

Where We Gather



WASHINGTON, DC / ROME

Acknowledgements

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Letter of Introduction

My 2020 Sister Cities grant through the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities focuses on using photography to capture the places *Where We Gather*. The grant, as written, included travel between Rome and Washington, DC. Our preparation included strategies for occupying, preserving, and supporting both history and identity in these capital cities. The program facilitated contact with and raised awareness of each city, outside the tourist attractions and political perceptions.

The way we are represented, misrepresented, or not represented has consequences. This grant has residents of DC and Rome portray themselves and their spaces through image-making. As a result, the photographers explored personalities, points of view, and preconceptions.

While the project started with digital photography, it also rediscovered and experimented with disposable color film cameras. That became a way to slow down and take notice, to compose and take pictures without immediately knowing the results. The photographs here demonstrate the talent and artistry in both cities; the images are compelling and diverse.

The original schedule had artists Aldo Feroce and Max Biscaia Wayne traveling to DC from Rome in March of 2020. With artists Alexandra Silverthorne and Ira Tattelman from DC, we scheduled workshops to discuss our artwork and introduce the DC participants to the project. After demonstrations and presentations, discussions would center around the participants' daily digital photographs.

At the end of the week, we planned to distribute disposable film cameras and have the participants shoot their places of gathering over the weekend. The following week we planned to review and discuss the results, focusing on photo reporting and community practice.

In May of 2020, Ira Tattelman and Alexandra Silverthorne were to arrive in Rome. The schedule started workshops with Rome participants and again, distributed disposable cameras at the end of the week, and so on. After making selections for enlarged printing, we planned a final exhibit and reception to celebrate the project. Finally, we invited the involvement of local artists and communities as the exhibit traveled to DC.

Given Covid-19, we had to shift our intentions. We made adjustments due to travel restrictions. For the first part of the project, the four of us created a photo conversation, now titled *Where We Used to Gather*.

We each sent five images, discussed the intentions and techniques, listened to comments and observations, and finally responded with another set of five and so on. Everyone worked within their environments, finding ways to express what they were feeling, thinking, and seeing during quarantines and the recovery process.

Each also created two videos. We demonstrated the expressive originality and craftsmanship in our art form. The first focused on who we are as artists. The second focused on our artistic intentions and techniques during the photo conversation.

We then began work with eleven artists in Rome and DC. They received access to our videos as an introduction. Through a photo exchange pairing one photographer from Rome with one from DC, participants were able to respond to daily prompts and share their images. We were happy to have the photographers make connections across oceans in these rough times.

The prompts were:

- *When you leave the house, what do you see?
- *In your neighborhood, which is the gathering spot most frequently used (currently/previously)?
- *Which place did you miss most during the lockdown?
- *If someone was visiting your city for the first time, what is the one place you would want to show them?
- *Is there a place you would suggest to have a calm and romantic talk?

At the end of the week, we distributed disposable cameras. They had the weekend to shoot. We believe the use of film is a more thoughtful, less immediate approach to picture taking. The four of us reviewed the results and put together a final selection of images. We shared film negatives, digital photos, and final pieces with those who participated.

The result is the small run zine or photo book that you have in your hands. Photographers with different cultural backgrounds met virtually and worked together to cultivate communication. Each expressed themselves through their choices. As a whole, they show that healthy creativity can be explored regardless of a pandemic.

To all participants and artists, we say thank you.

Ira Tattelman

Aldo Feroce

The project that I started working on during the month of June is nothing more than my daily diary. I went through long periods of isolation. We remained distanced from each other, definitely changing the rhythms with which we were used to living.

During this period, country life helped me overcome those fears, the uncertainties that life had in store for me, perhaps isolating me from a reality that does not exist.

Our usual way of meeting was changing, not only where to meet but above all how to meet. I perceived in people a strong attachment to faith. Hope, perhaps, was one of the few solutions available to everyone.

I am very happy to have been able to freeze an important moment, that of the Corpus Domini procession (photo 1). Due to the prohibitions in force, any form of procession was prohibited. The parish priest, however, did a great thing by taking a pickup truck around the town. Never had such a thing been seen.

