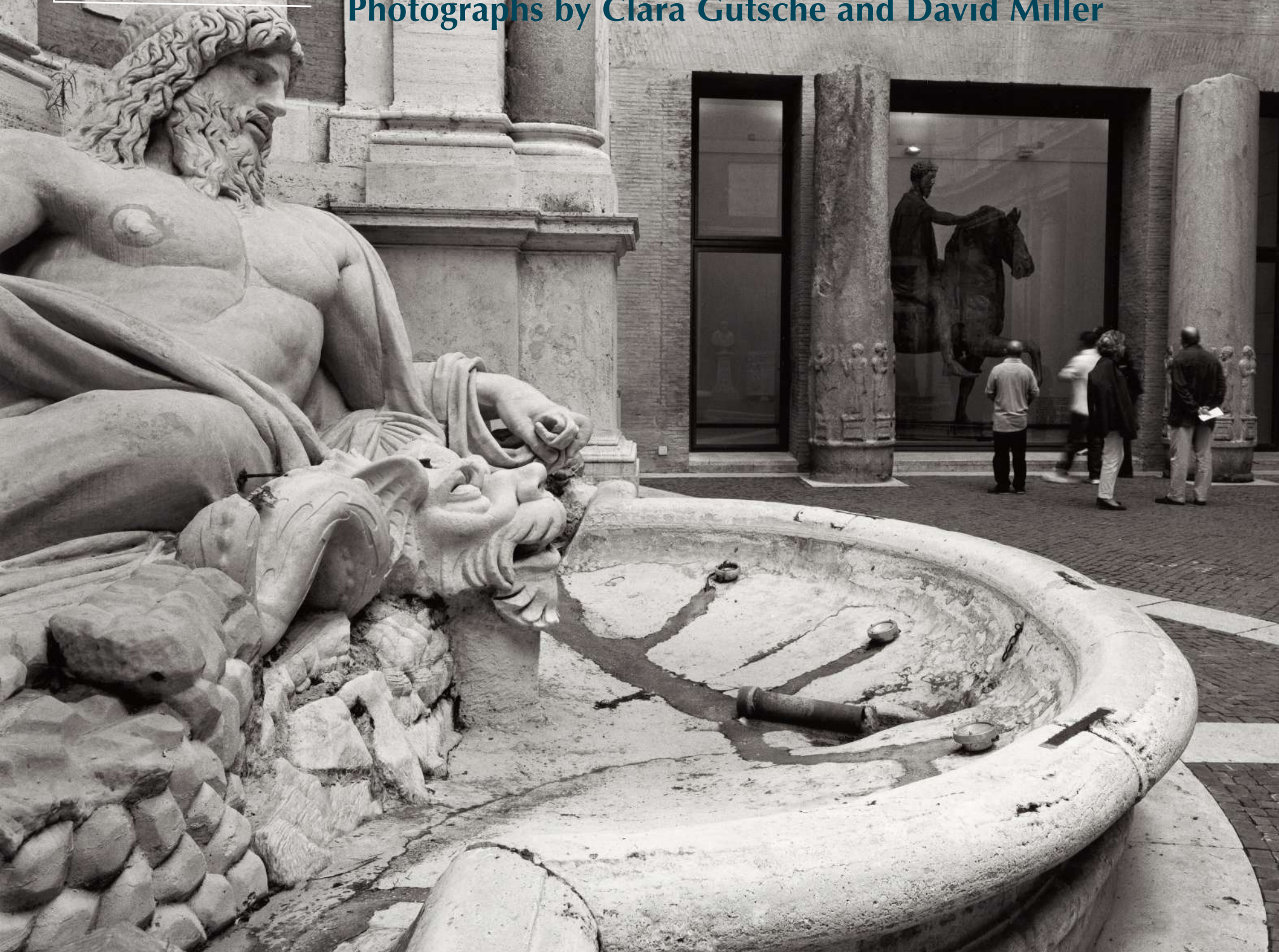


Retour de Rome

Photographs by Clara Gutsche and David Miller



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Retour de Rome

Photographs by Clara Gutsche and David Miller

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Introduction by Eduardo Ralickas
Texts by Clara Gutsche and David Miller

RECONSIDERING ROME

by Eduardo Ralickas

It is often overlooked that for several centuries, Rome was the destination of choice for emerging pan-European image-makers who were tempted by the promise of social ascendancy one could then glean from the newly consolidated — and rising — field of the Fine Arts. Whether one was an artisan or a craftsperson, one went to Rome in the hopes of polishing one’s aesthetic education and attaining artistic maturity, that is, in order finally to become a master or a fully fledged *artist*, in the modern sense of the term. Rome, that urban space in continual flux lying between an irretrievably lost Antiquity and a perpetually unfinished Renaissance, embodied the very notion of a spiritual incubator: therein were born the great ones; therein were engendered new forms.

Countless generations of painters and sculptors treaded down the Roman road to secure their artistic Patent of nobility, which could be granted, one then believed, only by pilgrimage to the places of art and architecture, by being in the very presence of masterpieces one only knew through

pictures. Once the sojourn was completed and the desired metamorphosis consummated, one went home (to Paris or to some province) and exhibited, as per customary practice, one's latest body of work to the delight of the rapacious novelty craving public. Such works, as well as the signature they bore, were now endowed with a symbolic capital guaranteed by the seal of the "Italian climate". Two entities were fostered by means of this centuries-old pattern (which disappeared only when Rome lost its stronghold as the capital of civilized culture): the "author function" and the "work of art" — the latter term denoting the most reactionary of meanings, for it eclipses an entire range of dubious political functions once ascribed to images and their magic. One ought not to forget Walter Benjamin's succinct phrase here: *there is no work of culture which is not at the same time a work of barbarity*.

Such exhibitions were commonly called "*Retour de Rome*". The question that arises given the present context is: *From what are we returning now?* Indeed, Clara Gutsche and David Miller's artistic collaboration allows one to assess the historical constructions that underpin our current notions of artistic identity. Their practice as documentary photographers at the fringes of the contemporary art world (which has always had some trouble integrating image-makers who do not conform with dominant notions of authorship) provide key insights given their particular vantage-point. In some respects, to "return" from Rome is to pose the question of the social function of art, as well as to challenge the status of the artist and of his

or her media choices. Moreover, to "return" from Rome with a documentary body of work when the art milieu's tastes lie elsewhere is openly to declare a series of refusals, not least of which is the refusal of the traditional artist function (which does not adequately encompass that of *photographer* or *documentarian*).

Gutsche and Miller's "returns" are numerous: there is a "media return" directed at the topographical tradition in nineteenth-century photography, which they have clearly mastered; there is also an "historical return" which is signalled by the show's hanging, which echoes the historical "Retours de Rome"; of course, one can speak of a "literal return" from the Eternal City, where they both lived and worked for several months to produce the works at hand; and lastly, there is a "*critical* return", perhaps the most important of all, a backward glance at postmodernism, which is now a historical fact upon which one may reflect.

