

ROME'S UNCERTAIN TIBERSCAPE: TEVERETERNO AND THE URBAN COMMONS

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If there is too much to see, that is, if an image is too full, or there are too many images, the effect is you do not see anything any more. Too much too quickly turns into 'nothing.' If an image is empty, or almost empty and sparse, it can reveal so much that it completely fills you, and the emptiness becomes 'everything.'

Wim Wenders

The idea of *'terrain vague'* has captured the attention of contemporary landscape and architectural designers in part because of its ambiguous implications. It is worth considering the origins of the vacant, indeterminate zones found in modern cities to better understand the causes of their abandonment or deterioration. More than an indefinite plot of land or territory, the nameless terrain in question has lived uncertain or unrecognized histories, contains weak formal boundaries, and is perceived to lie fallow however activated by marginal forces. Idealized pronouncements of unrealized potential haunt these urban areas that demonstrate both disorder and freedom. Neither natural conditions nor the product of conscious human intent, *terrain vague* is open to transformation.

How often are such wastelands the paradoxical by-product of ambitious development and alleged progress? When current cityscapes lacking identity were documented, although not aestheticized, by photographers like Martha Rosler, Gabriele Basilico, Thomas Struth, Margaret Morton, and Francesco Jodice, assorted worn and voided territories suddenly received new scrutiny. As a result, indistinct urban spaces were reframed in the consciousness of savvy and astute artists and architects in search of new ground. In fact, photography has been the predominant catalyst



responsible for shifting attention away from what was “already almost all right” in the architecture of many cities to those understudied and previously unseen eyesores that are part of any metropolis. The aim to act on possibilities presented by newfound indeterminate urban areas raises questions about their history. What caused such deterioration in the first place, what activities might revive allegedly dead zones, and what issues of identity and culture come to the fore?

This essay will examine one of the five ‘strategic spheres’ of Rome’s 2004 *Piano Regolatore* (master plan) for the historic city, the—Tiber River—and consider proposed interventions and programming by artist Kristin Jones (no relation to the author).¹ Hardly an unknown or marginal element in the city, the Tiber has historically dominated whole regions of Rome, which it has served as the main artery for commercial, military, transportation, and drainage infrastructure up to the 19th century. Yet the Tiber River has threatened the life of the city with violent acts of periodic flooding throughout its history, which led to the construction of embankments to control its inundations. Consequently, during the modern age, the Tiber’s presence and vitality in Rome have been diminished when compared with the preceding three thousand years of life along its banks.

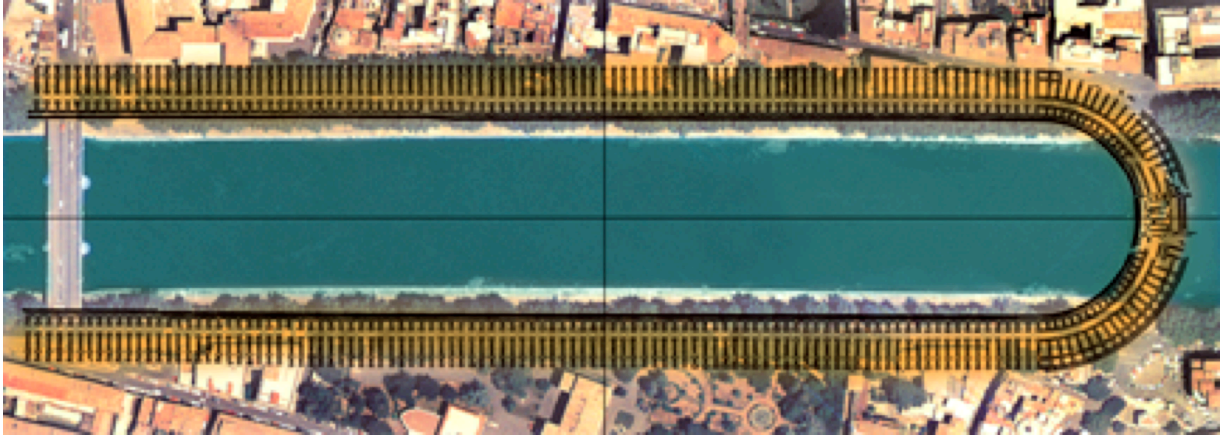


Fig. 1: Aerial view of Piazza Tevere with an overlay of the Circus Maximus, from the Rodolfo Lanciani plan.

Examining specific aspects of the Tiber's history ought to provide a basis for the fluid identity of the third largest river in Italy in relation to the metropolis that formed on its banks. The homeless camps, weeds, graffiti, pissoires, condoms, and needles that have accumulated on the embankments are paradoxical evidence of life in the 'disabitato,' or uninhabited area. Scrutiny about the river's identity, myths, and engineering, along with its defacto current usage, will be pertinent to its future. Whether or not the Tiber constitutes terrain vague, the status of this 400-kilometer long conduit from the Apennine Mountains to the Tyrrhenian Sea that gave birth to the first Roman settlement currently provokes intriguing questions about the city that persists as one of the world's most popular tourist destinations.

