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In this time of significant change, as witnessed by the unpredictable economy and the historic election, this issue of the SOF News brings together a broad array of contributions from the entire AAR community. Produced over an extended period, they reflect the elaborately diverse influences that make up the institution we share. This institution, beyond its well-loved bricks and mortar, allows all to benefit from the simple notion that a handful of scholars and artists living together in a community can foster and expand the pursuits of each through their day-to-day interaction. This common experience remains unchanged, but the results often change us, our work, our futures, and sometimes significantly.

Articles in this issue of the SOF News look at two historic AAR “re-openings” that were the focus of well-deserved celebrations in Rome. The first of these marks the centennial of the birth of Laurance P. Roberts, and recalls the re-opening of the AAR after World War II. The second describes the re-opening of the Arthur and Janet C. Ross Library, closed for a year for a comprehensive renovation and expansion. Its rebirth represents the crowning success of Christina Haemer’s tenure as the Drexel Heinz Librarian. The first re-opening brought the AAR into the modern, postwar Roberts era; the second brings the library into the 21st century. This issue also emphasizes the work of recent fellows in the arts and literature. One article recounts the experience of an artist simulating communal living in a two-dimensional world; another reports on a digital reconstruction of ancient Rome via a real-time three-dimensional model. Two other pieces herald enormous and welcome changes to two of the most important and often discussed aspects of the primary experience, the food and wine. And yet, these changes are significant, but the essence of the tradition of fellows dining together remains unchanged. Enjoy!

James L. Bodnar, faar 80

Letter from the Editor
Adèle Chatfield-Taylor, faar’84
President of the American Academy in Rome

In a year of many highlights and special events, the 2008 Roberts Centenary Celebration, chaired by Charles Brickbauer, faar’57, stood out as exceptional. The weekend of September 30–October 2, 2007, began as a commemoration of the 100th birthday of Laurance P. Roberts, the extraordinary man who led the academy from 1946 to 1979, drew into something that, we hope, genuinely reflected the breadth of what he and his wife, Isabel S. Roberts, accomplished.

When at the end of the second World War, the trustees of the American Academy in Rome appointed Laurance P. Roberts director, they gave him one assignment: to reopen the academy, the buildings were a means to an end: a re-
donations, including some distinguished artists and other researchers.

In 1947, Roberts brought Frank E. Brown, faar’35 (whose centenary we will also recog-
nize in 2008) to Rome to establish an academy excavation, which he did at Cosa, in 1948. Generations of fellows have worked there and in the Cosa Room at the academy, which was also created during those years, and the academy continues to this day to publish the work that has come out of this dig.

The academy’s music program in particular blossomed, with the Villa Aurelia concerts, an ongoing relationship with Rome’s Orchestra that made possible the perfor-
mances to the making of the modern Academy was addressed as part of the Roberts Centenary Celebration. On Monday October 1, Laurance Roberts’s 100th birthday, there was a public confer-
cence on “Roberts’s Rome” with papers given by Richard T. Ardelt; Henry A. Millon, faar’56, faar’66, Martin Eidelberg, faar’62; and Richard Trythall, faar’67, faa’71. Cosa: The Italian Sigillata. Supplements to the Memoirs of the AAR, 2008, by Maria Teresa Marabini Morev, Italian Fulbright Fellow’47 (the first year such fellowships were awarded), faa’74, was presented, with talks not only about the new book but also about the history of the Cosa excavations and the welcoming of Italian Fulbright Fellows into the academy family. There were remarks by Lawrence Richardson JR. faar’35, faar’39, delivered in absentia by Harry B. Evans, faar’72, faar’73; Russell T. Scott, Jr., faar’66, faar’79, delivered in absentia by Thomas A. J. McGinn, faar’85, Andrew W. Mellon Professor in Charge; Silvia Panciera, Italian Fulbright Fellow’58, and Maria Teresa Marabini Morev. A Villa Aurelia concert featured music by Roberts-era fellows and resi-
dents; it was followed by dinner in the style of those once given by the Robertses attended by the full community, Roberts family members, and Roman friends.

But mainly the Roberts Centenary celebrated the fellowship that is the academy. Before the public programs, before the concert and dinner party, there was a joyful family luncheon in the Cortile. A single long table ran the length of each of two arms of the Cortile to seat the more than one hundred people in attendance.

For the event, Charles Brickbauer had gathered together members of the Roberts family and their close friends; some of them had visited the Academy years ago, and others knew it only through often and fondly told stories. In addi-
tion, all the fellows who had been invited to Rome under the Roberts’s direction, hoping that the reunited classes of 1947 through the 1950’s would take the opportunity to confer with the fellows of 2007–2008. Many came: James Ackerman, faar’52; Katherine Gefken, faar’55; James Larnante, faar’62; Maria Teresa Marabini Morev, Italian Fulbright Fellow; Henry A. Millon, faar’60; Maria Bonfoli Pan-
ciera, Italian Fulbright Fellow ’70, and Silvio Panciera Italian Fulbright Fellow ’86. Happily, they were joined by fellows from other years, including Jeffrey Blanchard, faar’79; Harry B. Evans, faar’72; Ronald Fison, faar’70; Ste-
phen Kizer, faar’81; trustee Michael Conforti, faar’79; and Society of Fellows president James L. Bodnar, faar’80. Others, such as Robert Venturi, faar’56, faar’66, and William Mac-
donald, faar’66, sent comments, and Evangelos Frudakis, faar’02, gave the Academy a bust of Laurance Roberts that he had sculpted in his studio and cast in Rome during his fellowship years.

One by one, fellows from the 1940s and 1950s and those from the program rose and came to stand at the intersection of the two tables and give a five-minute talk about their work or their time at the academy.

Every single presentation was fascinating, and together they formed a complete portrait of the academy as a ayous, life-altering opportunity and experience that endures and grows over time but somehow always remains the same. Nat Roberts, nephew of Laurance Roberts, spoke especially memorably when he quoted his Uncle’s challenge to all new arrivals in the old days: “Do not think of where you’ve been, but of where you are going, and learn from the people that you’ll meet here to form a con-
tinuum through life.”

The final event of the centenary vividly cap-
tures the spirit of the weekend. This was a walk through Baroque Rome, a special tour con-
ceived by Charles Brickbauer, Hank Millon, and Robert Venturi. Led by Millon, it quickly became an ambivalent conversation on art, architecture, Rome and the Rome Prize expe-
rience, with contributions by Jim Ackerman, Charles Brickbauer, David Childs, Michael Con-
forti, and many of the fellows of 2007–2008. This (re)union of members of the Roberts family with Roberts fellows, with the fellows now in residence, and with Rome itself aptly celebrated the people that you’ll meet here to form a con-
tinuum through life.”

The academy’s other programs were also broad-
ened and reinvigorated in the mid-twentieth century: the joy and gener-
osity of spirit, the life of intellect and creativity
Can one create new spaces, move walls, remove floors, refinish every surface and design new furniture while strengthening the character of what we have known as the American Academy in Rome Library? What is its unique character and how does it relate to the rest of the McKim Building? This, in essence, is what occupied us for several years and especially last year, during the ten-month intensive restoration and upgrade of the American Academy in Rome Library, now the Arthur and Janet C. Ross Library.

