

videogallery

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Film screening

I am afraid that Rome existed!

Curated by Donatella Saroli

Featuring works by **Bankleer, Rebecca Digne, Catriona Gallagher, Mathieu Lucas, Cynthia Madansky, Aurelia Mihai, Itziar Okariz, Txuspo Poyo** and **Rocío Quillahumán**.

In 1982 French writer-director Marguerite Duras makes a black and white film, in the Eternal City. There are no actors but two off-screen voices can be heard conversing. It is the camera itself, which as Duras recalls, "will follow an axis of the city" filming whatever it passes through. The film will be called *Dialogo di Roma* (Dialogue in Rome), denouncing, right from the title, that the dialogue about the city belongs to the city itself. Rome takes over, and tells its version of its history, always different, always the same over time, eluding the constant attempt of those who live and observe it, to grasp it once and for all.

The film screening, curated on the occasion of the exhibition *Passeggiate romane* (Roman Walks), takes its cue precisely from the head-to-head - deep, intimate, at times risky - that Rome stirs in whoever attempts to narrate it, walking through it, and offers fragments of truth. The title is inspired by a sentence uttered in Duras' film. What does it mean to fear that Rome really existed? Will they be afraid to lose themselves in its entanglement of dreams, myths, and existences?

The works selected for the film screening allow us to keep this question open, preventing us from taking for granted what of the eternal city we seem to know. They are videos made by international artists, with different experiences, biographies, and practices, connected, however, by having been artists in residence at the foreign academies in Rome. Living and working here has meant for all of them running into the vibrant matter of the city, wandering, getting lost, choosing a destination, deviating from prescribed paths, following traces, and leaving new ones. Crossing cities means perceiving oneself as a body in motion and allows one to appear, and to take place in public space, giving rise to new narratives.

The screening opens with three 'multispecies' walks - that of an elephant, a she-wolf, and the skeleton of a Greenland whale, scaling down the role of Anthropos - and closes with the breath of the Pontentino, the wind dearest to the Romans that ideally reconnects them to the sea. It is the experience of the city 'crossed' that links these works by artists who question Rome and stage contradictions, dreams, and the crisis of our time.

We thank the Academy of France-Villa Medici, German Academy of Villa Massimo, American Academy in Rome, The British School at Rome, Real Academia de España en Roma.

Produced by RAI and Lunga Gittata Cooperativa («at the request of my friend Giovannella Zannoni» Duras declares, but the correct surname was probably Zannoni). The original version is in Italian, with the off voices of Anna Nogara and Paolo Graziosi; in the French version, *Dialogue de Rome*, the off voices are those of Marguerite Duras and Yann Andréa. The text of the film, with some modifications, is published under the title "Rome" within the volume *Écrire*, 1993.

Program:

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Rebecca Digne, *Metodo dei Loci (chapitre 1)*, 2019, 3'25"

An elephant is walking in the garden of a magnificent historical palace. The scene has something metaphysical about it as if from a dream. In reality, nothing is more real than what one sees. The setting is Villa Medici in Rome, where the artist has created a unique performance. The title refers to an ancient memorisation technique based on spatial relationships and is part of a broader reflection by Digne on the theme of memory as the essence of our individual and collective identity, and the tools we have to resist its loss.

Aurelia Mihai, *La Lupa*, 2019, 18'55"

Monuments that hand down official history and folklore that reveals popular history are, for Mihai, sources through which to read contradictions and ambivalences of our present. The protagonist and narrator of this short film is the Lupa Capitolina. The bronze sculpture of the she-wolf with the twins Romulus and Remus was long believed to be of Etruscan origin and more recently attributed to the 12th-13th centuries. Even today, this monument, a symbol of Rome's founding, retains the enigmatic and mysterious nature of the myth that the artist has chosen to explore from the history of its many reproductions scattered around the world (at least 22 copies can be found in Romania, the artist's country of origin).

Txuspo Poyo, *Gran Hotel Nazareno*, 2022, 18'44"

A small van drives through the center of Rome with a very unusual cargo: the skeleton of a whale. It is one of the most significant pieces from the cabinet of the Collegio Nazareno, the first public school opened in Europe in 1630. The artifact is leaving the historic building – sold and transformed into a luxury hotel - and passing through emblematic places in Rome that have themselves been emptied of memory and meaning, converted into other activities by the needs of the market.