Density is a virtue of this monumental city, which has hosted great world empires, yet it has maintained the qualities that Gore Vidal defined as the only proper village life he has known. The river, an urban void lined by plane trees and scrub growth, currently provides lungs and green vistas within the crowded and sometimes polluted city. The recent master plan has renewed focus on the potential of the Tiber as an underutilized urban amenity. How will the bureaucracies of Rome's public administration and Beni Culturali (cultural arts ministry) prepare for what is predicted to be a wave of up to seven million new tourists per year in the near future, and what likely roles might the Tiber River play?

A recent proposal for revitalizing a portion of the Tiber banks has come from New York-based installation artist and part-time Trastevere citizen Kristin Jones. The project and studio are named Tevereterno, a clever conflation of 'Tevere eterno,' or the eternal Tiber River, emphasizing the river's

centrality to Rome's identity as the Eternal City. Inspired by the vitality and continuity of rivers, Jones's concept targets the segment of the river between the pedestrian bridge, Ponte Sisto, and the heavily trafficked Ponte Mazzini bridge, which links the Campus Martius neighborhood to that of the Vatican. The project's strategy for engagement and collective investment exploit what is most compelling and local, yet Jones's proposal has widely relevant implications to other underutilized urban voids. Jones has argued and demonstrated that cultural programming by a well-organized arts administration is more promising than the current seasonal commercial exploitation along the Tiber banks. She had originally envisioned the potential for a major site-specific intervention just after Rome marked the millennium, a papal jubilee year, by proposing ephemeral, multidisciplinary collaborations within this chosen segment of the river. She discovered the coincidence of orientation, size, and scale between this rationalized and engineered river segment and the Circus Maximus, also perpetually a site of spectacle. According to Jones, the two urban spaces were predestined to share a theatrical purpose, and she has conceived of a 'water theater' on the Tiber as an open space with appropriate infrastructure to celebrate water, invite gathering and host contemporary art events in all possible media.

Jones's own contribution began as a proposed trilogy of elements, involving the collaboration of a host of technicians and specialists. During years of research and interaction with cultural scholars; local historians; and water, light, and sound engineers; she built alliances with city administrators and international arts organizations to forge Tevereterno, a legally registered Italian non-profit (onlus), as a collaborative endeavor. The project began with

infrastructure investment and local administrative oversight to foster an ongoing series of joint artistic works in constant flux by programming periodic activities within the river void. Operating within the complex network of city, state, and national agencies that oversee the site, Tevereterno has produced four major riverside programs with commissioned sound and art installations, drawing thousands to the river's shore. (June 2005, June 2006, May and June 2007). These dramatic single-night events have demonstrated the potential for free public programming that could best be served by minimal changes to the physical environs but maximum commitment to the civic definition and coordinated activities of the river site.

One aim of this study is to examine the capability of public art so conceived to reactivate urban spaces. Before describing and analyzing Jones' emergent Tevereterno project for Piazza Tevere, I will provide a brief overview of some of the qualities and history of the Tiber in hopes of shedding light on its current status as a public site. The question of Rome's uncertain Tiberscape is the result of the long and dualistic relationship between Romans and their lifeline where nature and culture collide. Why are the Tiber riverbanks rarely visited, poorly maintained, and almost devoid of commercial or cultural activities? Opportunities for free engagement are hampered by values that eschew tourist-driven enterprises and recognize the realities of a complex and massive bureaucracy charged to maintain one of the world's most revered historic urban patrimonies. And here lies a major challenge and paradox; who is in charge of the river and the public space along her banks? Both the Region of Lazio and the Municipality of Rome, each with governments in periodic flux, share jurisdiction over aspects of the zone and Tiber water, but they do not share common objectives.² It is optimistic, if quixotic, to propose public art as a possible means to revitalize public space, while confronting Rome as a timeless cultural assemblage of ancient baths and fora, the idealized Renaissance palazzo, Baroque axial streets, and recycled piazzas born of ancient foundations and fueled by innovative desires.

Gods and Goods: the Origin of Life on the Tiber

Postponing questions about the Tiber's bona fide status as terrain vague, it can be established that the river's history holds the key to Rome's identity, even now. Any formal or cultural interventions would do well to consider carefully the Tiber's multifaceted layers and meanings, while recognizing that new strata are still forming. Where many avant-gardists believe that tending to the past is certain to oppress and stifle, the intertwined myths and facts about the Tiber as birthplace of Rome instead suggest the vitality underscoring her present character.

Who does not know the myth of the She-wolf who rescued twin brothers, Romulus and Remus, from the Tiber's flow and suckled them to health only to have brother kill brother, the successor first locating the city of Rome on her banks? Rome was named for Romulus, the victor and founding father of the Republic, according to the archetypal tale of sibling rivalry so similar to recurring origin myths from Native American legends to Caan and Abel. The first known depiction of the She-wolf now located in Berlin, is dated as early as 470 BCE. Her most familiar image, the Etruscan bronze (circa 400 BCE), is permanently on display in Rome's Capitoline Museum. She has inspired countless portrayals that share key features. She is ferocious, prepared to defend her human young. Her teats hang heavy—feral and fertile. She is feminine yet virile, Rome's true mother.



