

FCO - MEL UNSPPOOLING

DR STEFANIA MANNA

I first encountered Andrew Hazewinkel, out of scale and out of time on the imposing stairs of a weighty edifice in Rome. Climbing the majestic stair of British School at Rome (Edwin Lutyens, 1912), to the front door of an impenetrable neoclassical mass, we moved through a façade which asserts and replays the weight of history in all its gravity. This sense of solidity and overwhelming permanence, was suddenly fractured by a series of fine coloured lines, ropes, which wound around the columns and traversed the pronao, turning them into a gigantic reel of thread, a playful if not irreverent gesture, and the beginning of an unspooling discourse.

The work comprising *Acqua Alta # 1*, Rome 2006, discusses the topic of a contra-position between fields of permanent force and temporary conditions, describing the fertile moment of their transition.

Andrew Hazewinkel
Acqua Alta # 1 2006
The British School at Rome.

17 cast resin fixing rings, 250 m rope,
broken chairs, 3 paired photographic
prints title *Domus_sub/merge #1,2,3*

Installation detail.



Crossing the threshold of this heavy edifice, I experienced an unwinding as I moved through the inner architectural space, along a constellation drawn in brightly coloured line, contaminating function as it traversed rooms whose original use were refectory, passageways, stairwells and galleries, usually inaccessible to the visitor's way.

Then like now, *Acqua Alta # 3*, Italian Institute of Culture Melbourne: 2009 installation, induces a disturbing proceeding through an ethereal network of connections, to an experience of the immobility of the architectural, now interrupted by the articulation of immaterial trajectories. It pushes into a dynamic exploration of a void, which is improbable in the everyday life of a building. Expressing a void now striated with bright lines, the crystallized vectors of a stilled storm of thought.

Tensile thoughts outline a structure describing relationships with the surroundings, in which you can re-read a social role of art. Through a symbolic act of re-appropriation, a re-experience of space, Andrews work gives back the consciousness of ourselves as creators of our own habitat, which has been progressively eroded. An individual sense of responsibility emerges, tying itself

into our consciousness. Flooded by fears, hopes and desires we no longer trust the fact that we shape the ephemeral frameworks and systems of our societies.

It is not by chance that the anchor points of this interference between the subject and object of this work, have been rematerialized; fragile in their inconsistent resinous transparency, they sit largely in contra-position with the reassuring memory of the heavy iron riverbank mooring rings from which their form is sourced. Reinventing the materiality of these holding points creates uncertainty, disorienting doubts, while the imagination perceives an inability, an impossibility of disentanglement. Reliable points of reference are inverted, unspooling a compromised relationship with a future, immediately present.

The Italian Institute of Culture in Melbourne presents a series of rooms, functionally evolutionary; a strange blending of domestic and institutional space. Andrew's lines traverse these spaces in multiple directions, sometimes attaching themselves to objects whose daily function in 'the present' has been reworked through studio time: found objects are reconfigured, reshaping their original function, becoming new hybridised objects, hovering between functions, suspended in familiar space.¹

In these familiar, re imagined relics; Andrew rediscovers an assonance with a symbolic world of Leonardo da Vinci, in his small sketch called *Cloudburst of Material Possessions*.² In this drawing, common household objects and the tools of a sculptors workshop, are falling down from a cloud like rain, possibly an early expression in drawing, pointing to an awareness of the interaction between our daily activities and our environment.

Since *Acqua Alta #1* 2006, innumerable lines thread Andrew's thoughts with mine, spanning his research and mine, as well as a shared and individual movement through space. The space of memory created through shared experiences, eloquently expresses the subtle differences between 'distance' and 'separation'.

*"I have been thinking about you and your return to Orléans and I can not help but make another parallel with the world flooding. I know, for sure, that, as you walk through the streets and into cafes and bars, you will be flooded with a deep emotional turbulence, rising to the surface, it makes me think of the flooded images we saw in Venice of New Orleans, ³ when the waters broke away the constraining walls and everything let go."*⁴

Distance and history, physical and emotional, are inscribed into a circle that memory traces to articulate the void between places and times, a sense of duration trying to dispel the notion of separation. But a new axis shifts an orbit turning a circle into a spiral, and, in fluid dynamic science, the spiral turns into a vortex and the vortex creates turbulence. If an immobile tension discusses the concept of permanence or fixity, we are obliged to loosen the tension, following the flux of chance, of disordered events.

In the city of Rome, memory is recorded stone by stone, layer by layer, but the continuous force of the Tiber undermines this authority, engraving signs of time into the city's heart by the dates of the many floods. ⁵ This well recorded history of Rome's liquid destruction challenges the built representation of power, the stone architectures of the eternal city.

Andrew searches in the perpetual natural elements of water and light for a supporting framework for the comprehension of this dichotomous reality; through the physical materiality of these elements, [which are impossible to reduce singularly into representation and language of art], Andrew looks to the instability of natural forces and the effect of the immaterial.

The video-sequence *Turbulence: 2007* shows us coloured plastic bottles and football balls dancing as if rocked by the Tiber's current, uncovering a pure primeval innocence in a light-clad, white foam. This disturbing and exquisite gurgling of rubbish presents the transformation of a deterioration phenomenon into a vision of absolute poetry. These disgusting daily witnessings of pollution shape the main characters of an urban staging, asserting their right to inhabit the river and the city. But the discovery of an aesthetic value in this experience generates a feeling of

wonder more than one of beauty, keeping away the discouragement of resignation felt for the lost war against environmental protection. Here a generative sensibility corresponds with the material urgency of the problem, setting a natural instinct of imaginary survival against destructive forces of an artificialized nature.

