



25.09.2024 | 06.01.2025
EARTH Foundation

Lorenzo Vitturi
Borgo Roma.
Paesaggio in Transizione

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Curated by
Giangavino Pazzola
in collaboration with **Giulia Adami**

Borgo Roma. Landscape in transition presents over thirty unreleased works by **Lorenzo Vitturi** (Venice, 1980), inspired from the observation of the Borgo Roma district, an urban area where the Specialized Refrigeration Station “*La Rotonda*” is located, the iconic architecture now home to the EARTH Foundation.

The exhibition reveals a poetic mapping of places and relationships based on a field survey conducted together with the anthropologist Caterina Borelli, creating a narrative that bridges the past and present of the area. Vitturi's images capture both the materials and goods that symbolize the various economic, productive and innovative phases of the area, as well as stories that reflect its contemporary social and cultural lifestyles.

The exhibition broadly reflects on the dynamics of urban transformation created by the migration of goods and people in contemporary cities. While focusing on **Borgo Roma** - the industrial heart of post-war Verona now transformed into a commercial and cultural centre - the narrative draws parallels with cities worldwide, highlighting the potential, complexities and limitations of these processes.

In Hall 3 are displayed works from two of Vitturi's previous projects made in other world capitals: **Dalston Anatomy**, set in the East London district of Hackney, and **Money Must Be Made**, dedicated to the Balogun Market of Lagos, in Nigeria. In both instances, as in **Borgo Roma**, Vitturi collects objects and impressions from the various communities that inhabit the places, transforming them into vibrant forms, colors and textures able to convey the complexity of urban environments in constant change.

The images, produced through a creative practice that blends sculpture, collage and photography, will become part of the collection at the International Center of Photography Scavi Scaligeri in Verona, following a research project initiated with the commission *Architettura e Memoria* (2005), carried out by Gabriele Basilico.

Lorenzo Vitturi

Lorenzo Vitturi (Venice, 1980) graduated in Photography and Design from the European Institute of Design in Rome. He quickly began experimenting with photography in conjunction with scenography, developing a method that includes *site-specific* interventions based on the study of particular places. Vitturi is interested to environments where urban transformation and cultural hybridization are most visible, often working in markets and busy streets to collect objects and suggestions, which he then translates into an artistic practice on the edge between sculpture, painting, collage, and photography. In his images, Vitturi combines different shapes, colors and textures, composing them in three-dimensional installations able to convey the complexity of urban environments in constant change. His work has been displayed in solo exhibitions at institutions around the world, such as the FOAM Museum in Amsterdam, The Photographers' Gallery in London, the Contact Photography Festival in Toronto, and the CAN in Luxembourg. He also participated in several group exhibitions at venues such as the MAXXI in Rome, the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, La Triennale in Milan, BOZAR in Brussels, the K11 Art Space in Shanghai. In 2013, Vitturi published his first book, *Dalston Anatomy*, a collection of photographs taken at the Ridley Road Market in the East London district of Dalston.

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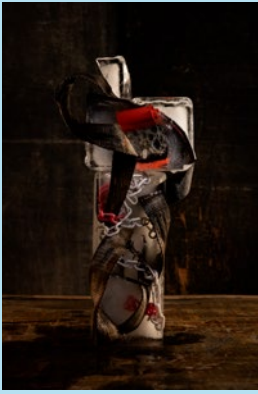
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1



2

The industrial load-lifting belt in Image 1 comes from the previous Bertrams factory (later transferred to ZinCol in 1997). The abandoned site occupies a large plot of land between viale del Commercio, via Copernico, and via Roncisvalle. Bertrams had already been operating in the 1960s in the galvanizing, painting and cataphoresis processes. Over the following decades, various issues emerged related to the hazardous nature of the facilities and the protection of workers' health, with real risks of chronic lung disease and hematological alterations due to the irritating vapors emitted during the pickling processes. Following a major production crisis that began in 2008, which caused a collapse in orders and production halving within six years, all its workers were fired between 2014 and 2015, and the Verona branch permanently closed.

Image 1: fragment of chain, asphalt, and artificial grass from the Eataly parking lot.

Image 2: fragment of bodywork found on viale del Commercio.

The orange synthetic material fragments visible in both Image 1 and Image 2 come from Mr. Adrian's junk warehouse (see Images 6 and 8), or rather the former warehouse. He had to vacate it last summer because the property owner raised the rent.