Fig. 2: The She-wolf nursing a young boy, from a funerary relief, Etruria, 5th Century B.C.E., Bologna, Museo Civico Archeologico. Graphic rendering by Kristin Jones and Francesca Fini.

The Roman She-wolf establishes a maternal origin that has guided Kristin Jones in her research as she has excavated every known depiction and has faithfully rendered the evolving symbolism as a continuing thread in her interest in time-based work. Jones worked with Claudio Parisi Presicce, scholar and now director of the Capitoline Museum, who provided images of over 300 historical depictions of the She-wolf. From this rich collection, Jones built a digital archive to encourage future scholarship. Her own investigation of the expression and significance of the various archetypes led Jones to select twelve images for her first Tiber installation.

Another familiar figure is the personification of the river itself as a male river god. At the base of the Campidoglio's Senate Palace resides a gigantic statue, reclining at the feet of the goddess Roma and holding a cornucopia of abundance. He originates in the myth of the legendary king, Tiberinus Silvius or Thebris, from Alba Longa who was to have drowned in the local Albula River, thus the river was renamed the Tiber in his honor, (Tiberis in Latin; Tevere in Italian). The previous pre-Indo-European name for the river was associated with "alba", the white color of the river caused by sediment that continues to be the source of its creamy, opaque appearance. According to myth, Roma, goddess of Rome, then called on the god Volturnus, named for "rolling water," as the guardian spirit of the river to ward off future mishaps.



Fig. 3: *The Tiber God at the Campidoglio.* Kristin Jones.

Yet a third mythical figure to inhabit the aura of the Tiber is Aesclepius, the ancient god of medicine. Near the Jewish Ghetto, the river divides around the Tiber Island, the Isola Tiberina, which is joined to both banks by ancient bridges, the Pons Fabricius (a stone bridge that replaced its wooden predecessor in 62 BCE) and the Pons Cestius (62-

27 BCE). A fitting site for quarantine and good air, the island has always provided a retreat for the ill, injured, and infected. Even today, the northern half of the island is occupied by the Ospedale di Fatebene Fratelli, now a public hospital, but previously run by a religious brotherhood in the Middle Ages. The Basilica of San Bartolomeo to the south was built a millennium ago on the shrine of the ancient healing god. A medieval well built on Aesclepius' ancient spring can be found near the altar of the church. The Scuola Aesculapius associated with the healing deity has been identified with the island since at least the 3rd Century BCE when his ship was carved into the foundation walls on its south east side. The remains of Aesclepius' travertine ship, staff, and snake are still in evidence.

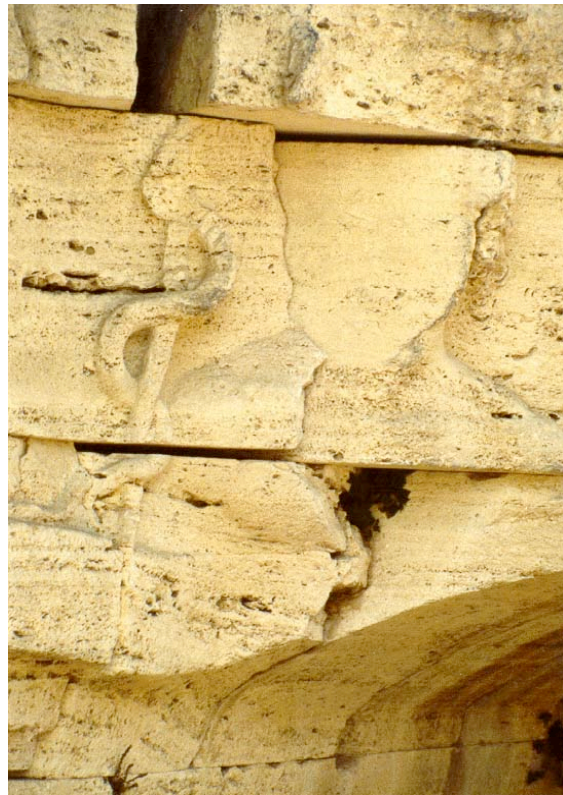


Fig. 4: *Detail of Aesclepius, Tiber Island.* Kristin Jones.

The river that once separated the Etruscans from the Sabine and the Latin tribes eventually unified the Roman populations and provided fundamental trade, commerce, transportation, and defense for the emerging Republic. Remains of at least ten Roman bridges that once crossed the Tiber connecting the Campus Martius to Trastevere can be identified, and some are still in use, while others have been continuously rebuilt, serving to join the two sides of Rome.³ The Tiber port on the Mediterranean Sea at Ostia served as Rome's naval

base during the Punic Wars in the 3rd century BCE. Construction materials including stone and timber were brought inland to Rome from the sea, among them Egyptian spoils of conquest. Most noteworthy are the granite columns of the Pantheon portico and the obelisks of Roman circuses and sundials, later used to pin down Sixtus V's Baroque urban plan. Wheat, olive oil, wine and other produce traveled downstream to Rome from Tuscany and Umbria or upstream from the sea. Since the time of the ancient Republic, shipping ports have lined Rome's riverside quays. The largest harbor among them was at the site of the ancient warehouses south of the seven hills that later became the mattatoio or slaughterhouses. The depository was eventually moved across river to the Ripa Grande at Porta Portese. The river was not navigable from the sea beyond the island, so arrivals from the north docked upriver where the grandiose undulating Baroque staircase of the Porta di Ripetta (1703) once stood.

