

Fabulae Romanae is a body of work by the artist duo Lucy + Jorge Orta that takes the viewer on a symbolic excursus across the city of Rome, drawn from archaeological and historical research conducted by the artists and their observations on the cultural and social map of the city and its seven hills. Starting from the most cherished form of the artists duo's language: the tent, Dome Dwelling and accompanied by the protagonists of their research the Spirits, who take on the form of ethereal and mysterious figures that inhabit the city. This publication brings together the installation of Lucy + Jorge Orta's work in MAXXI, the National Museum of XXI Century Arts in Rome and the video performance in which the contemporary sentinel Spirits silently explore the Roman city accompanied by the poetic verses of Mario Petrucci: we encounter the Traveler under the Castel Sant'Angelo bridge and in the Trastevere back streets; the Observer overlooking the Sacro Cuore dei Monti and the Isola Tiberina; the Tunneler and the Myth Maker in the Villa Gregoriana Park; the Flying Man, Chariot Rider, Memory Man, Bale Maker... Fabulae Romanae assumes the meaning of "homage" to Rome and was commissioned by ZegnArt with the curatorial advisor by Maria-Luisia Frisa.



LUCY + JORGE ORTA FABULAE ROMANAE



# FABULAE ROMANAE

LUCY + JORGE ORTA

Marsilio

ZegnArt | Marsilio

ZegnArt

**FABULAE ROMANAE**  
LUCY + JORGE ORTA

**MAXXI**  
National Museum of XXI  
Century Arts, Rome  
March 22 – September 23,  
2012  
part of MAXXI Arte Collezione  
TRIDIMENSIONALE

**Curated by**  
Maria Luisa Frisa

**A commission by**  
**Ermenegildo Zegna**  
**ZegnArt**  
Special Project

**In collaboration with**  
The Centre for Sustainable  
Fashion  
London College  
of Fashion

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# VIDEO PERFORMANCE



# FABULAE ROMANAE

poetry by **MARIO PETRUCCI**

Male voice  
Female voice

*Uprights Crossbeams Corridors Halls...*

---

Watch  
how I watch –  
before me and behind

each Roman  
flutter memories: white  
memory risen suddenly on wings

at my thunderclap  
observation. Such spires:  
high places from which to peer or

speak – steer  
each workbound mind,  
to hear in the stillest hour how

the city awakes...

... a soon-to-be mother  
stirred by the kick  
within: those

flickerings in her  
concrete face on Italy's  
long pillow inclined

with sleep  
elegantly stoned  
her shaped cheekbones.

Bitter orange  
streaks sunrise: each  
sloped roof. I count these

days through her  
mouthlight – and into her  
lips parted in truth or half-truth

I gaze.

---

Each skull  
is a cave where  
stories vie as wolves

or murderous twins. Such  
dominant plots up  
here –

the woman  
within this lesser fiction  
I am...

... bones –  
their clothes a tale  
as my stones climb hand

by hand to brand their fable  
on global horizons  
whose light

cloud-lined  
never fails but roosts  
static in flight...

... so  
who can be  
noble with delusion?

This loose garden in which  
she walks as though  
to move

were invention or what  
one wears snugly  
protagonist...

... who talks  
of home remembering  
not all Romans are poets and

not all of Rome – nor most  
of me – will fit this  
story.

---

Roman Spirit  
is not vapour  
Roman Spirit

does not flutter  
as a sheet flung  
by the moon –

These Spirits  
are satchels  
hard-sewn a-

spiring to  
contain only air  
a ziggurat s-

tacked at  
wishful angles  
unfinished

to the sun  
seen as if  
in dream

as the mountain  
village clung  
to its human

pinnacle

---

See his finger  
pointing along the centre  
unmet by any Maker –

as though all Rome  
were a Sistine dome whose  
trains of light (so slim)

drift in...

... or recline  
among my laurels  
soundlessly dressed

so I may bless then  
redefine your  
boundaries...

He is gemstone  
reflecting humanity  
differently for each  
and each alone...

Every fashion  
that swept you through...

... every thought  
each passion or  
true doubt

you ever wore...

... trails behind you  
welded  
heavily into a wake

and unlike water  
none of it  
fits –

... yet every moment  
as if  
into clear lakewater

a fresh self

steps out

---

Horse? Man?  
Some deep-grained  
Sagittarian?

Half Troy.  
Half Rome –  
half-brained

wood marching  
home. O his  
puppet-toy

made good.  
An egg  
in his square

an egg  
in his mouth  
he out-stares

out-knows both  
South and North.  
If he could he'd

rock himself  
as groom and bride,  
bestride the very

Campidoglio.

