

ON THE THRESHOLD.

Guidebooks and Visions of Rome

Summer School – Istituto Svizzero, Roma – 25.07/01.08.2021



Chair of the History and Theory of Architecture
Prof. Dr. Maarten Delbeke

ETH

Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich
Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich

Istituto Svizzero



CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

DEADLINE 15.05.2021

Summer School organized by the Chair of the History and Theory of Architecture Prof. Dr. Maarten Delbeke, ETH Zurich
Hosted by the Istituto Svizzero
Rome, 25 July–1 August 2021

The ways in which we experience the space of an unfamiliar city is defined and mediated by the physical thresholds that the city establishes upon us, such as walls, steps and doors, but also crowds, topography and so on. Especially within the century-long tradition of architectural travelling, this mediation has been triggered and systematized by guidebooks. This form of literature projects visions of cities outside their borders, at the same time fixing these visions onto organized spaces, selected monuments and established routes. As a result, the guidebook is itself both an object of scholarly study and a catalyst for a collective urban reconfiguration. This summer school explores the mediated territories between the city, its guidebook and the traveller. By adopting a selection of itineraries established by past and present guidebooks, students will investigate the thresholds of Rome, between the built city and its tourists.

Each day of the week will be dedicated to a guidebook, selected from the 16th century to the present. Through these, students will work in small groups (2-3) to investigate an architectural element (e.g. doors, stairs, etc...) that operates as a form of urban threshold. The workshop will move along three parallel lines of work:

1. We will dedicate each morning to ‘follow’ an itinerary proposed by one of the selected guidebooks and accompany it with short on-site seminars. We will engage with the books’ predetermined paths, moving along various urban elements, such as monuments and buildings, and experiencing its thresholds, as well as the ways in which tourists, visitors and citizens interact with them.

2. In the afternoon, students will examine, interpret, reconsider and interrogate their experiences of urban and human thresholds through a specific architectural element. They will do so by producing an image per day with mixed techniques, employing photographs, sketches, cut-outs from magazines and books, as ways to ‘(re)design’ a view of the city. In addition, a short

piece of writing will be produced alongside the images, using various registers (diary entries, interviews, short stories...) and freely inspired by the chosen guidebooks. We will host daily crits on the ongoing work with tutors and invited guests.

3. To provide a historical, critical and theoretical framework, the week will be complemented by series of public lectures, seminars and visits by invited guests. Academics, critics, architects, historians and specialists in fields of architectural writing, art history and cultural and media studies will provide a scientific perspective on topics such as guidebooks, architectural travel and urban representation. The public lecture programme will be published by May 2021.

At the end of the week, a public exhibition will showcase the drawings and writings produced by the participants, as a collective critical guidebook of Rome. The Summer School ‘On the Threshold’ will be an intensive and productive week of work and discussion on architecture, urban space and its historical representation. The week aims to provide students with different tools for interpreting and understanding the contemporary and historical conditions of the urban spaces of Rome.

The Summer School is planned for 15 international participants, ideally Master students or early career researchers, coming from different disciplines and curricula, such as architecture, applied arts, art history, literature, philosophy, sociology, photography, tourism studies and media studies. Use of personal laptops/tablets is expected. The Summer School will be held in English.

The Summer School On the Threshold: Guidebooks and visions of Rome is organized by the Chair Delbeke from ETH Zurich. Students and tutors will stay at the magnificent Villa Maraini, the historical seat of the Istituto Svizzero. Partners of the week will include, among others, the Bibliotheca Hertziana and the Rome Art History Network. The fee will be 300 euro comprehensive of lunch (6 days).

To apply, please send the following two documents (under 10MB) to threshold.isroma@gmail.com:

1. Letter of motivation (1 page in English), explaining how your academic/job profile and interests match the objectives and methods of the summer school, together with your contact information and affiliation (if applicable).
2. Sample of work, in the form of either one illustration (A4, free technique) or one piece of writing (1000 words max), which relates in some ways to the topics investigated in the summer school (e.g. architectural literacy, travel, experiences of buildings, history of cities, urban analysis...).

The deadline for applications is 15 May.

For more information, please contact the organisers:

Linda Stagni and Gregorio Astengo

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