

SPEAKING NEARBY

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Final Event

Roma Calling Fellows 2023/2024

Istituto Svizzero

Jacopo Belloni

Valentine Bernasconi

Chloé Delarue

Anthony Ellis

Simone Holliger

Jade Marie d'Avigneau

Léa Katharina Meier

Camilla Paolino

Veronica Pecile

Mia Sanchez

Sarina Scheidegger

Anna-Lena Wolf

Curated by Piersandra Di Matteo

Istituto Svizzero	Director Joëlle Comé
Istituto Svizzero acts as an interdisciplinary platform bringing together artistic and scientific research. From Rome, Milan or Palermo, it facilitates connections between Switzerland and Italy, as well as internationally. Istituto Svizzero offers residencies to emerging artists and researchers who wish to contribute to the future of art, science and innovation. Each year, the Institute presents a public programme aimed at promoting forward-thinking events and projects, experimental practices and excellence in research. Istituto Svizzero seeks to actively participate in the global discourse on arts and society, envisioning new paths and looking beyond the boundaries of disciplines.	Head curator Gioia Dal Molin
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SPEAKING NEARBY is a concertation of theoretical postures and artistic gestures staged across the various spaces of Villa Maraini throughout the extended time of a long afternoon into the night. The title, borrowed from a conversation with the filmmaker, composer, and theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha, implies an indirect mode of speaking to allow other voices to be heard, to operate artistically in order to make space, and to engage in an intra-action with bodies, sounds, and other matters. Intended as an operational framework to explore an expanded notion of proximity, the researchers and artists in a ten-month residency at Istituto Svizzero present punctual emergences of their research, revealing how ideas and things navigate through different protocols of encounters, the attunements with certain environments, the orientations connected with their own positioning, and the transformations that resonate within situated processes, enabling something to happen.

SPEAKING NEARBY is a device of coexistences, resonances, and interferences. It's a journey amidst breaths emerging from sculptures blowing into the water, whispers close to concepts, bodily humors linked to shame and archives of pleasure, statements of feminist artists inquiring the dynamics of social reproduction. It's an attunement with sonic grottos, with piano compositions by an Ethiopian mystic with a colonial history, with the Neo-pagan theories devoted to Olympic deities in the heart of the Middle Ages, and with voices entangled within the realms of law and the divine. It's an encounter with ancient traditions invented out of thin air in an uncertain present and bored customs that move on their own, while elsewhere silkscreen prints interrogate clothing codes through the standardization inherent in every uniform. It's a dialogue with excrescences made of paper, glue, and other materials, in symbiosis with the façade of the Villa, with references to a peculiar funerary monument of a woman in 16th century Naples, with the obsolescence of neon advertising sign reshaped by artificial intelligence, with the random flickering of public lights in the nights of the Eternal City.

On the occasion of the Fellows' Final Eyent, Istituto Svizzero launches the publication *SPEAKING NEARBY*. This book is the result of a collective process, featuring unprecedented texts and contributions by the Roma Calling Fellows 2023/2024. *SPEAKING NEARBY* blends theoretical orientations and artistic gestures, embodying various degrees of intimacy, sympathy, and permeability.

The book includes contributions by the Roma Calling 2023/2024 Fellows:
Jacopo Belloni (Visual arts, Performance)
Valentine Bernasconi (Digital visual studies)
Chloé Delarue (Visual arts)
Anthony Ellis (Classical philology)
Simone Holliger (Visual arts)
Jade Marie d'Avigneau (Art history)
Léa Katharina Meier (Visual arts, Performance)
Camilla Paolino (Art history)
Veronica Pecile (Law, Social sciences)
Mia Sanchez (Visual arts)
Sarina Scheidegger (Performance)
Anna-Lena Wolf (Ethnology)

The book is edited by Piersandra Di Matteo and published by bruno (2024).

