



**Today, the Vatican Apostolic Library inaugurated the exhibition *En route*, the sixth and exceptional event in the ongoing dialogue between its heritage and contemporary art, which began in 2021. The project was realized in collaboration with Maison Dior and with the support of Intesa Sanpaolo, Sparkle, and the ANAWIM Foundation.**

Vatican City, January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025

As part of the Jubilee celebrations for 2025, the Library explores the theme *Pilgrims of Hope* through its distinctive blend of scholarly and secular perspectives, weaving a reflection on the theme of travel. The focal point of the entire exhibition is the recent discovery of a collection from the estate of the diplomat and scholar Cesare Poma (1862–1932). Known as the *Poma.Periodici* collection, it is an extraordinary archive of approximately 1,200 newspapers from remote locations and languages of all five continents.

This collection sheds light not only on the biography and cultural journey of the diplomat but also on a curious periodical, *En Route*, which two French journalists, Lucien Leroy and Henri Papillaud, published during their global travels between 1895 and 1897. The publication aimed to finance their journey and share the stories of the places they visited. Alongside these predominantly male adventures, the exhibition also features stories of women who, defying the cultural stereotypes of the Victorian era, traveled alone to pursue their own unique *tour du monde*: journalistic, political, cultural, archaeological, or propagandistic.

To present the *Poma.Periodici* collection and the stories of the selected travelers, the Vatican Library invited three contemporary creatives: Lorenzo Jovanotti Cherubini, Kristjana S Williams and Maria Grazia Chiuri.

Lorenzo Jovanotti Cherubini opens the exhibition, welcoming visitors into the kaleidoscope of his soul as a singer-songwriter and globetrotter. He showcases the tools of his travels and music-making, the books that have most inspired him, his drawings, and a sort of travel diary created especially for this exhibition, accompanied by an exclusive soundtrack. *“In La Habana I found the Rome of the early 1970s where I was a child, those too-blue and long afternoons, the few cars, the people repairing things before buying new ones. I seemed to suddenly stumble upon protrusions in the ground and realize that they were my roots, that they had transplanted themselves”*, these are Lorenzo Jovanotti's words to describe one of his countless adventures.

Illustrator and graphic artist of Icelandic origin, Kristjana S Williams was entrusted with reimagining the journeys of Poma and the editors of *En route*, infusing them with her symbolic and dreamlike poetic style. *“It has been an incredible honour to be asked to be part of this historic exhibition and with such inspiring creative partners. Having access to the Vatican Library archives has been an extraordinary experience and has furnished me with so much content to inspire my work. The historical documents offer a fascinating insight into the way humans have experienced and viewed the world over many*

*generations, and it is a privilege to be able to incorporate the stories of these pioneering adventurers into my artwork”, this is how the artist describes her experience.*

Maria Grazia Chiuri, Creative Director of women’s collections for Dior, in collaboration with Karishma Swali and the artisans of the Chanakya School of Craft, offers a site-specific installation that reflects on the connection between fashion and travel, starting with the stories of six late-19th-century female travelers. She explores the power of clothing to liberate the body, enabling movement, and takes us on a global journey through maps and sewing patterns. To quote the words of Maria Grazia, *“It is a great privilege to be invited to exhibit in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, one of the oldest collections of books, maps, and manuscripts. Knowledge and creativity are for me completely intertwined and I am both honored and humbled to be able to imagine a project in such a significant location for our global culture and education.”*

The exhibition, curated by Don Giacomo Cardinali, Simona De Crescenzo, Francesca Giannetto, and Delio V. Proverbio from the Vatican Apostolic Library, culminates in the Sistine Hall with *Mappa* (1984) by Alighiero Boetti, an important loan from Intesa Sanpaolo's Gallerie d'Italia in Naples.

This exhibition also celebrates the more scientific and technological project behind it: thanks to the support of Maison Dior and the Galateri di Genola e di Suniglia family, the *Poma.Periodici* collection will be cataloged, digitized, and made freely accessible online through the institution's platforms.

*“Until now, the Vatican Library has engaged its heritage in dialogue with visual artists, photographers, and book designers. With En route, we go further, opening the conversation to creatives from even more distant and unconventional fields. Alongside an illustrator, we have a musician and a fashion designer. And I must say that our centuries-old institution demonstrates not only its ability to embrace these diverse worlds, languages, and thoughts but also reacts with surprising vitality and flexibility!”*, says Don Giacomo Cardinali, curator and Commissioner of the Exhibition Hall.

Through this exhibition, the Vatican Library reaffirms its commitment to making its historical cultural heritage accessible and engaging with the present, celebrating travel as a universal experience and an opportunity for the meeting of cultures, eras, and sensitivities.

The exhibition will be open to the public from February 15th to December 20th, 2025, with details on visiting times and schedule available on the website: <https://enrouteproject.com/>

Tickets can be purchased on Ticket.it.

Press pack available at the link: <https://cloud.vatlib.it/nextcloud/index.php/s/PPbiaMEgbNTjdmH>

## **About the Vatican Apostolic Library**

The Vatican Apostolic Library is an ancient institution, a place of conservation and research belonging to the Pope and closely connected with the governance and ministry of the Holy See.

Tracing its origins back to the 4th century, the modern history of the Library began with Pope Nicholas V, who in the mid-15th century decided to open the papal library collections to scholars (*pro communi doctorum virorum commodo*, Bull of April 30, 1451), and with Pope Sixtus IV, who formally established the Library's organization with the Bull *Ad decorem militantis ecclesiae* of June 15, 1475. Its extensive collections, which include manuscripts, archival materials, ancient and modern printed volumes, coins, medals, engravings, drawings, and cartographic and photographic materials, are open to qualified scholars from all over the world. The Library specializes in philological and historical disciplines, and, retrospectively, also in theology, law, and the sciences.