The ice shown in these and the following images was created by the artist to pay homage to the past of the building in which we are located, the former Refrigeration Station. Designed by engineer Pio Beccherle and inaugurated on June 8, 1930, it was used for sorting, packing and storing fruit and vegetables that arrived in Verona from all over Italy before being shipped to European markets. The icebox wagons remained in the cold rooms for about six hours, the time needed to load them, and were then filled with ice blocks produced on the upper floor. At its peak, the Refrigeration Station handled up to 100 rail cars per day, but its role began to decline in the early 1950s.



3

These stacked wooden chairs are part of what remains of the furniture from Interzona, formally a cultural association. However, those who founded it and were part of it prefer to describe it as a defense and a community. From 1993 to 2016, Interzona transformed the abandoned spaces of the former Refrigeration Station, later known as Warehouse 22, into a cultural production and consumption center. Its reputation finally crossed national borders.

The original group of volunteers had always been interested in the rehabilitation of disused spaces for cultural purposes. The choice of the Refrigeration Station, inactive since 1986, was no coincidence, but a deliberate and well-considered decision. In 1993, partly due to the political vacuum following the Tangentopoli scandal, they obtained the concession of a small but significant 700-square-meter section, which included the imposing dome and the cooling cell (see Image 10). Over the years, countless concerts, theater performances, and *site-specific* art installations inspired by these unique architectures were held here. In 2005, following the sale of the Magazzini Generali (General Warehouses) to Cariverona, the first eviction notice arrived. After a year and a half of negotiations, Interzona was allowed to relocate to Warehouse 22, but without a lease agreement that would allow for a long-term planning. The second and final eviction came in 2016.

Since then, Warehouse 22 has remained empty, while Interzona has no headquarters, only garages filled with stacked furniture waiting for a new use.

4



A fragment of asphalt and synthetic grass collected from the Eataly parking lot. When Interzona was located at the Refrigeration Station (see Image 3), the volunteers had created a garden outside, right where the parking lot is now located. After removing the asphalt, they spread soil and planted grass and other low-maintenance wild plants. The red rope was purchased at Leroy Merlin, in one of the many commercial areas surrounding the city of Verona.



5

Papers from the archives of the *Cartiere Fedrigoni* and the *Stamperia Valdonega*. The first paper mill of the Fedrigoni family was established in Trentino in 1724 but closed a century later. In 1888, Giuseppe Antonio Fedrigoni decided to restart the activity, this time in Verona, where he built a factory in the Basso Acquar area that used the driving force of the Camuzzoni industrial canal. Despite the Fedrigoni Group is now a multinational company, the building where the paper mill's director once lived – now renamed *Casa Fedrigoni* – is still located a few hundred meters from here, hosting the historical archive and a specialized library. *Stamperia Valdonega*, on the other hand, was founded in 1948 by Hans (Giovanni) Mandersteig, a German printer and publisher who frequented artists such as Kokoschka, Kafka, Hesse and D'Annunzio. Mandersteig himself is considered one of the most relevant printmakers of the 20th century. The *Stamperia* was acquired in 2007 by Siz. Industria Grafica, which preserves its papers archive, while the bibliographic collection is kept at the Centro Apice of the University of Milan. Fedrigoni and Valdonega, along with the publishing house Arnoldo Mondadori founded in 1919, are the reason why Verona remains one of the leading international hubs in the printing industry to this day. Interzona membership card from 2005. During its peak activity years, the association boasted an average of 5,000 members per year. Its archives are stored in the garages, where the furniture removed from Warehouse 22 is stacked (see Image 3).

Artificial grass picked from the Eataty parking lot.

Fragment of a poster found on the street.

Screws found inside the former Bertrams factory (see Image 1).



6



7

The metal objects and colored plastic slabs shown in Images 6 and 7 were found in Mr. Adrian's junk warehouse (see Images 1 and 2). In Images 6 and 7, synthetic grasses picked from the Eat-aly parking lot. In Image 7, a metalworker's glove found in the former Bertrams zinc plating plant (see Image 1), and a peach from Verona PGI purchased by Eataly.



The melon and its netting come from *Paradiso della Frutta*, on via Scuderlando. The store, which is part of a chain, is run by owners of Egyptian origin. Inside, the products are arranged very neatly and theatrically in huge piles of eggplants, zucchinis, lettuce heads, and apples.