Jacopo Belloni

Il palazzo delle maschere e di altre vanità, 2024

Sculpture

Mixed media

In his theoretical research and fieldwork, the artist Jacopo Belloni interrogates invented traditions. The starting point is the collection of festival costumes conserved in the Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions, now part of the Museo delle Civiltà. These costumes, remnants of Italian agropastoral communities, come from the materials displayed in the "Palazzo delle Maschere e dei Costumi" pavilion at the 1911 Universal Exhibition in Rome. Notably, the masks were modified, manipulated, and partially recreated for the occasion, in a process of mystification carried out in collusion with a theatrical tailoring workshop for their "restoration". Analysis of costume rituals in Italian provinces has confirmed that variations and new productions are a constant of the phenomenon. Investigating the mythopoietic mechanism at work in the construction of symbolic, cultural, and social identity within a community, Belloni produces two anthropomorphic sculptures. He blends artisanal techniques borrowed from cinema, theater, and cosplay, melting different materials. The artist brings to light masks escaping from any form of identity categorization.

Jade Marie d'Avigneau

Reclining Caterina, 2024

Performance installation

Between the late 15th and early 16th centuries, Italian funerary sculpture underwent significant evolution. Unlike medieval tombs, where the deceased is often depicted lying on their back with arms crossed over the chest, in prayer, or with closed eyes, the effigy of the early 16th century embraced a more vivid portrayal. This shift towards vitality even in death is exemplified in the Neapolitan tomb of Caterina della Rotta (†1511), where she is portrayed in a semi-reclined posture, leaning on a cushion, absorbed in the act of reading. The installation *Reclining Caterina* explores the sculptural depiction of life-death, stillness-movement, by comparing funerary iconography with the contemporary practice of living statues. The installation suggests a short-circuit between the traditional imagery of the active gisant—a funerary sculpture depicting the deceased—, which permeates vitality into death, by juxtaposing it with the practice of a performer who "mimics" immobility. What occurs when the funerary artwork, striving to emulate life, intersects with its living counterpart, which imitates death?

Performer: Sophie Malraye (World Champion in 2006 at the World Statue Festival in Arnhem, Netherlands)

Mia Sanchez

Strategies, 2024

Installation

Screenprint on textile

The works placed in the staircase of Villa Maraini represent an extension of Mia Sanchez's research into the motifs of clothing and uniform. They combine two or three individual items, featuring the inscription "Strategies". This reference to advertising branding aims to probe the mechanisms of capturing consumers eager for originality. However, the contradiction of this desire is highlighted in the serial, yet artisanal process of silk screen printing images. The layout of the final combinations is defined during the printing process, not unlike the technique of collage. The monochrome printing serves as a unifying element, erasing distinctions among those who identify through style. The serial organization of the individual clothes raises questions about replication and how processes of social standardization and normalization are dictated by codes that shape behaviors and forms of life. *Strategies* is a process of disassembly and re-composition that invites play with representations of reality in the imagination.

Valentine Bernasconi

Flickering Mind, 2024

Installation

Paper sheets and monitor

Research is a long and solitary process, marked by questions and doubts, punctuated by moments of achievements, key encounters, and decisive exchanges that enable progress along the desired trajectory. Valentine Bernasconi completed in Rome her doctoral thesis in Digital Visual Studies, dedicated to the historical and computational analysis of hands in early Modern European paintings. The intellectual effort, the intense social experience at Istituto Svizzero and the vastness of Rome's urban landscape quickly became a new and challenging frame. After long days of work in the library, Bernasconi found solace in nocturnal encounters with flickering lights present everywhere in the city. Over time, they transformed into a collection, a curiosity to seek out and capture during long and lonely walks through the streets of the Eternal City. *Flickering mind* brings together gathered research papers and a video montage of flickering lights captured while meandering, reflecting the mental state of the researcher during these last crucial months of the thesis.

