

Gary Deirmendjian's interventions in Rome

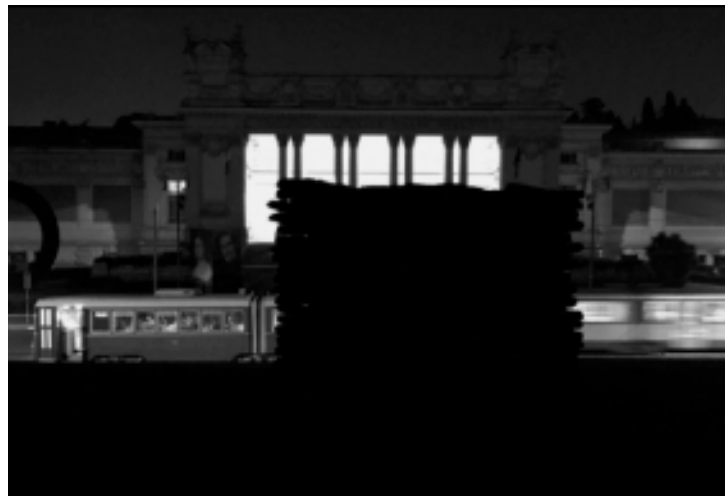
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Over the course of the past few months, visitors to the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna and Villa Borghese have been surprised by the interventions that have been appearing on the flights of steps that connect the two sites. The artist behind them is Gary Deirmendjian, this year's National Art School, Sydney, Resident.



Gary Deirmendjian (National Art School, Sydney, Resident). Photo by Antonio Palmieri.

The first installation appeared mysteriously overnight in early April: at around 4 o'clock in the morning, Gary had gone out to the steps overlooking the Gallery to put together his first piece, *roman stack*. The result was an anonymous cube stack, made out of the available material of bitumen debris – what Gary calls 'the city's flaking skin'. The orientation of the work was aligned with the global axis, and not with the site's urban geometry. Gary documented the changes to the work whenever he walked by, whilst resisting the temptation to make modifications himself.



Gary commented that during the installation, passers-by became intrigued and were compelled to take part: one helped by bringing over pieces of bitumen, another used his car's headlights to provide Gary with some light.

roman stack soon evolved in *the past has claws*: making further use of the loose bitumen fragments and the debris from the former installation, this new piece was exhibited adjacent to the relic base of *roman stack*.





Gary was struck by the sensitivity with which the public responded to these interventions. Firstly, he was pleasantly surprised by how long the pieces had lasted: being left to mercy of the elements and the many passers-by, he had expected the installations to lose their structure fairly quickly, however he was pleased to see that they were treated with interest and respect. It was also wonderful to see the creative response to *roman stack* and *the past has claws*: a number of spectators developed the installations, either by adding bitumen fragments to the existing pieces, or by building their own nearby.





This marks a continuation of the theme of 'shared space', which is often a central element of Gary's practice. On his [website](#), he writes:

The major thrust of my practice in recent years has become to exist in shared space – by definition the public realm in its broadest meaning. I'm very interested in the notion of art in public, as opposed to public art, with the latter commonly understood as being a brief-driven proposition.

As an artist, it has become essential for me to find means to connect directly with a broader public, one-to-one and free of any obligation, mediation or justification. Hence the demonstrable tendency in the work towards more public or openly shared space.

We are very much looking forward to seeing what other interventions Gary has in store for Rome!

All photos by Gary Deirmendjian.

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