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## Attraversiamo: artistic expressions along Italian routes

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Editors: Carolina Cantarino e Renzo Taddei

### *Sensitive walking and experiencing on the streets of Rome*

Gustavo Ciríaco, a Brazilian choreographer and artist, and Andrea Sonnberger, an Austrian dancer, created the work “here while we walk”. According to them, this “is based on experience and the long tradition that unites walking with the production of thought and lucidity”. It is a silent journey to share the urban space, which is in constant transformation. In this experiment, exterior and interior “continuously mix”, as they point out. Although they suggest that it can be done without being noticed, our experience was observed (by several people) while we walked. Applied for the first time in Italy, it brought us ideas and sensations.

Through of two proposals, that of Ciríaco and Sonnberger, and a second, created by the Spanish artist Maral Kekejian Hernand, we can see a bit of the activities of a large academic-artistic program related to the [7th STS Italia Summer School | ArTS in/and Society](#) that I integrated with more around 30 people from different countries, on September 3rd and 6th, 2024, at the [Royal Academy of Spain \(RAER\)](#).

Choosing to make a register about this summer school through this artistic mode allows us to go beyond in the literary sense of “attraversiamo”, from Italian, which means “let’s cross over”. This is an invitation to take risks, to go beyond what is experienced in ordinary life, to leave your comfort zone. Together with many others, we traversed.

### **Rubber band**

We were in Rome, a very touristy city. On the afternoon of September 4th, we walked to a fountain, near the Trastevere River. We sat on the steps. From there, we heard Maral Kekejian Hernand



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inviting us to participate in a performance. We would walk through the Roman streets with a black elastic band involving the entire group. We were following the recommendations given by Hernand, who, in turn, followed along with the performance created by Gustavo Ciríaco and Andrea Sonnberger — who were not with us.

Along the way, many eyes turned to us. Some people even addressed us with words (and questions) such as “Brilliant!”, “Interesting”, “What is this?”, “Is it a group of tourists?”, “You look like children”, “Are you trapped?”, “Are you crazy?”. The reactions showed astonishment, admiration, and doubt about what was being seen. Although we listened to them, it was not recommended to answer (and this was a kind of rule of this game).

Our (almost always) silent reactions were sometimes interrupted. Occasionally we were serious when we heard comments like “Are you crazy?”; sometimes we were smiling when we received friendly looks; sometimes we were laughing: for example, when a waiter went under the elastic band, joined the group, said he would follow us and then, laughing, left us.

If we looked from above, it was easy to see that the design of the streets was guiding our shape. In the narrow streets, we formed almost a single file. In the wide ones, it looked like a square or a kind of circle. The rubber band gave us the chance to expand and retreat. We were a group with amplitude and movement.

Although we were free to choose to participate in the performance and to leave it at any time, no one did. We walked together for around an hour until the Trevi Fountain. It was at this moment that I felt an overwhelming urge to leave. So I passed the black elastic band over my hair and went to look at the group and the city from outside. I was able to take a photo in front of this fountain with some participants still inside the elastic band — before it was not recommended to use cameras or cell phones. I soon realized that this was not just my wish. Everyone left the rubber band soon after. Hernand wrapped the elastic band, and then we applauded.

It was my first time in Rome.

It was my first performance.



Photo: Tatiana Massaro





Photo: Marije Miedema



## Mirror

My (second) performance took place a short time later.

Hernand would hand us a small wavy mirror and invite us to hold it close to our eyes. Before that, she told us that it had taken years to give materiality to this work, which she had created.



Photo: Tatiana Massaro

We gathered under a painted ceiling in a building near the Trevi Fountain. The artist gave each pair a mirror, and we began to see the paintings reflected. One person would guide the other, who would hold the mirror close to their eyes. The order would change along the way, so that each person could experience it.

Below, we see my partner, the Italian architect Annunziata Ambrosino, with the mirror in her hands. In the reflection, you can see the upper part of the Colosseum. We walked for about thirty minutes, passing a series of monuments, until we reached the Roman ruins and, later, this Italian icon that hosted performances and performances many years ago (the Colosseum). Annunziata kindly told me a little more about the history of Rome in our conversations. Along the way, we found new angles of the same landscape and, at times, we stopped to observe some places.





This time, we noticed that the tourists said nothing to us, but they did not stop looking, curious, at our way of seeing Rome “upside down”. At some point, I noticed that I was immersed in what the mirror reflected, and soon it was Annunziata who told me where to go, which allowed me to focus my attention on the images. I saw something similar to the photograph below.



Photo: Annunziata Ambrosino

We were expanding the possibility to see the world in an analogical way. Virtual reality glasses, for example, could offer us a similar experience by projecting videos filmed on this "mirror experience", created by Hernand, or even showing a walk through the streets where the Colosseum is located. However, it would not be the same. Seeing an image of the Colosseum in front of the Colosseum brings emotions, sensations, and creates memories. It also reminds me of a sunny Roman day, the wind, the people walking around by, and the chance to have conversations with Annunziata. It holds



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as well the delicious memory of the Italian ice cream flavor which we ate on the way. The path offered by the lenses of the virtual reality glasses does not allow us to experience these same memorable sensations first hand.

### **(Some) Reflections**

Artistic practices are considered as part of the multiple responses to the challenges brought about by our time, as demonstrated the Brazilian researchers Marina Souza Lobo Guzzo, Susana Oliveira Dias, Alana Moraes, Guilherme Moura Fagundes, Walmeri Ribeiro, Kidauane Regina Alves, and Renzo Taddei (2024). Susana Dias (2023), research and artist, offers us the chance to reflect about the acts of walking and “looking carefully” together, configuring a way to walk in the Anthropocene, where, as she emphasizes, it is inevitable to have to relearn how to walk.

Walking in a group with a rubber band and in pairs with a mirror invite us to think about what it is like to move with attention, in a kind of company that multiplies along the way: consider, for example, the group or the pair, and then the non-humans, the elastic object, the mirror, the sky, the streets, pavements, fountains, buildings, windows, doors, many people, a fair, monuments, trees, statues, the construction of a (new) subway, the Roman ruins, more people. When in a group, we were silent. We could focus our attention on observing our surroundings, seeing the people, feeling the movement of the streets. Guided by the artist, we did not need to worry about the path and the direction. In pairs, however, we walked and talked. Our attention spread between the directions, the mirror, and the map, which helped us to get to certain spaces where we wanted to go. We were walking, thinking, experiencing artistic and different companies: of beings, places, languages, and ways of seeing the world.

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