---

Highest, widest –  
my hill many-tongued.  
Complex breast

you button up  
one word at a time.  
Gather me in

with your maps –  
still my aromas  
sail through

from China,  
each narrowed street  
a handle laid flat

idling lovers grasp  
till I wander  
no longer

in the mind –  
each squared tuff  
a suitcase packed

upwards into walls,  
every arch a farewell  
embrace.

You come to me  
but walls cannot  
walk – talk

to me of stone  
where no stone  
mid-fall

takes flight.  
Put one cobble  
in your pocket

as you go  
so I too may  
travel.

---

My circle is  
that circled horizon:  
my abstract clutch of almonds

colourless against  
hue – a circular sound  
uttered by blue become silence

as it rises. I may  
pose in an instant as moon or  
sun for these break or

set in my contemplation...

... but I stress  
everything upwards  
strained and tested

between – between  
man and woman or  
earth and sky

as the Roman  
awaiting that  
Imperial thumb

in its Coliseum  
suspended I  
live or die.

---

Through fields of summered fabric  
I harvest softness – bale it

Rustic sunlight asleep in fibres –  
Roughness tight with yellow hues

Bundled up –  
An Icarus

Without wings: my face builds  
Its frown muscle by muscle or

Nonchalantly awake allows my climb  
To sling this old and humbled world

All brown or  
Gold behind me.

---

My birds do not soar.

They take to fire, water, earth.  
These are my thoughts – weightless  
with brain, spun elegant across piazzas,  
winding my DNA through stairwells:  
a red planet thinned to warlessness,  
each stone horse reared and tamed.  
A head of State cast in glass.

I span  
that spirit in  
abandoned bridges:

each to each  
cloud to cloud  
late light to light –

the all but massless  
balanced on scales,  
my sky a tigress

striped whitely  
with contrails,  
bluely supple

---

and tight in her  
clothes. So I drink  
but of myself –

you cannot  
penetrate me  
with those

mighty looks.  
Let your eyes be  
slightest brush –

our meeting  
a manner of dance  
matter to matter:

whether I be gilt  
or brinkwater this  
soul shall rush

to that glance.

---

Space here has an innard geometry –  
passages down which the mind will

see an eye that walks hard with light  
yet illumined from within the walker

not knowing who might be  
met at each bend mends

herself as one door  
opens another

opens.

