

Film screening at the Fittja Pavilion during the 14th Architecture Biennale in Venice, June 5th – September 7th, 2014.
Istituto Nautico Cini-Venier, Castello 787, Venice. Open: Tue – Fri, 10 am to 2 pm, Sat – Sun, 10 am to 6 pm.
A Botkyrka konsthall production, curated by Joanna Sandell. www.botkyrkakonsthall.se

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I'M GONNA LIVE ANYHOW UNTIL I DIE

JOHANNA BILLING

I'M GONNA LIVE ANYHOW UNTIL I DIE A film by JOHANNA BILLING, 2012, HD, Blu-Ray, 16,29 min/loop

Featuring: Palma Biadene, Eufrosia De Mattia, Andrea Folchi, Rocco Ciardo, Leonardo Faiella, Elena Lera & Gabriele Folchi, Pietro Faiella & Liliana Massari, Francesca Valentini, Roberta Sprizzi & Alessandro, Chimera Poppi, Cecilia Canziani and Davide Ferri
Director of Photography: Manne Lindwall, Second Camera Operator: Tiziano Casanova, Sound Recordist: Enrico Lenarduzzi, Still Photographer and Assistant: Lauren Brincat, Editing: Johanna Billing, Musical soundtrack recordings: Interpretations based on "Cariocinesi" and "Mechanics" (originally written and performed by Franco Battiato, from the album "Fetus", 1972, Bla Bla records, Italy), Arranged by Johanna Billing along with musicians Andreas Söderström (whistling, guitar, percussion, synthesizer, pump organ), Patric Thorman (upright bass, electric bass, piano, vibraphone, percussion), Jonna Sandell (violin), Karl-Jonas Winqvist (glockenspiel, fender rhodes, cembalo, cymbals) and Christian Gabel (drums), Recorded and Mixed by Christian Gabel at Cobra Studio, Sound mix: Joachim Ekermann, Helter Skelter, Color grading: Swiss, Stockholm
Blu-Ray production: Filmtech, Stockholm, Project coordination: Cecilia Canziani and Stefano Collicelli Cagol, Produced by Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin and The MAC, Belfast, with support from IASPTs, the Swedish Arts Grants Committee's International Programme, Special thanks to: Ristorante "Al Biondo Tevere", Scuola Carlo Urbani, Fondazione Giuliani, Adrienne Drake, Chimera Poppi, Davide Ferri, Cecilia Canziani, Lauren Brincat, Daniella Gallo, Roberto Panzironi, Angelo Forestan, Swiss, Stockholm, Filmtech, Stockholm, Poster: Leo Norgren

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Johanna Billing's videos weave music, movement and rhythm – placing subtle emphases on the individual within representations of changing societies. In her work Billing partly directs the participants, and in part puts in place a series of improvisations around the notion of performance and the possibility it holds to explore issues of the public and the private. The protagonists in Billing's videos all play themselves but take part in staged situations that oscillate between documentary and fiction, as a multi-layered interpretation of a place.

I'm gonna live anyhow until I die, 2012, is a video work, set in Rome, that has its origins in a project to mark the 150th anniversary of the Unification of Italy, co-commissioned by Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin and the MAC, Belfast, during 2010–2012.

The main characters in *I'm gonna live anyhow until I die* are five children who run around the streets of Rome, seemingly doing what they like, having abandoned their parents at the restaurant, Al Biondo Tevere.[†] After running through the park of the Roman Aqueduct, a courtyard in the 1930s working class district of Testaccio, and Ostia's Seadrome, the children finally arrive in an empty school in the centre of Rome, where time seems to have stood still. The old classroom has been turned into storage, here they begin to play around with the obsolete pedagogical tools and technological instruments that they find, as if they are trying to understand what to do with them or what they could be used for. Little by little, each child begins to compose black shapes on sheets of drawing paper folded in half, creating blots that resemble those of the Rorschach test. The childrens' imaginary or inner journey takes them back and forth in between time, place and genres, freely following their own pace and rhythm.

Harnessing her research methods, Billing used her exploratory approach to

identify place and event in Rome, Lazio that she used as source material, drawing on a mix of traditions, connected to the human psyche, film and education – such as Italian Neorealism and pedagogical as well as psychoanalytical workshop techniques. Visiting Rome during the demonstrations against University reforms in autumn 2010, Billing focuses the work on the future of the younger generation and the populist political ideology, which has been undermining the education system. The work is at the same time haunted by the daily life and death of Pier Paolo Pasolini who expressed a series of thoughts about Italy, anticipating the social and cultural changes that would sweep the country at the end of the 1970s, and parts of the scenes in the video are situated in his locality. The project is in some ways also a loving tribute to pedagogical heroes such as Bruno Munari and his tactile workshops for kids, as well as championing the early tradition of Italian filmmakers, who in their often biographical films about the 40s and 50s, focused on the freedom of children exploring their city as a way to reflect upon historical and societal change.

The accompanying soundtrack arranged by Billing features a Romany violin, upright bass and whistling, include improvised interpretations of the songs *Cariocinesi and Mechanics*, (originally written by the Italian progressive experimentalist Franco Battiato), serving as a homage to Battiato and his classic concept album *Foetus* from 1972. The final result is, as with many of Billing's video works, the product of a meticulous editing process, placing equal focus on the visual material and sound recording. This gives special attention to physical movement and gesture as well as activity taking place not only around the centre of the action.



[†] *Al Biondo Tevere* is a restaurant frequented by known cultural figures and where Pasolini had his last meal before he died.