Catriona Gallagher, *Daphne was a torso ending in leaves*, 2024, 13'

Interested in the theme of metamorphosis and the encounter of human and non human, Gallagher starts from the myth of Daphne and Apollo to trace the presence of the laurel plant in more than two millennia of the Capital's history. Marble friezes, hedges, food, ornamental motifs on the city's lampposts and garlands worn by recent graduates testify to its pervasiveness. But the artist goes beyond a thematic and symbolic research. Laurel, in fact, becomes the ingredient of an alchemical process, a fixer for the development of the 16-millimeter film of her work; the frames retain traces of the leaves, resembling ghostly presences. In this experimental video essay, Daphne – a laurel plant in ancient Greek - seems to escape Apollo's death grip.

The work will be presented at the 2024 edition of the Lo Schermo dell'Arte Festival (Florence)

Aurelia Mihai, *Cento piedi*, 2012, 11'03"

The artist chooses as her privileged observatory the Trajan Column, the monument celebrating the Roman conquest of Dacia (present-day Romania), the artist's country of origin. As is often the case in her works, in *Centro Piedi* Mihai investigates the contemporary history and social conditions of her country: identity, immigration, perception of Romania in Italy and Europe, precarious economic conditions and much more. She does so by juxtaposing documentary research with fictio, creating parallel realities - the interior and the exterior of the column in the Trajan Forum – and offering opposite rhythms: the slow, repetitive one of the Romanian folk song hummed by the protagonist and the array of different languages spoken by tourists and guides.

Itziar Okariz, *Conversation with Monk*, 2023, 8'34"

Between the 14th and 16th centuries, popular Roman tradition entrusted so-called "speaking" statues with the task of acting as spokesmen for the discontent of the people. Satires in verse began to appear on a group of statues - that of Pasquino is perhaps the best known - denouncing the abuses and arrogance of nobles and members of the clergy. In keeping with this tradition, *Conversation with Monk* was realized in Rome in 2023 at the Academy of Spain as part of a larger project of the artist, *Las estatuas*, started in 2018. A visual artist and performer, Okariz chooses to assume a particular posture for her encounters with statues, ensuring proximity, intimacy and the possibility to listen to the "vibrant matter," as political theorist Jane Bennet calls it. These are intimate conversations that blur the line between animate and inanimate while investigating the hierarchy between object and observer in the museum experience.

Rocío Quillahuamán, *Puriykachay*, 2024, 2'43"

"Puriykachay" means to walk and is a term the artist retrieves from *Quechua*, a language lost to her that her mother stopped speaking after leaving Peru to emigrate to Europe. Strolling through Rome, aimlessly, the video's protagonist recalls her past in Lima, the city where she was born, and then in Barcelona, where she emigrated with her family as a child. During her residency, walking through the city has been a daily routine for Quillahuamán, a central experience in her process of getting to know herself and others.

Bankleer, *Taumelnde Leere (Unsteady Void)*, 2021, 34'

In this work by the socially engaged duo *Bankleer* (Karin Kasböck, Christoph Maria Leitner), the streets and squares of Rome become a stage where to move between reality and props. The two young protagonists traverse an empty and silent city due to the Covid restrictions. Starting at night from the East side of the city, they reach the Capitoline Hill at dawn, accompanied by three large sculptural heads depicting Angela Merkel, Mario Draghi and Dutty Boukman, symbols of the power of contemporary financial systems in shaping the lives of living beings.

Cynthia Madansky, *Anna Pina Teresa*, 2015, 6'20"

The artist reinterprets a crucial moment from Roberto Rossellini's film *Rome, Open City* in which Pina - a character played by Anna Magnani and based on the story of Teresa Gullace - is killed in the street by fascist police. The scene is characterized by three movements of the protagonist's body: resistance, running and falling. Setting her work in the Fencing Hall of the Foro Italico, Madansky reflects on historical and contemporary dynamics by having dancer Marta Ciappina perform resistance movements inspired by Rossellini's film in an urban space of fascist origin.

Mathieu Lucas, *Ponentino*, 2019, 8'36"

During the summer, the Ponentino, a sea breeze from the west, rises every day when the land gets warmer. It is a cool wind that engulfs the Tiber plains, flies over the hills and tries to penetrate the city. It is the best known of the winds that reach Rome and in popular culture is synonymous with the coolness that comes with the end of the day despite the fact that this sea breeze hardly reaches the heart of the capital. Lucas, an architect and landscape architect, attentive to the climate change impact on the ecosystem, invites us to explore the suburbs of the city through the prism of the wind, in an attempt to make the peri-urban landscape perceived as a complex system of relationships and interconnections among different spaces and living beings the ground and the atmosphere.

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Screenings run in a loop starting at 11:00 a.m. until 7 pm

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