Léa Katharina Meier

La Grande-Biblioteca-Bagnata-Umida-Lubrificata, 2024

Publication, drawings printed on fabrics, sound composition, reading

Combining drawing, writing, performance, and textile production, Léa Katharina Meier observes and goes through hilarious archives starting from experiences of shame and abjection. Libraries, closets, and archives are summoned to be contaminated and disorganized with dripping, soft, and humorous narratives, where everything seeps through to delve deep. It is a collection of tactics to suggest a new sensual cartography. *La Grande-Biblioteca-Bagnata-Umida-Lubrificata* is a textual and visual research of the transformation of shame into joy. Considering the library as an imaginary landscape to craft dyke stories, full of pleasure, Meier sets up an environment in the garden of the Villa where one can encounter a fairytale in the form of text, reading, and drawing that narrates the birth of a very wet, damp, lubricated library that can also provoke disturbance. *Here there is space to invent one's own past; to choose what to carry inside and how to transform it; to have healing dreams like persistent kisses, rubbed on the humid parts of the body, to re/de-compose worlds.*

Sound: Serge Teuschler; Graphic design: Mat* Avogadro
Thanks to all the team of Istituto Svizzero, Veronica Pecile, Camilla Paolino, Serena Bassi, Mayara Yamada, Max Léo Hauri

Sarina Scheidegger

Ululoszhhh, 2024

Performance

Instruments, glazed ceramics, variable dimensions

Ululoszhhh combines sound, ceramic vessels and performativity. The polyphonic and collaborative nature of water has been part of Sarina Scheidegger's practice for many years, observing fluid conditions and cyclical instances have shaped her work processes and thinking. During the residency at Istituto Svizzero, the artist has developed a series of ceramic whistles which can be activated by the pressure of water, creating various tunes and melodies. Being shaped by the thoughts of Ursula K. Le Guins' *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, the performance *Ululoszhhh* refers to alternative forms of narratives: the whistling vessels being containers who hold and collect the virtue of a non-verbal connection with their human and non-human surrounding. The instruments oscillate between whispering, howling, screaming and whistling—creating a soundscape to reflect on their listening habits. Villa Maraini's garden hosts a sounding and bodily score that calls for attunement to deep listening.

Performers: Greta di Poce, Marta Olivii, Vera Ortega Villanueva, Rodrigo Toro Madrid, Sarina Scheidegger
Thanks to Ane Rodríguez Armendáriz and Francesco Timpone, Sole Ceramiche

Chloé Delarue

TAFAA – SIGNAL (stupid affection), 2024

Sculpture

Neon, metal, transformer

Integrated within the hosting architecture, *TAFAA – SIGNAL (stupid affection)* is a neon sculpture illuminating an internet meme reinterpreted by an artificial generative tool. Emulating a neon sign, this piece manifests its uniqueness by brilliantly illuminating the hybrid and haphazard assembly of existing elements. Between mischief and astonishment, the face of this internet meme looks sarcastically at the spectator, in the same way our emotions, now turned into data sensors like any other, are scrutinized. The work is a new occurrence of *SIGNAL*, a series of sculptures envisioned by Chloé Delarue that reinterpret the aesthetic codes of neon signs. The neon advertising prevalent in the 20th century has transitioned its radiance to connected screens, inundating our social interactions with commercial prompts. Unlike neon signs, subject to time's effects and obsolescence, targeted digital content thrives and adjusts instantaneously to captivate our attention. This virtualization of emotions, subjected to the attention economy, subtly reshapes our perceptions and representations of reality within our tangible environments.

