“Basilicata Motherland. Patrimonio Vivo”
When the human touch perfects AI

In Basilicata, artificial intelligence did what it does best: it imagined. Then it handed the stage over to light, real light, which falls and casts shadows in a way no algorithm can yet match. That is the story of “Basilicata Motherland. Patrimonio Vivo”, the living heritage campaign in which APT Basilicata, at the initiative of its director general, Margherita Sarli, has in a sense reversed what seemed an inevitable direction of travel: not from human to machine, but from machine to human.

It all began with the work of visual artist Silvio Giordano, who used AI to develop a visual concept, or rather a “vision”, which was then presented at two international showcases: the Italian Pavilion at Expo Osaka and the 2026 BIT international travel fair in Milan. At that early stage, the tool came up with design ideas and original combinations at lightning speed.

The task of recognising, selecting and interpreting those ideas then fell to human eyes and hands. While the debate on artificial intelligence swings between doom-laden predictions of the end of the world and handing over entire areas of human activity wholesale, this project chose dialogue.

Launched in June 2026, the campaign took shape through the body painting of artist Lela Peretto. In ten iconic locations across the region, including Matera, the Torre Guevara in Potenza, the Calanchi badlands, the mountains of Viggiano, the black beach at Maratea, Policoro and Melfi, the models were painted on site with the colours, textures and light of the landscape, until they merged with the foam of the water, the rugged rocks, the golden beige of the limestone and the powder blue of the sky. Until they became almost invisible and disappeared into their surroundings.

That “almost” is where the campaign’s charm and appeal lie.

The result was a series of standalone works spanning painting, performance and experimental photography, brought together in a cinematic advert broadcast nationally on La7 and Sky: figures gradually revealed by a moving camera, making the smallest of gestures without ever leaving the landscape.

The industry took notice too. La Gazzetta del Pubblicitario ranked it first among the regional campaigns of summer 2026, ahead of Umbria and Friuli Venezia Giulia, citing its boldness, strategic positioning, emotional impact and the quality of its art direction.

For destinations, and for those who tell their stories, the lesson goes beyond this one campaign: artificial intelligence is not just a way of saying “look how far ahead we are, using a prompt to promote ourselves”. It can be a real accelerator of the imagination, and it is useful when it helps to convey an experience. It is an approach that could work in any sector: a model with wider relevance.

The rest, as always, is down to Basilicata itself, with its light that is at once ancient and futuristic: more than a destination, an identity, as Sarli put it when presenting the campaign.

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