art, Dylan would create music that defied a category. He would also become a prolific visual artist.

With a career spanning a half century, how does the 81-year-old singer, performer, and visual artist resonate with younger generations? “Gen Z” was born between the late 1990s and early 2010s. Like the Silent Generation, they, too, have grown up in a world of complicated global, political, and economic affairs: from 9/11 and seemingly endless wars in the Middle East to the 2008 Recession. Moreover, the lingering and acute effects of Covid-19 continue to have an outsized impact on the lives of the world’s youngest, resulting in a tumultuous coming-of-age period, mirroring that of the Silent Generation. Both generations were primed to be weary of the world and skeptical of opportunities..

The Silent Generation found their primary calling in the Civil Rights Movement, urging the world to reject racism and discrimination. For example, Dylan debuted his first protest song “The Death of Emmett Till” at the 1962 Congress of Racial Equality, and 1964’s “The Times, They Are A-Changin’” has remained relevant for people all over the world facing confusion and conflict. A drawn image by Dylan of a man drowning gives a visceral and graphic urgency to the fate of those who refuse to change with the times, mixing lyrics and metaphor: “you better start swimmin’, or you’ll sink like a stone.” Gen Z has no shortage of causes to unite behind, from gender equality to climate change, all of which resonate with the urgency of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. Yet, Gen Z’ers demonstrate a certain degree of inherent progressiveness and momentum that reflects a sense of upward progress. Gen Z’ers are digital natives, born into a world with the internet and smartphones, allowing for spontaneous organizing and activism. The Silent Generation was initially content, for far too long, to work within the system because they didn’t have the means, infrastructure, or precedent to change the status quo.

Dylan’s 1964 “Chimes of Freedom” rebelled against this idea and captured his wonderment at nature’s crescendo as a metaphor heralding freedom of identity and perception. The song is a hymn for the gentle, the kind, and the mistreated. Meanwhile, Gen Z’ers’ access to technology has given them choices and a greater ability to harness their collective power: in particular, to sound their own alarm for

the downtrodden of their world. Masses armed with smartphones can now be just as potent to politicians and those in power as previous generations were with guns and guerilla tactics.

With work that transcends generations, places, and circumstances, Dylan speaks to the enduring core of our humanity. Perhaps, then, it's no surprise that Dylan continues to remain a creative powerful force. He has published eight books of drawings and paintings and sold over 125 million records in his career. He has won Grammys, a Golden Globe, an Academy Award, and has been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. In 2008, he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for "his profound impact on popular music and American culture, marked by lyrical compositions of extraordinary poetic power." That award could equally have been given in recognition of Dylan's prose writing for the brilliant, critically acclaimed *Chronicles: Volume One*, published four years earlier. President Obama awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2012, and in October 2016, he won the Nobel Prize in Literature "for having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition."

If Dylan's era was the Silent Generation, he certainly didn't let it define him or his work. He shattered that silence, and, like a sonic boom, the generation of today is feeling its effects most profoundly. His words, his music, and his art are here to stay. And of that, we have no doubt: "Life isn't about finding yourself. Or finding anything. Life is about creating yourself."

## Bob Dylan. Retrospectrum

*curated by* Shai Baitel

*texts by* Shai Baitel, Alain Elkann, Anne-Marie Mai, Greg Tate, Richard Prince, Bob Dylan, Caterina Caselli  
*double edition Italian and English*

Skira Milan 2022, 224 pages, 32.5 x 26 cm

Published on the occasion of the exhibition of Bob Dylan. Retrospectrum at MAXXI, the exhibition's first European venue after the Modern Art Museum (MAM), Shanghai, China and the Patricia and Phillip Frost Art Museum in Miami, Florida.

The work presents an overview of Bob Dylan's creativity as a painter and sculptor in over 100 drawings, paintings, metal sculptures and videos. With contributions from leading writers, thinkers, and artists—among them Richard Prince, Anne-Marie Mai, Greg Tate, and Alain Elkann—the publication describes the transformative sources and styles that have inspired and influenced Dylan over the years. It traces the persistent evolution of Dylan's work as he continually makes new encounters with ever-changing environments and people, reflecting the sensibility of a genuinely original artistic voice.