Camilla Paolino

A Quella Dovete Dare Voce!, 2024

Audio-collection from five phone calls, in Italian, English, French

From a Marxist feminist perspective, Camilla Paolino is interested in exploring the material nexus between reproductive labor and creative work in Italian artistic practice during the 1970s. *A Quella Dovete Dare Voce!* ("you have to let it speak!") consists of excerpts from five recent phone conversations with feminist artists, intellectuals, and activists encountered during her research dedicated to the role of the visual arts in the struggle against the mechanisms of social reproduction. The voices of Diane Bond, Nicole Gravier, Libera Mazzoleni, Lea Melandri, and Mariuccia Secol trace the genesis, forms, and contents of selected works they produced in the 1970s. Resorting to a form of self-narration that looks back at the past from today's perspective, these artists move from technical to colloquial registers as their stories reverberate in proximity with one another. Envisioned as a space for collective listening, the work proposed by Paolino weaves an acoustic connection between each singular political or aesthetic trajectory, framing oral transmission as a practice of positioning and transmission of knowledge within feminist genealogies.

Sound editing: Claudio Tortorici

Anna-Lena Wolf

Hearing What Isn't Said, 2024

Sound installation, in English

While conducting ethnographic research on Catholic canon law in Rome, Anna-Lena Wolf chooses to speak nearby students at Pontifical Universities to understand their life trajectories, faith journeys, and complex entanglements with God. Her sound installation is about intra-actions between people and the divine. How did Marco turn from a genuine atheist to a Catholic priest? How did Rahel conciliate her inclination to fight for justice with being a nun and future canon lawyer? How did the monk Thomas struggle with his faith when being confronted with global inequalities after coming to Rome from the Global South to study canon law? How did Maria sense that God wanted her to become a nun? The voices presented are snippets from recorded conversations with canon law students in different languages including Italian, English, German and Spanish. Due to anthropology's ethical research requirement to guarantee interlocutors anonymity, all extracts were translated into English and re-spoken by different people. Some contextual information such as gender and nationality were additionally changed to keep people anonymous. The four students' voices are unsheathing an important aspect of speaking nearby, which is *Hearing What Isn't Said*.

Simone Holliger

AmalgaMate, 2024

Sculpture

Paper, glue, pigments and dammar resin

Simone Holliger creates monumental works by assembling fragments of paper and hot glue, revealing a complete trust in the qualities of this material— lightweight yet robust. Her artistic practice takes shape in a variety of large sculptures, molded in relation and in friction with the place they inhabit, radically altering the perception of space. Questioning the long history of masculine sculptural conventions, Holliger positions herself at a critical junction between acknowledging tradition and purposefully diverging from it, resulting in a sophisticated illusion of weight and a perceptual manipulation that paper can achieve in her large-scale works. *AmalgaMate* is a site-specific intervention conceived for interacting with the façade of Villa Maraini. Like an oversized tongue that is partially fused with the stone, it breaks with the uncluttered character of the villa. The combination of artificial and organic matters serves as a tactic to create a hybrid object endowed with a sensual, tactile, and mysterious texture.

Veronica Pecile

Echoes of Empire, 2024

Sound installation, in Italian

In her research project, Veronica Pecile delves into the constructing of Italian colonialism through property law, specifically examining the legal discourses and techniques employed by Italians to establish the colonial domain as a distinct social and economic reality. One of Italy's conquests included Ethiopia, which was invaded between 1935 and 1936 and subsequently annexed to Italian East Africa. *Echoes of Empire* is envisioned as an auditory narrative inviting listeners to engage with the life of Emahoy Tséque-Maryam Guèbrou, a composer, pianist, and nun born in Addis Ababa in 1923. Amidst the Ethiopian invasion, Emahoy and her parents were forcibly relocated to a detention camp on the island of Asinara, while some of her relatives fell victim to the colonizers. Subsequently, she embarked on a path of spiritual introspection and artistic creation, combining her Western classical training with the vocal traditions of the Orthodox Church and the groovy sounds of Ethiopian jazz from the 1960s and 1970s. This sound installation illuminates her remarkable life journey deeply resonating with colonial and postcolonial histories.

Voice: Veronica Pecile; Sound editing: Claudio Tortorici

BY KING

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Fellows

Jacopo Belloni (1992) is an artist who questions the process of "theatricalizing" contemporary reality. He holds a Work Master from HEAD – Genève and has exhibited in institutions including the Palazzo Delle Esposizioni, Rome; ADA, Rome; Kunsthalle, Bern; Aargauer Kunsthaus, Aarau; Palazzo Re Rebaudengo, Guarene (TO); Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva. In Rome, through sculpture and performance, he developed his research about symbolic technologies in the Italian rural world around the concept of «invention of traditions».