The strength of this two-tiered project (which already bears in its breast the seeds of irony, that echo, as Sperber and Wilson have it, of other people's sayings, which one mentions without using) is to have orchestrated a dialogue with postmodern photography *in a language that is wholly modern*. In fact, documentary photography is practiced here without paying heed to the various deconstructions of the eighties. Moreover, it is as if such critical operations had never really touched documentary practice in the first place, which pursues its course quite naturally.

At the heart of Gutsche and Miller's project lies a confrontation between the photographic medium and the concept of the *fake* — in this light, Rome is the very site of doubling : Rome harbours roman copies of lost Greek originals, imperfect copies of Old Masters, pictorial copies of "eternal" monuments that only live on through postcards or their ancestors (i.e., *vedute* and topographical paintings), etc. Ultimately, if it is no longer pertinent to ascribe to postmodernism the novel idea of an aesthetics of quoting, it follows that photography is thus free to pursue tasks other than those of exposing the structure of the fake at every turn — other tasks, such as that of framing everydayness in places such as Rome — the banality of tourism and crowds included. The historicity of the photographic document is being replayed here as one bears witness to a form of "situated" critique, to the work of critical reflection motivated by a sociologically informed praxis.

The result is far from banal: the viewer is in the midst of a heterogeneous collection of *tableaux* by means of which he or she can travel, (re)discover a seductive topography, and above all relive (without any appeal to the notion of originality) an experience that is paradoxically singular yet conventional, and out of which is made the tourism of the gaze.

(Translated from the French by the author)

The text by Eduardo Ralickas was originally published by Occurrence to accompany the "*Retour de Rome*" exhibition in the Fall of 2007.

ROME, REVENONS-EN

par Eduardo Ralickas

On oublie parfois que pendant plusieurs siècles, la ville de Rome a été le lieu de prédilection de la relève artistique paneuropéenne alléchée déjà par la promesse d’une éventuelle ascension sociale des artisans imagiers que le domaine des beaux-arts semblait alors annoncer. Qu’on fût artisan ou apprenti, on y allait en vue de parfaire son éducation esthétique et d’atteindre la maturité, c’est-à-dire d’accéder, enfin, au titre de maître, voire d’*artiste*, dans le sens pleinement moderne du terme. Rome — cet espace urbain en flux perpétuel, entre une Antiquité perdue et une renaissance culturelle toujours à recommencer —, incarnait l’idée même d’un incubateur spirituel : c’est là que naissaient les grands. C’est de là que venaient leurs nouvelles formes.

D’innombrables générations de peintres et de sculpteurs ont emprunté la voie romaine afin de se procurer leurs lettres de noblesse ne pouvant être conférées, croyait-on, que par la fréquentation des chefs-d’œuvre du passé et des monuments qui n’étaient connus qu’en images. Une fois le séjour terminé et la métamorphose consommée, on rentrait chez soi et selon

la coutume, on y exposait — à Paris ou en province —, au plus grand plaisir du public avide cherchant sans cesse la nouveauté, ses œuvres les plus accomplies conçues à l’étranger. Ces dernières, ainsi que le nom d’auteur les ayant signées, portaient désormais en elles un capital symbolique que seul le « climat italien » pouvait assurer ; on créait ainsi, de par un schème séculaire qui ne disparut qu’au moment où Rome cessa d’être la capitale de la culture civilisée, des fonctions d’auteur et des « œuvres d’art » dans le sens le plus réactionnaire que peut véhiculer ce terme occultant une fonction politique des plus douteuses. À cet égard Walter Benjamin ne disait-il pas : *il n’y a aucun témoignage de la culture qui ne soit également un témoignage de la barbarie* ?

Ce genre d’exposition, on l’appelait communément « Retour de Rome ». La question s’impose d’emblée : de quel *retour* s’agit-il à présent ? La collaboration artistique que nous proposons Clara Gutsche et David Miller, photographes documentaires œuvrant depuis plus de trente ans dans les marges du *art world* contemporain (qui a toujours mal su intégrer les créateurs ne se réclamant point de la fonction d’auteur dominante dans les discours de l’histoire de l’art), nous fournit des pistes de lecture fort intéressantes vis-à-vis de nos constructions historiques relatives à l’identité artistique. Revenir de Rome, c’est en quelque sorte poser la question de la fonction sociale de l’art et celle plus épineuse du statut de la figure de l’artiste et de ses choix médiatiques. Par ailleurs, revenir de Rome avec un corpus documentaire lorsque

l’engouement du milieu de l’art se porte sur d’autres objets, c’est manifestement opérer une série de refus (dont celui d’être *artiste*, appellation se superposant fort mal à celle de *photographe* ou de *documentariste*).

Les « retours » de Gutsche et Miller sont multiples : retour « rétro » vers les traditions de la photographie topographique du XIX^e siècle que ces producteurs maîtrisent avec brio ; retour, par l’accrochage, aux « Retours de Rome » historiques que nous évoquons ; retour géographique, certes, puisque Gutsche et Miller ont passé plusieurs mois de vie et de recherche dans la Ville éternelle afin de produire le corpus exposé ; mais surtout, retour *critique* « vers le *post* », le postmodernisme étant maintenant un phénomène historique sur lequel on réfléchit.

La force de ce projet bicéphale (qui porte déjà en lui la marque de l’ironie, cet écho, selon Sperber et Wilson, des dires d’autrui qu’on mentionne sans employer) est d’avoir orchestré ce dialogue avec la photographie postmoderniste qu’il récuse sans toutefois la réfuter *dans une forme picturale relevant en tout point du paradigme de la modernité*. En effet, l’emploi de la photographie documentaire se fait ici sans la moindre concession aux déconstructions des années 80. En outre, c’est comme si ces dernières n’avaient jamais su atteindre véritablement la production documentaire, qui suit son cours.

On détecte, par exemple, à l’avant-plan des considérations de Gutsche et Miller un souci de conjuguer la photographie à la notion du *faux*, la ville de Rome étant le lieu par excellence de

la copie de l’art : copies romaines de bronzes grecs perdus ; copies parfois imparfaites des tableaux des maîtres ; copies picturales de monuments « éternels » qui ne vivent aujourd’hui que par les copies (de copies) que l’on sait, etc. Or il se trouve que s’il n’est plus pertinent d’imputer l’idée de citation plastique aux apports novateurs de la postmodernité, la photographie dans les mains de documentaristes avertis tels Gutsche et Miller se trouve alors affranchie de la tâche de dire sans cesse le faux et peut se lancer vers d’autres horizons, dont celui d’exhiber le quotidien romain tel qu’il peut apparaître au Nord Américain moyen — y compris celui des foules et des touristes. C’est l’historicité même du document photographique qu’il s’agit de réactualiser ainsi que son potentiel à mettre en acte une critique située, une réflexivité motivée sociologiquement.

Le résultat : une collection de tableaux hétéroclite par le truchement de laquelle le spectateur voyage, découvre (peut-être à nouveau) une topographie séduisante, mais surtout revit — sans aucune prétention à l’originalité — une expérience paradoxalement singulière mais conventionnelle qui est celle du tourisme du regard.

Le texte d’Eduardo Ralickas a été rédigé lors de la présentation de l’exposition « Retour de Rome » à Occurrence, automne 2007.

