



# Napoli Explosion

by Mario Amura

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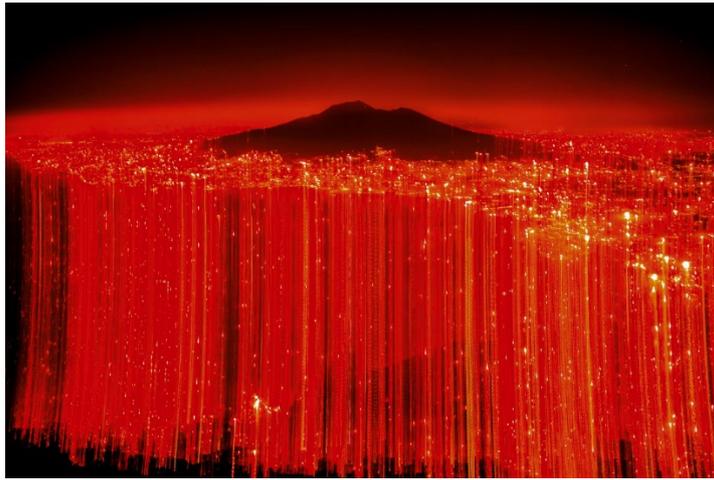
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Real Albergo dei Poveri (Naples) | 15.DIC.25 – 5.APR.26

# Mario Amura: Napoli Explosion at the Real Albergo dei Poveri.

*On the occasion of the 2,500th anniversary of Naples, the Real Albergo dei Poveri hosts the major new exhibition Napoli Explosion by Mario Amura, curated by Sylvain Bellenger.*



*NAPEX 7303222, 2017. Mario Amura. 240x160 cm Fine art print*

At the Real Albergo dei Poveri in Naples, the major new exhibition dedicated to Mario Amura is open until 8 March 2026. Curated by Sylvain Bellenger—art historian and former Director of the Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte—the exhibition follows Bellenger’s presentation of Amura’s first show in Naples in 2023, held in the Cellaio of the Royal Palace.

**The project originates from fifteen years of documentation of the Neapolitan New Year’s Eve. From Monte Faito, Amura records the vast spectacle of light that each year transforms the city. The exhibition unfolds as an investigation that brings together reportage, painting, science, and poetry, conveying the perceptual and cultural complexity of the luminous phenomena that define Naples.**

“Through a masterful use of exposure time,” comments curator Sylvain Bellenger, “and camera movement, the images move beyond a descriptive dimension to assume autonomous, abstract, and pictorial forms.” What emerges is a reflection on the relationship between light, time, and perception—one that re-centres photography as a language of knowledge, capable of uniting artistic intuition with scientific analysis.

The exhibition situates itself within the city’s visual tradition, historically tied to the development of photography and cinema thanks to Naples’ unique lighting conditions. *Napoli Explosion* is accompanied by a scholarly catalogue and a public programme dedicated to the relationships between art, perception, luminous phenomena, and contemporary visual culture.

“*Napoli Explosion* reveals how photography can transform a collective phenomenon into a visual meditation on light and perception,” **Bellenger continues.** “Amura’s images bring together artistic intuition, individual

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sensitivity, and analytical rigour, conveying the luminous vitality of Naples. It is a poetic work of the image that questions our capacity to see, and the way the city itself generates forms, sublimation, emotions, and knowledge.”



2025. *Photographic reconstruction during the design phase of the exhibition “Napoli Explosion”*

“In the year in which Neapolis celebrates its 2,500th anniversary, I imagined an exhibition capable of challenging our idea of time and the way we perceive it,” says Mario Amura. “I immersed the works in an incandescent red light streaming through the large windows of the Real Albergo dei Poveri, as if Naples had been hurled onto a cosmic dawn star. It is the same red as the magmatic chamber, where the volcano forges matter and its colours. It is the red of the darkroom, the place where the photographer attempts to fix an instant. This exhibition is born from a dialogue between different temporalities: the time of Neapolitan civilisation, the geological time of Vesuvius, and the infinitesimal time of the photographic exposure.”

**“*Napoli Explosion* is an autobiographical work, a hymn sung by Naples to itself.”**

**Salvatore Settis**

“The aspect of *Napoli Explosion* that is most striking is its choral nature,” says art historian Professor Salvatore Settis. “During the night marking the transition to the new year, the city of Naples is populated by thousands—tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands—of people who set off, or watch the setting off of, these fireworks, unaware that they are contributing to a pictorial work.”