Valentine Bernasconi (1994) is a PhD candidate in Digital Visual Studies at the University of Zurich. In her research project she studies the meaning of hand gestures in early modern paintings through computational approaches. She holds a degree in digital humanities from EPFL and studied computer science and art history at the University of Fribourg. In Rome, she pursued her research on the impact of new technologies on the practice of art history, engaging in a dialogue between art historians and institutions involved in processes of digitization of photographic collections.

Chloé Delarue (1986) is an artist who focuses on the complex relationship between digital technologies and living matter through the troubles that this produces on our perceptions. In 2021, she won the Pax Art Award and the Bourse de la Ville de Genève. She has exhibited at the Musée des Beaux-Arts La Chaux-de-Fonds and at the Kunsthaus Langenthal among others. In Rome, she conducted research-works collecting representative fragments of the mythical and contemporary history of the city, using photogrammetry.

Anthony Ellis (1986) is a postdoc researcher at the Institute of Classical Philology at the University of Bern. He focuses on ancient religion and cross-cultural encounters. He studied in Oxford and Edinburgh, where his PhD thesis (2013) explored the role of the gods in early Greek historical thought. In Rome, he reconstructed how the Byzantine philosopher and Neopagan Gnostos Pletho rewrote ancient historical texts, tracing Pletho's influence on the Greek refugees who migrated to Rome following the Ottoman conquests.

Simone Holliger (1986) is an artist who creates large-scale sculptures with a process-based approach. She has received several awards, including the Swiss Art Award (2019) and has exhibited at the Musée des Beaux-Arts La Chaux-de-Fonds and BF15 in Lyon. She holds a master's degree in fine arts from HEAD – Genève. In Rome, she dedicated herself to researching content, forms, and materials with reference to the urban and architectural space of the city.

Jade Marie d'Avigneau (1994) is a PhD candidate at the University of Lausanne. She studied Art history and Philosophy at the Universities of Florence, Munich and Lausanne. She received a faculty prize from the Dante Alighieri Society for her master's thesis. She has been in residence at the Centro per la Storia dell'Arte e dell'Architettura delle Città Portuali in Naples to work on her doctoral thesis on 15th and 16th-century Neapolitan funerary sculpture. In Rome, she continued her research, examining several aspects of Neapolitan sculpture, social history, and artistic exchanges during this period.

Léa Katharina Meier (1989) is a multidisciplinary artist. Through performance, textiles, drawing and writing, she develops narratives in which failure and ridicule are forms of healing. She won the Jury Prize and the Audience Prize at the Swiss Performance Award (2021). In Rome, she continued her research into the notions of shame, queer humour, and the library as a place of pleasure and laughter.

Camilla Paolino (1991) is a PhD candidate at the University of Geneva, where she investigates the material nexus articulated between reproductive and creative work in 1970s Italian art practice. In parallel, she animates the radio-art platform CANALE MILVA and the art space Lateral Roma. In Rome, she pursued her thesis on the contribution of art to the struggle for the reconfiguration of the traditional sexual division of labor organizing production within the artistic sphere as much as the socioeconomic one.

Veronica Pecile (1989) is a postdoc researcher in law and critical theory. Since 2023, she has been an affiliated researcher at the LucernaIuris-Institute for Interdisciplinary Legal Studies at the University of Lucerne. Previously, she was a postdoctoral researcher at the Collegium Helveticum in Zurich and at Harvard Law School. She holds a PhD in Law and social sciences from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales and a master's degree from Sciences Po Paris. In Rome, she investigated the legal techniques and discourses through which the Italian colonies were established.

