

LUCCIOLE

PROFESSOR ANTHONY GARDNER

If clichés are anything to go by, then Rome is the Eternal City by virtue of its architecture. From the ancient relics of the Forum to the monumental Pantheon, from the cupola of St Peter's to other Renaissance and Baroque wonders, and out further still to the suburbs and estates teeming with contemporary living, the narratives of Rome unfurl centrifugally through the city, the longevity of its history captured in the immutable authority of bricks and stone. For the great poet and cineaste provocateur Pier Paolo Pasolini, however, this was entirely the wrong way to approach the forces of history. It was not the city's walls and lintels that put us in touch with long distant pasts, he believed, for architecture was but a mute marker within time, refusing to divulge the events that it had seen. For him, history was not something contained within permanent structures, but released through much more ephemeral events: through fleeting gestures and colloquial speech, for instance, passed down from one generation to the next like waves of embodied memory; or through the particular rhythms of dialects that, as sound and tempo rather than language, have resisted their incarceration as objects of knowledge or static marks on a page.

Andrew Hazewinkel
DOMUS_SUB/MERGE 2006
PAIR#1 eight pairs. 2006-2009
giclée print on archival paper 28.8
x 84 cms

Archival image source:
Mackey Collection
The British School at Rome



Following the writings of Deleuze and Guattari and Jean-François Lyotard, history for Pasolini was something to encounter through the ostensibly irrelevant or easily overlooked – through articulations of all things “minor” rather than grand narratives. These brief and brilliant signals, these irruptions of the past within the present, were what he called *lucciole*: bright, flickering visions that dart in and out of perception like fireflies dancing at night. To glimpse these *lucciole* meant being open to engaging with history as something lived, not simply read, and being sensitive to historical recurrence in unexpected and even ungraspable ways. It also meant, as the historian Georges Didi-Huberman would later argue, realising how “minor” histories can evade capture within the dominant understandings of the past and rigid architectures of knowledge. *Lucciole*, according to Didi-Huberman, can therefore be considered forces of resistance, opening up new perceptions of history, and tearing new holes in the teleologies that drag from the Antique to the Renaissance and thence to the neoliberal present where everything, including time and historical knowledge itself, has chiefly become a commodity.

At first glance, this Pasolinian discourse may seem remarkably distant from the work of Andrew Hazewinkel, especially given his long-held interest in water that would surely douse the *lucciole*'s light. This would, however, be a deceptive first glance, for it is precisely the fragile, the precarious, the survival of all things fleeting, and the historical roots of these survivals that have been Hazewinkel's persistent subject in recent years. In particular, it is the pulsation of history along Rome's River Tiber that has snared Hazewinkel's attention, for if Rome's architecture is its make-up, then its more profound and murky memory lies within the Tiber.

Here, Romans have been disposing the traces of fellow Romans for centuries, in the hope that the Tiber's perpetual floods, rising up and down the river's banks in seasonal rhythms, will take

the detritus downstream and out of sight. In the past – and, most likely, still in the present – this has involved using the river as a repository for unwanted bodies (Caesars and commons alike). Today, wanderers curious to leave Rome's glamorous ground level and to head down the steep, fractured staircases to the water will generally find less gruesome, more banal objects caught in the river's currents. These are the focus of many of Hazewinkel's videos: the plastic bottles and soccer balls of *Turbulence* (2007) caught indefinitely in the cataract on the western side of the Isola Tiberina, the long slipstream of an island within the river south of the Castel Sant'Angelo; the branches and, on occasions, large tree trunks that bash noisily against the cataract on the island's eastern side (*Splinter Cycle, Recurrent Dream*, 2008); the bags and (in *Raft* of 2009) wooden palette trapped in shallow eddies waiting for the next storm or flood to send them on their way to their next temporary destination. This rubbish caught in the motions of the river may seem utterly meaningless. Yet, as Pasolini suggested in the 1970s, the trivial is actually the means by which history may best reveal itself, for the sight of waste trapped bobbing in the river and the sounds of trees beating against the river's walls and base are among the few constants within Rome since its early Republic. Each thud of wood against riverbed is potentially little different from the churning sights and sounds of the Tiber two thousand years ago, reverberating with the impact of an everyday living history that has somehow survived amid the fetishised pasts for which Rome is usually renowned.