"Us" consisted of the gifted design team, Architects Cinzia Abbate and Carlo Vigevano with Engineer Bruno Masci, MEP/HVAC Engineer Luigi De Marco and structural Engineer Marco Barone; Christina Huemer (Drue Heinz Librarian) and her staff, especially Paolo Imperatori and Antonio Palladino; yours-truly and the Marco Barone; Christina Huemer (Drue Heinz Librarian, now the Arthur and Janet C. Ross Library, now the Arthur and Janet C. Ross Library.)

The scope of the overall project was fairly broad but at its core was the fact that the Italian partners with bookshelves on the side was a direct response to the narrow beauty of the old Metropolitana which was going to become our new Reading and Folios Room. The new reference desk, named for the late Andrew Heiskell, turned out to be the most difficult single piece of furniture to design because of its location in the middle of the beautiful historical woodwork in the Linda Bettman Reference Room. It was not until the very end of the project that we finally felt comfortable with our design. We needed to spend time actually working in the Library and watching the old furniture come back to life, after cleaning and re-waxing, before we could design this desk. We needed to, as Adele often says, "watch the light".

The rest of the project fell into place. We decided on compact shelving to increase shelving capacity; we designed a new mezzanine to gain more space for the offices and created a second Reading Room on the lower level. For this we selected a corner space which never had a continuous use and because of this lacked clear character or relevance. However we knew we could turn it into a relevant part of the Library by anchoring our design around an original McKim table with its chairs and lamps that we needed to relocate from the Linda Bettman Reference Room to make room for the new Andrew Heiskell Reference Desk.

With plans in hand, we went out to bid and began construction in early September 2006. A General Contractor called MarCost, new to the Academy but not to the Architects, won the bid. MarCost turned out to be a very good contractor. Key to the project was Nazzareno Palmieri, the tireless Superintendent who worked every Saturday for ten months, a few Sundays and holidays, almost never lost his cool and consistently went beyond the call of duty. One day, a few hours before the official Cortile Dinner for Fellows and Trustees during Trustee week in Rome, with over 100 dinner guests expected, the Sous Chef Chris Boswell called me in a slight panic because their pasta maker had just broken. The Maintenance Crew had already left for the day so I immediately called Nazzareno who instead of going home, came to the kitchen with his toolbox and fixed the pasta maker.

The restoration of the Library brought one major surprise. During the early stages of demolition and structural consolidation we discovered that the main sewer line that passed below the Library space had collapsed and had to be rebuilt. This added a tremendous amount of work and time to the project, all of which had to be absorbed within our schedule making it mandatory from the very beginning to work weekends.
Our work completed (including the move of all 120,000 plus books first out and then back in, a painstaking enterprise that was carried out under the supervision of Christina Huemer and her staff), the Library reopened on September 3rd, 2007 to the new Fellows and a week later to our outside readers just as Carmela had promised.

It is always a little sad when a project comes to an end for those of us so intensively involved. But after ten months of noise and loud voices it was now quiet. The readers were back inside the Library, working in silence and the Library was where it belongs, at the center of Academy life.

Architect Carlo Vigevano was the Architect of Record for Construction which meant that his professional liability was on the line while we were carrying out major construction and excavations right below the Fellows bedrooms and studies.

The Director Carmela Franklin was a great supporter and advocate for the project, always finding the positive side of the project even in the face of the dust and noise that the project brought on everything and everybody. She also kept us on schedule by reminding us during her frequent site visits that she had given her word to the Roman community of scholars that we would reopen the Academy Library on time.

One of the great privileges of living and working at the Academy is that it deepens ones understanding of the purpose of the institution, the buildings, the gardens, the community and how it all comes together. This knowledge is fundamental during the design phase of any project and must continue to guide the project as it unfolds during construction and implementation.

Restoration is a process and each new insight and decision must be checked against the overall project intent. Close attention must be paid to understand the nuances of the evolving project and one needs be ready to refine design decisions, whether it is the amount of shellac to be applied to the original wood or the height of a vertical element for a new railing.

Finally, if everyone involved in the project understands the spirit of the restoration process, then changes can be made without major “change orders” or extra cost. When we uncovered some old rails which had been used to transport coal back in the early life of the McKim building, we were able incorporate them into our floor design as if they had always been part of the project.

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Arthur Ross (1900–2007) was elected a trustee of the American Academy in Rome in 1981 and remained a member of the Academy's board of directors for many years. He was a passionate supporter of the Academy and its programs, and became an integral part of the Academy family.

At a luncheon celebrating the endowment gift, Arthur and Janet Ross made a name for the library by "...the library, with its world-scale collection of over 150,000 volumes on art and archaeology, has always interested us, [as has] the reading rooms, with which we have had a love affair since early on."

"As the years have passed, adding to my devotion to the Academy, I began to feel a sense of patriotism and the attraction of supporting this great cultural outpost of our country. We have enough army and naval bases around the world and enough preoccupation with guns and military hardware, so to raise our flag high over the library was an opportunity not to be missed."

Arthur Ross's affection for and commitment to the Academy was expressed not only in his support for the library but also in his promotion of the fellowships, the creative and scholarly programs, and the place itself. He endowed the Arthur Ross Predoctoral Rome Prize Fellowship in Ancient Studies, the first, in 1970.

Judith Di Maio (faar’99), traveled to Beijing in 2007 as part of a summer program between NYIT and Tsinghua. The trip included visits to 2008 Olympic stadium and pool complex.

John H. Thow (faar’76), born November 2, 1949, died April 3, 2007. He was 57 years old.

"Mr. Thow’s music combined a modernist’s approach to rhythm and harmony with an almost Romantic lyricism, and often the music’s interest lay in the tension between those contradictory impulses. In other works, his interests ranged far and wide, and he had a particular fondness for Western music."

Allan Kozinn

"Reserved and self-effacing, Mr. McCrindle moved rectilinearly through life, traveling constantly, moving from one project to the next."


Shelia Silver (faar’79) is the recipient of the Raymond and Beverly Sackler Museum, President’s Prize for her opera The Wooden Sword. This award is organized by the University of Connecticut’s School of Fine Arts. Her composition Twilight’s Last Gleaming, for two pianos and orchestra, was performed at the Morgan Library in New York in November 2007 with pianists Gil Gallich and Christian Dahl and percussionist Hsin Yen Lee.


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By mid-December the air in the shadows has grown painfully cold. Hardly any Italians seem to bring their children outside. When we pushed our twins through the Villa Sciarra, where stone fauns and nymphs stand in the frozen basins of fountains and two peacocks strut through a chain-link aviary trailed by dozens of pigeons like royal attendants, we are often the only parents strolling babies.