There is always Arabic music playing in the background of the store, and a constant flow of customers attracted by the very affordable prices. During the summer, Mohammed often stands at the entrance; he has been the latest to join the team after touring various Italian cities: he enjoys chatting but does not want to be photographed. It is a shame; he has a great smile. The fragment of asphalt was collected from a parking lot for campers and caravans located between the Le Grazie road and the Giuliani canal. On top, the people counter that was used by Interzona at the time of Warehouse 22 (see Image 3).



10

The cooling cell of the former Refrigeration Station from the Interzona archive (see Image 3). When five volunteers from the association first entered the abandoned building in 1993, accompanied by a representative from the Heritage Office of the Municipality of Verona, the entire area was “a no man’s land,” completely cut off from the city by a high surrounding wall. The interiors of this imposing building-machine, an engineering work completed in 1930 and permanently decommissioned in 1986, remained intact. The furniture, forklifts, electrical panels, and engine room were all still connected to the electricity and arranged around a dome that had, over the years, turned into a giant aviary for pigeons. The only missing element was the turntable for trains, removed earlier due to operational problems. Among its most distinctive features was the huge refrigeration cell with metal-coated walls and a circular arched floor plan, which made it difficult to see its end. Along with the dome, it immediately became the muse for the many avant-garde cultural productions born within these walls. In its first phase of activity (1993-2005), Interzona also conducted significant archival research and cataloguing work. This effort led, in 1999, to the declaration of an architectural constraint, that included the furnishings. This safeguarded both the tangible and intangible heritage of the entire Magazzini Generali complex – a total of 28 buildings – by the Superintendency. However, a few years later, with the transfer of ownership from the Municipality to Cariverona and its subsequent change in use, the Refrigeration Station underwent a full restoration. As a result, much of this heritage will be dismantled, and in some cases even torn down.



Until the 1950s, the area we now call Borgo Roma was actually divided into two very different sections: the northern district of Tombetta was more urban, primarily inhabited by office and factory workers from the Basso Acquar and the ZAI (highly innovative area of Verona); the southern part of Tomba was more rural, characterized by typical courts and a population engaged in manual labor. The current urban layout of Borgo Roma started to emerge in the post-war period with the new 1957 General Master Plan. This plan included, among other things, the establishment of the new parish *Gesù Divino Lavoratore - Borgo 1° Maggio*, in “a suburban area to the south of the city, scarcely urbanized, and where virtually everything was lacking, there was nothing to see and nowhere to stop” ¹.

However, the construction of the current church with its various annexes – the youth recreation center, sports areas, and theater – only began in 1964. Until then, Father Angelo Corrado, the young priest responsible for establishing the new parish, had been holding Masses in the “chapel-shack”, originally used as a chicken coop and a storage room.

¹ From “The Parish ‘Gesù Divino Lavoratore’ and Borgo 1° Maggio: A parish, a community, a district” by Marco Comencini, in *Borgo Roma and the Verona Sud area*, edited by Patrizio Mantovani (2012). Edition: Centro Turistico Giovanile Verona.



The rituals associated with the arrival of spring, which have roots in pre-Christian times, are ubiquitous in Europe as a celebration of rebirth after winter and a good omen for the harvests. Among their many variations, the *Palo di Maggio* tradition dates back to the Middle Ages: it involves a collective dance around an initially bare pole, which is covered with a dense web of weaves as the dancers perform their steps, each holding a ribbon tied to the top of the pole. Traditionally, women dance counterclockwise, and men clockwise, alternating between the passing of ribbons either below or above each other. The more people coordinate their movements, the more linear and harmonious the weave will be. The fewer knots and inaccuracies are formed, the better the coming year will be. The *Palo di Maggio* ritual has been recently revived as part of the spring festival, which is organized every year at the Santa Teresa Park in Borgo Roma by the Nuova Acropolis association (see Image 18). It is part of an international network and present in Verona for over thirty years, and it promotes sociocultural activities with a particular focus on teaching and spreading philosophy. It also supports the promotion of reading thanks to the Bibliomobile, created by set designer Gianni Volpe, that is exceptionally on display here by kind concession of the association.



