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Nov. 8, 1998

Dear Ms. Verveer

Jill Abramson from the N.Y. Times suggested I send this to you and I very much appreciate your consideration. As you see by the enclosed description I am working on a piece which will be shown at several museums next year, about courage. I have a great deal of admiration for Mrs. Clinton and hope she might be able to spare five minutes for me. It is an extremely low tech proposition - just me and a hand-size audio tape recorder. Anything she might want to edit I will gladly submit.

My many thanks,

Anything you might like to see I will gladly forward.

See the Best.
Susan Kleinberg

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Nov. 2, 1998

Dear Mrs. Clinton,

I so hope this finds you
well and with us having triumphed
in the election.

I've enclosed a brief description
of a project I'm doing - about courage.
It will be shown at several museums
next year. The main component is
brief audio taped interviews. I would
be honored and delighted if you
could find ten minutes to talk
with me.

I keep the note the President
sent me after my print joined the
White House walls - and I thank you
again.

All my best,
Susan Kleinberg

Also enclosed Venice Biennale catalogue.

Susan Kleinberg

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Fear Not

Installation

The walls of a medium-sized room will be covered with mud/adobe. Participating in this ritual is a tradition of honor, primarily to the women of villages in the Southwestern United States, parts of Africa and Southern India; each inch of the dwelling touched by human hands.

The room will smell of this earth.

Embedded in one wall will be an open-palmed hand (sculpture). This is the ancient Arabic symbol, "fear not."

In one corner of the room will be a metal water cooler, like the kind you find in the back of old gas stations. People can have a drink, and it will drip.

An audio tape will run continuously, all kinds of people speaking in different languages about courage ... a bullfighter from Tijuana, a recently escaped Tibetan Lama, artist Chuck Close, four firemen, Mr. T, who is seriously battling cancer, a Japanese woman interred in California during World War Two whose son was in the U.S. Army, Anita Hill, an illegal immigrant working as a domestic, writer Toni Morrison, Magic Johnson, a cat burglar, a woman with MS, Elizabeth Taylor, James Bond's stunt man, Newsweek's correspondent in the Balkans, astronaut Sally Ride...

The room will have rather low light and several chairs.

Ultimately, I will transcribe the interviews and publish them.

Jane Kramer, who writes for The New Yorker, is working on a piece related to this project.

I am doing this piece at P.S. 1 this spring.

Susan Kleinberg Venice Biennale, 1995

"Sposalizio del Mar"

Installation in the water between San Marco and San Giorgio.

This is a ring filled with golden shimmering history and hopes; an accretion of images from time immemorial, glinting, emerging and submerging through space and memory.

A bright yellow ring designed by NASA engineers based on the Apollo spacecraft's flotation collar, sustains and supports objects which refer to Venetian history as a crossroads of all history, through the present to the future. It is at once an archeology emerging from the deep and a capsule splashed down. It is the sea, its parts and secrets.

Golden Byzantine columns float among angels wings and manhole covers and putti and crowns long lost. Capitals and wall fragments, a sea dragon and toucans, all golden, toss up and under the waves. Tritons, tiaras, golf balls, books, a plate from Harry's Bar, a mask of jokers or the four winds might emerge at any time. Swords and a seahorse link with a Crusader's axe, Kublai Khan's lanterns and a Renaissance picture frame.

The pieces are signs and symbols, the dragon deriving from Carpaccio, angels wings of San Giorgio, the columns of San Zaccaria, the swan of myth, Brancusi and all children. A large crystal ball floats among them.

The ring is a symbol of the "Sposalizio del Mar,"¹ as humanity and the sea are wed through civilization and nature. Some of the Sabbadini Edict of 1553 is written on an inflatable shell. (Sabbadini was a philosopher and Minister of the Water in the Venetian Republic.)