Virgil claims in the Aeneid that the Romans dunked newborns into freezing streams to “harden them,” but the few baby carriages we’ve seen this winter contain infants ensouled in snowsuits under down comforters, not so much a baby at all as a pillow with a head and two mittens and two shoes stitched on the corners. On buses older women slide the windows shut as soon as we wheel through the doors. In the supermarket, a woman in an ankle-length skirt watches us bag groceries, then stops boys and asks something like “You’re taking them outside?”

How does she think we got there? It’s only 35 or 40°F after all. Try this sometime: Park a stroller in the shade in Rome in the winter. Within a minute an Italian mother will stop. “They must be put in the sun,” she’ll say. One pair of ladies took the stroller out of our hands and wheeled it thirty feet across a piazza and positioned it themselves.

Either Virgil was lying or the Romans have gotten soft. We dress the twins in hooded sweatsuits, fleece jumpers. We draw glances of horror. We are parenting daredevils.

Late afternoons, as it’s getting dark, I walk from my studio to a café and take whichever boy happens to be awake out in the backpack to see the starlings. Tonight, it’s Owen. We head downhill from the apartment, kicking up leaves, the frame of the carrier creaking in the cold. He hums a sustained C-sharp into my ear. We pass the Feltrinelli on Largo di Torre Argentina, where almost every night a chain-link aviary trailed by dozens of pigeons, a hundred or so, turn on battlefields. These chickens, Pliny said, held “supreme empire over the empire of the world.” Down in Trastevere streetlights come on, one after another. The starlings rematerialize, washed in blue, a five-hundred-foot-tall dancer turning flips. I prop the backpack on its stand and adjust Owen’s hat and give him a bottle, wondering what he sees. Maybe you know the history: In 1890, in New York City, a drug manufacturer named Eugene Schieffelin, who wanted to make sure that every bird mentioned in Shakespeare’s plays was introduced to North America, released eighty starlings in Central Park. A hundred and fifteen years later the United States alone has 200 million starlings—and angry wheat farmers and flocks sucked into jet engines and histoplasmosis, a respiratory disease that originates in starling feces. And that doesn’t count the birds in Canada and Mexico.

In Rome there are a million or so. When they’re twirling above the rooftops, hardly anyone seems to notice. Outside the Feltrinelli on Largo Torre Argentina, where almost every night a flock performs arabesques above six umbrella pigeons, I am usually the only person on the sidewalk looking up. The few Romans who do pay attention seem to want them gone. A couple of years ago volunteers tortured a couple of starlings, recorded the distress calls, then walked laps of Termini broadcasting the recordings through megaphones.

Imagine what the birds heard! Strange voices shouting, Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! It didn’t appear to scare them off.

In front of me, in front of Owen, ten thousand birds swerve, check up, and float. Then they plunge. A tourist at the railing asks, in English, “Who’s the leader?” but no one answers. Knowing or not, we all stand there taking our auspices, reading the omens of the birds. Starling, earthling. How little we understand.

Nero had a starling that spoke Greek and Latin. Mozart kept a starling in a cage beside his piano.

The real question, the one that keeps me coming back to this railing, night after night, is, Why do they bother to be so beautiful?

On the street beside me Owen hums as he drinks his milk. He explores the texture of his backpack with his fingertips; he blinks his big eyelids.

Adapted from Four Seasons in Rome: On Twins, Insomnia, and the Biggest Funeral of the World, by Anthony Doerr (Scribner, 2007.)
Flatland was a collaborative art project installed at New York’s Sculpture Center. The main things to know about Flatland are that it is four stories tall and only two feet wide, and that six artists—Pelle Bruge, Eva La Cour, Douglas Paulson, Maria Petchnig, Alex Schwerder (saa’06), and myself (saa’06), decided to live in it around the clock without coming out, starting 24 April 2007. Two members of the group stayed inside Flatlands for 21 days.

The shape of the Flatland structure is schematic, a thin-sliced sculpture revealing a diagram of six people’s (temporary) lives pressed between two plates of glass. You can see us all, all the time. It is like living in a giant flat screen TV.

Flatland was designed for living in. It was outfitted with a bathroom, a kitchen, and multi-purpose personal spaces (work and sleep) for each participant. Food was delivered (by Fresh Direct!) so that we could stay in the structure and not come out. This we did, and it was central to the meaning of the piece.

Flatland is a proposition. What would your life be like if your life was different, if things you took for granted were gone and your world was (metaphorically) reduced to two dimensions? This notion falls within the concerns of my work, which has involved creating and living in (grotesquely) alternative architectures. In doing this, I exploit a fundamental aspect of architecture: the mutually formative relationship between subject and object, between people and buildings.

Alex, the Flatlander with a degree in architecture and a knack for aphorisms put it like this: “We shape our buildings; therefore they shape us.”

Another way to look at Flatland is as a short, weird, social experiment. Flatland is a collaborative piece and the participating artists came from distant parts. Only one of us knew more than two of the others. So, we were not a group of total strangers, but we weren’t a family either. Initially, we became a community on the internet. We were aware of the problems we might have coping with each other in this tightly compressed environment and we started working to avoid these on our wiki-page chat room (Our wiki link/history, and blog of members’ thoughts and feelings are all linked to our web site, http://www.flatlandproject.com, which also has lots of pictures.) We divided up areas of responsibility according to interest, and we came up with a system for making decisions as a group based on the Quaker consensus method, which stresses agreement, not majority rules. And the Flatlanders were chosen partly based on their emotional maturity, self-reliance, and tolerance.

We tried to prepare ourselves individually and set up a community that could cope with the confining effects of our new chosen home. We knew it would be extreme; the prospect was in fact a little scary. Surprisingly, no one ever felt the claustrophobic sense of being trapped that you might expect. The transparent walls dissipated the sense of confinement. When we divided up Flatland into private spaces, the lower ones were chosen first. They would be less private, but less scary too. After a day or two, height ceased to be an issue.

There had been a lot of concerned talk about the deadly ladder holes in the floor, to step over and easy to fall through. We never did make them safer; we just got used to them. We got used to it all, becoming as casual as squirrels running along branches. I think we all felt safe.

Surprisingly too, privacy did not seem to be a problem. Flatland was designed to give each person his or her own space, that no one else had to pass through to get somewhere else. True, for seven hours a day, we were on display, and there was no place to hide except the bathrooms. But that left 17 hours with no conspicuous observers (you just forgot about the web-cams). Flatland is configured to have eight “dead-ends” and each of us had one. Except for Eva, across from the kitchen, then it was easy to get on your own. It was easier to be isolated than to be social. In fact, almost the only place one could sit and get physically comfortable was in one’s own space. So, as radical as the space we shaped was, its effects were felt most strongly in the social dimension.

The Flatland paradox was this: as close-quartered as we were, it was nearly impossible to gather in a group. Two people could stand face to face, but in the Flatland space, three people together form a line, which is not the shape of congeniality. And four people are just a congestion.

We came to act very independently, but everything one did affected the others. Everything: getting up in the middle of the night to pee, leaving a dirty cup in the sink, even just relaxing with a cup of coffee in the kitchen, you were in somebody else’s way. Our social space was about squeezing past each other. Such constant inconvenience required unflagging courtesy and cheerful greetings; anything less could be interpreted as annoyance by the other person.