---

*Uprights Crossbeams Corridors Halls...*

EACH ROMAN  
FLUTTER MEMORIES: WHITE  
MEMORY RISEN SUDDENLY ON WINGS





WATCH  
HOW I WATCH –  
BEFORE ME AND BEHIND



EACH SKULL  
IS A CAVE WHERE  
STORIES VIE AS WOLVES



... BONES –  
THEIR CLOTHES A TALE  
AS MY STONES CLIMB HAND



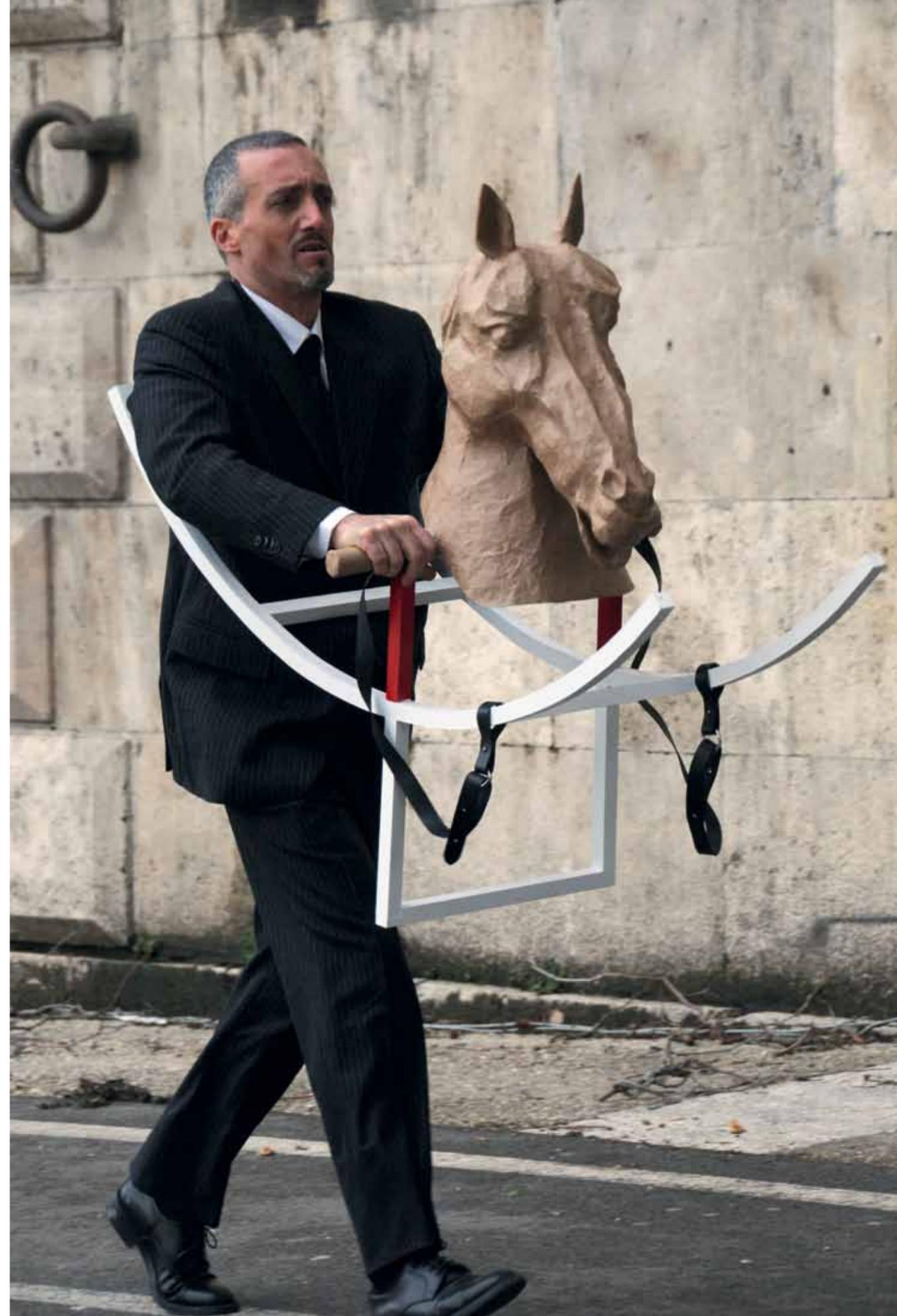




