

# Ameriguns

The USA has a gun obsession, and Gabriele Galimberti offers us a close look at it.

by **Lilian Bernhardt**

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"The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun," says Katie, whose Texas business sells home decor with quotations from the Second Amendment.

The United States is home to more guns than people, and despite comprising just four per cent of the global population, it hosts 46 per cent of all privately owned firearms.

"The proportion is completely unbalanced," reflects Italian photographer Gabriele Galimberti, via Zoom.

Galimberti's latest photo series *Ameriguns* is a portrait of American gun culture, which captures firearm owners with their collections. The two-year project began when, driven by curiosity, Galimberti entered a gun store in rural Kansas. Uncovering what he describes as "a different planet", Galimberti asked a customer purchasing a gun if it was his first. Soon after, Galimberti found himself in the man's home, photographing him with his 50 firearms.

"He was proud to show his arsenal in the same way that a friend would show their collection of vinyl records," Galimberti reflects in *The Ameriguns* book. It was in this moment that he decided to journey across the country to document "the part of America that loves guns".

Galimberti travelled to 30 states and spent days at a time with his subjects to understand what bonds Americans to their guns. The most commonly held value among his subjects is rooted in the ideal of freedom, and the right to bear arms, enshrined within the Constitution. Of this, Galimberti is critical.

"The meaning of the [Second] Amendment was connected to a certain situation the country was living in that moment, but now, 200 years after, everything has changed, so it doesn't make sense anymore," he reflects.

For some, guns are a passion connected to sport and hunting. For others, guns represent a stylistic and aesthetic pleasure connected to self-expression. Guns are also, for many, rooted in a sense of tradition, a generational rite of passage. "When you are around age six, seven or eight, some of your relatives might say, 'Okay let's go out and shoot guns,' so it's the same way we learn how to bike," Galimberti says.

One portrait holds particular significance to Galimberti in the wake of the recent school shooting at Robb Elementary in Uvalde, Texas, where 19 children and two teachers lost their lives. Taken in Texas, 11-year-old Josh stands gun in hand with his family and their collection. "The parents were really proud to tell me he built the gun himself with parts they bought from the internet," Galimberti says.

For him, the photo demonstrates the ease with which American children can access weaponry.

*Ameriguns* has circulated around the world in the aftermath of the latest shooting. Galimberti attributes its success to his visual formula, used in all his previous works, in which he focuses on the arrangement of objects.

"With this project, I think I was able to combine a simple language with a difficult topic, so that's why I think it's working quite well and is powerful."

FOR MORE, GO TO [GABRIELGALIMBERTI.COM](http://GABRIELGALIMBERTI.COM).



← Gun influencer and former Marine Torrell Jasper (aka @blackrambotv) relaxes by the pool. This image won first prize for portraits at the 2021 World Press Photo Contest.



Robert Baldwin Jr never leaves the house unarmed and keeps all of his guns behind a bulletproof window in his home in Las Vegas.

→ Danyela D'Angelo keeps hundreds of firearms locked away in a vault.



← Avery Skipalis discovered her love for firearms after joining the Air Force at 17. She taught her sons how to handle guns at ages 5 and 7.



"Compulsive buyers and serial collectors" is how Joel and Lynne describe themselves. Their 11-year-old son Josh carries a gun he built himself. Five-year-old Paige can only shoot with parental supervision, for now.