Another very special moment was my visit to the gardener where I usually go to buy vegetables. It was there that he worked with the mask alone in the middle of the earth. I understood the fear running through us (photo 2).

The other thing I remember very clearly is loneliness. Everything around us brought me back to this feeling (photo 3).

Having shared this experience was a stimulus to the whole project.



aldoferoce.it
Rome

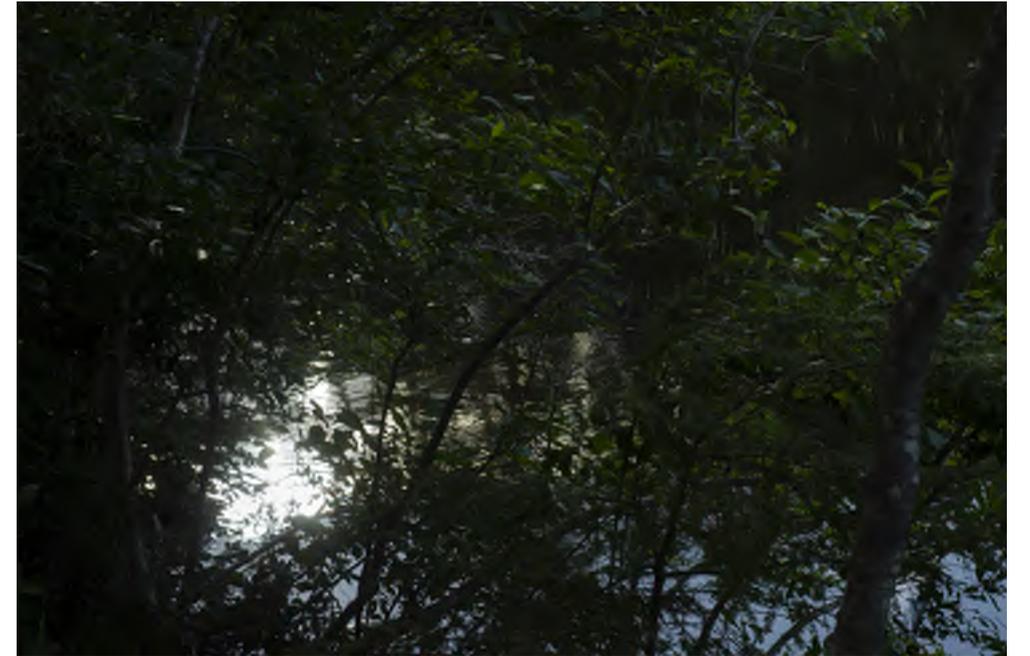
Alexandra Silverthorne

In mid-June, I left DC to spend some time at a family house in rural New Hampshire. After three months of relative isolation in my smaller apartment in the city, it felt remarkably freeing to be with my family and have more space surrounded by woods, mountains, and water.

At the beginning, I simply did not know what to shoot and decided to start with the basics focusing on the natural light around me.

As I settled into the routines of life in New Hampshire, I began to examine my relationship to my surroundings more deeply. Being there left me feeling more connected to both my family history and the natural world and I kept shifting my lens to capture these connections. I was often unable to describe what I was looking for when making images, but when I saw it, I could feel it instantly. As time progressed, images began to come together into a series that I continued working on even after our exchange ended.

I'm especially grateful for the correspondence with Aldo, Max, and Ira as without them, I would not have started this collection of new images. Our weekly emails between Italy and the United States kept me accountable for making new work as well as provided me with much-appreciated insight and feedback on the photographs. It was equally inspiring to see what they were thinking and making during this challenging time and in sharing our own isolated worlds, we created dialogue and community.