HE IS GEMSTONE  
REFLECTING HUMANITY

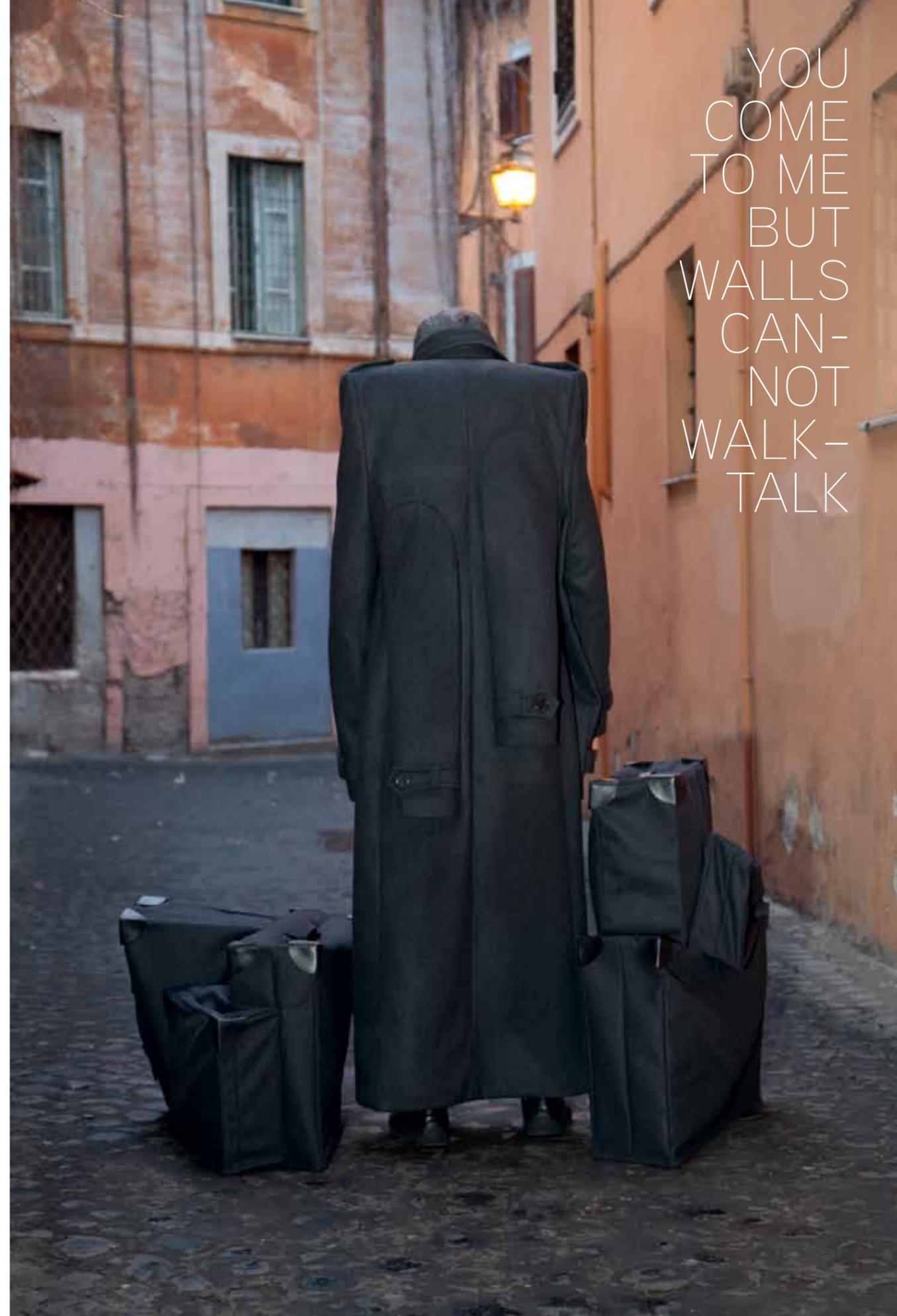


HORSE? MAN?  
SOME DEEP-GRAINED  
SAGITTARIAN?





WOOD MARCHING  
HOME. O HIS  
PUPPET-TOY



YOU  
COME  
TO ME  
BUT  
WALLS  
CAN-  
NOT  
WALK-  
TALK



AS THE ROMAN  
AWAITING THAT  
IMPERIAL THUMB

IN ITS COLISEUM  
SUSPENDED I  
LIVE OR DIE.