We built Flatland in ten very long, hard days, so we were creating a society of introverts. It was not the goal of all of us to last the whole 21 days. All were free to leave at anytime they chose without drawing any criticism. I think that four of us stayed exactly the length of time we had decided on before hand; the other two had been proceeding open-endedly, and when they reached the point of diminishing returns, they elected to leave.

Adaptation was a struggle for each of us, and each found her/his own way, with a personal set of results and lessons learned. Some of us felt exhaustion and muscle cramps a few days after we left. We call it “flatlag”. Others did not experience this. Some became depressed and (relatively) listless in Flatland. Others did not.

What is Flatland good for? What is the value in doing something dumb in a difficult way?

Adversity is instructive. You understand the sun best by being in its presence, but you understand its value to you by better having it taken away. Grotesque distortions separate the meaningful from the merely taken for granted. When you reduce the structure and surface of things to get past the friction and misunderstandings that our close-quarters made inevitable, it was not the goal of all of us to last the whole 21 days.

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The Flatland paradox was this: as close-quartered as we were, it was nearly impossible to gather in a group. Two people could stand face to face, but in the Flatland space, three people together form a line, which is not the shape of congeniality. And four people are just a congestion.

We came to act very independently, but everything one did affected the others. Everything: getting up in the middle of the night to pee, leaving a dirty cup in the sink, even just relaxing with a cup of coffee in the kitchen, you were in somebody else’s way. Our social space was about squeezing past each other. Such constant inconvenience required unflagging courtesy and cheerful greetings; anything less could be interpreted as annoyance by the other person. We knew we could not afford to let things flare up. Everyone was very tolerant and tried to be considered, and it was enough. We only had to make it last for three weeks; you cannot over-emphasize the importance of time when assessing tolerance.

Getting together for the pleasure of each other’s company was awkward and we only did it when an issue demanded a meeting. We attempted group meals, but they were never casual and expansive; instead, they were valiant attempts at congeniality, clustering around two of the ladder holes, balancing a plastic bowl and a plastic cup. They were short affairs, after which we would slip back to our lairs or pair up to talk a little longer. It was hard to party.

We were creating a society of introverts. We found cooking meals in pairs to be a good remedy for this. Maria became everyone’s personal trainer and her sessions were good for the mind and body, central in keeping us together.

Time went by really quickly, but nothing much got done. Our everyday chores took much longer then in the outside world, but we didn’t really notice. It was hard to work, hard even to read. We watched a lot of Netflix DVD’s; we even tried to do that as a group but that was unsuccessful. It was uncomfortable for even two people to try to watch a movie together, but we tried it a number of times: it was a way to show that you cared about being together, that friendship was worth the stiff neck. In the end, I think the struggle came down to this: balancing individual needs and comforts against the need to keep the group cohesive and fluid. One had to take care of oneself, but show openness and caring to the others. We depended on trust, tolerance and displays of good will to get past the friction and misunderstandings that our close-quarters made inevitable.

It was not the goal of all of us to last the whole 21 days. All were free to leave at anytime they chose without drawing any criticism. I think that four of us stayed exactly the length of time we had decided on before hand; the other two had been proceeding open-endedly, and when they reached the point of diminishing returns, they elected to leave.
There’s a certain freedom in the long blue slant of its uncaring, in the wind that knocks the surface onto rocks, and there’s a dent made in that wind by the woman who recites straight into it, pretending the waves might hear or that some larger being that is sea or seeing hangs there listening, when sea air’s so clearly full of its own gusts and grunts, inanimate uprisings. In the line of no one’s sight, her voice lost in the spray, she feels a chilling freedom: how the foam edges the sheets of zig-zag patterned water while gulls’ shrill outbursts punctuate the sky (one cloudy, sentimental phrase or canvas brushed with amber, green, and rose). What welcomes, and ignores, and doesn’t question? Sheer emptiness. It’s like a husk for her alone. It’s like a shell for absence. Without an audience, she makes a noise swallowed by waves and wind, just as the waves themselves—or no, just like the drops lost in the waves, which neither care nor keep distinctions—sweep out a place inside an amphitheatre she imagines rising around her, with columns that crash instantly, like the white foam that collides and shreds its layered castles. Her words drift, dissolve, and disappear. A crest of words has surged and poured into the sea. It doesn’t matter now what the lines say.

Tasso’s Oak

Seeming cinder clinker your collapse prolonged by iron arms whose square trunk too is splitting, swollen with rot reaches in death skyward as blackened flecks filter silently invisibly through the fume-filled air the exhalations of hospital ductwork incessant cars huffing unknowing (knowing) pilgrims that enshroud-embalm you enwrap-attack you as beer bottles blossom amidst snuffed-out cigarettes and withered weeds all crowd round the lopped off remains of an interloping shrub taken root in your crumbling thigh near the once shady slope (now backed with a rampart of solemn brick) where Tasso laid his wrecked body grasped soft grass touched chill earth with knowing fingertips gazed at sprawling Rome through swaying green.
Rome Reborn

For more than a decade Diane Favro (Fulbright Resident 1979–80) has been engaged in an exciting and innovative endeavor to make ancient Rome accessible in a virtual format. Peter Holliday (faar ’95) met with her to find out more about the project.

Peter Holliday: What is the “Rome Reborn” project?

Diane Favro: Rome Reborn is a real-time model of late antique Rome formally presented to the world by Rome’s Mayor Walter Veltroni on 31 June 2007. Users can navigate through the model with complete freedom, moving up, down, left and right at will, and entering prominent public buildings such as the Roman Senate House, the Colosseum, or the Temple of Venus and Rome. Each model has extensive metadata recording the breadth of range of source materials, such as texts and ancient images, as well as the scholarly advisors and modellers. The American Academy in Rome has a long tradition of archaeological and architectural research, including the promotion of printed, verbal, and physical reconstructions. The digital Rome Reborn project brings all such inquiries into the 21st century and encourages global collaboration. This amazing model allows us to appreciate individual buildings of ancient Rome within a broad urban context, and thus also in understanding how the city took shape over time.

PH: How did the project originate?

DF: The project began over 10 years ago at UCLA when Professor Bernie Frischer and I established a digital lab to reconstruct historical environments (website: www.etc.ucla.edu). The operating goals were to allow full interactivity (movement through the models in real time) and to include as much context as possible rather than focusing on models of individual structures. Initial work centered on the Roman Forum as a well-documented and important urban center. With generous support from numerous foundations, including the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the National Science Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities, the project expanded. Carefully documented high-resolution models of individual buildings are placed within a larger urban model of the entire city inside the Aurelian Wall. The greater city model is based on the famous plaster model of Rome in 320 C.E, located at the Museo della Civiltà Romana.

PH: The Plastico, based on Iñatool Gismond’s reconstruction in the museum at EUR. We all use such models to point out to students what is wrong, and how new archaeological reconstructions challenge that model. How do you determine what evidence to use?