Retour de Rome

Photographs by Clara Gutsche and David Miller

From: “David Miller” <davidphillipmiller@hotmail.com>
Subject: Gelati et alia....
Date: Sun, 07 Jul 2002 13:00:21 +0000

Hi,

The important news from here is that we have started to find great food sources. Less easy than one would imagine, but spectacular in some cases. Haven’t even tried a restaurant yet, but probably will soon. The kitchen here is small but usable, and both of us are inclined to find good ingredients and cook at home. The spectacular place isn’t in this neighbourhood, but a longish walk away, and then a bus ride back when laden with parcels. But worth the journey.

Haven’t yet made it to gelato mecca, but have managed (yes, it has been an effort) to try some almost every day, with variable results. Will report on mecca when we arrive.

Love,

David

From: “David Miller” <davidphillipmiller@hotmail.com>
Date: Sat, 13 Jul 2002 09:31:31 +0000

Uh oh, another mass letter. But there won’t be much choice because we’re on a dial-up connection at Telecom Italia rates. It rather limits how much time I’d normally spend waffling on line).

It’s starting to get hotter in the last couple of days - although it does cool off a fair amount at night. Supposed to be a high of 34 today, which has been scientifically proven to be hot enough to fry the brains of those who might otherwise have calculated what that might mean in an antiquated scale used only in the US.

We have been out wandering every day, heat or not, though we normally wait until about 3ish. It’s still blazing sun by 5:00, too contrasty to photograph; in fact, the light doesn’t start to become tractable until about 7:00, by which time I’m thinking about going home to make dinner. I don’t think we’ve eaten before 8:00, which is early, but not unimaginable, for Italians. Our schedules have shifted a couple of hours later than normal (for us, I mean), which doesn’t really gain anything: we add a couple of hours of coolness at the end of the day, and lose them at the beginning. When in Rome.....

Clara has managed to contact a photographer from Québec who lives here; she told us where to find photo supplies. We went



Piazza Navona, Edmond Behles ca. 1870

yesterday; it’s quite different from what we’re used to: a tiny shop, absolutey crammed full floor-to-ceiling, and well-stocked. I’m intending to develop black and white film here, partly to see if it’s ok, partly to avoid X-raying it twice. It’s too hot to even think about film developing now, but it should provide many hours of entertainment at some point.

The complexity and layering of this city is amazing. Unlike Firenze, which is beautiful but so overrun by tourists that it’s hard to see anything, Rome is large enough that even now one can wander a few blocks from the must-see monuments and suddenly it’s not crowded. Don’t misunderstand - Italians do must -see monuments very well indeed, and we must see them. But the crowds are pretty daunting, so as we have the luxury of waiting until most of them go home,

I expect we’ll revisit places later. We haven’t yet made it to Il Vaticano, but will next week.

Sarah joins us on the 21st. We will go visit our friends Nicholas and Anna in Zurich sometime in early August, and the Sarah wants us to join her in Copenhagen for a few days. Dates not fixed.... but towards the end of August.

We’re starting to do museums; the Modern Art museum was actually pretty good, but around here, modern art appears to mean 1870 to 1950. And contemporary art seems a bit thin on the ground so far. We’re going to try another one today; hope springs eternal....

Ciao, David

From: "David Miller" <davidphillipmiller@hotmail.com>
Date: Sat, 20 Jul 2002 08:39:54 +0000

Well, this is the next instalment...and an important chapter at that. FOOD, that is. Tonight we had fresh figs and parma ham to start. We must as an aside admit that we've managed to eat this combination at least every second day since we've arrived. The figs are affordable, and they are good. Really good. Lets forget melon and prosciutto, especially styrofoam melon, right now. Italians know how to eat, so ficchi it is. About the prosciutto: contents: pig, salt. That's it. Yeah, right, it's better than the chemical stuff we get.... OK, we're past the first course. Zucchini and salmon trout. The fish was fresh, and yes, it's better. And the zucchini? Tiny, and with the flowers attached. It's hard to fake freshness that way: the flowers rot after a day or two. A revelation. It's going be hard to go back (and Montréal isn't bad for food). We've only eaten in one restaurant, last night, and it was pretty good (we have to admit, we're not really into expensive restaurants). One thing which is fantastic - restaurants here do not gouge on wine. Love it... a half bottle of decent white (that's in a bottle, not a carafe of god-knows-what) was 3,60 euros (that's \$3,60 to any Americans who may be on the receiving end of this polemic).

Now it's time to admit that a few days ago we bought pizza a taglio (by the slice) from a local joint run by...Indians...the worst #*#@#% pizza that either of us ever ate! So if you work at it, you can find crappy food even here. But you do have to work at it. Now guess if we're going to enter a place with Indians behind

the counter. Unfortunately, the best food is not to be found in this neighbourhood, and, we've been putting a lot of time and energy into photographing; so it's more than we can handle to do food shopping out of our neighbourhood most days. There's a place downtown where every single thing we bought was a revelation. So we'll be back, but it will have to be fitted into good light for photographing.

Did I mention gelati ? I've missed a couple of days, but in the interest of thorough research, I've forced myself to eat some just about every day. Have found one place where I'll definitely go back, where the gelato is as good as it was in Firenze. Even in a place downtown where one would expect standards to be tourist-low I had vanilla yesterday which seemed homemade. I think that Italians are less tolerant of bad food than most other people.

We have yet to work out a good protocol for photographing. The light here is intense, too contrasty to work in until about 7:00pm, by which time my mind is usually turning to more stomach-related concerns. So we may have to figure out a 6:00 snack, and 9:00 dinner schedule for sunny days. Or just forget photographing, and attend to more important matters.

And with that deep philosophical consideration, we bring this chapter to a close....

Love, David



Piazza San Pietro, anon. ca. 1875

Pantheon, anon. ca. 1865



Basilica di S.M. Maggiore

From: "David Miller" <davidphillipmiller@hotmail.com>
Subject: another chapter
Date: Mon, 29 Jul 2002 08:26:36 +0000

Greetings, and another installment in our Pilgrims' saga....

We begin by recalling to mind the troubling footage of drought in Sicily. Close-ups of hoards of grasshoppers chewing the parched remains of what had clearly been green crops. Flash forward to Rome; we are wandering around the various tourist attractions (anything antique, and dilapidated). The comparison is clear to me: we are grasshoppers! We are masticating the Forum, the Colosseo, the Vatican (this last is not dilapidated; obviously God has more money to keep his house in order than, for example, the Vestal Virgins. Their house needs work...).

Do not misunderstand, we do not mind the tourists in Rome. In the first place, we are they, in a manner of speaking. And perhaps more importantly, they, but not we, play important supporting roles in our photographs. Bit parts, but crucial; no tourists, no snarky photographs of tourists. So we acknowledge our debt, even as we are annoyed by the quantity, and yes, sometimes the quality of some of our fellow tourists. Some of us even think that bermuda shorts and running shoes should be, if not banned, perhaps taxed. (Some of us are notably uncharitable, however).