alexandrasilvertorne.com
DC

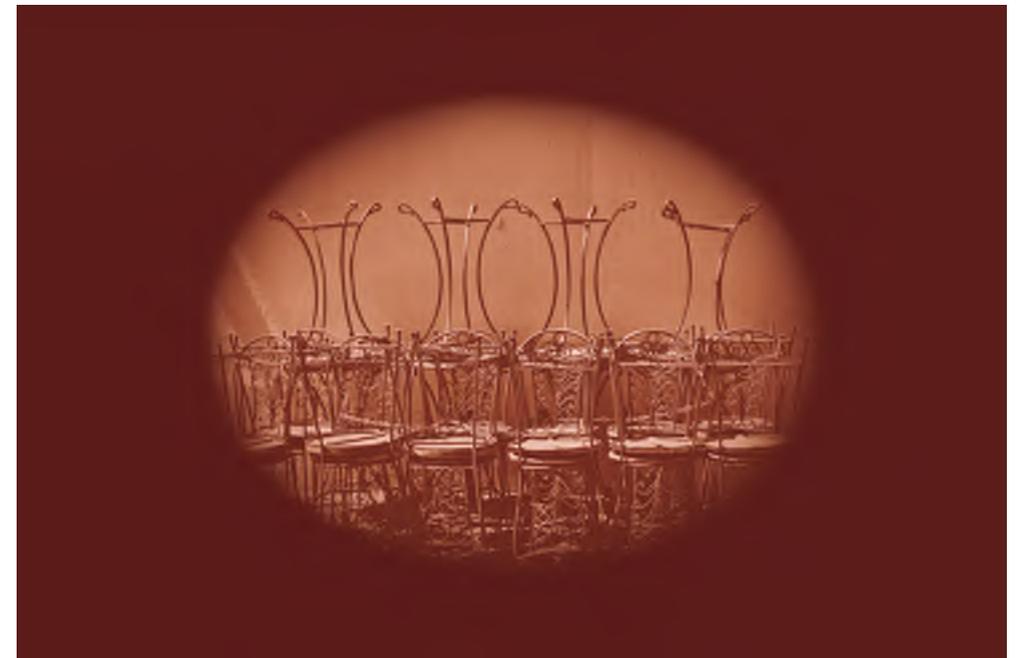
Max Biscaia Wayne

Given the revision of our collaboration system and theme for the Sister Cities project, I chose to focus on the adaptations that took place in the neighborhood where I've been living for the last ten years. At the beginning of our correspondence the vibrant historic center of Rome was still enveloped in a profound and alienating silence, often reinforced by the vigilance of authorities and influence of the news. Since March, a new geometric pattern of encounters was noticed in the piazzas and outdoor spaces, traditionally considered by most people as the meeting place par excellence.

Isolating the visual space through photographic masks was a way of combining the centrality of the theme with the widespread sense of collective deprivation; and more concretely on the impact of new social rules imposed on public areas. Another isolation effect was to confine the color range, applied as a metaphor that relates to our perception of a global shock caused by a phenomenon partly invisible to our eyes.

As we face a second version of lockdown, the analog and digital images I shared with Ira, Alexandra and Aldo are now gathered in sequences associated with a couple of audio installations.

I am grateful that this collaboration has continued even during the difficulties of an ongoing pandemic and hope that some of its guide lines may inspire future projects of socially engaged photography. I find that most of the participant's results we reviewed tend to witness the ability to share more than a mere sense of place. Some reveal an immediate and intimate approach, others describe in detail the communities in which they are embedded and it's great to see these narratives come together.



readymag.com/maxwayne/see
Rome

Ira Tattelman

Public space plays a large role in our upbringing and how we relate to others. Given the pandemic, I saw missed opportunities. Spaces were empty but ready for potential visitors.

I felt somber, entrapped. When I saw an increase in gatherings, something was out of balance - many without masks and rising Covid-19. I also saw isolation and anxiety as represented by barriers and darkened storefronts. I was concerned about abandoned objects and places. I focused on what we left behind.

With my artwork, I address the space around us. What is happening, just happened, or will happen? Interpreting a situation seemingly out of control, I looked for sites that spoke clearly and efficiently.

During our virtual conversations, I wondered whether I would have produced similar work without the lockdown. I take photographs as is, do not set up scenes and leave out the extraneous. I focus on the "footprints" of our activities. I observe what others might ignore.