DF: A scientific committee of international experts is formed for each building or urban space. These teams include archaeologists, classicists, architectural historians, and others as appropriate. The scholars work closely with the modelers, most of whom are UCLA architecture graduate students knowledgeable about construction, design, software, programming, and architectural history. The scholars and architects collaborate, carefully selecting the appropriate data and interpretations. All information is documented to clarify the parts of the reconstruction based on archaeological remains in situ, the parts based on extant architectural fragments, and the more hypothetical sections based upon secondary representations and analogues. The aim is not a hyper-realistic depiction; but an informed representation and visualization of current knowledge about ancient Rome. Thus we do not include features that we know existed in the ancient city (such as plantings and painted architectural components), but for which there is insufficient information for a reconstruction.

PH: What have you described sounds much more fluid and dynamic than the old Plastico. As the scholarship evolves, so does “Rome Reborn?”

DF: Right. An important aim is the creation of a scholarly platform that will allow various researchers to add, comment on, or change the existing model, or provide alternative solutions. This resource would be something like a Wikipedia site, but with a mechanism for vetting the contributions; in effect it would be a dynamic digital publication with peer review.

PH: How do you envision your virtual model being used?

DF: For me, the process of creating the model is especially informative. Building a model digitally requires the gathering of various information as well as constructing a real physical structure. As a result, the researcher is compelled to consider the ancient architectural environment holistically. In addition, the collaborative work in many fields from archaeologists to acoustical engineers to computer scientists, is especially stimulating. The modeled environments are used as humanities labs, where scholars test theories about view sheds, processional movement, construction, acoustics, and other aspects. The models are also used as settings for live performances. In addition, these interactive models are invaluable teaching tools used in many different classes, including art history, classics, architecture and urban design. The UCLA Experimental Technologies Center also has a robust outreach program, showing the models to hundreds of K-12 students and general audiences each year. The ability to excite and inform viewers of all ages makes such immersive creations particularly compelling.

PH: Who will have access to it?

DF: The ultimate aim is to have complete open access to the models over the internet. We hope that improvements in web delivery will make this possible in the near future. In the interim, the Experimental Technologies Center at UCLA will soon launch new, lower-resolution models of ancient Rome in different periods on the website, viewable using the free Google Earth application.

PH: Will it ever be finished?

DF: Like the city of Rome itself, the digital model lives. In contrast to physical reconstruction models of cork or plaster, digital re-constructions can be continuously altered and improved. The Rome Reborn model is not a definitive, static model of ancient Rome, but a malleable knowledge representation. In this virtual environment scholars from around the world can conduct experiments, add alternative reconstructions, and visualize new research and findings.
Interview with Pina Pasquantonio

James Bodnar: Let us begin with you describing your personal interest in wine.

Pina Pasquantonio: Yes. That started a long time ago. I’ve always been interested in wine. My grandfather made wine, my father made wine.

JB: And where is your family located?

PP: My family is from Abruzzo. I’ve always been interested in wine and enjoy it very much, so this had been in my thoughts for a long time, to become a sommelier and actually learn the secrets of the trade. But it’s a very expensive field to get into and involves a lot of study.

JB: Is the education itself expensive?

PP: Yes, and you also have to participate in a lot of wine tastings, and sometimes they’re quite costly as well, so it becomes a pretty expensive proposition.

But three years ago, when I celebrated my twentieth anniversary at the American Academy, the academy decided to give me a gift, so they subsidised part of the cost of this course that I took.

JB: How did they know you had this interest?

PP: I was given a choice, actually. I was told, “Well, you can choose the wine course that you would like to take”, and so I said, “Well, my interest is in wine.” Consider that I was already buying wine for the academy without having any expertise, just trying to go on how carefully we could get it. Then I started this course, which was simply amazing. It lasts for a year and a half and you’re really taken through basic techniques of wine making, you learn all about Italian wine, and all about Italian grapes, and then you do international wines. The final part of the course is matching food and wine, and they teach you all the techniques for doing that.

JB: Now, did you travel at all, or was it all done here in Rome?

PP: Mostly here in Rome.

JB: So no going off to vineyards or—

PP: We did. We went to a couple of vineyards, and you could do more as an extra-curricular thing, but of course I was working at the same time, and my schedule did not always correspond.

I think about midway through the course I started to set up a little wine cellar here in the academy, buying different kinds of wine, and towards the end of the course, well I then was matching the food to the wine as well, getting the menus and instituting the procedures that we’re doing here now.

JB: So how do you do that? Do you and Mona, the chef, coordinate ahead of time?

PP: No, she gives me a gift, so it becomes a pretty expensive proposition.

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JB: Very economical.

PP: It’s very economical! If you consider that you’d probably be spending twice as much in a store for the same kind of bottle. Now that I have been introduced to the wine world and various people in it, I get to hear about wines that are good and taste them before they become well known, so I can purchase them before they become too expensive.

JB: That’s great. What regions do you like the most, and share with the fellows?

PP: I try to make the fellows—last years and this years—understand that there’s the Nebbiolo, and those from the Barolo area, and Chiavari and the super Tuscan, so I take them all through Italy. I often like them to taste really special wines. For example, last year I introduced them to wines which they would never have heard of and you’ll probably not find in the United States. The technique used to make this wine is antique. You let the must ferment on the skins of the grapes very briefly, and continuously add new grapes to the fermenting must. So it’s a fresh, good wine.

JB: Almost like Côte de Beaune.

PP: Exactly, exactly. And there’s another one called Susumaniello, which is a particularly old grape that originates in Puglia, if I’m not mistaken. I also introduced them to real Verdicchio, not just the old Fazi Battaglia with its distinctive bottle, but excellent Verdicchio that has got top marks.

I also introduce them to all kinds of grapes and wines from Sicily, which is just a wonderful powerhouse, and wines from Trientes, LaMarche, Umbria, and my own region of Italy, Abruzzo, in fact the entire peninsula. They all come away knowing a little bit about Italian wines in general and this year I hope to do a that’s a must thing.

JB: Do you ever actually speak with the fellows about what your approach is and your strategies for buying and serving wine?

PP: Sometimes at lunch, when it’s a particular wine, I’ll try to write up something about it. I don’t think it’s much to do here that I don’t always have the time to indulge in that. Last year’s fellows asked me many times to organize a tasting, but that’s just too busy; I really couldn’t manage. But this year when I do my food chat, I would like to explain to them about how Italian wines are classified as opposed to French wines, and to give them an idea of the techniques involved in wine tasting, just little things.

And then I’ll have them taste wines—but nothing famous. Instead, I would like to have them taste something that they might not know about, such as a Taurasi, which is considered the Barolo of the south, and which they might never taste unless they went to Campania.

JB: Did you ever spoken with Hank Millon about this?

PP: No.

JB: Hank—I have heard through the grapevine—used to send an academy vehicle up to the Pediment period-odally to pick up wine, in the years when he was a director.