In addition to facilitating commercial traffic and military defense, the Tiber was the conduit for urban Rome's expulsions. Along with the sophisticated water supply system of the aqueducts and baths, the ancients developed a complex sewer system that dumped into the river from the Cloaca Maxima located just downstream from Tiber Island. Its gaping mouth is still visible on the right bank, although Rome's sanitary system does not rely on it.

The river had a magnetic draw that provided industry, livelihood, and entertainment throughout the centuries before Rome became Italy's capital. Tiber historian Maria Margarita Segarra Lagunes has argued that the river is Rome's most important economic, environmental, ecological, and recreational resource.⁴ Alessandro Strozzi's 1474 map monumentalized the Tiber as the primary element of the long inhabited capital. Early maps provide evidence of the migration of Rome's population to the riverbanks, especially as the empire diminished in population during the Middle Ages. Fishing was allegedly so good that popes charged fishermen for their hauls as a source of income for the papal state. Floating mills were located on barges at points where the river pinched and the water flow increased to harness power for industry. Papal edicts aimed at controlling raucous behavior record bathing activities that took place on the Tiber's shore. Activity flourished on both banks as toll boats served for some river crossings, a sign that the number of permanent bridges was not sufficient for movement back and forth.

There is abundant evidence of the necessity of the Tiber to facilitate Rome's evolution in spite of its discontinuous flow of water, shallow

depth, and lack of a natural port. Heavy sedimentation has continuously clogged the Tiber's Mediterranean mouth, which has migrated six kilometers since Emperors Claudius and Trajan established their new port at Fiumicino. The cloudy stream of the Tiber's water is colored by deposits of loose volcanic silt from tributaries that drain an estimated 18,000 square kilometers of Italian territory. Extensive cleaning and dredging was attempted to improve navigation by popes between the 17th and 19th centuries, but to little avail. Dredging, prohibitions of assorted activities, sewage control, even submerging cleaners in diving bells, did nothing to improve the water quality or navigability of the Tiber.

While the Tiber was an essential economic resource for the city, it has also brought devastating floods. Dualism in Rome's relationship with the river is evident throughout the Campus Martius flood plane and the Ghetto, where water levels on buildings are marked with the dates of recurring disasters. Just after Italy was unified in 1870, the Savoys arrived in Rome to begin their reign only to be met by the Christmas flood that ravaged the entire city. Such vulnerability would not do for the new capital, and the King wasted little time in addressing the dilemma that had eluded so many preceding popes and civil engineers. The Eternal City, eternally plagued by uncontrollable forces of nature, finally witnessed the construction of the muraglione, forty-foot high battered walls that contained the water and fundamentally redefined relations between the river and the city. By building the monumental flood control levees, not only was the Tiber effectively controlled and citizens removed from the water's edge, but the papal bank accounts grew flush with new fishing taxes and urban traffic was facilitated with wide, tree-lined avenues aligning the new embankment walls. Soil and sediment recovered from the containment project was dumped in the area of Prati, which was rented, tilled, and later developed to meet exploding demands for housing for those masses migrating in droves to the national capital. With street life, bridge crossing, and public activities now thriving fifteen meters above the Tiber's water level, which rises and falls with little effect, the relationship of modern Romans to their river was detached and would be changed forever.

Disabitato: Terrain Vague between Debasement and Emancipation

... Isn't there a way in which cities have to negotiate between past and future: either they make the future accessible to you or they get in the way of it.

Wim Wenders

Like so many contemporary photographers, German film director Wim Wenders has produced images that interrogate and reveal assorted terrain vagues. His sight-seeing and documentation have served his search for urban settings in which to situate his narratives. Over many years, Wenders has contemplated similarities between the responsibilities of architects and those of filmmakers; these intersections invite reflection on the part of any artist operating in the public realm. When discussing his beloved Berlin, he talks about “stubbing his toe on the future,” replacing the promise of what could be with history’s “what has been,” a familiar obstacle to creative freedom in places with deep cultural roots.

Rome is arguably the repository of more detritus and strata of recorded culture than any other Western city, where archeology of ancient ruins and construction frequently collide, and public works must call for extremely flexible time schedules and abundant monetary resources. The economy of contemporary Rome is in no small part dependent on preservation of her monumental patrimony. Yet while change is inevitable and vital cities must transform their infrastructures to evolve, patterns and principles for development vary in the hands of shifting leadership.