A short note about photographing: Clara has made friends at her lab,

and is trying to make friends with her camera. The tripod is a problem - it signals professional to security guards and officious types everywhere, and brings interference, and denied permission with its three innocent feet. David is not using a view camera, and is thus able to be a bit sneakier; he has a very small table-top tripod

which can be used held against walls, in doorways, etc., which allows very slow shutter speeds, but is quite discrete. Sometimes discretion is the better part of photography.

I pay when it comes time to develop film. Clara takes hers to the lab, picks up developed negatives. I load two rolls into my stainless steel tank (brought in my luggage from Montréal) at night, in a closet, lights out, and then struggle with rather primitive arrangements in the bathroom the next day. But this means a limit of two rolls per day, which is slow, and frustrating. Unfortunately, it's a lot easier to shoot film than to process it, so I'm feeling somewhat Sisyphusian (surely not a word, that) rolling my rollfilm up the hill....

I think this will have to close this chapter; it's time to develop film. As you may imagine, competition for the bathroom can be intense, and not everyone shares my feeling that film development should come first.

Love, David



Pantheon, interno



Piazza della Rotonda



Fontana di Trevi



Campo de' Fiori.



Fori Imperiali

Chiesa San Marcello



From: “David Miller” <davidphillipmiller@hotmail.com>
Subject: travelogue
Date: Wed, 11 Sep 2002 07:17:49 +0000

Hi,

We’ve been back in Rome for about two weeks, and are about to head off for Milano for a couple of days, in a couple of days. Actually, we have train reservations for the leaving part, but not the return, thus two days could stretch to three....

One of the biggest changes for us on our return was Clara’s discovery of an outdoor market on Saturdays, not far from the apartment. The food is better than most of what we’ve found locally, the people are friendlier, so that both the procurement and the dispatching of edibles has improved. We had last night a taste comparison of the prosciutto crudo from an expensive (and excellent) downtown store, and some from a small booth in the market. Different, but a draw. And both were much better than any other we’ve found here, not to mention the substitutes we’re used to at home in Montréal. Excellent cheese, fruit, and vegetables (including fresh funghi porcini) have left David happy. For those of you who have been waiting anxiously for a report on the gelato research, I’m pleased to announce that it is ongoing. This is much too important to rush.

One thing which is surprising is the climate, which is both cooler

than I’d thought, and much rainier (the amount is historic, and further north, disastrous, though not as bad as central Europe. From footage we’ve seen of a vineyard in Piemonte, with completely rotted grapes amidst a sea of mud, I’d have to think that this vintage will be a complete write-off. Presumably you already know about eastern Germany and parts of the Czech Republic). Looking forward to the fall, I’m glad we brought a fair amount of warm clothing - we’d been warned about damp, cold autumns, though not wet, cool summers. I haven’t minded a bit that there has been so little oppressive heat.

We’ve been doing more cultural visits: churches, palazzi, museums. I’m about churched out, though laying off for a bit might help. It will be nice to go to Milano, where art did not stop in the 18th century. After the first several thousand two-thousand year old statues, they all start to look, well, just a little, similar. It has been fun seeing some of these things, sculpture and paintings, displayed in palazzi in a similar way to how they would have been seen inthe 16th and 17th centuries (yes, there are apparently pictorial as well as succession records of that).

At this point, a little disclaimer: if anyone is waiting to see photographs of all this, it could be a long wait. Unfortunately,



Roman Forum, anon. ca. 1870

neither Clara nor David is doing photographs of much descriptive value. Sarah does that extremely well, but she only spent a few days in Rome, and though she claims she's "done" Rome, I'm less sure about that. I have a funny feeling that you'll get a better idea of what Rome, at least historic Rome, looks like from her few photos than you will from ours. Also, of course, we may never do prints. But I can assure you that the negatives, developed laboriously 2 rolls at a time, do exist. Punsters, if I had a lab, it would be less, not more laborious.

A minor disappointment - we had thought that by September the number of tourists would drop significantly. It hasn't. I was at the Fountain of Trevi a couple of days ago, and it was mobbed. That doesn't do the scene justice; people were standing on each others' heads. Could that be hyperbole? Not far off, though. Where are all these people from, and why aren't they back at work, school, whatever? I tried to photograph, but had to leave after a bit. It was too crowded.

It is 11 Sept. Every city in Italy, probably Rome most of all, will be crawling with police, all intent on keeping Italy safe from terrorist attack, and guarding the twin towers (Pisa, for one; I'm not sure what a second would be). The quantity of sub-machine guns walking

the streets here is astounding, however, my sense of security is in inverse proportion. I'm not even sure that photographing would be a good idea today. One doesn't know how that might be interpreted. Paranoid? I don't think so; remember the Italian polarity of anarchy and fascism. An interesting place....

Must go finish doing laundry. A given of human existence, that even in the midst of such philosophical musings, one must do laundry. Off to Milano tomorrow, to see if contemporary art actually exists somewhere in Italy. And to see another city, and a northern existence in a mostly southern country. Maybe Clara will check out Prada while David checks out the cuisine of Lombardy. Next installment....

Ciao, David



Museo Capitolino



Palazzo Senatorio, Capitoline



Piazza del Quirinale



Il Gesù



Piazza Navona



Piazza Navona

NO TRIPODS ALLOWED!

by Clara Gutsche

I was destined to run into la polizia throughout my residency in Rome. There is a law in Italy which prohibits putting a tripod down in public space without a permit. So I was told when I was forbidden to use my tripod at the piazza Navona on September 17th by an officer who spoke some English. I had already been stopped from photographing once before. I wrote an email to Daniela (Délégation de Québec) on September 24th to get information about what was happening. I was mystified. She offered to arrange a meeting with the photographer who has worked for them, Giampiero Ortenzi. In space of one week following my email request for information from Daniela I was stopped two more times: at piazza San Pietro, later the same day as the email I had written in the morning, and at piazza Lovatelli on September 26th. I realized that there must be some sort of specific regulation. Perhaps what the officer at the piazza Navona had told me was true?

I decided to try getting some answers from the cultural service of the Canadian Embassy. Elena Solari very kindly met with

me when I dropped by without an appointment. She told me about the Italian law that prohibits the use of a tripod in public spaces without an authorization. Now I could understand why I had been stopped by la polizia when photographing and how to apply for a permit – although I found the law incredible. Obtaining authorization to photograph (or film) with a tripod seems to involve making a written request for a particular locations on specific days – and paying fees. Easels for painting are included in the interdiction. I was told it takes about a week for the request to be processed. What if it rains on your approved day?

The much more inhibiting problem for me was that I felt I could not ask for an official permit. I had asked Elena Solari and the Canadian Consulate in Rome for clarification about the legal length of stay in Italy without a visa. Three months (90 days) was the maximum limit. We were supposed to have obtained visas in Canada before we left for our 6 month stay. I feared precipitating questions about my illegal status in Italy which I did not want asked. Opinions were divided at the Canadian Embassy. One person thought that the Italian bureaucracy was so compartmentalized that any cross referencing of information was very unlikely and another thought that requesting a tripod permit was not cautious and could lead to further investigation. I did not take the risk. If my status in Italy had been legal, I certainly would have requested permits for the renowned piazzas where I most wanted to photograph.