While the past year's difficulties are genuine, I began to recognize some connectivity and even hope. Someone mentioned that they see places, not empty and lonely, but brimming with potential. We find a way to adapt; spaces will fill up again. While we will not return to the way we were, we can hint at a time with less uncertainty.

My work is a dialogue with and reinterpretation of the environs we inhabit. By taking pictures of the places I occupy, my practice makes physical and emotional connections to the built surroundings. Since the physical world is constantly changing, I call attention to the planned and unplanned outcomes of human actions.

As a group, we each followed various routes. Yet, we were in conversation. I was inspired while collaborating and took what I learned into the second part of this project.



iratattelman.tumblr.com
DC

Participants

Rome

Sara Aguzzoni
Thalita Bartoli
Massimo De Cubellis
Federica Davani
Elisa Ferrantelli
Veronica Grego
Bogdan Lupu
Roberta Marsigli
Flavio Orlando
Alice Ruzzettu
James Teasdale

Washington, DC

Sondra Arkin
Kimberly Cunningham
Tom Drymon
Mercedes Fernandez
Heather Ferris
Matt Francisco
Frederick Nunley
Jhon Ochoa
Robert Roseman
Charlie Werner
Dolores Woods

Tom Drymon

*Traversing the city, with the pandemic ever present, I'd realized that I was keeping my head down and avoiding eye contact with people. As a result, I was also missing much of my surroundings. This project made me more present to my surroundings and inspired me to consider the impact of the pandemic on daily life—evidenced, for me, in the empty park bench and the loss of gathering places of comfort like churches.

Roberta Marsigli

*I am happy to have participated in this project. It gave me new ideas to think about, how to photograph and how to move differently in the places I already know.

*The place we seek in where we gather is not for me a tangible place. It is the place that is a step above the level of reality, the place where there are no boundaries, the sense of loneliness does not exist, friends are always present. It is a secret garden we must guard with grace.

Frederick Nunley

*Challenging to think about places we gathered during the Covid-19 pandemic. It brought all the anxiety of our situation to light in new ways as I sorted out how to illustrate a response to our daily prompts. Traveling is challenging (It was too risky to go further than I could walk) and the tight daily posts limited my answers.

*I was impressed with my partner's skills at photography and common sense about avoiding gatherings! She is younger than I but she clearly knows how to live. I enjoyed seeing what she revealed each day during our exchange.

Elisa A. Ferrantelli

*Besides allowing me to meet new and interesting people, the project helped me to see the situation of Covid-19 from other points of view. It also allowed me to experience and portray it in a more personal way, especially on an emotional level. Reviewing the places in Rome without the life and frenzy that characterized them before the pandemic was difficult.

*Being in contact with other people who share the same experience as me, but from different perspectives and places, has made the global aspect of what we are all living, even more tangible in our daily lives. It made me understand how a delicate moment like this really makes us all so similar, equal and fragile. For better or for worse, we are much more united, close and dependent on one another than we think.