Romans have recently witnessed grand projects scaled to the city’s legacy, such as the Parco della Musica Auditoria (Renzo Piano Building Workshop), the Ara Pacis project (Richard Meier), and MAXXI, the forthcoming new museum for contemporary art and architecture (Zaha Hadid). None of these interventions has been without controversy, and prolonged pauses due to public and political agitation are typically part of the process. Simultaneously, the reframing of venerable artifacts and vast, fragile physical territories in service to and pressured by tourism’s increasing onslaught of global consumers must transcend novelty. Just as history is continually rewritten, encountering physical evidence of the past requires confronting famed artifacts and new finds with critical assessment as appropriate to each condition, otherwise the nostalgia can be stifling. Tensions between change and stasis, growth and

preservation, are daily business in the Eternal City where all roads and tourists convene. As a creative producer working in an international cultural milieu, Wenders provokes thought about some existing urban voids as empty vessels, a few of which may be better left alone.

Not beholden to the false dichotomies of natural versus humanly contrived places, urban landscapes in Rome are usually products of bold hardscape designs, massive man-made interventions, and bureaucratic public authorities. Along the Viale Lungotevere, the street that runs behind the embankment wall, evenly spaced mature plane trees are each numbered, nurtured, and preserved. Together the trees form a tall wall and continuous green barrier on both sides of the river effectively separating the city from the water surface. Fluid, loud, exhaust-producing one-way traffic along the boulevard, which is often clogged, creates another barrier to activating the waterfront today, while the enormous staircases descending to the water’s edge are usually urine scented and slippery since they do not drain well. No wonder the *battello*, the low enclosed ferryboat for river tours, is underutilized. Embarkment access is difficult and unpleasant. The Tiber River’s right bank hosts a *pista ciclabile*, a flat bicycle path, offering recreation from the Ponte Milvio in the north to near the EUR, Mussolini’s planned new government center toward the sea, yet no bicycle rentals are available on or near the lower quays along the river. The riding surface is paved with cobblestones that make the ride a bit uncomfortable. Silt sediment accrues at river bends and invites the growth of spontaneous weeds and scrub kept mown by civic maintenance staff. Bridge abutments shelter permanent settlements of nomadic dwellers, some poor or disabled, others *extracomunitari* immigrants. Their presence is not detrimental or dangerous, it merely signals the stagnant status quo.



Fig. 5: Tiber bike route adjacent to nomads' temporary shelter observed during May 2007. Kay Bea Jones.

Yet there is plenty of life along the Tiber. The Roman pedestrian feels relief from the crowded streets with each bridge crossing. Seasonal changes are pleasant as leaves turn color, then fall, and skies open providing brighter areas and open vistas within the densely built fabric of the city. At night the moon can be seen reflecting on the water surface. For being in the center of Rome, the Tiber quays are not particularly polluted or unsafe, even though they currently accommodate primarily the socially marginal and infrequent joggers, dog walkers, and fisherman. The overgrown green fringes along the river's edge remain largely uninhabited; they are more visually than physically accessible.



Fig. 6: Tiber River near the Vatican. Kay Bea Jones.

Does the Tiber in its current state exemplify the indeterminate, abandoned, or deteriorated wasteland characterized by the notion of *terrain vague*? We have witnessed that the Tiber's public edges are currently empty, unstable, and unnamed. They flood periodically without significant impact to city life; on the other hand, they accommodate summer kitsch markets, thus advertising their availability. Where else are continuous strips of open public terrain obtainable in the center of Rome? They appear to hold the promise of encounter while being blocked by the inertia of local bureaucracy and immune to permanent change under the superintendent's authority. The Tiber is spatially and temporally interstitial, an interval paced not by the usual foot or vehicular traffic, but by the river's flow. It acts as a void between distinct Roman neighborhoods on its banks, reduced to a series of anonymous zones between bridges that ultimately mark an empty passage in Rome's rich history. Generously

hosting only the weedy, grimy remnants repressed elsewhere, the Tiber banks furnish what Luc Levesque might call an "urban resurgence of the wild."⁵ Yet the current conditions of the Tiber constitute neither an eyesore nor a threat to human well-being, so there is little economic, social or political demand to change its current state.

Any acts of rejuvenation ought not be ignorant of the forces that produced the subject's present or past terrain. Productive intervention at the scale of urban infrastructure will likely require the players to have *pello sullo stomaco* (literally, a hairy stomach), otherwise known as Roman guts or strong will matched by enormous confidence. Culturally motivated activity is the primary catalyst. Commercial development for its own sake could have insignificant or detrimental consequences as witnessed by the ugly follies that appear each summer. Such financially motivated and bureaucratically slick uses of the riverside lack a long view. Luc Levesque's thesis concerning *terrain vague* insists on avoiding the "all-out struggle between order and disorder." He instead promotes those attempts that "capture the experimental and conceptual dimensions" of the action and the territory. He envisions the potential for *terrain vague* to host those creative, spontaneous activities that would otherwise not take place in public spaces. Those sites that have not given way to urban rules of order and consumption provide "the ideal place for a certain resistance to emerge, a place potentially open to alternative ways of experiencing the city." So for the Tiber there may be no better remedy than the investment of good, provocative ideas, framed through the lens of contemporary arts practices, collectively owned and engaged by those with noteworthy fortitude, creativity, and a personal message. To be successful in Rome, an impassioned, savvy artist will also need the media and strong political allies.