**“Here Mario Amura has imprinted the footprint of a people, pressed into a few minutes of carefree glory.”**

**Erri de Luca**

**Erri De Luca** writes: “The intention to depict the fateful minutes of revelry took shape after the experience of contemplation... To contemplation, Mario Amura added documentation, then continued along an exploratory path that transforms what the senses have perceived into art. An artist is one who, out of an impulse of generosity, seeks to give back what has been received as a gift. An artist is not one who seeks to express the self. Here Mario Amura has imprinted the footprint of a people, pressed into a few minutes of carefree glory.”

Alongside thirty previously unseen works and a dedicated cinema room, the exhibition also features an area devoted to the immersive experience **NYA – Now Your Art**. This installation allows visitors to witness the fireworks celebration from the very vantage point from which Amura captures his photographs, and to create their own unique work—immediately shareable on social media.

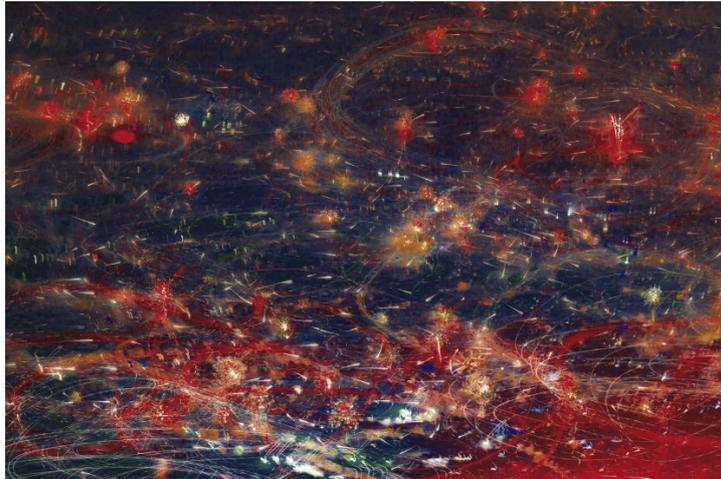


*NAPEX 257120, 2025. Mario Amura. 240x160 cm Fine art print*

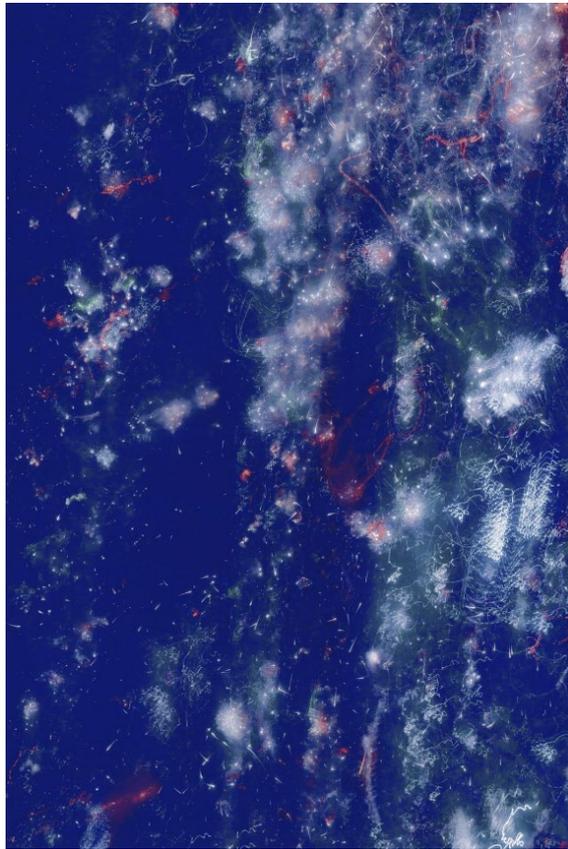


*NAPEX 2310142, 2023. Mario Amura. 240x160 cm Fine art print*

MARIO AMURA  
napoli  
explosion



*NAPLEX 255041, 2025. Mario Amura. 240x160 cm Fine art print*



*NAPLEX 241066, 2025 Mario Amura. 160x240 cm*

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# Links to Photos and Videos

## PHOTO KIT

- LINK on napex.art  
<https://napex.art/press-kit/>

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- LINK TO THE 18-MINUTE DOCUMENTARY: <https://vimeo.com/1144242333> (password: napex)

# Information

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# Biography of Mario Amura



**Mario Amura** was born in Naples in 1973. His artistic training began at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, where he studied under the master cinematographer **Giuseppe Rotunno**.

From 2000 to 2012, he served as director of photography for several films presented at major international festivals, including Cannes, the Berlin International Film Festival, and the Venice Biennale. In 2003, he was awarded the **David di Donatello** by the Italian Film Academy for the short film *Racconto di Guerra*, set in Sarajevo during the siege of 1996.