Hazewinkel's photographs – collectively titled *Domus_sub/merge* (2006-2009) – take a slightly different approach to the Tiber as a curious kind of archive. Here, survival is less about the recurrence of "minor" sights and sounds through time, so much as the resilience of community on the river's banks and in the wake of its floods. Each work within these suites comprises two photographic images set adjacent to each other: on one side, an image originally sourced from the British School of Rome's holdings (principally from the Ashby, Bulwer and Mackey collections), showing sites that have withstood particularly high Tiberian waters; on the other side, the spaces that people living on Rome's streets have taken over as temporary homes, their materials deliberately makeshift (cardboard, plastic, foam and so forth) given the objects at hand and the imminent likelihood of either the river or the Roman authorities sweeping those homes away. Implicit in both types of scenario, then, is a will to overcome the Tiber's power to wipe over everything in its path, like a palimpsest or Freud's mystic writing pad: on the one hand, the monumental stone of the bridges and arches that try to withstand the writhing current; on the other, the remarkably ordered and precise layout of these homes, to the point that, in one instance, even the shapes of pillows have been fashioned from a cardboard bed. Precision here provides a potent means of working with and through precariousness, a will to return to order that bears a humility quite unlike the stubbornness (perhaps even the hubris) of the "grander" architectural forms, and one which often goes ignored at the base of the staircases beside the Tiber's lonely edge. This is survival from the position of the marginal and the fleeting once more, of survival 'despite everything', as Did-Huberman has written, and of glimmers of forgotten experiences that exist alongside – but are not subsumed within – "major" histories.

The use of ropes throughout Hazewinkel's series of *Acqua Alta* projects articulates a third strategy against architecture. Here, the diagonals and acute angles of the rope weaving from wall to ceiling to floor clashes with, complicates, even immanently corrodes, the perpendicular structure of the buildings that have housed these projects: the British School of Rome, Hazewinkel's Melbourne home and the Italian Institute of Culture in Melbourne. Seemingly stable forms lose that stability, become floating features caught within and behind the gauze of netted ropes (most infamously, a chair soaring high in a stairwell in the British School). In the case of the Seamen's Mission, however, these ropes also seek to retrace and visualise transitory histories – namely, those of the sailors using the Pantheon-like dome of the Mission as a gymnasium, climbing up and down ladders and ropes to the ceiling, across walls or from one wall to another. The seamen's long-vanquished sounds and strains find their approximation in the abstract forms writhed by the fibre as it courses across the building – the rapid-fire

movements up, down and pinging through space, replicated by the taut zips and knots of the ropes, their multicoloured reds and yellows and whites flashing across each other like yet more fireflies dancing.

In each instance, then, Hazewinkel's work charts trajectories between the energies of living and their erasure through time, floods and disavowal. Survival – or what Didi-Huberman has called *survivance*, *l'image survivante*, the image surviving – becomes a medium as much as a subject here, much as it was for Pasolini. It becomes a means of following the *lucciole* and visualising again what has occurred and recurred through time, struggling against the narrowed focus and amnesia that riddle the dominant accounts of our pasts. This may be why Hazewinkel finds correlations, perhaps even inspiration, in a small drawing by Leonardo da Vinci in the British Royal Collection – *A Cloudburst of Material Possessions* (c.1510) – in which a storm concentrates its force in either raining various everyday objects to the ground (rakes, bottles, maybe even a football), or sweeping them away in floodwaters. This is the ambiguity of Leonardo's "minor" sketch: does the storm shower the soil with wealth, or sweep possessions away; is it a positive or a destructive force?

A similar ambiguity lurks, I think, within Hazewinkel's tracings of the *survivants*, the *lucciole* and the survival of all things "minor" in the present: Can history resonate in different ways from what one might expect? And how might it be actualised, perceptible, traceable, long after its energies have presumably died down? It is a resonance that is not limited to Rome's Tiberian underbelly, of course, but finds itself flowing everywhere in other, unexpected ways as well.

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i. Pier Paolo Pasolini, '*L'articolo delle lucciole*', *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, ed. Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1999 (originally written in 1975), pp. 404–411. The contrast of 'minor' to 'grand' narratives is best seen in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986, and Jean-François Lyotard's celebrated introduction to his book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, pp. xxiii–xxv.

ii. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Survivance des luccioles*, Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2009.

iii. Sigmund Freud, '*A Note Upon the Mystic Writing Pad*', *The Standard Edition of Freud's Works*, ed. James Strachey, vol. 19, London: The Hogarth Press, 1961 (originally published in 1925), pp. 227–232.

iv. Didi-Huberman, op. cit., p. 36.

v. Georges Didi-Huberman, *L'image survivante*, Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2002.