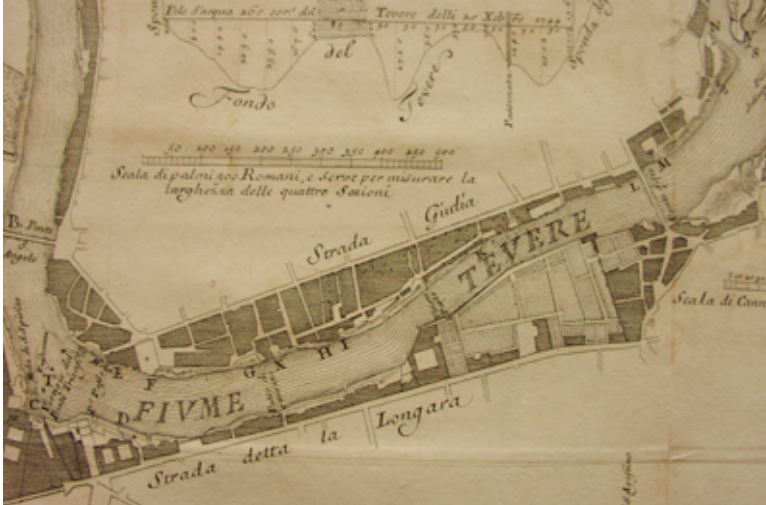


Fig. 7a: Tiber River between Ponte Sant'Angelo and Ponte Sisto, detail from A. Chiesa, *Pianta del Corso del Tevere e sue adiacenze*, 1744. Delineata da Andrea Chiesa e Bernardo Gambarini, (Rome: 1744). Image courtesy of the Vincent Buonanno Collection.



Fig. 7b: Aerial View of Piazza Tevere. Alex S. MacLean.

TEVERETERNO—a nexus between public art and public space

Kristin Jones' current research actually began in the early 1980s while she lived and worked in Rome as a Fulbright scholar exploring how water animates the city's public space. Crossing Ponte Sisto one day, she looked down at the Tiber River and saw an opportunity: a perfect rectangular void, vacant but begging to join the social dynamic of everyday life in the Eternal City. She imagined a commons, where the intertwined and ubiquitous merchants, lovers, tourists, and city-dwellers were invited to extend their daily *passaggiata* into a revitalized public domain. Penetrating the layers of urban grime, she found a canvas, a site for public art, festivals, and spectacle.

As a renowned installation artist whose permanent works with partner Andrew Ginzel are found from Manhattan's Union Square and former World Trade Center subway station to the Kansas City Airport, she naturally envisioned her own project drawn from physical properties of the site. Jones was moved by the silent passage of the river, a sharp contrast to its urban context. Research revealed that the water flowed at a walker's pace, and the artist imagined that the cadence might carry sound—the work of contemporary writers and composers—in synchrony with the river. The site's rigid geometry, controlling the water's movement, invited a fluid-dynamic element that could be animated by the river's current. The dramatic emptiness of the place, with its high embankment walls, suggested the possibility for projections, and Jones envisioned the mythological She-wolf coming to life as the river's guardian. Jones's

vision for the site has shaped not only her own objectives and those of her collaborators, but has formed a new chapter in the public perception of the Tiber River.

Jones and Ginzel have practiced in New York City, their expertise hard won by designing, staging, and constructing permanent architectural scale works in one of the world's greatest centers of art. Jones was undeterred by the technological challenges she perceived in her Tevereterno project for Rome. The challenges presented by her chosen site were part of its appeal. She set up her studio in Trastevere in the jubilee year of 2000 as a base from which to plan the complex formal and physical intervention, which would require advanced sound technology and hydraulic engineering. She mined local historians for their knowledge of the river's past and involved university researchers and civil engineers with expertise in the Tiber's flow and physical dimensions. She built liaisons with the mayor's office, the superintendent of the national culture ministry, and local arts commissions, and she began fundraising among international entities. Over the years, she has presented her findings and subsequent proposals to academic audiences across Italy and the U.S. In the process, Jones's vision has grown to become a major cultural endeavor proposing a curated urban site continuously hosting contemporary ephemeral events. In the process, she has grown aware that her project must ultimately belong to the city of Rome. While opening her conceptual proposal to a river of ideas, she has reinforced her determination to see the project advance. Yet she has had to run a marathon through

Rome's bureaucracies, and she has not relented regardless of how often she stubs her toe on the future.

Jones's concept is to establish a revitalized, named, and dedicated Piazza Tevere on the riverbanks between Trastevere and the center of Rome and between the Ponte Sisto and Ponte Mazzini. Her proposed physical intervention has grown beyond the lower event space to include a major alteration of the street furniture and infrastructure at the road level above. As previously noted, Jones discovered that this area coincides with the Circus Maximus, which has lived several theatrical lives, and with which it coincides in proportion, orientation, and scale. As a waterfront 'theater' administered by the city, the Tiber site would be amended to host ongoing arts and performance installations, seasonally staged and collaborative in nature. Her image of the urban theater has been rendered visible with the assistance of architects Carlo Gasparini, Paolo Pineschi, Patrizia Pulcini in the form of open seating, not unlike the stairs of the Spanish steps or the former Porta di Ripetta.