In 2005, Amura began work on the **StopEmotion project**, marking the start of his photographic research aimed at fragmenting the linearity of chronological time into emotional peaks. Time is thereby purified: it ceases to function as a measure and becomes a concrete object whose essence lies in the visibility of emotions. Through the *StopEmotion* technique, he has gathered photographic material in Bosnia, India and rural China, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Latin America, the United Kingdom, and France. His photographic reportage projects are characterised by the need to mature over extremely long temporal spans.

Since 2007, he has been developing the ongoing project **Fujenti**. *Napoli Explosion* is a project initiated in 2010 and still in progress today.

Official website: <https://mario-amura.com/en/>

Wikipedia: [https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mario\\_Amura](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mario_Amura)

## Key Dates

### 1973

Mario Amura was born in Naples and lived first in Potenza and later in Torre Annunziata, on the slopes of Mount Vesuvius. The window of his bedroom overlooked the volcano, which became a constant presence with which he established a profound bond.

### 2005

From the high ridge of Mount Vesuvius, Mario Amura witnesses the explosion of New Year's Eve fireworks and intuits that a connection may exist between the ritual of firecrackers and New Year celebrations and the presence of one of the most dangerous active volcanoes in the world. It is as if the people living around Vesuvius exorcise the fear of an eruption through this ritual act of superstition.

### 2006

Mario Amura witnesses New Year's Eve celebrations from the summit of Mount Faito, the mountain that rises over the Gulf of Naples, facing Mount Vesuvius.

On that night, from that vantage point, the scene unfolding before him seemed to overturn the classical iconography of gouaches and the masterpieces of Turner, Wright, Marlow, Volaire, and Warhol: the volcano in eruption, coloured by the lava flowing over it. Vesuvius appeared instead as a silent shadow, immersed in a landscape that seemed to explode all around it.

### 2010-2023

Since 2010, Amura has spent every New Year's Eve photographing from Mount Faito the explosion of fireworks over the Gulf of Naples and around Mount Vesuvius. He is accompanied by his closest friends, who become the *Napoli Explosion* troupe (Claudia Ascione, Serenella Iovino, Serafino Murri, Maurizio Valsania, and Christian Arpaia). The results are kept confidential, awaiting the moment when the project is deemed complete.

### 2023

Sylvain Bellenger, Director of the Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte, becomes aware of the project and decides to promote the staging of the exhibition *Napoli Explosion* in the Cellaio hall at the Museo di Capodimonte.

# Critical Essays by Sylvain Bellenger, Erri De Luca and Salvatore Settis.

## **Napoli Explosion by Sylvain Bellenger**

The exhibition *Napoli Explosion* is a geometry of time.  
Here, time does not flow: it bends, stretches, fractures, and reflects.  
The instant tears through duration.  
The myth of Parthenope dissolves chronology.  
The volcano recalls the anteriority of the world.  
Photography fixes the scorching of the present.

From the laughter of celebration to the shadow of the cosmos,  
from the joy of New Year's Eve to exploding light,  
the exhibition traverses the entire spectrum: the fragile, the celestial, the incandescent.

It moves through three temporalities:  
the time of New Year's Eve, which pretends to measure Naples' twenty-five centuries;  
the mythical time of Parthenope, circular and regenerative;  
the cosmic time of Vesuvius, as deep as infinity.

Here, the instant does not pass: it opens time.

**Sylvain Bellenger**

## **Excerpt from the catalogue text "*Within a Few Minutes*" by Erri De Luca**

...The title *Explosion* evokes the effect of an explosive device.

It is preceded by the legal or clandestine purchase of flammable materials by peaceful families competing from one balcony to another over who can produce the most sparks and fury.

Stuffed from lavish dinners, they watch time run backwards in the countdown of seconds. And time, instead of passing, for the occasion descends through the neck of an hourglass, marked by a chorus that accompanies it to the terminus of zero, which by superstition is never spoken aloud.

Bottle corks pop and the santabarbara of lined-up munitions is set alight. At times the fiery whirl shoots between feet rather than into the air. Fire remains untamed.

From the balcony of my adolescence—averse to every festive armament—I witnessed the city vanish beneath the smoke of a self-combustion.

Only from the heights of Mount Faito was it possible to contemplate the whole.

Mario Amura's intention to depict the fateful minutes of revelry took shape after the experience of contemplation.

No premeditation could have anticipated what he saw there for the first time.