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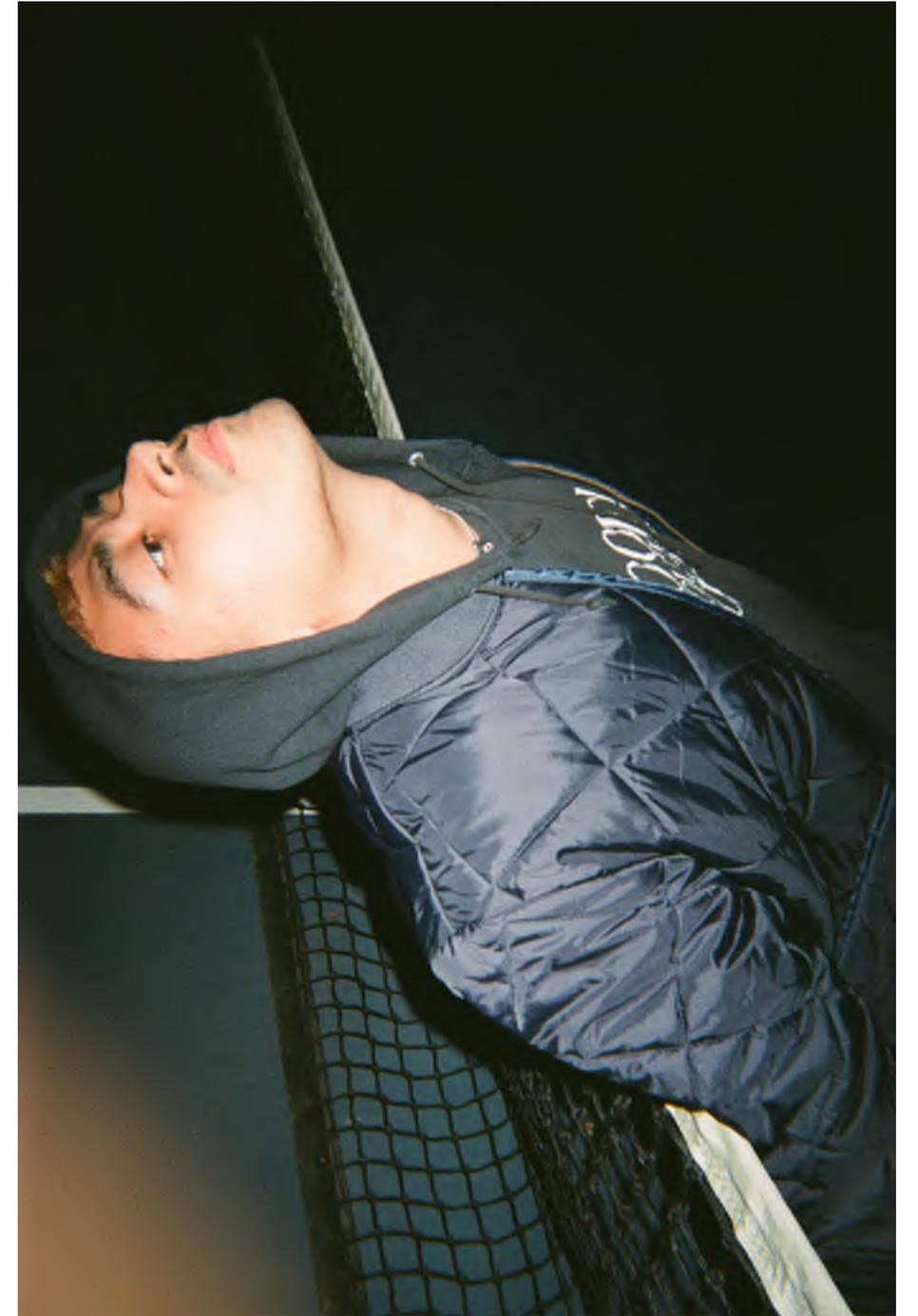
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Aldo Feroce

il progetto che ho iniziato ad elaborare durante il mese di giugno non è altro che un mio diario quotidiano. Ho attraversato lunghi periodi di isolamento, siamo rimasti distanziati gli uni dagli altri cambiando decisamente i ritmi con cui eravamo abituati a vivere.

Durante questo periodo la vita di campagna mi ha aiutato a superare quelle paure ed incertezze che la vita mi riservava, forse isolandomi da una realtà che non esiste.

Il nostro abituale modo di incontrarsi andava modificandosi. Non solo dove incontrarci ma soprattutto come incontrarci. Ho percepito nelle persone un forte attaccamento alla fede, la speranza forse una delle poche soluzioni a disposizione di tutti.

Sono molto contento di aver potuto congelare un momento importante quello della processione Del Corpus Domini (foto 1) in cui per i divieti in vigore vietavano qualsiasi forma di processione. Il Parroco fece una grande cosa facendosi portare lui con una macchina in giro per il paese. Mai si era vista una cosa del genere.

Un altro momento molto particolare fu la mia visita all'ortolano dove abitualmente vado a comprare ortaggi, era lì che lavorava con la mascherina da solo in mezzo alla terra. Ho capito la paura che attraversava dentro di noi (foto 2).

L'altra cosa di cui ricordo con molta lucidità è la solitudine, tutto intorno a noi mi riportava a questa sensazione (foto 3).