PP: Pediment is just a fantastic, fantastic area. Le Langhe produces outstanding wines, but they’re mostly beyond our price range. I will introduce them eventually to some nice Barolo’s, and they’ve already had a few Barbaresco’s. I would also like to have them taste some Lambrusco, because there’s a lot to be said for this wine, even though many people think, “Oh, this is sparkling red, so it’s disgusting.” It most certainly is not. It is matched to the right kind of food.

I take great pride in the fact that last year’s fellows were writing down the wines served at dinner and asking me questions about them. And we’ve been left with a bit of an education on Italian wine—not too bad at all.

JB: How large a cellar do we have at the Academy?

PP: It’s not huge. We have a little climate-controlled area in the cellar—meaning that we have air conditioning in there—so I am able to keep the wines at a constant temperature. And this is important for the barrels, since I cannot be able to buy shelves for it, it looks very nice and it is more functional, but it’s not perfect. I keep it out of the window for about six months. We store about five months worth of wine. Eventually I would like an authentic cellar where I could store a good wine being sold at a lower cost in bulk, or a wine with excellent aging potential, the kind you taste and think, “This is a good wine; a few more years and it’ll be a fantastic wine.”

JB: Are those wines that you are now buying the kind that age well?

PP: No. Because there is a rapid turnover, I would like to do that in the future. It would be a good investment for us.

JB: So what volume of wine does the Academy go through in a month, approximately?

PP: Oh, my goodness. Calculate that at every dinner we serve between 18 and 24 bottles, depending on the number of people present.

JB: That’s six nights a week.

PP: There’s no wine served at lunch. But then I also provide the wine that is sold at the bar. I try to keep them distinct.

JB: So that’s 500 bottles a month.

PP: It’s a lot.

JB: In the course of a year, that’s five to six thousand bottles.

PP: I am talking about a lot of money.

JB: And that’s not including the bar or special events.

PP: That’s right, because for a special event I’ll purchase a specific wine to match the menu.

JB: So looking forward, besides buying bottles that age so you can build a better wine cellar, what are your other plans?

PP: Well I’d like to build an appropriate cellar that has all the conditions and requirements that you really need. The ideal location, of course, would be the cellar of Casa Rustica, where the wine cellar was located before the academy took over the property. There should be little noise, no vibrations and the humidity and temperature have to be controlled and a certain type of lighting. With a proper wine cellar we could stockpile things that we knew are good and well become excellent. There are so many traditional types of the academy who are interested in wine and could help us get donated wine, we could take the whole project a lot further.

JB: Anything else you want to add?

PP: I think I’ve said everything I needed to say—except that I’ve also become a sommelier in olive oil. Yes. That’s my second interest.

PP: So tell me a little bit about that for a moment.

PP: My family owns olive trees in Abruzzo and produces olive oil, so I became interested in learning more about that as well. In becoming a sommelier, you learn the techniques for making good oil and also how to taste it properly. I have lots of ideas about how to improve my olive grove and the oil we produce in order to eventually bottle it and sell it commercially. It’s going to take a few years’ work because you need to invest in improvements and then determine when and how you want to harvest it and how many types of oil you want to produce. So that’s my next project.

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National Endowment for the Arts Rome Prize
John Ochsendorf, Associate Professor, Department of Architecture, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
The Preservation of Masonry Vaulting in Rome

Landscape Architecture
Pench Parcharzalis Trusts Rome Prize
Alan Beag, Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University
Landscape Reclamation and the Pontine Marshes

Garden Club of America Rome Prize
Lisa Taiona Switkin, Senior Associate, Field Operations
Monument Landscapes: Construction and Construction of the City

Literature
John Guare Writer’s Fund Rome Prize, A Gift of Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman
Junot Diaz, Writer and Professor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Tokyo Rose: A Novel

Joseph Brody Rome Prize, A Gift of the Drue Heinz Trust/ American Academy of Arts and Letters
Sarah Manguo, Writer and Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Writing, and Using Miscellaneous Knowledge
The Guardians (A Collection of Short Prose)

Music Composition
Samuel Barber Rome Prize
Erik Gao, Composer
Sleep Towards Sound: An Opera in Four Acts

Frederic A. and Barbara Dorsch Rome Prize
Yotam Habar, Composer
Music in the Jewish Community of Rome: Research and Composition of a New Work for Mezzo-Soprano and Chamber Orchestra

Historic Preservation and Conservation
Booth Family Rome Prize
Jana Dambroglo, Conservator, Document Conservation Laboratory, National Archives and Records Administration
A Technical Study of Northeastern Italian Monuments Legal and Accounting Documents and Bindings at the Vatican Secret Archives

Visual Arts
Chuck Close Rome Prize
Daniel Bozhkov, Artist
Eternity’s Ephemera: Frescoes of Rome’s Daily Histories

Humanities
Ancient Studies
Andrew Moss Pre-Doctoral Rome Prize
Robert R. Chenault, Interdepartmental Program in Greek and Roman History, University of Michigan
Rome and its Senators in the Fourth Century A.D.

National Endowment for the Humanities Pre-Doctoral Rome Prize
Jackie Elliott, Assistant Professor, Department of Classics, University of Colorado at Boulder
Ennis and the Architecture of the Annals

Francis Barber Tractemith Rome Prize Foundation
Helena M. Woodruff Fellowship of the Archæological Institute of America Pre-Doctoral Rome Prize (Year One of a Two-Year Fellowship)
John N. N. Hopkins, Department of Art and Art History, The University of Texas at Austin
The Topographical Transformation of Archaic Rome: A New Interpretation of Architecture and Geography in the Early City

Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Pre-Doctoral Rome Prize
Eleanor Rust, Professor of Classics, University of California, Berkeley
Ex Angulis Secretisque Librorum: Reading, Writing, and Using Miscellaneous Knowledge in the Noctes Atticae

Medieval Studies
National Endowment for the Humanities/ Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Post-Doctoral Rome Prize
Florence Eliza Glaze, Assistant Professor of History, and Co-Director, The Honors Program, Coastal Carolina University
Garabos and the Sarmatians: Medical Texts and Medical Practice in Southern Italy c. 1000-1225

Samuel H. Kress Foundation Pre-Doctoral Rome Prize (Year One of a Two-Year Fellowship)
Erik Gustafson, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University
Tradition and Renewal in the Thirteenth-Century Franciscan Architecture of Tuscany

Modern Italian Studies
National Endowment for the Humanities/ Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Post-Doctoral Rome Prize
Paul Arpaia, Assistant Professor, Department of History, Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Luigi Federzuni, Standard-bearer of Italianità from Liberal to Post-Fascist Italy

Marin and Andrew Heiskell Pre-Doctoral Rome Prize
Christian Ferando, Department of Art History and Archaeology, Columbia University
Staging Neoclassicism

Renaissance and Early Modern Studies
Mellencamp Merci Johnson Pre-Doctoral Rome Prize
Thomas Frederick Mayer, Professor, Department of History, Augsburg College
Trying Galileo

Donald and Maria Cox Pre-Doctoral Rome Prize
Daniel R. McReynolds, Associate Professor of Modern Italian Studies, Department of History, Augustana College
Refiguring the Palladian Legacy: Architectural Reform in Eighteenth-Century Venice

Phyllis G. Goodhart Samuel H. Kress Foundation Pre-Doctoral Rome Prize (Year Two of a Two-Year Fellowship)
Gregory Waldrop, History of Art Department, University of California, Berkeley
Sixteen Sirens: Prints and Visual Representation in Early Quattrocento Siena

Paul Mellon Post-Doctoral Rome Prize
Marjorie Curry Woods, Associate Professor, Department of English, The University of Texas at Austin
Weeping for Dido: Male Writers and Female Emotions in the Medieval and Renaissance Classroom
Interview conducted by James L. Bodnar 10/10/2007
James Bodnar: To begin, I would like to ask you about your background and your interest in cooking.