Were there ways to use the tripod in Rome without a permit?

For the rest of the trip I sought advice and information from Italian photographers I met. It seemed unlikely that local photographers would request permits every time they wanted to take a commercial or personal photograph. Here are a couple of email responses I received when I wrote to ask why the tripod law and how do you get around it:

Cristina Nunez

Thu, 3 Oct 2002 10:14:56 +0200

In Milan you have to ask for an authorisation in a precise area on a precise day (or half day) and pay an amount like 100 euros a half-day. There is usually an office of the City Police (vigili urbani) who cares about that, and it can take 5 working days to get it.

Fabrizio Sanetti & Enrico

Mon, 28 Oct 2002 18:18:04 +0100

About the use of a tripod: We thought you knew that Italy is the Country of taxes, where you have to pay a tax for everything! So you have to make a written request to the Italian Police (I think the central agency is in Piazza Bologna) and pay a tax. After that, they'll give you a temporary authorization. But usually policemen are not so bad with tourists. You can try to tell them that you are not working, but simply taking pictures like a tourist... In the worse, you can tell them: "Just this picture and I go...!"; then you make the tour of the building and come back again... (but mind them, after!). GOOD LUCK!

When I met with Dr. George Tatge, the Director of Photography at the Fratelli Alinari, he told me that I would be stopped in Florence as well if I photographed with a tripod. He informed me that this law dates back to the fascist era. Later on the same trip I met Martino Marangoni, at the Fondazione Studio Marangoni who also confirmed that the law was introduced by the fascist regime and was still enforced in Italy.

For the next 4 months I wondered what is the penalty for occupying public space with your tripod and without a permit. Am I simply committing a municipal infraction subject to a parking ticket sort of fine? During the 6 months I saw several male photographers but no other female using a tripod. I worried that the same agent would see me twice and remember. However, no one arrested me, no one fined me.

The police stopped me many times. In my notebook I wrote down some, but not all encounters. I recorded that I was ordered not to photograph with my tripod at the piazza Navona on September 17th, the piazza San Pietro on September 24th, at the piazza Lovatelli on September 26th, the Forum on October 3rd, the piazza della Rotunda on October 6th, the via del Lavatore on October 26th, and piazza San Pietro on October 28th. In December, near the end of the trip, I sat down on a column in the piazza San Pietro to put away my camera. Two carabinieri shot over to order me to not photograph with a tripod. I had had no intention of attempting a quick photo. The tripod was collapsed to its shortest height and my camera was facing sideways and not at any subject.



By Walter Sprange.

“NO TRIPOD ALLOWED HERE.”

I had taken up the suggestion made by the Délégation to meet Giampiero. He made the very generous offer to drive me around the city on his motorcycle. Giampiero said I could photograph while seated on the motorcycle. The reasoning is

that you have already paid for your use of the public space on which your motorcycled is parked through vehicle license fees. But I knew that this method would result in unsharp photos because of my long exposures. Nevertheless, Giampiero's suggestion gave me the idea to wedge myself with the tripod-mounted view camera between a parked motorcycle and a garbage can when I tried to photograph the piazza della Rotunda, in front of the Pantheon on October 6th. I hoped I was inconspicuous – or that I looked like the owner of the motorcycle. But an officer charged over to tell me to leave while I was still composing the photograph under the dark cloth using the rise, fall, and tilt movements.

On rare occasions I tested the commitment of the police to taking the trouble to enforce the tripod prohibition. When I was photographing at the intersection of Via della Panetteria e Via del Lavatore, it occurred to me that the carabinieri stationed there might be lazy. After I completed one photograph while out of the officer's line of sight around a corner, I went to the far end of the piazza where he could clearly see me, but would have to leave his post and walk over to be heard. After taking this photo I positioned myself within easy calling distance. And sure enough, he pointed his finger at me and ordered me to stop. I took a photo, folded my tripod legs, and left.

I succeeded in taking photographs of the Campo de' Fiori by sitting with my camera on the steps of the centre fountain where many other people were also hanging out on this beautiful Sunday in September. And at the piazza San Pietro I

took one uninteresting photograph in late September. My strategy was to camouflage myself by mingling among a group of German tourists who were resting on the steps of one of the fountains. As soon as the tourists left two officers came over to tell me that the Pope forbade the use of tripods.

I would have been interrupted even more often, except that self-censorship set in. I avoided the main piazzas where I would have liked to photograph. This constraint became the defining parameter of the Rome project. I remembered that I tell art students at Concordia, who often wish to be free from any guidelines and requirements, that constraints can serve as parameters that define a project. They map the conceptual territory to be explored.

My tripod stories are all fairly similar. The tripod theories are more varied. Why is there a law against tripods in the first place? Why enforce the interdiction against tripods even if the law is still on the books? The senselessness of some laws and the randomness of enforcement were hard to decipher. Different people suggested different reasons for the law. The most frequent explanation was that – clearly - if you are using a tripod you must be a professional photographer. The assumption was that people not using a tripod are just taking snaps. The authorities couldn't possibly control hand cameras used by the millions of tourists. Italians are practical. With a tripod you're a sitting duck to pay permit fees or bribes. I wondered if some of the cops who stopped me wanted to create a set-up for a bribe?



Via della Panetteria e Via del Lavatore

Italy seems to lurch back and forth between laissez-faire chaos and law-and-order authoritarianism. The resulting confusion stimulates the imagination to make up all sorts of explanations. Someone thought that the no-tripods law helped to maintain traffic flow - that putting a tripod down in public space would impede the free movement of pedestrians and motorists. This concern for traffic flow would also explain why the cops don't stop motorcycles running red lights - since that would slow the rate of vehicles circulating.

David speculated that the reason it was so important to enforce this law was because the photographer (I) was questioning the papal doctrine with her own holy trinity. He claimed this was a more refined theory than others because it addresses the question of whether two or three legs are touching the ground at the same time. He observed that the cops never once stopped a cripple with a crutch and explained that if you think about how somebody walks, you realize that only two appendages touch the ground at the same time.

Another common explanation was that –obviously– those in authority would view a camera as a surveillance device that they alone want to control; someone using a camera is committing a threatening act. Or, I wondered if the more mundane goal was image control? Maybe there is PR motive to manipulate through regulation the image of Italy portrayed by photographers. The paucity of variety in Rome postcard views led me to wonder if photographers had been controlled

and selection standardized. However, the total control of information and image would have been impossible ever since the 1930s when Minox spy cameras, Leicas, and Leica copies became available. Every theory has its refutation. Can you imagine a spy setting up a camera on a tripod?