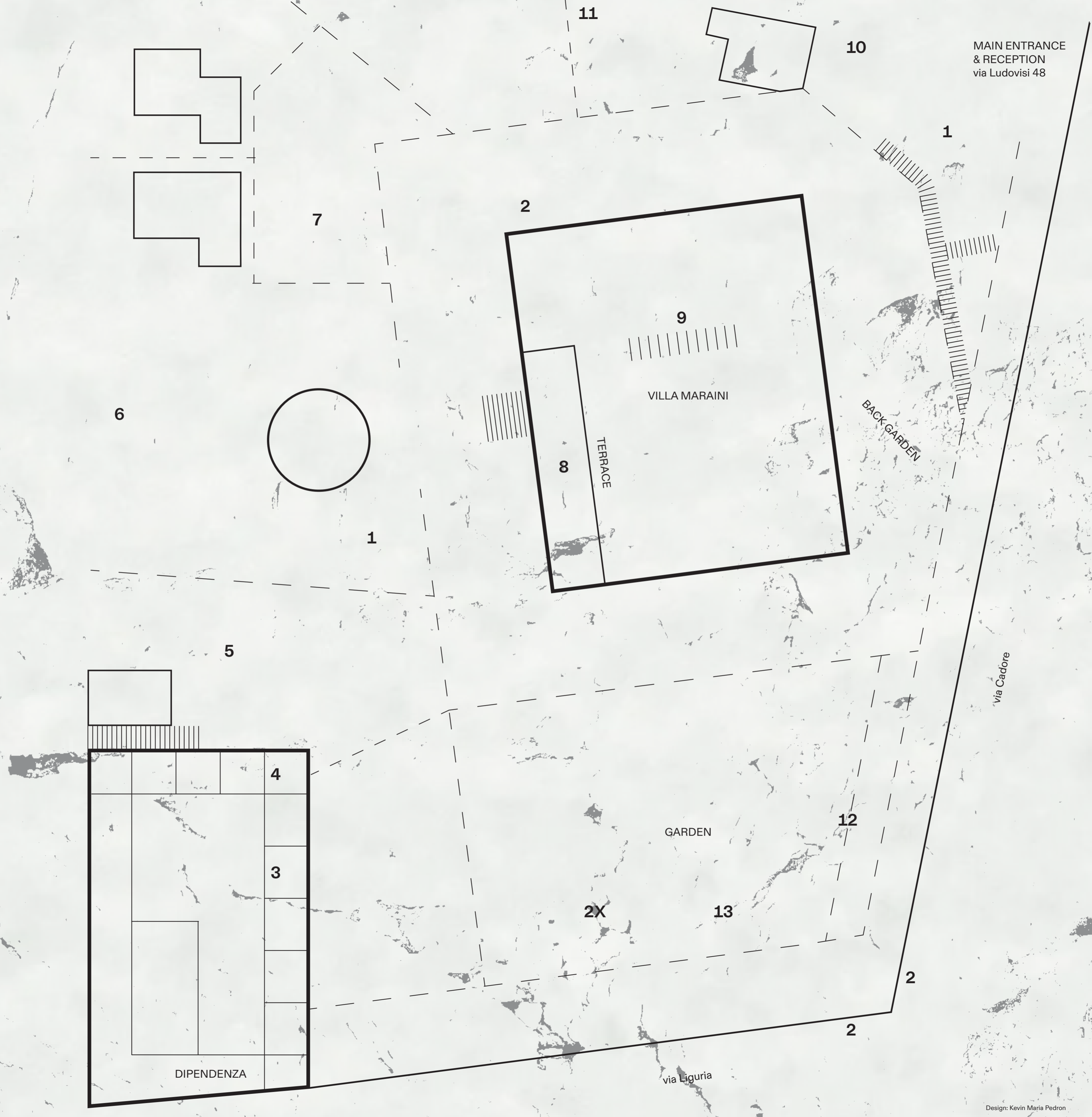
Mia Sanchez (1988) is an artist working with video, photography, and sculpture to explore social structures in the public sphere. She holds a master's degree from the FHNW in Basel and has exhibited in institutions such as Kunsthau Langenthal; Stadtgalerie, Bern; Istituto Svizzero, Milan. She received the Swiss Art Award (2022) and co-founded the art space Riverside. In Rome, she explored the impact of public space and our built realities on leisure time and how it influences social and economic practices.