*Venetorum urbs,
Divina disponente providentia
Aquis fundata
Aquarum ambitu circumsepta.
Aquarum ambitu circunsepta*

*Aquis pro mura mumitur
Quisquis igitur
Quoquo modo detrimentum publicis aquis
Anferre ausus fuerit
Hostis patriae judicepur*

*Nec minori plectatur peoma
Quam qui sacros muros patriae
Violasset
Hujus edicti jus ratum perpetuumque
Esto.*

¹ The "Sposalizio del Mar" is the mystic marriage of the Doge to the sea. Begun in the year 1000, this ceremony, in which the Doge, now the mayor of Venice, tosses a bejeweled ring into the sea, symbolizes the interdependence of the Venetians to the sea.

The city of the Venetians
With the aid of divine providence
was founded on water
enclosed by water
defended by water, instead of walls.
Whoever in any way dares
damage the public waters
shall be declared an enemy of the State
and will not deserve less punishment
than he who breaches the sacred wall of the State.
This edict is valid for ever more.

From a waterproof tape deck come stories of the Lagoon, told by fishermen, shop workers, ferry-boat drivers, a man who sells artichokes, a woman who sells squid... This includes some history of the Lagoon and its development, particularly by Counts Cini and Volpi -- the story of Cini's incarceration in Dachau, his release, and later his desire to dismantle the bridge he had constructed. People speak in a variety of languages -- all voices mingling with the lapping of the tides.

Susan Kleinberg
Venice, May 29, 1995.

SUSAN KLEINBERG

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No one should die without having once checked into Alitalia, the Italian national airlines, in a moving van.

So began the "installation" phase of life as an artist participating in the Venice Biennale.

The Venice Biennale, begun in 1895, is the oldest and most respected international exhibition of art, in the world. To participate is an invitation laden with myth and history. In celebrating this 100th year of the Biennale, 14 artists from different countries were asked to design sculptural installations to float in the Venetian Lagoon.

When I was first asked to conceive of a piece for the Biennale, one which could float in the deceptively rough conditions of the "Bacino San Marco," I searched my memory for the strongest floating image I could locate. It was the dramatic re-entry from space of the first Apollo space capsules, floating in bright yellow so precariously, yet so strongly, while we waited breathlessly to see life emerge. And so I called NASA.

The people at NASA, Cape Canaveral and the Johnson Space Center in Houston could not have been more helpful. Engineers long retired from "Landings and Recovery" sent data and drawings. It was a most worthwhile excavation into significant generative thought from such a pivotal moment and I would rather speak to Rip or Bernardo than most anyone else in my day. They were greatly concerned about how it should look, I was entirely concerned about how it should work.

They put me in touch with a company in Cape Canaveral who constructed for NASA, and would now build an Apollo-like flotation collar for me, ultimately stamping on it, "Round Float Thing - This Side Up, Susan."

In my research I had begun to focus on the major ceremony of the Venetian Republic, the "Sposalizio del Mar," begun in 1,000 a.d. It was the symbolic, mystic marriage of the Doge (King) of Venice to the sea, continued to this day by the Mayor of Venice, a Communist. In its day, it was a lavish procession at dawn to toss a bejeweled ring into the sea, sanctified by the highest priests and witnessed by most of the populace in their slender gilt boats.

This symbolic interdependence of civilization and nature seemed apt in 1995. My ring from Cape Canaveral would imply a movement through time and space and a continuation of this immutable pact. In its center would be Venetian references and objects of all of our histories to the present: Columns, manhole covers, a sea dragon, gothic windows, Byzantine capitals, a mask of the four winds, plates from Harry's Bar, angels' wings, books, Ionic pediments, tritons, an inflatable swan, a Crusader's axe ... all golden, rising up out of the sea, emerging and submerging with the waves.

It was deep shopping — 100 pounds of false pearls can be purchased in New Jersey — major detective tracking, divine intervention.

I spent two months at the American Academy in Rome, preparing, researching, thinking, testing ideas and materials. I felt fairly well versed in the Venetian Republic — its secrets, its codes — how St. Mark's body was smuggled out of Egypt to Venice wrapped in bacon so the Muslim authorities would keep a distance, this type of relevant information.

In the following months I constructed it, and now here I was, checking in.