As I reflect upon my choice for a photo project, I conclude that my idea was excellent. I anticipated being drawn to the piazzas and I was. So much planning and money have been lavished on these public spaces for so long. Sitting and watching the social dynamics of their use provides countless hours of entertainment. Locals, as well as tourists, love to linger in piazzas. Since I usually photograph inside, I decided it would be an interesting challenge to photograph outside. I thought the structures created by building-ringed piazzas combined the qualities of interior and exterior space. But, too bad that *tripods are not allowed!*



Via Nazionale e Via XXIV Maggio



Piazza di Sant' Ignazio

From: “David Miller” <davidphillipmiller@hotmail.com>
Subject: further tales from the innocents abroad
Date: Sun, 22 Sep 2002 10:00:16 +0000

Hello all,

Another chapter in the travels and tribulations of C & D. This time to Milano, an odd instance of time travel within the same timeframe. What I mean is that Roma lives in the past, and particularly significant for us, in the distant past for the art world. Milano is a normal, modern European city. The difference is quite striking. Milano (ok, Milan, if you must) has a thriving contemporary art scene; we were surprised and impressed, especially by the friendliness and helpfulness of people in the private galleries. And we found a decent photo store, something which doesn’t exist in Rome. Rome is wonderful for living in the past, but sometimes it’s nice to check in with the present.

Our other discovery made an excellent counterweight to Milano: Bergamo, at least the upper part, is a medieval city on a hill. It was a day trip from Milano, leaving us only a short time to amble through it, but it is beautiful, and coherently medieval, museum-like, but still living. A little oddity: the Basilica was quite impressive, not “modernised” (I mean Baroqued, in fact. Almost all really old churches have been), and filled with 15th century tapestries, one of which clearly showed the infant Christ being circumcised. Well, yes, we were surprised. Sorry, no postcards; we looked.

So here I am, sitting at home writing a letter when I “should” be out using the perfect light to photograph. But for whatever reason(s), I’m not. This doesn’t indicate that I haven’t been photographing; indeed, this morning I developed roll #60 (there are 3 rolls with lower numbers which, for technical reasons await development. So clearly there has been quite a lot of film flowing through the camera, although there is no implication of commensurate quality. Just quantity. The reason for these musings are to be found in the word should. As this is the first time in my adult life when I have had no work-related obligations, it’s interesting that I’ve felt the necessity to invent a structure of “should” be out photographing. That structure, by the way, includes 2 hours almost each day of developing the film, which is both a practical, and aesthetic necessity. I don’t want the exposed film to deteriorate, and it really is important to see what is actually on the film, as opposed to what I wanted, or imagined to be on the film. Sometimes, amazingly enough, there is a coincidence of imagination and reality. Perhaps those are the ones to print....

And now, if I may jolt you all back to earth with an utterly mundane concern, I must go start the melanzane parmigiana, using for the first time real Mozzarella. Yes, this is just as important as exposing silver halides to light, though perhaps somewhat less permanent as

creations go. There it is, the light bulb goes on: we make art because food, no matter how artistic, is rather more ephemeral. But still satisfying, no?

Well, not always! The oven turns out to be broken, blew a breaker, and the parmigiana turned into a stove-top disaster. Sic transit gloria parmigiana. And doesn’t bode well for future culinary endeavors. Today has been, well, low key; it,s been raining on and off, and so far my only outing has been down to the Trastevere, the area we wish we were living in. This to a pharmacy where there are pharmacists who speak French, as well, of course, as Italian. One is reputed to speak English, but we haven’t found him yet. It is occasionally useful to speak a second language as we struggle with a third. Struggle seems to best cover the situation (I can buy cheese in Italian, but I can’t say itch. Or lots of other things. Eating, as mentioned above, is important, but so is relieving insect bites). I do not think that either of us will come home fluent in Italian. But I don’t think we’ll starve, either. Vorrei due etti di Cacciota. Sì, questo....

And, faute d’inspiration, I will bring this to a halt, a hiatus rather than an end, thus promising further verbiage in future.

Love, David



vicino Piazza Collegio Romano



vicino Piazza Mattei



vicino Piazza Mattei



Via del Governo Vecchio



Viale dei Quattro Venti



Viale dei Quattro Venti



Via Fonteiana



Via Fonteiana



Via Fonteiana



From: “David Miller” <davidphillipmiller@hotmail.com>
Subject: another chapter
Date: Fri, 04 Oct 2002 02:51:15 +0000

Hello everyone,

Several days ago I went to the Capitoline museums. I was only able to stay for two hours, not because they closed, but at a certain point, one becomes visually overwhelmed. I became overwhelmed. A terminal case of visual indigestion. It was leave, or.... what? I had to leave. But the interesting thing is that I’ll go back; perhaps it’s like eating (not that I want to belabour this metaphor): one can only consume a certain amount at a time.

There was so much sculpture that I never made it to the painting floor, so there will still be something new next time, and I’m sure to have missed things in any case. I couldn’t possibly count the sculptures, but there were certainly more than several hundred. Plus frescos on the ceiling, inlaid marble floors, Greek and Roman inscriptions on the walls, several generations of antique foundations exposed to view, and, just in case the visitor becomes bored from lack of stimulation, great views of the city, and the best possible view of the Foro Romano. So, there may be no contemporary art in Rome, but there is a stunning amount of antique art. And perhaps that is the problem after all; it really is overwhelming, and the Romans have given up trying to compete.

I used the clear views to do some photographs, so I haven’t given up (on the other hand, I’m glad I’m not a sculptor. Or maybe I’d be inspired?).

Just one example of being inspired by another medium - in the Palazzo Nuovo (it’s old), which is one of the connected Musei Capitolini, is a red marble Satiro Ridente , a Laughing Satyr. This statue is the Marble Faun of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s novel. Of course, he was paid by the word. I only managed a few paragraphs, perhaps less inspired.

It’s several days later, and in that time, we managed to get to the Galleria Corsini; mostly paintings, a welcome pendant to too many sculptures. However, it did give rise to questions about the value of curators, and what a collection looks like in the absence of same. The Corsini is essentially a 17th and 18th century rich family’s collection, still in the same Palazzo, and suffering from a certain lack of expertise and judgement. On the other hand, there were some wonderful paintings there. Get rid of about two thirds (Clara says three quarters) of the second and third rate stuff, put in decent lighting, and... you’d have a modern museum instead of an original collection from the 18th century. So we’d gain, and lose. I was actually happy enough to see the not-so-good work, just for the



Campidoglio, Pompeo Molins (attr.) ca. 1865

context, but I don't feel that tempted to go back. I would imagine that the sheer quantity of antique art here may lead to a slightly blasé response, that is, there's always more to see, why go back?

The other area which has been a constant attraction is churches, not normally a pole which draws me . I went to three yesterday, one so-so, one beautiful, ancient but renovated (more later), and one ancient and perhaps the most amazing church I've ever been in. Tuscan fans, this includes San Francesco in Arezzo, which is a genuinely spiritual place. So is S.Stefano Rotondo in Rome, the one I saw yesterday. It's half torn up, archeological digs being the local sport, and the frescos are in a state of considerable decay (adds to the charm, no doubt). I can't do it justice in writing (and besides, I'm not being paid by the word), but tried a photograph, which may or may not work (can one photograph the spiritual? I leave this debate to wiser heads...).