For the past few months, Federico has been renting one of the 64 vegetable community gardens managed by the Piccola Fraternità of Borgo Roma (see Image 14) on a plot of land between via Comacchio and via Manfredo da Cortenova. He lives a few blocks away from it. The garden keeps him busy, and he doesn't always manage to keep up with it as he would like; but today, he came to harvest the summer work to make a nice peperonata. He has eggplants, zucchinis, green beans and large pumpkins. One of the latter, while growing, has spontaneously settled on a plastic chair. "I found it like that when I came back from vacation, sitting." Despite the exceptional heat of this summer, that has dried out much of the soil, his small plot is lush, as are those of his neighbors: tomatoes of many different varieties, lettuces, cabbages, aromatic herbs, abundant flowers, as well as some crops imported from other countries, such as ochre, reflecting the diverse backgrounds of the renters. Most are retirees, but in recent years, especially after the pandemic, employed people like Federico have also been admitted. The annual fee is 65 euros, a symbolic amount that does not cover the actual expenses.



The Piccola Fraternità is an association founded on Christmas Eve in 1987 to help people with disabilities. Before that date, the activities of the original group of volunteers were hosted in a space connected to the parish of *Gesù Divino Lavoratore* (see Image 11). However, faced with the need for more space, the then-president came up with the idea to request a plot of uncultivated land owned of the Province – in an area that, at the time, was in a state of degradation mainly due to drug dealing and consumption – to turn it into community gardens (see Image 13). The modules that still constitute the Association's headquarters, where volunteers hold recreational activities three times a week with the assisted persons, were donated by the Municipality of Cervignano del Friuli, after being decommissioned from housing the victims of the 1976 earthquake. There are several indoor spaces for meetings and tool storage, as well as multiple outdoor communal areas. These outdoor spaces host lunches and other recreational activities, including the annual festival held in September, which also serve as a fundraiser to support the association's activities. As the current president explains, the association does not receive any kind of public subsidy. Currently, it is facing some challenges, especially regarding the cost of renting the land and the lack of generational turnover among the volunteers. Despite these difficulties, the association remains committed to support its members, manage the gardens – for which there is always a great demand – and promote a sense of community in the district.



To sum up the professional – which is also personal – story of Alberto Bronzato is not an easy task. It would begin in the 1970s with the *Circolo di Vicolo Satiro*, based in a stable in the Filipini District, leading to 1987, the year in which *Estravagario Teatro* was founded. For ten years, the company met in a basement, until a stroke of genius (or madness) hit: on the advice of Andrea Togni, they bought a marquee with 1,400 seats and 2,500 standing places for 300 million in 1997, plunging into debt. After two years of negotiations with the Municipality, they obtained the concession of the outdoor space at the Magazzini Generali in exchange for 27 free evenings a year (which they had no control over) and 80 free seats per performance. *Estravagario Teatro Tenda* was officially born. Without public funding, it hosted 864 performances and a variety of other events between 1998 and 2005, from concerts by international artists to gypsy weddings. In 2005, its journey came to a sudden end when the Municipality sold the spaces to the Cariverona Foundation, causing an eviction similar to the experience of its Interzona neighbors (see Images 3, 4, 5 and 10). To manage the remaining debt, the marquee was sold to a used car dealer in Brescia. It was proposed the Warehouse 26 as an alternative location, but after a year and a half of planning, nothing came of it. Since then, the company has continued its educational work at the Granbadò dance and theater school in Borgo Roma, but it no longer has a performance space.



We met Vanelle at Usman Travels (see Image 20), where she went to make some photocopies. Born in Cameroon twenty-five years ago, she has been living in Verona for four and she is studying biotechnology. She completed her bachelor's degree in July, and she will start her master's degree in September. Perhaps, once finished her studies, she will move to Switzerland, a country she has never been to but dreams of. She cannot explain exactly why; its alpine landscapes seem "something beyond reality" to her. In the meantime, she continues her life in Borgo Roma, her chosen district since she arrived, and which has become home to her: "when I'm away, I can't wait to come back here," she says with a laugh.