So ten Italian men in gray suits screaming that my 20 ft. long proposition, with its Cape Canaveral insignia, and nine other pieces of "luggage" at their check-in counter, was impossible was not such a worry. It was not wrapped in bacon and the telex from their main office said the impossible was in fact expected. And so it left with blessings and tags.

Some many hours later, as we slipped through mist-shrouded canals on three transport barges, the miracle of a civilization functioning on no known rationale made perfect sense. It was a sonata and this piece of mine, which would float in the water in front of San Marco, a wonder and privilege.

We passed my favorite sites, the Gothic *Pecheria* on the Grand Canal, where fish have been sold each morning for generations, yet it speaks of cloaks and velvet and elegant glances — no small feat for a fish market; past the Campanile from which Galileo demonstrated his telescope to the Doge in 1609, to the open Lagoon.

The Biennale authorities had arranged I would be assembling my piece on San Servolo, the next island beyond San Giorgio, kind of to the left of the Hotel Cipriani. San Servolo was the former hospital for "maniacs of good family."

And it was a place of dreams. My beautiful decaying ballroom opened to a terrace of gnarled perfume — roses primarily. The sea glimmered flat and unpredictably at every time of the day, and the custodians tended to be a bit "particular," becoming interested in whichever minute aspect of construction appealed to their inclinations. The dog's name was "Roma." Napoleon's contribution to mental health in Italy was to add a wing for the populace at the far end of this small island, which now houses an exceptional center for classical restoration.

It has been my most unusual studio thus far. Ultimately, escorted by a fairly regal flotilla, from the Guardia di Finanza to a squid fisherman and an algae harvester, we dropped the *Spozalizio del Mar* into the sea — and it worked.

I became known in Venice by each school girl who caused her ferry boat driver to swing by the piece as, "the artist of the duck." No matter how many times I would protest, "It's a swan, Leda and the Swan, et. al., not the duck," in classic Venetian tradition I ultimately resigned to fate.

It continues to be a pleasure each day to think of this living archeology bobbing about through the hours, witnessing and witnessed.

From the acquisition of scuba divers to bureaucrats guarding the keys to kingdoms, or in my case, "permisos," I recommend to anyone embarking on this type of adventure, a great deal of time, maintaining an attitude that it is all anthropology and an embrace of the true Venetian spirit that nothing of value was ever seen on a direct route.

★

Some particular routes towards favorite spots: Best pastry and coffee in Venice, *Puppas*, two bridges in from the magnificent church of the Gesuiti, just off the Fondamenta Nuove. Signore Puppa's father and grandfather made these marvelous ambrosias in the same location and to die of gout in Venice is an honored tradition. (Byron was rumored to be attempting to counter its effects when he swam the Grand Canal.)

On the beautiful Campo Santi Apostoli, under the trees, the Cafe Santi Apostoli, the only known restaurant to administer to the famished after 11:00 p.m. Unlike Rome, except for this, after 11:00 you're on a diet.

Connected to the Church of Santi Apostoli is a wizard electrician, capable of accomplishing the impossible task of connecting an American answering machine to the Italian phone system.

Wine bars are a special Venetian tradition, serving fresh raspberry wine with your morning coffee, open all day until about 8:30 p.m. They usually have delicious snacks. My favorite is just over the bridge from the Church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo, also known as San Zanipolo, the burial site of the greatest number of Doges in Venice, the most beautiful Veronese, and St. Catherine of Siena's foot.

The preferred, and deservedly so, hotel of the art world, the *Gabrielli Sandwirth* down the Riva degli Schiavoni from the *Danieli*, has wonderful rooms, by no means all equal. Four stars.

Out of the tourist center, in the truly Venetian section of Cannaregio, across the island from San Marco towards Murano, -- the *Hotel Giorgioni*, three stars.

The extremely charming and inexpensive *Casa Boccassini*, also in Cannaregio, a great secret in a lovely garden. No stars.

Venetians see no point in names for streets. If they fix on one they use it for several half dozen. So if it says, once again, "Per San Marco," remember -- relatively -- so is Chicago. The colors will turn warm and golden in the sun and you never know what you may find.

1,350 words.