It's a couple of days later; Clara and I went to four more churches today. Sometimes we do our churchgoing together.... One of them is a relatively unmodernised Medieval church which has quite an amazing aura; I've noticed (is this coincidence?) that the most interesting places tend to have the fewest people in them. Or, put another way, it would be hard to describe the Trevi fountain as

an intense experience, but it is literally crawling with people. But I've been in two churches in the last three days which were quite amazing, and which had a maximum of 10 people in them. Now I know that church attendance is down these days, but I also know that anyone reading this knows how much time I have for organised religion. Scientists can measure very minute periods of time these days, but one would need sophisticated methods to quantify my tolerance level.

And in case you think that there's no interest in churches, drop by the Vatican. There are 981 churches in Rome, and every tourist is in S. Pietro. Everyone except me. I'm checking out every un-Baroqued old church in Rome. So that brings me to the question of renovation. We all know that if one spends a lot of money renovating the kitchen and bathroom(s) in ones house, the food tastes better, and, well, we're in polite company, so let's skip the bathroom functions. The important thing to keep in mind is that ones friends will be impressed, and the resale value of the house increases. Now back to churches (that was the topic sentence, no?). It has taken me three months to realise that the same human imperatives must be operating: when one walks into a Baroque (or Baroqued) church, it is, above all, impressive. Cold, impersonal, and not, to me at least, spiritual, but undoubtedly impressive. And I guess it must have

increased the property value. That's what all the real estate people say. About kitchens. I bet none of them cooks. Or goes to church....

And with that, I will leave you. I have four churches on the list for tomorrow.

Arrivederci,

David

And a modest PS: last night I decided that Barock'd looks better than Baroqued, although in my always humble opinion, neither looks good in churches. Cheers....

From: “David Miller” <davidphillipmiller@hotmail.com>
Subject: Rome et al
Date: Sun, 03 Nov 2002 09:50:38 +0000

It is autumn. The short days and the falling leaves are unmistakeable signs that we’re nearer the end of our trip than the beginning. I’m spending time thinking about what I don’t want to miss before leaving, even making lists. It is clear that there will be more things to do, many more, than there will be time to do them. The endless little mistakes photographing now seem more serious, as both of us realise that there won’t be opportunities to go back and correct them all. I realise as well that one could extrapolate from this to a larger perspective; there is no formal interdiction about doing so.

Most of my photographs which haven’t worked out are of church interiors, from which you could correctly interpret that I have been spending quite a bit of time in churches. Once I got beyond the impact of Roman ruins, the otherness of 2000 year old walls and foundations interspersed with everything else, I began to think that in fact the centre of Roman life for most of the last two millenia has in fact been the church, or rather the Church. And despite my reservations about the materialism of Catholic churches in general, and Baroque ones in particular, I decided “when in Rome...”. So I have been steadily working on seeing a representative sampling, and at the same time, trying to make photographs which go at least a little beyond monochromatic 2-D transcriptions of richly chromatic 3-D spaces. This challenge offers many opportunities to make

mistakes, and I’ve made the most of my opportunities.

The sampling will have to be modest in terms of numbers; with 981 churches in Rome, with the best will in the world a few months is not enough time even to get into, much less spend time, in all of them. Assume an hour apiece (many have crypts, many chapels, paintings and sculpture well worth seeing); do the arithmetic yourself; assume that you’re unionized (40 hour work week). There go 6 months....

We went yesterday, All Souls Day, to the Protestant Cemetery. Actually, it’s called the Cimitero Acattolico per gli Stranieri, which freely translated means all you Other people. It’s generally a very quiet place, but there were large numbers of people cleaning gravestones, placing flowers. However, the odd part was the feeding of the cats; Rome is full of them, and there are women who feed them daily. There is a sort of ritual aspect which made it not inappropriate that it took place in a cemetery. Life and death on the same site.

May I shift momentarily from the sublime to the mundane? I’ve had fiore da zucca several times in restaurants, then decided yesterday when we were at our outdoor market that I should try my hand



(literally; stuffing squash flowers requires a light hand). Shame one can’t get the flowers in Montréal, these turned out very well. One of the things we’ve learned about cooking is that sometimes what we consider excellent ingredients in Montréal or New York or wherever really are poor imitations of the real thing. Being exposed to the real thing here has been an education. An excellent example is funghi porcini. We can buy dried ones in North America, soak them, and we’re in business, right? Don’t kid yourself, these are very poor imitations of funghi porcini, and believe me, we’ve eaten a lot of the real thing here. It’s going to be hard to go back and contemplate making pasta with mushroom-smelling cardboard. On sober reflection, I’m not so sure that real food is mundane, after all. The fiore da zucca were divine....

Galleria delle statue, Vaticano, Pompeo Molins ca. 1865

I have skipped over our trip to Venice, which took place several weeks ago, partially because Venice is in fact overwhelming, and partially because it rained for most of the 3 days we were there, and everyone already knows that Venice is wet. I’d like to corroborate that general impression: Venice is wet. It’s also quite spectacular, and we’re considering going back. Problem is, there are also Bologna, and Torino, and Padova, and Mantova, and endless medieval towns in Tuscany, and there is only so much time (and money! Travel’s expensive.). And I haven’t even mentioned the south, which it seems unlikely we’ll get to, partially because of earthquakes and Etna erupting, partly because we seem to be more drawn to the north. Back to Venice: November seems a good month to go because the number of tourists will be down, for good reason. November is cold and rainy, so the city should be not just wet but positively sodden. So we will go to all the museums and churches which we didn’t have time for the first trip, because we were walking around with our mouths agape looking at buildings, canals, bridges. And we won’t have to queue to get in, because most other people will have had the good sense to go before it got cold and rainy.

David



S. Pietro, interno. Vaticano



San Pietro in Vincoli



Santa Maria della Consolazione



Laboratorio di antichità, vicolo Domizio



Tempio di Mars Ultor, via Baccina



Piramide di Caio Cestio



Veduta dal' viale Alfredo Saffi, Monteverde



Piazza di S. Egidio, Trastevere



Parco Savello



Via di Santa Sabina



Terme di Caracalla



Terme di Caracalla



Veduta dal' Monumento a Vittorio Emanuele II

From: “David Miller” <davidphillipmiller@hotmail.com>
Subject: travelogue, again
Date : Wed, 13 Nov 2002 11:03:39 +0000

Hello again,

After offering food for thought last time I think I will turn to thoughts of food once again (well, sorry, but it is a serious preoccupation around here). On the menu: carciofi & prosciutto crudo; you read that correctly, try it sometime. The artichokes here are not just different, they’re better. I marinated these in a little olive oil for a couple of days. By the way, this is serious food porn, so if you’re easily offended by such, skip the next bit. Although it sounds odd (I’m staking claim to the combination; challenges accepted and verified....), artichokes and prosciutto go extremely well together.

This was followed by tagliatelle tartufo. This simple statement masks the attainment of one of my goals for this trip - I had never bought a truffle, a white truffle to be precise, and I intended to fill this lacuna. Those of you who have consumed these objects, when I describe the smell as intense, and even erotic, will understand and nod; those who haven’t can think ”hyperbole” and nod in a different way. I leave you to your various nods.... The other ingredients are butter (the butter I used is spectacular, lives in a different universe than even the best butter I’ve found at home), and a small quantity of parmesan cheese, all added as soon as the pasta is done, and then consumed immediately. I can’t describe the taste, other than to say

that I can still clearly recall my first exposure to it, in a restaurant in Arezzo a few years ago. My effort was as good, but the first time always has a certain buzz, doesn’t it? Well, I warned you that this was going to be food porn....