Sarina Scheidegger (1985) is an artist and writer. Collaboration is one of the key aspects of her research and she often works with other artists, performers, and musicians. She holds a master's degree from HKB Bern and has received numerous grants and residencies: FLORA ars+natura, Pro Helvetia, Bogota, (2018), Swiss Performance Award (2012). In 2016 she founded «Stringray Editions» together with Kambiz Shafiei to publish different formats and editions by various artists. In Rome, she developed performances and ceramic instruments that explore the relationship between amphorae and current debates on (hydro) feminism.

Anna-Lena Wolf (1984) is an anthropologist with a focus on the Anthropology of law and religion. She is a postdoc researcher and lecturer at the Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg. In 2018, she completed her PhD thesis (University of Bern), in which she analyzed changing notions of justice on tea plantations in the Northeast Indian state of Assam. In Rome, she conducted ethnographic fieldwork in institutions of the Holy See to understand the relationship between legal change and divine agency in Catholic canon law.

Curator

Piersandra Di Matteo Performing arts scholar, dramaturg, and curator. She is the artistic director of Short Theatre Festival in Rome (2021-2024), and member of the team research project «INCOMMON» and SSH! Sound Studies Hub at University IUAV of Venice, where she teaches «Curation in Performing Arts». She is appointed curator of the Multidisciplinary Residency in the Académie of the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence.



PERMANENT WORKS

- 18:30–24:00
- 1**
Il palazzo delle maschere e di altre vanità, 2024
Jacopo Belloni
Sculpture
Mixed media
 - 2**
La Grande-Biblioteca-Bagnata-Umida-Lubrificata, 2024
Léa Katharina Meier
Installation
Drawings printed on fabrics
 - 2X**
La Grande-Biblioteca-Bagnata-Umida-Lubrificata, 2024
Léa Katharina Meier
Installation
Publication, sound composition, drawings printed on fabrics
 - 4**
TAFAA – SIGNAL (stupid affection), 2024
Chloé Delarue
Sculpture
Neón, metal, transformer
 - 5**
Echoes of Empire, 2024
Veronica Pecile
Sound installation, in Italian
 - 7**
Ululoszshh, 2024
Sarina Scheidegger
Instruments
Glazed ceramics, variable dimensions
 - 8**
AmalgaMate, 2024
Simone Holliger
Sculpture
Paper, glue, pigments and dammar resin
 - 9**
Strategies, 2024
Mia Sanchez
Installation
Screen print on textile
 - 10**
Hearing What Isn't Said, 2024
Anna-Lena Wolf
Sound installation, in English
 - 11**
Flickering Mind, 2024
Valentine Bernasconi
Installation
Paper sheets, monitor
 - 12**
A Quella Dovete Dare Voce!, 2024
Camilla Paolino
Sound installation, in Italian, English and French

LIVE-EVENT CALENDAR

- 3**
H19:00
Book launch of the collective publication *SPEAKING NEARBY* (bruno, 2024), 30 min
Contributions by the **Roma Calling Fellows 2023/2024**
- 7**
H19:45 and H21:30
Ululoszshh, 2024
Sarina Scheidegger
Performance, 12 min
- 6**
H20:00, H21:00, H22:00
Reclining Caterina, 2024
Jade Marie d'Avigneau
Performance installation, 30 min
- 2X**
H20:30
La Grande-Biblioteca-Bagnata-Umida-Lubrificata, 2024
Léa Katharina Meier
Reading, 20 min
- 13**
H22:30–24:00
DJ set by **Qursarina**