Jones's proposal for riverfront seating along the Viale Lungotevere, is as natural to Rome as the bench along the front of Palazzo Farnese. The proposal's most radical intervention constitutes an erasure rather than an addition of a monumental new structure. By removing the one-meter tall continuous stone wall from the upper avenue, visual connection would be established between the city above and the river below. One hears echoes of Colin Rowe, who staged "Roma Interotta" during the era of paper architecture. To revisit the spatial complexity of the Eternal City, Rowe invited hypothetical interventions sited on the 1748 Nolli map by renowned architects, thereby inciting an urban orgy of postmodern critical introspection. Yet when Rowe defined the ideal city as a place accommodating the "theater of memory" and the "theater of prophecy," he might as well have been describing Jones's waterfront theater proposal. As a continuation of the surrounding civic environment, Rome's new cultural venue would host performances by renowned and emerging artists along with those of the everyday actors and passerby.



Fig. 8: Proposed view of the Piazza Tevere site from the Lungotevere as envisioned in the 2004 Master Plan for Rome.

A Work in Progress

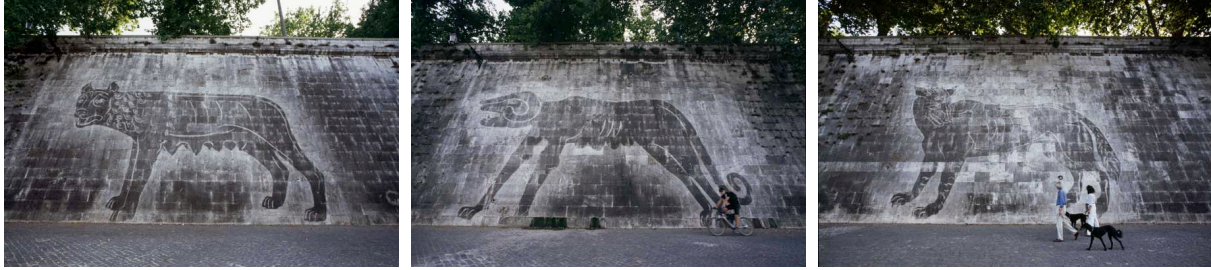
Production of an event in a strange territory; casual unfolding of a particular territory, which is superimposed on an already existing; repeated void in the city; silent artificial landscape touching the historical time of the city yet neither canceling it nor imitating it. Flow, force, incorporation, independence of the forms, expression of the lines that cross it. Beyond the art that unveils new freedoms. From nomadism to eroticism.

Ignasi de Sola-Morales

Jones has retained her first insight of the river space as a canvas, its built-up grime conceived as a layered historical palimpsest. She saw the opportunity to make visible the presence of the She-wolf, whose spirit inhabits the Tiber, by

another act of erasure carried out with the assistance of alliances she has built with the Roman bureaucracy. She employed the city's graffiti power washers to 'draw' twelve She-wolves, representations of Rome's protective pagan mother, on the Trastevere side of the forty-foot tall embankment. This first marking of Piazza Tevere has drawn attention to the overlooked site, and has become as much a part of Rome's ephemeral scenography as the scarred and periodically cleaned travertine church facades along with scaffolding scrims over urban restorations, which are constantly changing even as they persist.

Jones's next acts have consisted of three annual celebrations: "Solstizio," (Solstice) on June 21, 2005, "Ombre dal Lupercale," (Shadow of the Wolves' Den) on June 21, 2006, and "Flussi Corrente," (Current Flows) on June 22, 2007.



Figs. 9a-9c: She-wolves and Roman pedestrians on the banks of the Tiber. Mimmo Capone.



Fig. 10: Graffiti wall washers. Kristin Jones.

Other events have been staged at Piazza Tevere as a by-product of Jones's initiative. Each is illustrated here. These events offer insights into both the potential and the challenges of public art as urban intervention. During eight years of active collaboration Jones has accomplished something remarkable; she has reestablished the vitality of the urban commons. Further, she conspires to bring widespread recognition to an overlooked asset, and

has formed many allies in the process. She has witnessed hosts of possible infrastructural transformations and has ultimately demonstrated the profound virtue of the living void. She has demonstrated that emptiness ought to give way temporarily to fullness by social agreement rather than permanently by commercial intervention, thereby preserving the potential for open alternatives to experiencing the city of Rome.



Fig. 11: Piazza Tevere, Rome. Mimmo Capone.

Past TEVERETERNO Events on Piazza Tevere



Fig. 12a: Kristin Jones / Daniel K. Brown, 'Luminalia' (2007). Piazza Tevere, Rome. Photo: Daniel K. Brown / Erika Kruger.

June 2007 Flussi Correnti

A diverse group of composers and sound artists were invited to respond to the site and its sound environment. The evocative works presented by the musicians through the high-fidelity, multi-channel sound system set the audience inside the sound, creating a dialogue between the river itself, the sound and the public. Roman musical ensemble *Ars Ludi* performed live music by Steve Reich, David Monacchi, and Corrado Fantoni. Nicola Sani presented a new recording of his work for water, *Wassererinnerungen*. A concert of environmental sound art, curated by Joel Chadabe of the Electronic Music Foundation (New York), was played, including works by Jean-Claude Risset, Joel Chadabe, Steven Feld, Carla Scaletti, and Aleksei Stevens. Daniel K. Brown and Kristin Jones presented *Luminalia*, a serpentine line of fire made by *fiaccole* (candles) floated upon the Tiber's surface, illuminating the length of the river basin with one thousand flames throughout the night and into the morning hours.