The Ramesh hair salon is located on via Scuderlando, in the direction of Ca' di David, which together with Borgo Roma forms the Fifth District, the second highest in Verona for concentration of foreign-born residents (20.7% of the total residents) after the Fourth District (25.7%) which includes Santa Lucia, Golosine and Madonna di Dossobuono. In Ca' di David, which extends beyond the highway and is much more rural than Borgo Roma, is concentrated most of the Sikh population present in the city, mainly employed in agricultural work. Even Kumar, the salon's owner, despite his successful business, still sometimes helps in the fields. He mentioned this on the day we met him: his face is covered in a white mask to cleanse the impurities that accumulate on the skin while working outdoors. He recently opened the salon, having previously worked for the Railways; his brother taught him the barber trade, while the name of the salon – Ramesh – was chosen as a tribute to his father. The entire extended family now lives in Italy, mostly in Verona; his cousin, who introduces himself with a friendly handshake, runs a tax assistance office on the parallel street. Kumar's car is decorated with a large sticker depicting a lion and honoring Sidhu Moose Wala, a famous Punjabi singer and rapper who was assassinated in 2022. A black-and-white painting in his honor stands out in the elaborately decorated salon.



Tommasina has been living in Borgo Roma for ten years. She has a passion for running, and it was this interest that led her to discover Nuova Acropoli (see Image 12). During her training sessions at Santa Teresa Park, she often saw volunteers leading various activities, like readings with children and the philosophy day. Sometimes, she would stop to curiously glance at the wooden house with books made available to the public. One day, she recalls, a stranger of a certain age approached her while she was tying her shoes and preparing for her daily run. Out of nowhere, the stranger began talking about the philosophy meetings in the park. “It was a genuine confidence, as if to say we are here, we are two women, I confide in you and tell you something about myself. And for me it felt like a sign.” Philosophy thus entered Tommasina’s life in a way that surrealists would describe as a *hasard objectif*: that unexpected confluence between what an individual desires and what the world offers. Since then, Tommasina has been attending Nuova Acropoli’s courses and participating as a volunteer in many of their activities. Philosophy, she says, especially when applied to daily life (“active philosophy”) helps her focus on the here and now, without getting lost in trivialities, to find a sense of sharing and of caring for others, for public spaces, and for nature.



By a twist of fate, Camilla's family history revolves around the spaces where we find ourselves right now. Her grandfather worked at Federexport, in the former Magazzini Generali's area, while her father has been the lighting and sound technician for the *Estravagario Teatro Tenda* for many years (see Image 15). For this reason, Camilla has known Alberto Bronzato since she was a child, and she also completed many years of theater studies with him at the Granbadò school. She is now the restaurant's room manager at Eataly, where she has worked since before it opened to the public. For the future, she envisions a return to theater, a resume of her studies – perhaps with an experience abroad – and a career that allows her to work with children. For now, though, she does with passion her job and says she is fond of this “majestic, amazing” architecture, where she spends many hours each day.



Overlooking the large intersection between via Centro and via San Giacomo there is a small shop that once housed a tobacco and newspaper store, as still revealed by the folded sunshade with the word “Arena” on its edge. For about four years now, it has been home to Usman Travels, a commercial business that offers many services: travel agency, fax and photocopy services, money transfers abroad, tax assistance and paperwork of all kinds. It is run by Ali, a young entrepreneur originally from Pakistan who moved to Borgo Roma from Trento, where the rest of his family still lives. In just a few years, Ali has built a solid clientele around his business which is growing day by day, to the point that he had to extend the opening hours to keep up with the increasing workload. The services he offers are mainly – but not only – used by people of foreign origin, who turn to him when faced with the Italian complex bureaucracy. Ali seems to know everyone here: half the neighborhood passes through his shop, and the other half still walks past his door, facing the large intersection.



21



22

Papers from the archives of the *Cartiere Fedrigoni* and of the *Stamperia Valdonega* (see Image 5).

In Image 22, the bell pepper was purchased at the *Paradiso della Frutta* store on via Scuderlando (see Image 9).

Vine found on via Gioia.



On the other side of the intersection from Usman Travels (see Image 20) is the Center Rock Lounge bar. As the name suggests, it caters to a clientele passionate about rock and metal music. The latter plays at loud volume from the speakers, reaching the outdoor tables at the corner of the sidewalk between via Monfalcone and via Volturno. Inside, behind the beer taps, against a backdrop of red walls covered in music-themed memorabilia, or sitting outside chatting with regular customers, Carmen can be found from 5 p.m. onwards. Born in Romania, she has spent most of her life here in Borgo Roma. The bar's owner occasionally stops by, but she often works the entire evening shift alone until closing. She says that it is not a problem, the district is fairly quiet overall, although every now and then something happens, like a troublesome drunk who refuses to leave. "But there's always one of the guys to help me out, and if worst comes to worst there's this", she says.