Mona Talbot: Okay. I'm originally from Canada. My grandmother was an exceptional home cook, and I learned a lot from her. When I was in college at the University of Victoria, I got a summer job cooking in a refrectorium camp in northern British Columbia. I realized that I had a real love for cooking and could possibly make a living at it, and I had a yearning to go to Europe, so I saved money that summer and was able to spend the winter in Europe.

When I came back, I went to cooking school in Portland, Oregon. When I graduated, I did an internship at Chez Panisse, in Berkeley, California. That's where I began my association with Alice Waters. I worked at Chez Panisse for about five years and learned everything. It was an incredible experience, all about sustainability, organic food, a great approach to cooking.

And then I decided to go to France, right to the source. I lived in Brittany and cooked in a very small fish restaurant there, and then I was offered a job in Paris, so I came to New York to get a work visa. While I was in New York, I worked one year, a little bit for Elizibar.

JB: Which location?
MT: I worked at EAT and the Vinegar Factory, and then opened a new restaurant called Across the Street, right in front of Aspen Green. He wanted me to do a Chez Panisse-style restaurant. I was not the chef. It was another Chez Panisse person, but I worked there, too, while I was waiting for my visa to be processed. During that time, I also catered a wedding at the country home of Annie Liebowitz, whose sister works there, too. So I cooked for her and her friends, and afterwards, I was offered a job in Paris, so I came to New York to get a work visa. While I was in New York, I worked a little bit for Elizibar for a few dates.

JB: And how long did you work there?
MT: I was in New York for one year. I worked a little bit for Elizibar for a year.

JB: And which location?
MT: Yes, it was a great, beautiful home, the old Astor estate in Rhinebeck, New York.

Late, while I was in France, I got a call asking if I would be interested in cooking for them privately — coming back to New York and being their personal chef. I decided to stay on in France for six more months, and then I returned to New York and ended up working for Annie and Susan for six years. I worked for them in many different capacities — I catered their private dinner parties; I also catered all of Annie's New York photo shoots for about four years, and did a lot of great collaboration with Susan, and really enjoyed it very, very much. Susan was a brilliant person to work with the Academy.

JB: They were a great couple.
MT: After that, I worked for the New York Restoration Project for one year—Bette Midler's foundation in New York City—to help her develop an after-school cooking program for children. I developed the project, but they didn't launch it, they weren't able to do that point dedicate the funding. And Alice Waters asked if I would come back to California and help her with the new school lunch program that she's been developing for the United States. The model program is at Martin Luther King Middle School in Berkeley. They're designing a beautiful Dining Commons. I worked with Alice developing recipes and menus, and at the same time I did a lot of private catering.

When the Academy job came along—when the Dining Commons project had just been delayed for another six months, so she said, “Why don't you go to Rome for six months and help the American Academy find a chef and launch their dining room project?”

So I came to Rome, initially for six months to try to get your dining room open; it took six months before I could even get into the kitchen. There were a lot of rules and the chef wasn't comfortable with having outside people in her kitchen, so I spent six months finding suppliers, cooking at the Belasco for Carmella the director—doing different dinner parties for her and developing a style that would work for the Academy.

Then, on February 26th, we took over the kitchen, and we haven't looked back since.

JB: That is a big date, an important date.
MT: Yes, that is a date, an important date.

JB: So you have complete control now.
MT: Yes, we do. We still have the caterer in the kitchen, who was the previous food service provider who cooked and provided the caterers, and there are still some employees who work here, but we're hoping to move in a different direction.

So our goal is to be 100 percent organic; we're about 95 percent organic right now. We have suppliers from all over Rome. We're looking to create a relationship with a coffee company, to have a corporate coffee donor; it would be an exciting thing for us to have a special Academy coffee—you know, the coffee bar does a great business. We have a pasta donor who donates organic pasta, and we're looking for water, and also wine. So there are exciting developments.

JB: And we have some fruit yesterday at lunch—they were from the garden as well?
MT: Yes. Those purple grapes were from the Balacci. Uva, they're called. They are sweet, and we make jam with them. The little walnut cookies you ate—the jam in them was made from the Balacci grapes.

We also have a relationship with the Culinary Institute of America. We have interns who come from the CIA and work with us for three months. They are very much interested in Italy and in our style of cooking—Panisse approach and the Slow food philosophy, and the added bonus of being here at the Academy, which makes it a really interesting experience.

JB: I noticed some people here this weekend—I believe they're staying up on the mezzanine level—who are helping out in the kitchen.

MT: Lynn McNealy is volunteering—virtually volunteering his expenses—he's a visiting chef from New York. We also opened our kitchen to our very large Chez Panisse family, and there are a lot of other chefs, from all over the United States and in Europe as well who come and work with us, who volunteer their time.

JB: I also heard that you had children from France working with you.
MT: We do. This is a really strong component that I'd like to develop even more: I believe that it's important that the fellows feel ownership, and they are brought together as a family around mealtimes. So, we find tasks that the children can do that are safe and fun and we ask them to come in on Fridays afternoons and they do a little bit of work with us.

We also put out beans to be shelled and walnuts to be cracked out in the courtyard, and the Fellows will often sit there and drink their coffee for an hour or two and shell beans and talk.

There are even fellows that are very interested in cooking. For them, we have a sign-up sheet, they can put on an apron and come in and work with us in the kitchen. We actually put them to work.

JB: Now, are all the fellows aware of the amount of effort you put into it? Do you ever have a chance to talk to them as a group and let them know what you're doing?
MT: Well, this year we haven't. This may or may not be something that's right for your article, but... there was so much attention given to us in the first six months, that we were kind of kept to a lower profile and play things down this news session, let people discover the kitchen in a more natural way. We have individual conversations with them. We are very open. We're more than happy to talk to anybody while we're shelving beans about our projects and philosophy. We will develop this a little bit more, but we haven't made a big announcement about what we're doing, what our goals are. Slow food itself is the most important part. We don't want to draw attention to ourselves; we're here to support the academy. By providing food that's nutritious, delicious and inexpensive, we can support the mission of the Academy. People come here as friends—or residents can come and sit for a long time at the table, shell beans and talk, and that's our goal. We really want to integrate ourselves more and more into the academy.

We also love feeding the staff and the faculty, the management—we want them to feel as at home as possible, as well as taken care of as the fellows. Part of the Slow Food mission is to promote the local food scene, very democratic and everybody is entitled to eat the same quality of food.

