

Alice Marsh, 'March Mostra 2018 / Meet the artists...Oona Grimes'
2018

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As we approach the March Mostra, our second exhibition of this academic year, we will be publishing a series of blogs taking a closer look at the individual practices of our seven resident artists and resident architecture fellow. Our second interview is with Oona Grimes, our Bridget Riley Fellow.



Photo by Antonio Palmieri

Tell us more about your introduction to Rome and the influence of Italian cinema in your work?

I originally fell in love with Rome through cinema – a mis-spent youth watching too many Italian films, and I am now expanding the script through the below-ness & sideways-ness of the city guided by the amazing archaeologists and art historians here; the trips to Cinecittà, San Giovanni in Laterano, Trinità dei Monti & discovering Totò at the Museo di Roma in Trastevere.

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Totò

I loved the arrival at the BSR and enforced chucking out of familiar habits & materials. Initially I was drowning in a sea of visual treats, seeing Rome as if for the first time & felt like a veritable tartan sea sponge, a kid who has overdosed on candy floss.

I felt as if I had woken up in heaven – too many treats & vast amounts of exhilarating information, like a giant tramezzino & triple negroni circumnavigating my brain – completely intoxicated! Excited by the trips & tours, exploring new or overlooked places with the other award-holders, the talks & best of all the casual brilliance of conversations at mealtimes. The shared detail of the drape of a toga or Roman plumbing system, the flow of a fascist fountain, the philosophy of Olivetti..... No drizzling or gratings here just gorgeous dollops & generous splashes of rich nourishing brain fodder!

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Cinecittà

You usually have several different projects on the go at once. What have you been making while here in Rome?

Firstly deciding not to panic or enforce a premature response. Drawing, drawing always drawing. Filling notebooks in order to make sense of things. Fast drawings and slow drawings continually circumnavigating the left brain. So the smaller rapid fire 'not a neorealist storyboard' are coloured pencil fragments from mis-remembered films, and larger slower double-page spread stencil drawings: a potential giant storyboard, non-sequential sequence.

Fumetti grrrrls celebrate flatness of frescoes, blackness of analogue film & badly restored fake patches. A discourse between a Porta Portese tea towel and the handkerchief of Saint Veronica. Fragments of Etruscan porn dance with pixelated vespas & the maid from Teorema. A bit of flayed peeling and patching in a passata of Pasolini and Pucci. *Fumetti grrrrls* are invitations to a dinner party with *i gemelli di Fellini*, Totò and *le sorelle Fontana*.

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i gemelli di Fellini Oona Grimes. Spray paint, coloured pencil & collage on paper. 76x111cm



the priest and the choir grrrrl Oona Grimes. Spray paint, coloured pencil & collage on paper 76x111cm

Your parallel project is also influenced by Italian film. Tell us more about how this project is developing...

I have been re-visiting certain scenes from neorealist films. Initially re-drawing or storyboarding them and trying to make sense of them by re-enacting in a series of wilfully amateurish iPhone rushes – the kind that usually deservedly end up on the cutting room floor or in the giant digital blackhole of tourist photo albums.

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Looping slapstick-like fragments, stretching the *commedia dell'arte* element by repetition and abstraction, a Sisyphean rehearsal for a never to be released film. Owning the discourse through mis-remembering, imitation and low-tech re-enactment.

Which films/scenes have you been looking at...

Umberto D (1952, Vittorio De Sica), extracting the scene where he is reduced to begging in Piazza Rotonda. The *mozzarella in carrozza* eating scene in *Ladri di Biciclette* (1948, Vittorio De Sica) and a glass-bottomed bucket cut from *Stromboli (Terra di Dio)* (1950, Roberto Rossellini)
These are a sideways hop – maybe a hop into the bin or maybe over the Tiber.....!



Ladri di biciclette

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Do you think that your practice/plans have changed since coming to Rome?

All the elements from my original proposal are still there and are shifting, but reconfigured in an entirely different order, and I am extremely glad to have six months here as I really have not even begun to make sense of anything – but am enjoying the non sense!

I'm seeing the *Mostra* as an opportunity to have these conversations outside of the studio and not just inside my head.

Oona's work will be exhibited alongside the seven other resident artists in the March Mostra. The opening will take place on Friday 16 March 18.30-21.00. Opening hours 16.30-19.00 until Saturday 24 March 2018, closed Sundays.

Photos by Oona Grimes. Interview by Alice Marsh (Communications & Events)