

EXHIBITION

EUGENIO TIBALDI, *BENU*

curated by Marcello Smarrelli

Opening: Tuesday, September 22, 2026, 6:00 PM

Open to the public: September 23 – November 28, 2026

Fondazione Pastificio Cerere

Roma, via degli Ausoni 7

PRESS RELEASE

The phoenix of Rebibbia arrives at Fondazione Pastificio Cerere

From September 23 to November 28, 2026, Fondazione Pastificio Cerere and Fondazione Severino, in collaboration with Intesa Sanpaolo, present **BENU**, a solo exhibition by artist Eugenio Tibaldi curated by Marcello Smarrelli.

Through images and documents, the exhibition tells the story of the eponymous project promoted by the two foundations, born from a shared desire to bring contemporary art into the Rebibbia Women's Prison. The project involved the women inmates in a process of artistic co-design that turned the creative experience into a tool for participation, dialogue and rebirth.

BENU culminated in the creation of a permanent site-specific artwork, **inaugurated on the occasion of the 2025 Jubilee in the presence of the President of the Republic, Sergio Mattarella.**

"This exhibition gives back to the public the value of an experience developed together with the women of Rebibbia," said Paola Severino, president of the foundation that bears her name, adding: "BENU is not just a work of art, but the result of a participatory process that transformed ideas, energy and creativity into a shared symbol of rebirth. A concrete example of how art can create connections between the prison and the outside community."

"Supporting projects like BENU means giving shape to the mission of Fondazione Pastificio Cerere," says President Flavio Misciattelli, continuing: "Promoting contemporary art capable of engaging with the local area, involving communities and contributing to building a more open and aware society. We believe art can generate relationships, activate shared processes and create value in the contexts where it operates."

Inspired by the phoenix, a universal symbol of rebirth, ***BENU*** takes its name from a mythological creature sacred to the ancient Egyptians, associated with the god Ra and later assimilated into the figure of the phoenix. **The project actively involved the inmates in creative workshops** during the preparatory phase, but still needs their commitment and determination to produce the energy needed to power the light sculptures inside the prison.

"The two phoenixes," states **Marcello Smarrelli**, curator of the project, "have become images of hope, transformation and redemption, at the same time creating an ideal bridge between the space of detention

and the outside world. The exhibition gives the public back the experience of **BENU** through an immersive, collective journey that weaves together contemporary art, co-design, active participation and social reflection."

The exhibition unfolds through a range of materials and works that form the pieces of a single large visual map, able to convey the project's development process while bringing out the aesthetic and conceptual influences that guided its creation.

Alongside the pieces devised by the women during the workshops, the exhibition presents **the paintings made by Eugenio Tibaldi** over the course of a slow process of synthesis and identification, which culminated in the two final works, born from the dialogue and contributions that emerged through exchange with the participants.

As testimony to the vitality of **BENU** and its developments, one year after its inauguration at Rebibbia, the exhibition hosts a body of works born out of that experience and helps spread **the imagery of BENU beyond the boundaries of the original project.**

A large installation spread throughout the spaces of Fondazione Pastificio Cerere was created by the artist together with participants in the **RUFA – Rome University of Fine Arts Masterclass**. The work features over **a thousand phoenixes**, each different from the others, created by Tibaldi together with the workshop's students, who came from different geographical areas and **explored the meaning of this symbol within their own cultures**. The paper silhouettes, cut out and applied to floors, walls and ceilings, reflect on the historical persistence of the myth, exploring its significance through to the present day and clarifying the role it continues to play in individual journeys and in different social and cultural contexts.

Among the project's most recent developments is also the creation of **a flag inspired by BENU**, made from donated and reclaimed fabrics by the non-profit organization **Progetto Abito of Turin**, again in dialogue with the artist. The work has become a symbol of identity for the project's founders and facilitators, who have recognized in it an image capable of representing the values of inclusion, sustainability and participation that underpin their work.

A further section of the exhibition presents a photograph of the forearm of Barbara Sales, an activist committed to the protection of rescue greyhounds, who chose to have the image of **BENU** tattooed on her, working with Fabrizio, known as **novemberokbranch**, one of Italy's best-known tattoo artists. The photograph is displayed alongside a selection of hundreds of images of phoenix tattoos gathered from the web, highlighting the extraordinary spread and ongoing reinterpretation of this symbol.

The exhibition also includes the prototype of **BENU**, a **light sculpture on a smaller scale** than the permanent installations at Rebibbia, which served as the experimental model from which the two final works were developed.

The exhibition concludes with a **video production made by Eugenio Tibaldi together with Lorenzo Morandi** and produced by TIMO, born from the experience of building the project and conceived as a further tool for research, documentation and storytelling.