Parallel to this work, the river offers Andrew more occasion for emotional awakening from a familiar consciousness: Through a practice that spans the climate controlled, protective environment of a photo archive and the banks of the river, Andrew creates a cycle of paired photographic images *Domus_sub/merge # 1 to # 8 Rome: 2006 /2009*, bringing together historic images of flooded Rome, [sourced from the Ashby, Bulwer and Mackey collections held at British School at Rome photo archive] and images of the fragile, sensitively constructed, ephemeral dwellings found along today's Tiber.

The Tiber carves a free-space, an emptiness, through the centre of the city. The history of flooding has kept in perpetuity this free-space which courses through the intense density of urban history that is Rome. This free-space is somehow not trusted, somehow unsafe, unreliable and unpredictable. In the full face of vulnerability, homeless people settle into these places which the force of the river has created and somehow defended from the constructions of edified power.

Once again opposing fields of force are at play: construction and destruction, order and disorder, impossible attempts at negotiating the space, between the instinctive need for a domestic refuge and unavoidably violated intimacies. The states of sensorial excitement stimulated by fixity vs the rhythms of vortex and turbulence; the clear still, post flooding vs the intimacy of existences in disastrous whirl.

In *Splinter Cycle [recurrent dream] 2008* the current drags reluctant branches into greenish, gray vortexes, in a sort of anomalous drift. Everything moves in all directions. Both of these natural elements are captive in a circular space and time. The trees remind me of the kind of vegetation that once stood on the river banks - I have seen them in paintings- and the water itself flows backward as another section of footage is calmly played in reverse, it somehow takes us back to somewhere we have not been before.

Rethinking, is subtly different from revisiting earlier thoughts, mental journeys are never alike. Rethinking is a process of accumulation, noticing changes to the shape of understanding [or not], but also and moreover, of rewinding from and into the present. The surprise, [the miracle of the art], is that this is seemingly an impossible rewind: the condition of consciousness' acquisition does not admit a way back to innocence.

Like the fixing rings attached to the architecture, these constraining conditions generate tension. The imperfect in the passing of time, an impossible truth, the contemporary weak thought⁶ that splinters history, cutting it into discontinuous sequences which never see an end corresponding with a beginning, and vice-versa.

The return to places where you have never before been, denounces displacement in a way that creates parallel worlds, where evolution is not only going on, but also coming back, passing unexplored territories, in a process of disarming non linearity.

Worlds where composing and decomposing combine with each other in infinitely different ways, never offer in return the same image: Like a mosaic of tesseras that seem unable to resolve themselves into a comprehensible picture. Without the acquired stability of this balance of positive contamination, the past brings about the need of a new becoming.

" The Tiber arrived close to the point of flooding and, for some days, a tangible restlessness filled the city, in the same way as the ongoing falling rain. Passing by Ponte Garibaldi, I saw a multitude of plastic bags and rubbish waving from the branches and bushes along the river banks; garbage which had been pushed up by the voluminous rising of the river.

Rewinding the tape of my memory, images of your bottles, Andrew, passed in front of me, and I've seen in those fragile, outcast swimmers of the river, an army of survivors of the inclemency of life, with whom a force of nature was bestowing an unusual, proud beauty. Thinking of how much you would have liked them, I wished you were here.”⁷

POST SCRIPT

Through the opportunity of writing this short text, I have had long conversations with Andrew about the ‘meaning’ of his works, for which I thank him. An urgent communication of the ‘sense’ of the work has emerged from these conversations. At times I have doubted language, [perhaps it could be too simple] to stimulate the complexity of this ‘sense’; that the strength of emotional reaction to the ideas of this, could get lost in a decontextualization and that geographical distance may relegate earlier thoughts to a reservoir of ‘past’ experience. Although the spatial and emotional source material of this work and research is Rome, Australia is a natural environment for its presentation. In Australia, time is anthropologically and geographically ancient, but young as an edified history: it is a time that you can’t touch with your hand, but that is continuously rethought. Past is not built, remembered, preserved. It is a floating, permanent, heartfelt presence that is free from moorings, far from spirals of memory. Perhaps in Melbourne, more than in Rome, we feel free to unspool.

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1. For the installation in Rome, for example, there was a chair caught in the network of ropes; this chair had been found discarded in the car park of the BSR some days before.
2. Drawing by Leonardo da Vinci is dated ca. 1510, ink on paper, The Royal Collection at Windsor Castle, Berkshire UK, RL12698.
3. The reference is to the United States of America’s Pavilion, titled “*Dopo l’Inondazione: Ricostruire su un terreno più alto*”, curated by Christian Bruun, 10th International Exhibition of Architecture at Venice Biennale, 2006.
4. Correspondence, May 2007.
5. More than one hundred and fifty major floods at Rome have been registered between 414 BC and AD 2000. A list of those floods can be found in Appendix 1, “*Floods of the Tiber in Ancient Rome*”, Aldrette G.S The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 2007 ISBN 0-8018-8405-5.
6. The reference is to the notion of “weak thought” by Gianni Vattimo, in “*The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-modern Culture*”, Translated by John R. Snyder, Polity Press, 1991. ISBN 0-7456-0971-6 Translation of “La fine della modernità”, Garzanti, Milan, 1985.
7. Correspondence, December 2008.