JB: Well that's the key to the meals at the Academy as well: we leave our baggage at the door, and come together and share as a community.
MT: Exactly. Yes. And that’s the driving force for us: to make people feel welcomed.

Everyone is equal at the table—that’s the whole idea behind one long table and the cortile—we’re all in this together. Another thing that makes our approach to cooking particularly appropriate for the academy is that the people are very interested in the process, not just the final product. We really need that kind of understanding. We do everything by hand; we don’t buy anything premade or packaged. We care enough to do it ourselves and know where it’s going into it.

JB: And is the facility adequate?

MT: For the time being, but so much of the kind of cooking that we like to do is over an open fire, so we’re using the entire space and all the people do that. And a pizza oven. In the summer, on Friday nights, we really want to be able to have barbecues and cook the whole meal outdoors. The garden, I think, is — understood. I would love to have more dinners out there. Under the olive trees, which is just the most incred- ible place—those are my dreams, and we’re making plans for a big grill, spit roaster, a pizza oven and a sink all outdoors. That’s hopefully going to happen in the future. We also need to design our dish room. Before, the food service provided a lot of food in from the cam- pagna that was precooked and they would reheat it. Now we’re working the kitchen hard. To meet the code, we need to have a separate dishwashing setup. We’ve planned to open the kitchen so we have a place for making pastry and putting the dishes that we moved out so that’s a big project that’s on the agenda for this year.

JB: Any further plans?

MT: Yes, I think that in the future, I would like to develop two things: First, a culinary student scholar- ship fund. You know, these students come for three months and we give them room and board, but I would also like to be able to help them with their plane tickets and give them a little pocket money. They’re struggling financially, and I think that would enhance the experience. I’d also like to have a little extra funding to take them out into the countryside and to a couple different restaurants, that kind of thing.

The other idea that has been talked about by a number of people, is a culinary fellowship to study food history and food culture, which is such an important part of the Italian experience.

JB: It’s one strength that you could really bring that is lacking in our fellowship program. In the past, we gained no knowledge through the dining experience of the quality of Italian food, it’s a regional culture, or how it is prepared. In addition, you are bringing this added element, the organic philosophy, which we take for granted in Italy and is definitely less wide- spread then in the United States.

MT: Yes. Italians are about ten years behind the United States but they will catch up, they are let- ting go of the old ways because they’re more labor intensive, and also there’s high yield, higher produc- tion when you use pesticides and herbicides. But the farmers that we work with are very much com- mitted to the organic sustainable movement, which, again, fits perfectly with the whole philosophy of the way the academy and the Janus: looking forward, looking back. That means being modern in our approach to learning, looking at the future but not losing what is important: Italian cuisine. This includes the sim- plicity, the seasonal and regional styles. We are learning a lot. We’re just beginning.

JB: So there is a variety of regionalism that you bring to the table.

MT: No, no, no. We stick mostly to Lazio, the region around Rome. We’re trying not to use too many products outside our province, part of the whole concept of the academy is not importing things from too far away. We do use Sicilian capers, but we get our oil from the hills in Sardinia. We’re using Castelli Romani local cheeses. In the past, we’ve had this whole mission to buy, wherever all of our products come from. The sweetest strawberries come from Latina. It has been really exciting for us, too. I can put up a map, and look around Rome, and see where the best lamb is coming from. We’ve discovered this particular region.

JB: Are many people doing what you are doing here? Are there other people who are working in the focus that you have?

MT: I don’t think so. I really don’t think so. Last year at the Slow Food Conference in Turin, there was a huge discussion about academic institutions. There are pockets of restaurants who are getting caught up in the movement and so are individuals. There is a huge food service element, institutional food, that isn’t taking part. I mean, we just did toooool for lunch. If you people understand what we’re doing, that makes a huge impact. I think that this group of academics and artists understand that interdisciplinarity, and also appreciate the way it’s expressed. But in general, I think taste education is the way in. This is a year that’s ripe and in season and goes well, and that leaves a lasting impression. People can appreciate that and they will begin to compare all the other areas to that ultimate peer. Of a really good mozzarella, and then a really good bread. That was a huge step for us, finding really, really good bread that people enjoy eating. So everything... comes together and creates a whole.

I think that it’s really important that institutions also understand how to do this for large numbers of people on a very tight budget. We can’t afford to buy a lot of different cuts of meat or have a variety of ingredients. That fits into Roman cooking. They don’t eat big roasts, they eat little pieces of meat and lots of pasta or grains, and lots of vegetables or greens and fruit, and sweets on the weekends—you don’t eat sweets every single day. It’s actually here. We’re learning as much as we’re teaching, that’s for sure.

JB: Well, we—the ex-fellows—are very happy you are here.

MT: Thank you.

JB: because we may not get here very often to enjoy it ourselves, we all care about the people who come now and want to make sure they don’t have only the experience we had, but a better one.

MT: Oh, good? Wow!

JB: How long are you going to stay?

MT: I’ve committed to seeing the program through for five years. I think that it matures enough, before four years, after four years—when its really, I’ll know—but I think.

JB: You think that’s when someone else can take it on?

MT: Someone can take it on when all of the systems are in place. We want to build a sustainable infrastructure so we’re training employees who can sustain it. This may be a whole other conversation, but in this industry, when you have semiskilled labor, you tend to just tell them what to do rather than teaching them to think for themselves. But I think it’s really important when we have such a noble profession, that they really understand. We give them roots. For example the bartender, we’re trying to teach him to really understand the why of what we are doing, what we want him to own it. The same for the different people we bring in. We’re very careful who we bring in, because sometimes there’ll be another chef, but these people will play. Italians are very loyal and they stay with one job for many, many years.

JB: Well you can feel there’s a new energy in the kitchen.

MT: Oh, good. We love it! I think you are much more a part of the commu- nity than you might even realize.

MT: I’ve always known that, cooking is the heart of any house. You are definitely in a power position when people are digesting what you make. This is not just looking at it on the wall, they’re actually eating the food you’re making. So we know that food has a lot of impact. And we’re really proud of what we’re doing. We make a mistake and we hear about it at a real slow pace. I just want it to be a flowing dialogue, to know that we’re connected and that everyone feels that they come to you and talk about whatever.

JB: What do you want to do next, after this is a suc- cess?

MT: You know, I don’t know. I’d like to be able to help other institutions. When I was working for Alice, who has been one of my mentors for many years, I talked about what I should do next. After I left New York and came to California. People—consumers—are demanding higher-quality food and they’re concerned about sustainability, and you can get into the schools and change kids’ palates. They start out liking junk food and then you educate their taste. But there’s this whole middle level: food service institutions. How can you get in there and change that?
Staying In Touch! Please send notices of address change, small mail and especially e-mail to the S&F and the AAR by either the S&F website, www.sof-aarome.org or to Shawn Miller, S&F Liaison, at smiller@aarome.org by phone at 212.751.7200 x 42, or by fax to 212.751.7220.

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