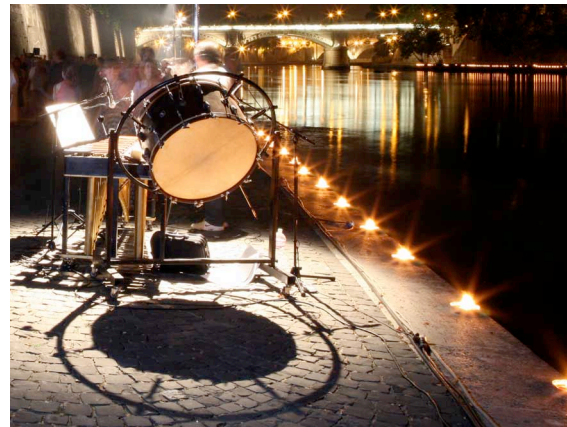


Fig. 12b: *Ars Ludi* at *Flussi Correnti* (2007). Piazza Tevere, Rome. Photo: Daniel K. Brown / Erika Kruger.

May 2007 Jenny Holzer – For the Academy

In May 2007, Tevereterno joined the American Academy in Rome in hosting the work of artist Jenny Holzer at the Piazza Tevere at a public event sponsored by FLOS lighting.

Synchronized, scrolling projections of texts by international poets and writers, in both English and Italian, were cast along the 1800-foot length of the Piazza Tevere's right bank over the course of the evening. Viewers gathered on the river piazza's banks, parallel walkways and bridges from 9pm to 12am during the first event of Tevereterno's 2007 programming.



Fig. 13: Jenny Holzer, 'For the Academy' (2007), Piazza Tevere, Rome. Photo: Francesca Capocchi.

2006 *Ombre dal Lupercale*

An all-night program of six events of sound installations paired with animated shadow projections on the embankment walls featured the work of artists Andrea Biagioni and Gabriele Manechhi, Daniel K. Brown and Erika Kruger, Roberto Catani, Barnaby Evans, Francesca Fini, Maureen Selwood, Kiki Smith, as well as Kristin Jones. Composers included Walter Branchi, Alvin Curran, Eugenio Giordani, Roberto Laneri, David Monacchi, and Nico Muhly. One thousand Roman candles were lit along the edges of the river on the Piazza Tevere, burning throughout the night, and the program culminated with a final musical composition by Walter Branchi to welcome the dawn.

2005 *Solstizio d'Estate, Full Moon and Summer Solstice*

Tevereterno's inaugural solstice event at the Piazza Tevere lit the banks of the Tiber River with 2,758 *fiaccole*, outlining the site and representing the years since the founding of Rome. Twelve grand She-Wolf silhouettes (height: 24ft / 8m) revealed by cleaning the patina of time from the embankment walls were unveiled, and a 100-member harmonic international choir directed by Roberto Laneri performed over the course of the night.



Fig. 14: Maureen Selwood, 'At the River's Edge' (2006), Piazza Tevere, Rome. Photo: T. Charles Erickson



Fig. 15: Kristin Jones, 'She-Wolves' (2005), Piazza Tevere, Rome. Photo, Mimmo Cappone

NOTES

¹ For the 2004 Master Plan, see <http://www.tevereterno.it/index2.html>. For Kristin Jones, see <http://www.tevereterno.it/tevereterno.html>.

² In the political discussion of urban development and remediation, the Tiber, which flows through several regions, stands as a no man's land that is paralyzed by national, regional, and municipal authorities, without a single river agency. Offices concerned with flooding and water quality include the *Autorita del Bacino del Tevere* and the *Capitaneria di Porto*, while the riverbed is under the jurisdiction of the national ministry of archeology. The water is "owned" by the electric company ACEA along with the *Capitaneria*. the Comune di Roma AMA S.p.A. (department of sanitation) is responsible for cleaning and maintenance up to six feet above the river banks, while the parks department maintains the numbered plane trees at Lungotevere level, about 40 feet above water level. However, an example of debilitating bureaucratic conflict is evident in the fact that the spontaneous growth at the water's edge cannot be trimmed by anyone, because it does not officially exist. The Region permits commercial usage on embankment platforms for a fee without apparent consideration or regard for impacts on the City, so tensions have risen regarding riverbank administration between the State and the City and are unlikely to be resolved, due to bureaucratic complexity. *Tevereterno* is a challenge to both and has raised awareness between political adversaries.

³ See for example, Rabun Taylor, "Tiber River bridges and the development of the ancient city of Rome", in *Waters of Rome*, Occasional Papers #2, 30 June 2002, <http://www.iath.virginia.edu/rome/article.html>.

⁴ Segarra Lagunes, Maria Margarita, *Il Tevere E Roma*; Storia Di Una Simbiosi, Rome: Gangemi, 2004.

⁵ http://www.amarrages.com/textes_terrain.html.