

Pippo Ciorra

These Ghosts

Two archaeologies have competed in Rome since the Thirties. The first is the established archaeology of ancient Roman ruins that wind from the Ager and periphery towards the city's monumental centre, purposefully designed to be a large space, *the Fora*. The second is the metaphorical archaeology of Fascism's "imperial" phase which is scattered around the central city in large nuclei: the Città Universitaria, the Foro Italico and the EUR. The two ghosts that circumvent Rome pursue each other round the city, brushing against each other but almost never actually touching, apart from at the epicentre of the Imperial Fora. Schink has seized upon this strange dialogue and majestically expressed it in a project composed of two distinct yet intimately connected series. The first follows the Roman aqueduct Claudio, from the Ager to the city centre. The second investigates the metaphysical landscapes of the EUR neighbourhood, created for a 1942 Expo that would obviously never take place.

The two *archaeologies* could not be any more different. The aqueduct storms into the city enveloping everything in its path: trellis fences, playing fields, lopsided houses, huts, vegetable patches, junctions, unkempt parks, building sites and useless scaffolding. The trauma of this confrontation with the present is continuous and stimulating. Sometimes even worrying, for those concerned about *protection*, but it constantly reminds us, though we may see no humans, what the real lifeblood of the city is. The EUR on the other hand, is sparkling and immaculate, photographed in black and white as though it recently opened, powerful and hyper-architectural with its stone walls, colonnades and thick marble surfaces. The metaphysical void changes meaning here, it excludes life and rather places the maximum emphasis on the urban scenography of the project orchestrated by Marcello Piacentini and created by almost all the modernist architects living in Italy in the Thirties.

There is an inevitable Pasolinian air around the aqueduct, but the memory of the EUR as described by Fellini is still stronger, so totally theatrical as to be "smaller" than the human scale, especially if we're talking about Ekberg's unbridled magnitude. Two complementary souls in this representation of Rome, what we would call *biopolitical* nowadays, the *organic* present that finds room in the folds of the *mineral* past and then the crasser and paradoxical soul of Rome that looms like a surreal and luxurious set. The two are united by Schink's perspectival shortcuts, his ability to arrange the architecture like two conversing people, his attitude to distributing light and shadows when they appear. When attempting to compare Schink's Roman projects with his other work, the recurring and characterising element is something else however, the *sky*. Wherever he may be, from Japan to L.A., from Western Europe to Peru, Schink gives the impression that the urban or country landscape that occupies the lower part of the photograph is nothing more than a tool to define the skyscape, which is often dominating and fleeting at the same time, devoid of substance and colour, livid, ghostly. How appropriate to compare this heavy "air" with the real weight of the stones from Roman archaeology, both genuine and replica.

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