From his elevated position, hundreds of metres above the gulf, stretching as far as the eye can see, arose the mission to share the spectacle with the crowd that produced it.

That first encounter gave him his directive.

Far from the gatherings, one suddenly recognises one's task. Solemn commissions await their moment—and their place.

To contemplation Mario Amura added documentation, then continued along an exploration that transforms into art what the senses have perceived.

An artist is one who, out of an impulse of generosity, seeks to give back what has been received as a gift.

An artist is not one who seeks to express the self.

Here Mario Amura has imprinted the footprint of a people, pressed into a few minutes of carefree glory.

### **Excerpt from the catalogue text “*Napoli Explosion*” by Salvatore Settis**

*Napoli Explosion* is an autobiographical work, a hymn sung by the city of Naples to itself.

From this unusual chronicle of a single night, from the multiplicity and concatenation of shots that make up *Napoli Explosion*, the true protagonist emerges: the Neapolitan people, who year after year stage their own eruption and display it before the looming volcano, as homage or as challenge. It is also a challenge to time: moving their devices like butterfly nets, photographers capture distant lights; by altering exposure times, they fix and distil the trajectories of fireworks in the air.

The unwritten rules of investigative reportage are fully adopted, and immediately overturned toward a function that is not only narrative but aesthetic.

The triangulation between the pyrotechnic chorus of the Neapolitans, Vesuvius as the recipient of the tribute, and Amura with his companions in adventure triggers a strongly authorial perspective, in which the intuition and labour of the “director” shape an anthology of evocative stories and images.

The outcome we see (unintended?) settles at the crossroads between abstract art and a new figurativism. Yet even the most abstract images—born from the close dialogue between photographic lenses and the anonymous crowd that unleashes the fireworks—possess a powerful narrative content, indeed twofold: an apparent narrative, suggested by what the images seem to evoke (sunsets, children's games, seabeds), and the real narrative of New Year's Eve nights in Naples.

Here unfolds, as a natural effect of vision, the living narrative potential of the most abstract art—the metamorphosis of the figural into ornament (and vice versa).

### **History of Colour Photography by Sylvain Bellenger**

Colour photography was born in the nineteenth century from a dream: to capture light as matter.

In 1861 in London, James Clerk Maxwell presented the first colour image, reproducing a tartan ribbon from negatives filtered in red, green, and blue. Between 1868 and 1870, in Agen and then in Paris, Louis Ducos du Hauron devised the first processes capable of permanently fixing colour: his landscapes, flowers, and portraits are the earliest works in which colour becomes language.

With the appearance of Autochrome in 1907, the sensation of colour became an autonomous substance, and each photograph a pane of glass to be coloured, upon which light settles like paint on canvas. Kodachrome later imposed brilliance, saturation, and vibrancy—the chromatic syntax of the modern world.

From the 1990s onward, the digital revolution liberated colour: a mutable, modulable writing, a material to be composed.

Within this long trajectory, Mario Amura's work proceeds counter to the current. Since 2010, with *Napoli Explosion*, he has returned photography to its original gesture: painting with light. Before the fireworks of

Neapolitan New Year's Eve, his camera becomes a moving brush: explosions turn into lines, veils, filaments; the night sky becomes kinetic painting.

Contrary to contemporary practices, Amura does not digitally manipulate his images, except in his intervention on colour, which he intensifies or softens like a painter shaping chromatic matter until it finds its proper breath.

For fifteen years, every New Year's Eve, he has climbed Mount Faito with his group of collaborators, overlooking the Gulf of Naples. From there, facing Vesuvius, they capture the city intoxicated by its own flashes of light, when Naples seems to set the sky ablaze.

*Napoli Explosion* is a rite—a shared way of looking at what light reveals and carries with it.

## Q&A with Mario Amura

***When did the Napoli Explosion project begin? What is its origin?***

MA: I lived in Torre Annunziata until I was eighteen. The window of my bedroom looked out onto Mount Vesuvius, and every morning, with care, I would whisper good morning to it, as one does when addressing someone who is asleep and whom one fears to awaken. For anyone living on its slopes, the volcano is a living presence. In 2006, I happened to celebrate New Year's Eve on the heights of the volcano, among the pines on the slope facing Naples. Witnessing the euphoria of firecrackers and fireworks at the stroke of midnight, while sensing beneath my feet the heat and energy of the magmatic chamber, made me feel that there had to be a connection between those ephemeral explosions unfolding before me and the population's fear that what might explode was the dormant power of the volcano itself. It was on New Year's Eve in 2010 that I first witnessed the celebrations from the summit of Mount Faito, the mountain that rises over the Gulf of Naples opposite Vesuvius. That night, from that vantage point, the scene that opened before me seemed to overturn the classical iconography of gouaches and the masterpieces of Turner, Wright, Volaire, Marlow, and Warhol: the volcano in eruption, coloured by the lava flooding it. Vesuvius appeared to me, instead, as a silent shadow, immersed in a landscape that seemed to explode all around it.