Last course, salad, arugula and radicchio, with hazelnut oil (thank you, Deborah). By the way, did you know that there are several Macdonalds here? I wonder who goes? One could eat quite a few “meals” at Macdonalds for the cost of a small truffle, but even a pig would go for the truffle. I will forbear pointing out any moral conclusions here.

Back from Bologna. Doesn’t that have a nice alliterative ring to it? What a wonderful city, and a new favourite place. At the end of the week we’re going to Mantova, then Padova, then back to Venezia, so we can have some more new favourite places. I don’t understand what’s wrong with Italians. Why don’t they tear down all that old stuff so they can put up nice new highrises? Where are all the brothers-in-law and uncles in construction? Anyway, Bologna.... The historic part seems to be mostly built between the 12th and 18th century, not old by Roman standards, but wonderfully coherent, and beautiful. And absolutely great churches, not, at least 4 of the 5 we saw in our 24 hours there, Barock’d. The Basilico di Santo Stefano



Coliseum, Altobelli & Molins ca. 1865

is an incredibly complex compendium of constructions dating from the 11th through the 18th centuries, but using elements of previous churches (and “pagan” temples) going back to the 2nd. And there is a beautiful cloister. We were literally walking around exclaiming.

Add very good museums, and very good food (I don’t know if we were simply lucky, or if it’s difficult to find mediocre food in Bologna); I’d love to return. But then there are so many other places to see.... Incidentally, if anyone should happen to be wondering how our Italian is progressing, at S. Stefano I bought a booklet about the church. I had a choice of Italian or Spanish, and bought it in Spanish. Voilà. I do have to admit that not only do I read Italian and Spanish equally poorly but I liked the reproductions in the Spanish version better. Another admission: here in paradise we are freezing. It’s not that cold, but it is incredibly damp, and the heat has not been turned on in the apartment; even though it’s only 17 degrees (inside), it’s miserable in here. At least we found out how to get the oven to work, so we can heat the kitchen. Next time you happen to find yourself in a castle or palazzo, think central heating. Think lack of same. I must have a perverted mind - I really do think about that when we’re in some incredible palazzo, looking at the stunning frescos, the amazing mosaic floors. There aren’t even fireplaces in most of the rooms. The nobility must have literally frozen their butts sitting on their chamber pots. How unromantic....

As we are now thinking romantic it seems appropriate to bring in catacombs, romantic loci par excellence with which Rome is particularly well supplied. Why is it that claustrophobia-inducing underground burial chambers should incline one to romantic musing? In case you are inclined to impute that to the suggestive remains surrounding the subteranean traveller, one should note that over the 15 centuries since the catacombs were abandoned as cemeteries, the tomboli (grave robbers) have removed almost everything, including, interestingly enough, the bones. Thus we are reduced to a bare bones situation, as it were, and we still find it suggestive, atmospheric, well, romantic. Fortunately, the grave robbers were unable to remove the paintings. I try to imagine painting by oil lamp or torch in a cramped underground space. The urge to leave expressive marks has always been strong and this is a particularly powerful expression of that. The paintings in the Catacombe di Priscilla are apparently 2nd and 3rd century (AD by definition; only Jews and Christians buried their dead underground. The “pagan” Romans thought this practise quite odd, and on seeing row upon row of narrow cavities carved out of the tufa, stacked perhaps 8 high, I am inclined to agree with them).

However, oddity is in the mind of the beholder, of course, and I will now take you to a place where oddity would be perhaps the mildest of descriptors. This is the aboveground crypt of the Cappucines in

the church of the Immaculate Conception, where the good brothers have thumbled their collective noses at the physicality of death by using the bones of the deceased to make designs, moralistic instalations, decoration. An interesting, even riveting, Conception. I am going to spare you descriptions, but would like you to know that I have postcards. I don’t think you would believe verbal descriptions, even skeletal ones, but as we all know, photographs never lie.

Do you know the other half of that expression? Photographs never tell the truth....

The light is good; I think I’ll go out and photograph.

David



S. Stefano Rotondo



Via Nazionale, preso dalla Villa Aldobrandini

Via dei Pastini





Via dei Banchi Vecchi



Piazza Mattei

vicino Via del Corso



Piazza Benedetto Cairoli



From: “David Miller” <davidphillipmiller@hotmail.com>
Subject: Back soon
Date: Mon, 16 Dec 2002 11:28:41 +0000

So, this will be the last instalment from Rome. The end is not only nigh, but here. We’re slowly starting to pack, and we’re mentally gearing down. And now, an admission: I just saw the Sistine Chapel for the first time. I’d like to report that I was awed, blown, if I may, away. But I wasn’t. Sorry. The Sistine Chapel, how could I not be overwhelmed? Could it be that the hype is so over the top that nothing could match the inevitable expectations? Or is it simply that one is so far from the paintings that there is no sense of connection? I actually responded more to the frescos on the wall (Botticelli, Pinturicchio, et al). Two odd aspects which I liked, the first the depiction of birds in flight (they look like airborne frozen turkeys. Quite startling.), the second was that with the exception of one panel, no one’s head was higher than the horizon. Not wanting to get too near God, or merely avoiding collision with frozen turkeys? Your guess is as good as mine, and if you know a lot about 15th century iconography, it will be better.

We’re off to Firenze tomorrow, only for a day, but the Palazzo Pitti beckons, and it’s the Last Chance. Somehow, we haven’t yet made the hour and a half trip, perhaps under the rubric of “it’s close, we can do it any time”, so this is our last fling before we fling ourselves back over the Atlantic.



Arco di Titus, E. Lamy ca. 1870

And now we’re back, and very happy we went, even though it took 5 months to get around to. We both highly recommend the Galeria Palatina in the Pitti, should you happen to be passing by (although the lighting is awful by any standards. Bring your own flashlight). We went on a modest shopping spree, something which hasn’t been a temptation at all in Rome. We are both feeling frustrated by the lousy photographing weather - December has been a total bust. So looking at other people’s pictures, and spending money was the best we could do to be creative.

And for those of you who have imagined our existence in Nirvana, one little anecdote which turned out not-so-badly, but might have been otherwise. After we returned home last night, Clara discovered

that her purse, made of quite tough double-layered nylon, had been neatly and professionally slit about 5 inches on the side. Reconstructing events, but not the purse, we are quite sure it had to have happened on the very crowded sidewalk right near the train station in Firenze. The odd thing is that Clara had bought a new leather purse literally a few hours earlier, but wasn’t using it yet. Nothing was lost other than the purse, so hardly a disaster, but close.... One doesn’t want to lose a passport and credit cards 4 days before flying back.

I haven’t mentioned France, and lots of other things. This will just have to end with a whimper.....

David



Foro Romano



Foro Romano



Scalinata di Spagna



Santa Maria del Popolo



Piazza S. Pietro. Vaticano



Tetto di S. Pietro. Vaticano