Aver condiviso questa esperienza è stato di stimolo a tutto il progetto.

All'inizio, semplicemente non sapevo cosa scattare per cui ho deciso di iniziare con le basi concentrandomi sulla luce naturale intorno a me.

Mentre mi addentravo nella routine della vita nel New Hampshire, iniziai a esaminare più profondamente il mio rapporto con l'ambiente circostante. Essere lì mi ha fatto sentire più connessa sia alla mia storia familiare che al mondo naturale e ho continuato a spostare l'obiettivo per catturare queste connessioni. Spesso non ero in grado di descrivere quello che cercavo quando scattavo le immagini, ma quando lo vedevo, lo sentivo immediatamente. Col passare del tempo, le immagini hanno iniziato a riunirsi in una serie su cui ho continuato a lavorare anche dopo la fine del nostro scambio.

Sono particolarmente grata per la corrispondenza con Aldo, Max e Ira perché senza di loro non avrei iniziato questa raccolta di nuove immagini. Le nostre e-mail settimanali tra l'Italia e gli Stati Uniti mi hanno responsabilizzata della creazione di nuovi lavori e mi hanno fornito informazioni e feedback molto apprezzati sulle fotografie. È stato altrettanto stimolante vedere cosa loro stavano pensando e facendo durante questo periodo difficile; nel condividere i nostri mondi isolati, abbiamo generato dialogo e comunità.

A metà giugno ho lasciato Washington, DC per trascorrere un po' di tempo in una casa di famiglia nelle zone rurali del New Hampshire. Dopo tre mesi di relativo isolamento nel mio appartamento più piccolo in città, mi sentivo straordinariamente libera di stare con la mia famiglia e avere più spazio circondato da boschi, montagne e acqua.

Max Biscaia Wayne

Data la revisione del nostro sistema di collaborazione e del tema per il progetto Sister Cities, ho scelto di focalizzarmi sugli adattamenti avvenuti nel quartiere dove vivo da ormai dieci anni. All'inizio della nostra corrispondenza il vibrante centro storico di Roma era ancora avvolto da un profondo e alienante silenzio, spesso rafforzato dalla vigilanza delle autorità e dall'influenza della cronaca. Da Marzo una nuova cadenza geometrica degli incontri si nota nelle piazze e negli spazi all'aperto, tradizionalmente considerati dai più come il luogo d'incontro per eccellenza.

Ira Tattelman

Lo spazio pubblico gioca un ruolo importante nella nostra educazione e nel modo in cui ci relazioniamo con gli altri. Data la pandemia, ho visto molte opportunità mancate. Gli spazi erano vuoti ma pronti per potenziali visitatori.

Mi sono sentito cupo, intrappolato. Quando ho visto un aumento delle riunioni, qualcosa era fuori equilibrio: molti senza maschere e le custodie del Covid-19 aumentando. Ho anche visto l'isolamento e l'ansia rappresentati da barriere e vetrine oscurate. Ero preoccupato per oggetti e luoghi abbandonati. Mi sono concentrato su quello che ci siamo lasciati alle spalle.

Con la mia opera d'arte, mi rivolgo allo spazio che ci circonda. Che cosa sta succedendo? Cosa è appena successo? Cosa accadrà? Interpretando una situazione apparentemente fuori controllo, ho

isolare lo spazio visivo tramite l'uso di maschere fotografiche è stato un modo per coniugare la centralità del tema con il diffuso senso di deprivazione collettiva; e più concretamente con l'impatto delle nuove regole sociali imposte su ogni luogo pubblico. Un'altro effetto di isolamento è stato la limitazione della gamma cromatica, applicata come metafora di riferimento alla nostra percezione di uno shock globale causato da un fenomeno in parte invisibile ai nostri occhi. Mentre affrontiamo una seconda versione di lockdown, le immagini analogiche e digitali che ho condiviso con Ira, Alexandra e Aldo sono ora raccolte in sequenze associate ad una coppia d'installazioni sonore.

Sono grato che questa collaborazione sia avvenuta nonostante le difficoltà della pandemia in corso e spero che alcune delle sue linee guida potranno ispirare progetti futuri di fotografia socialmente impegnata.