SNAPSHOTS AND MONUMENTS Johanna Billing and Cecilia Canziani

Palma (6 years old): Let's go on, or we will not reach the end of this fantastic adventure!
Eufrasia (9 years old): I do not really understand where we are going, but I trust you and will follow you.



JB: The day after I came home from Rome a funny coincidence happened right here on my living room floor. Julian, my two-year-old son, who has a habit of throwing books he can reach off the bookshelf, was as usual focused on this very task. As I sighed and was about to tell him for the 100th time to stop – my eyes suddenly caught sight of a book in the huge pile on the floor that I had not seen in years. Having just been to Rome, seeing this book almost gave me the shivers, and I felt very grateful to my son for bringing it to my attention. It is called *My Roman Lion* and is about the childhood memories of artist and writer Renata Wrede; about the everyday lives of a Swedish family of archaeologists based in Rome during the early 30s, all seen and told through the eyes of a six-year-old.

The book was released in 1974. My mother was then studying to become an Italian teacher and as a huge fan of Italian literature and history she thought this was an especially appropriate thing to read aloud to my brother and me when we were around five years old or so. I have very few memories in general from this time in my life, but somehow the images of hugely confident Renata running around the streets of Rome, have stayed with me ever since. Reading it again now, so many years later (the book, hilarious as it might be for children is mainly written for adults) it reveals a rare story about Rome before the Second World War.

After days and weeks of searching the Internet for an English translation I find what seems to be the only existing copy left out there in the UK (previously from a library).

When I get the copy, I put it in the post and cross my fingers that the mail service will deliver the book to Cecilia before Christmas.

CC: Many months later, and one week after filming with Johanna in Rome, I am at my desk keeping next to me, as a talisman, the copy of *My Roman Lion* that arrived, indeed, right before Christmas. Life has an intelligence of its own, I believe, and from the very beginning of this project chance has proved to be more brilliant than any planning. When I was contacted to organise the site visit of an artist in my region (for the project *Un'Espressione Geografica* (A Geographical Expression), curated by Francesco Bonami, at Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, 2011) I did not know it would be Johanna, and she did not know that her guide would be me. It was a surprise to both of us that we were brought together by this project after a long time. We met several years ago, and the occasion of a road trip together sounded just perfect.

The visit was planned for the beginning of October in 2010, when Rome is still not fully awakened from summer, the heat and the holidays. To me, the summer ended when Johanna arrived and we started talking, as happens with anyone visiting Italy, of the current political scenario. We were walking in the city centre and Johanna asked: 'Why is nobody protesting?' Indeed, why?



Driving in the hills around Rome, on the coastline in the direction of Latina, across Rome, we talked of education, mainly, and culture, history, films, books, people and places and in short – what makes Italy, as Guido Crainz in a brilliant sentence says, *un paese mancato*. A country that lost its moment: that, in a sense, betrayed its potential, hopes and abilities. We were exploring without a real plan, and again chance directed our steps. I do not remember what we planned for that day, but on my way to

meet Johanna I met a former student of mine who told me that they had begun the occupation of the Faculty of Architecture at University of Rome La Sapienza. Our new plan evolved: following the protest. From Architecture we moved to Humanities and Mathematics (hosted in a splendid building by Gio Ponti) on the main campus near the train station. We were always late and did not make it for the assembly, nor for the flash mob. We looked at the traces. We compared slogans. Something started to develop, a thread, an idea, something that was about Italy, of current times, Rome – around the role of education.



Then a stop for a bite, a sandwich at the train station. I had on my cellphone the photos of a school I visited some months before, they had an amazing room full of typewriters, documents, educational material on tape and film, which Daniela Gallo from the director's office wanted to form into a museum. I showed the images to Johanna and I think this was one of the first sites she envisioned.

JB: At the very entrance of Scuola Media Carlo Urbani when we first visited the school, in the little janitor's booth next to the door, I took a snapshot of a bright green key hanger that displayed all the important keys to the classrooms and offices in the building. This image I returned to again and again in my mind over the coming months, without knowing that it was actually going to play a little part in the film. I pinned it to my wall, used it in lectures about education and art schools, and kept on thinking about who and how one can access these keys you need in life and work – or just the one right key – to squeeze it in your hand - that can give you the confidence to turn something around.

Next to the photo of the keys on my studio wall is a photo of an old worn football goal with a broken net, probably no longer in use, at the beach in a run down part of Ostia. On the first day of our tour around the outskirts of Rome we happened to pass

there by mistake. We had stopped by the Pasolini monument a couple of hundred meters before, and as we could not turn our car around on the narrow road we continued forward. The setting at the beach is not exactly breathtaking, it was a cold and windy October afternoon, and certainly not the best place in Ostia for a seaside snapshot. Still, we felt we had to step out of the car to have a look. Somehow, all this talking and thinking about Pasolini – whom we had obviously started to talk about whilst eating at the famous Al Biondo Tevere restaurant just a couple of hours earlier – cast the scene in the most beautiful light, and we realised right there and then, that this red painted and battered structure of a football goal was of course – at least to us – the unofficial and *real* Pasolini monument.



CC: A few steps from where he was found dead, this goal brought back to life the laughs, the fights, the joy of the many football matches that the poet played here and in other *borgate* with children. Monuments seem to have lost their capacity to represent the past in front of our eyes and to serve rather as a viaticum to forget. Bringing back to life, use and function, the site of a death, through a trace that has the strength of a symbol, re-presented to me a way to rethink the capacity of memorials to reconfigure the present today. Which is ultimately what has always fascinated me about Johanna's work, since I first met her.



Originally published in the catalogue *"Un'Espressione Geografica"*, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy (Mousse Publishing 2011)