The exhibition also extends beyond the spaces of Fondazione Pastificio Cerere thanks to the support of APA – Agenzia Pubblicità Affissioni+, which is promoting a paper and digital (LED) billboard campaign across the city of Rome. The images created by Eugenio Tibaldi will engage in dialogue with a poem written by one of the inmates during the workshop process, bringing one of BENU's most significant voices and

in partenariato con

Casa Circondariale
Femminile di Roma Rebibbia
"Germana Stefanini"

con il patrocinio di



in collaborazione con



sponsor tecnici



symbols into public space.

A **book**, published by **Magonza**, documents the genesis of the project as well as the large-scale exhibition at Fondazione Pastificio Cerere. Texts by curator Marcello Smarrelli, Simone Ciglia and Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça explore the aesthetic, social and cultural implications of Eugenio Tibaldi's work. The book, introduced by the President of the Republic Sergio Mattarella – alongside contributions from the Minister of Justice, the national prison administration, Fondazione Severino and Intesa Sanpaolo –, unfolds a **rich visual apparatus** documenting both Eugenio Tibaldi's **working process** and **the installation of BENU** at the Rebibbia Women's Prison, as well as the large-scale exhibition at Fondazione Pastificio Cerere. The book, produced together with the artist, is printed in a bilingual edition (Italian and English) on fine 5-color paper and, with its experimental typographic design, stands as a further step in the project.

The project, promoted by **Fondazione Severino and Fondazione Pastificio Cerere**, is carried out in collaboration with **Intesa Sanpaolo**, under the patronage of the **Dicastery for Culture and Education of the Holy See** and the **Ministry of Justice**.

Eugenio Tibaldi, biographical notes

Born in Alba in 1977, he lives and works in Turin and is drawn to boundaries both geographical and sociological. A substantial part of his research is devoted to projects centered on liminal territories and people living on the margins of society. Operating within this uncertain and slippery space, Tibaldi sets in motion a processual dynamic that, applied to artistic research, allows alternative aesthetics to emerge. His ability to read social contexts, together with the sensitivity with which he shares the artistic work with the communities involved, allows his works to generate a new sense of identity and cohesion within the contexts in which he operates. He attended the CSAV (Artists' Research Laboratory) at the Fondazione Antonio Ratti, Como, and the Domus Academy in Istanbul, and held an Affiliated Fellowship at the American Academy in Rome. His exhibitions include: Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin (2007), Manifesta 7, Bolzano (2008), International Centre of Contemporary Art, Bucharest (2009), Museo Madre, Naples (2010), Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art (2013), 12th Havana Biennial (2015), Museo Ettore Fico, Turin (2016), Palazzo del Quirinale (2017), MCAD Museum Manila (2017), IIC New York (2017), MAXXI Museum, Rome (2018), Venice Biennale, Cuban Pavilion (2019), Museo del Novecento, Milan (2019), Galleria Nazionale, Rome (2020), Zoma Museum, Addis Ababa (2020), Tenuta dello Scompiglio, Lucca (2021), Parco Arte Vivente, Turin (2021), 20th Ermanno Casoli Prize 2022, Italian Pavilion, Malta Biennale (2024), Shape – cercando la forma, winner of the PAC 2025, MAC Museum, Santiago de Chile (2025).

Rome, July 2026

PRESS MATERIALS AND PHOTOS:

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/oicyu83v7zeubu9af9t4w/AECc5WyuLu9E9k_dTYD14Sw?rlkey=2f72da_w1xkpjtp68yb0dgnsnc&st=2hiwc4c2&dl=0

in partenariato con

Casa Circondariale
Femminile di Roma Rebibbia
"Germana Stefanini"

con il patrocinio di



in collaborazione con



sponsor tecnici



EXHIBITION PRESS OFFICE

Maria Bonmassar | tel. 06 4825370 | cel. 335-490311 | mail: ufficiostampa@mariabonmassar.com

INFORMATION

Exhibition: Eugenio Tibaldi. *BENU*

Curator: Marcello Smarrelli

Opening: Tuesday, September 22, 2026, 6:00 PM

Open to the public: September 23 – November 28, 2026

Venue: Fondazione Pastificio Cerere, via degli Ausoni 7, Roma

Hours: Summer hours (June to September) Monday to Friday, 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM. Winter hours (October to May) Tuesday to Saturday, 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM, and Mondays by appointment.

Informazioni: +39 06 45422960 | info@pastificiocerere.it | www.pastificiocerere.it

Facebook: Fondazione Pastificio Cerere | Instagram: [fondazionepastificiocerere](https://www.instagram.com/fondazionepastificiocerere)

in partenariato con

Casa Circondariale
Femminile di Roma Rebibbia
"Germana Stefanini"

con il patrocinio di



in collaborazione con



sponsor tecnici