Trovo che la maggior parte dei risultati dei partecipanti che abbiamo esaminato tenda a testimoniare la capacità di condividere più di un mero senso di luogo. Alcuni indicano un approccio immediato e intimo, altri descrivono in dettaglio le comunità in cui sono inseriti ed è bello vedere queste narrazioni riunite.

cercato siti che parlassero in modo chiaro ed efficiente.

Durante le nostre conversazioni virtuali, mi chiedevo se avrei prodotto un lavoro simile senza il blocco. Faccio fotografie così com'è; Non allestisco scene e tralascio l'estraneo. Mi concentro sulle "impronte" delle nostre attività. Osservo ciò che gli altri potrebbero ignorare.

Sebbene le difficoltà dello scorso anno siano reali, ho iniziato a riconoscere una certa connettività e persino speranza. Qualcuno ha detto di vedere posti, non vuoti e solitari, ma ricchi di potenziale. Troveremo un modo per adattarci; gli spazi si riempiranno di nuovo. Anche se non torneremo come eravamo, possiamo accennare a un momento con meno incertezza.

Il mio lavoro è un dialogo e una reinterpretazione dei dintorni in cui viviamo. Fotografando i luoghi che occupo, la mia pratica crea connessioni fisiche ed emotive con l'ambiente costruito. Poiché il mondo fisico è in continua evoluzione, richiamo l'attenzione sui risultati pianificati e non pianificati delle azioni umane.

Come gruppo, ognuno di noi ha seguito vari percorsi. Eppure stavamo conversando. Sono stato ispirato durante la collaborazione e ho portato ciò che ho imparato nella seconda parte di questo progetto.

Kimberly Cunningham

*Seeing life in Rome from the point of view of a fellow woman artist has been so inspiring. I was able to see how the pandemic has affected life there and see similarities that I had not known existed. I would love to be able to do this again.

Sara Aguzzoni

*We had the opportunity to share not just images but different points of view and sensitivities. Through the pictures I was emailed, I liked to imagine my USA mate.

Thalita Bartoli

*I also loved sharing my work and words with a stranger, in a sense discovering it through images and his certain experience and I must say that I very much appreciated my partner's photographic style.

Matt Francisco

*I loved sharing photos with and getting to know my photo-pal. Staying and working from home over the past few months made it tougher for me to go out and shoot, and I appreciated having something that motivated me to get outside.

Massimo de Cubellis

*I appreciated very much this experience because gave me the possibility to reflect more deeply how the pandemic changed and conditioned our lives.

*I live in the Vatican area where the absence of tourism is visible and the economic effects are disastrous.

*It's been very interesting to wake up in the morning, for discovering the theme to develop, and I become more curious day after day.....

Robert Roseman

*I found this program to be incredible. At a time when we are unable to travel due to a global pandemic. It was really nice to see and hear about another culture.

Dolores Woods

*This experience was unexpectedly necessary. I found that my partner and I had a lot in common. Also having to answer a prompt each day added some excitement to these mundane COVID days.

Flavio Orlando

*"Where we gather" has been a nice project, with a great concept and idea, following what is happening right now. Art has an important role because it's the human activity that talks about humanity, so in a way it's the only mirror we have to look at ourselves. I enjoyed my correspondence, we created a connection in a really fast way and we shared our ideas and facts, together with our pictures.

Alice Ruzzettu

*I am happy to have been able to participate in this photographic project of an international exchange, especially after a global period of collective isolation and its inevitable context of adaptation. The correspondence was exciting with a fairly regular exchange of current and previously done images in the company of nice stories and comments; I would definitely repeat. I'm curious to see everyone's results on the final zine.

Sondra Arkin

*It has really made me think about the photos I take differently—and feedback is always helpful.

Heather Ferris

*It was curiously refreshing to communicate with a total stranger - no history; no previous connection; no assumptions. It was interesting to hear a different perspective of life in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Bogdan Lupu

*I found it interesting to share spaces and visions close to me with someone far from me. Through the images and emails, intimacy was created in an easy way.