THROUGH FIELDS  
OF SUMMERED FABRIC  
I HARVEST SOFTNESS – BALE IT





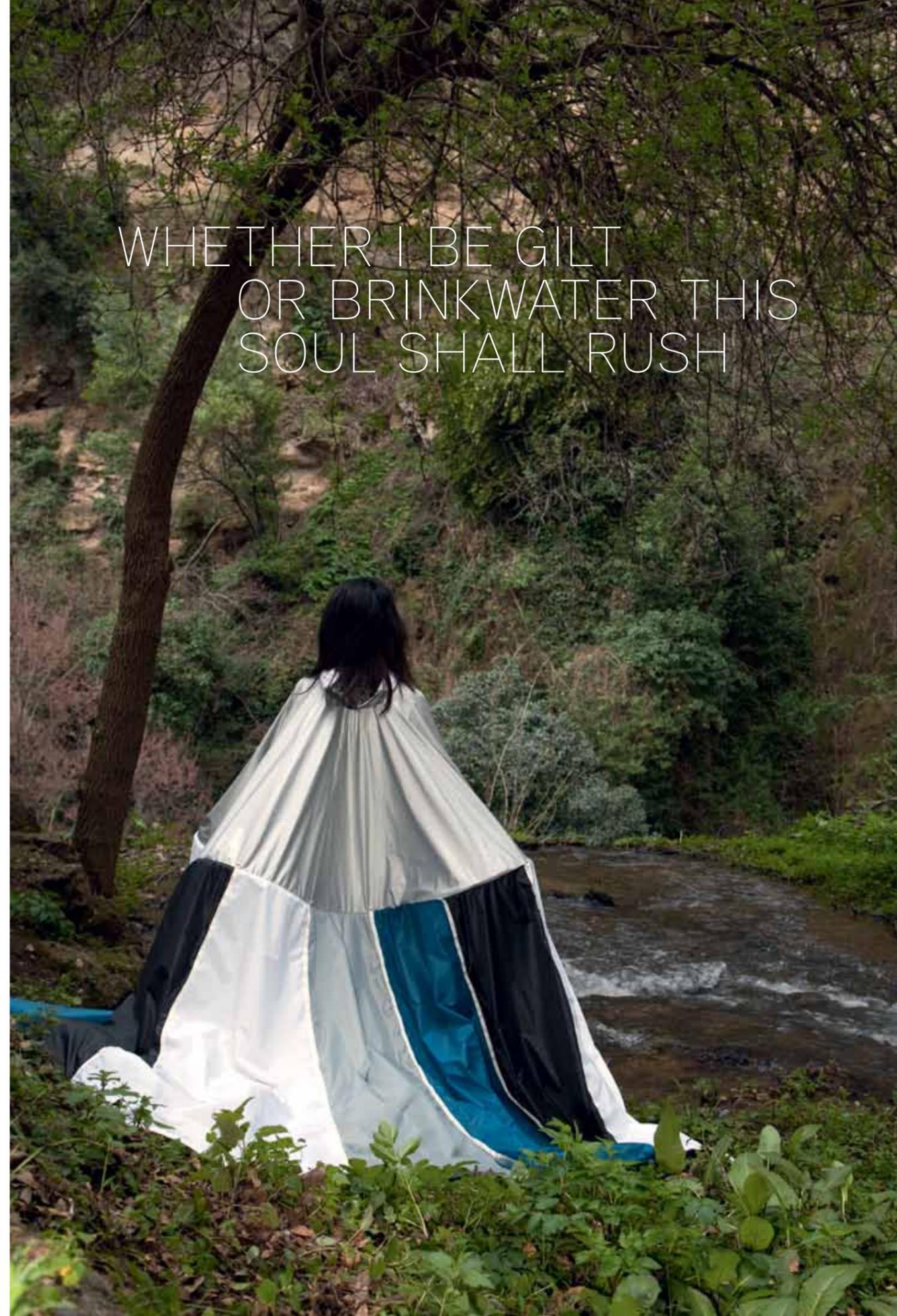
MY BIRDS DO NOT SOAR





I SPAN  
THAT SPIRIT IN  
ABANDONED BRIDGES





WHETHER I BE GILT  
OR BRINKWATER THIS  
SOUL SHALL RUSH



HERSELF AS ONE DOOR  
OPENS ANOTHER



# FABULAE ROMANAE

by LUCY + JORGE ORTA

Filmed and Edited by **David Bickerstaff**

Poetry by **Mario Petrucci**

Spirit sculptures by **Lucy + Jorge Orta**  
in order of appearance: *The Observer*, *Myth Maker*,  
*Dome Dwelling Quirinale*, *The Memory Man*,  
*Chair-iot Rider*, *Traveller*, *The Buoy*, *Bale Maker*,  
*Flying Man*, *Tunneller*.

With the collaboration of Studio Orta:  
Roxanne Andres, Michel Aubry, Nicolas Doerler,  
Charlotte Law, Susan Leen.

&  
Alumni from London College Fashion:  
Chloé Gayet, Mio Jin, Lara Torres,  
Oliver Ruuger, and Sum Yu Li.  
With the support of the Centre for Sustainable  
Fashion, London College of Fashion, Curatorial  
Research Assistant: Camilla Palestra  
Communication Assistant: Zoe Beck.

Poetry narrated by:  
Clare Corbett and Aldo Alessio

Music and Sound: David Bickerstaff

Second Camera: Simona Piantieri

Cast in alphabetical order:  
Valerio Calabro', Enrico Campagnoli,  
Riccardo D'Acunto, Fabiana Di Virgilio,  
Emanuela Iorio, Saverio Magistri,  
Marco Patassini, Dalila Valente

Crew:  
Producer: Michele Virgilio  
Production Manager: Karin Pavone  
Location Manager: Francesco Colicigno  
Set P.A.: Frederik Shelbourne  
Prop Master: Leonardo Raponi  
Prop Master: Fabio Marconi  
Prop Master's Asst.: Massimiliano Ciamei  
Seamstress: Gisa Rinaldi  
Wardrobe Buyer: Cristiana Agostinelli  
Van #1 Driver: Marco Di Francesco  
Van #2 Driver: Emanuele Germano  
Security: Mirko Carangelo, Cristiano Meloni  
Minivan Driver: Alessandro Patrese  
Cast Supervisor: Nicolò Rosa

With special thanks to  
FAI Fondo Ambiente Italiano  
and Villa Gregoriana Park

Photography: Paul Bevan

The video performance was created  
for the purpose of a high definition video  
projection artwork.

Duration: 29'

HD projection format: 4266 x 3200mm.

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