***What is the current objective of your project? From the outset, were its purpose and formal outcome already clear to you?***

MA: From the very beginning, I sought to narrate the bond between the Neapolitan people and Vesuvius through a form of *contrappasso*, capturing a city in eruption while the volcano remains silent. Over the years, I have pursued an obsessive search for an image of Vesuvius that would not be stereotypical or already over-familiar—perhaps a vision capable of dislodging the gaze from its expectations. The image of the volcano's dark, silent silhouette submerged in the clamour of colour from fireworks struck me as a representation that deserved to be seriously explored, and through many different paths. The only certainties were the two constraints I imposed on myself from the outset, which defined the project's field of action. The first was to respect, in digital post-production, the principles of photographic reportage, limiting intervention to what could once be achieved in the darkroom. Honouring what is gathered during the act of shooting "from life" offers the unique exhilaration of expressing oneself through something that transcends the self: fixing in an image what unfolds autonomously, simply by extracting it from the temporal continuum. The only truly decisive choice through which a reportage photographer interprets reality lies in establishing a point of view. It is precisely with regard to point of view that I set my second constraint: to photograph always from the same vantage point, from the summit of Mount Faito. After all, the concrete experience of photographing *Napoli Explosion* unfolds in just a few minutes each year—the minutes between midnight and 12:15 a.m. Not changing my point of observation allowed me to fine-tune my approach by studying, throughout the rest of the year, the results of previous expeditions. Over time, the creative process has pushed beyond the representation of reality, towards the exploration of new frontiers and affinities between photography and painting. What began as an attempt to capture a different image of Vesuvius evolved into an

experimentation with new forms of writing with light, using a unique colour palette provided by the hundreds of thousands of fireworks exploding simultaneously.

*Napoli Explosion* has thus become a work in search of the feeling of light.

## Documentary Fact Sheet – *Napoli Explosion* (Cinema Room)

Link to the Documentary (18 min) <https://vimeo.com/1144242333>

Password: **napex**



Duration: 18 min

The documentary traces the creative process—spanning more than fifteen years—behind the works of *Napoli Explosion*. “For fifteen years, at midnight on New Year’s Eve, I have climbed Mount Faito—the mountain overlooking the Gulf of Naples opposite Vesuvius—to capture this kind of exorcistic ritual that Neapolitans enact to ward off the fear that Vesuvius might erupt. Hundreds of thousands of fireworks that, from that distant vantage point, become a unique colour palette placed before me for just ten to fifteen minutes each year,” says Mario Amura. He is accompanied on this journey by his partner Claudia Ascione and by some of his closest friends, including Christian Arpaia, Serenella Iovino, Serafino Murri, Gennaro Santamaria, and Maurizio Valsania.

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## Immersive Work Fact Sheet “NYA -Now Your Art”



Alongside the photographs of *Napoli Explosion*, the exhibition features **NYA – Now Your Art**, an immersive work by Mario Amura that brings visitors to the very heart of New Year’s Eve night around Mount Vesuvius. Through a VR experience, viewers observe the celebrations from varying distances, as if looking through a photographic lens: the point of view becomes variable, mobile, and an integral part of the work itself.

NYA introduces a simple yet decisive gesture: while contemplating the scene, visitors can take a photograph using the controller device, allowing the coloured beams of fireworks to trace lines and vibrations in space. From this gesture emerges a unique image, carrying within it the pictorial component already present in Amura’s practice: a fragment of light interpreted through the movement of the hand, a small act of participation in the work.

The generated image can be preserved as a digital token and shared on social media or produced as a Fine Art print, but its true power lies above all in the process. NYA does not ask viewers to replicate what they see; rather, it invites them to enter the luminous substance of the celebration and transform it into a personal vision.

# Art Book Catalogue Entry - *Napoli Explosion* *Vol. 2*



## **Editorial Sheet**

Napoli Explosion vol.2

Limited Edition of 500 copies, signed by the artist

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Info: [www.napex.art](http://www.napex.art)

Photographs © 2025 Mario Amura

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Erri De Luca

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# Exhibition Colophon “Napoli Explosion”

## Exhibition *Napoli Explosion* by Mario Amura

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Sylvain Bellenger

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napoli  
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*The artist extends his thanks to*

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