As stated by the Editor of the catalogue "Celebrating the prolific life and work of Bob Dylan, this book for Retrospectrum compiles original writings from leading artistic and literary voices. It is virtually impossible to comprehensively represent Dylan's vast talents and prolific art, but this book offers a poetic and intimate perspective into his works' impact and influence.'

### **FS GROUP: INFRASTRUCTURE, PASSENGER MOBILITY, LOGISTICS AND URBAN REGENERATION**

The FS Group is one of the largest industrial companies in Italy and at the heart of the country's sustainable mobility system. With more than 82,000 employees, 10,000- plus trains per day, 1 billion train and bus passengers per year and 45 million tonnes of freight annually, the FS Group is a leader in passenger and freight transport by rail. The railway infrastructure extends approximately 16,800 kilometres, of which over 1,000 kilometres are dedicated to High Speed services. The Group also operates a road network of around 32,000 kilometres.

The FS Group's new governance is split into four business hubs – Infrastructure, Passenger, Logistics, Urban – each consisting of different Group companies. As subsidiaries of the FS holding company, they are homogeneous in terms of mission and objectives, playing a crucial role in developing increasingly integrated and sustainable infrastructure along with a mobility system for the benefit of Italy. Each Hub is coordinated by a sectoral parent company with the function of policy, coordination plus strategic and financial control. The International Department interacts with the four operational Hubs and is responsible for coordinating all foreign activities of the Group.

The full expression of all the potential the four Hubs hold will be realised through the specific enabling factors of digital innovation, connectivity for people and freight, along with people as bearers of ever-increasing talent, excellence and skills. Seizing the opportunities offered by innovation, the FS Group will avail of digital platforms to foster smart mobility, to serve integrated logistics and to build resilient infrastructure. In addition, it plans to extend fibre optics along the 17,000 kilometres or so of railway lines to bolster connectivity for all 2,200 stations. These objectives can be achieved with the professionalism and commitment of the 82,000-plus people working in the Group, promoting initiatives to support inclusion, continuous training and the development of talents.

The FS Group pays particular attention to issues of ecological transition. As the leading energy consumer in Italy (with a slice of around 2% of national demand), some 1.6 billion euro will be invested in installing plants with a production capacity of 2 GW, thanks to which total annual energy of 40% of overall consumption can be produced, corresponding to around 2.6 TWh. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will also be reduced in reaching the goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2040.

The FS Group regards Europe as its home market, one in which it is operationally active through subsidiaries. Beyond Europe, the Group has long been present in the fields of engineering and certification. It exports its extensive technological, operational and engineering know-how abroad, developing mobility projects, with a particular focus on railways.



## Company Profile

**UniCredit is a pan-European Commercial Bank** with a unique service offering in **Italy, Germany, Central and Eastern Europe**. Our purpose is to empower communities to progress, delivering the best-in-class for all stakeholders, unlocking the potential of our clients and our people across Europe.

We serve over **15 million customers** worldwide. They are at the heart of what we do in all our markets. UniCredit is organized in four core regions and two product factories, Corporate and Individual Solutions. This allows us to be close to our clients and use the scale of the entire Group for developing and offering the best products across all our markets.

**Digitalisation** and our commitment to **ESG** principles are key enablers for our service. They help us deliver excellence to our stakeholders and creating a sustainable future for our clients, our communities and our people.

XXXXXXX

**UniCredit è una banca commerciale pan-europea** con un modello di servizio unico nel suo genere in **Italia, Germania, Europa Centrale e Orientale**. Il nostro obiettivo primario è dare alle nostre comunità le leve per il progresso, offrendo il meglio a tutti gli stakeholder e liberando il potenziale dei nostri clienti e delle nostre persone in tutta Europa.

Serviamo oltre **15 milioni di clienti**, che sono al centro di ciò che facciamo in tutti i nostri mercati. UniCredit è organizzata in quattro macroaree geografiche principali e due fabbriche prodotte, Corporate e Individual Solutions. Questo ci permette di essere vicini ai nostri clienti facendo leva sulla scala del Gruppo per offrire una gamma completa di prodotti.

**La digitalizzazione** e il nostro impegno nei confronti dei principi **ESG** sono fattori chiave per il servizio che offriamo. Ci aiutano a garantire eccellenza ai nostri stakeholder e a creare un futuro sostenibile per i nostri clienti, le nostre comunità e le nostre persone.