

ROME IN THE WORLD

curated by Ricky Burdett

MAXXI | KME Gallery | 17 December 2025 – 6 April 2026

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Rome, 16 December 2025 - From 17 December 2025 to 6 April 2026, MAXXI, the National Museum of 21st Century Arts, presents ***Rome in the World***, curated by **Ricky Burdett**, a major exhibition that places the Capital in dialogue with other global metropolises.

How does Rome differ from Paris, London, Istanbul or Beijing? Is it a congested or liveable city, sprawling or compact, socially integrated or divided? And again, what space does Rome occupy today in the world's imagination?

The exhibition explores the essence of the city starting from two different but complementary perspectives.

On the one hand, the universe of data: an impressive mass of numbers, indicators and graphs, made accessible thanks to a skilfully designed exhibition layout. On the other, cultural and symbolic resonance: that imaginative dimension which the Eternal City has always nurtured in art and literature, from the Grand Tour onwards.

The result is an accurate contemporary portrait of a city that confronts global challenges and realities: from climate change to ageing, from migration to sustainability. What emerges is a true mosaic of data, photographs, documents, models and works of art, to which a new photographic commission is added. A large physical model of the entire Municipality of Rome, made of terracotta, serves as a platform for the visualisation of new information on the spatial, social and environmental dynamics of the city. « »

«In the year of the Jubilee, MAXXI chooses to speak about Rome from an unprecedented perspective, to share questions with its visitors and, through this exhibition, to seek answers», states **Maria Emanuela Bruni, President of Fondazione MAXXI**. «An ambitious research project that aims to define and recalibrate the space that Rome occupies in relation to the other capitals of the world».

«With *Rome in the World*», continues **Lorenza Baroncelli, Director of the Department of Architecture and Contemporary Design**, «MAXXI today sets out to broaden its gaze, deliberately and programmatically adopting the lens of urbanism and photographing Rome 'from the outside', in order then to arrive at a representation of its own, more intimate, DNA». «When MAXXI asked me to curate an exhibition on Rome, my instinct was to overturn the point of view that places it as *Caput Mundi* and to position it within a global context,» concludes **curator Ricky Burdett**. «The data collected offer a new reading: that of a complex contemporary urban artefact, socially stratified, expansive and green, built upon one of the cornerstones of our history».

EXHIBITION PATH

Rome in the World unfolds in the ground-floor spaces of the Museum as a true urban section. The exhibition path is articulated into three major sections, which dialogue with one another as chapters of a single narrative: *Global Comparisons*, *Rome in the World's Imagination* and *The DNA of Rome*.

GLOBAL COMPARISONS

Global Comparisons relates Rome to seventeen other major cities around the world, starting from four key dynamics:

Space, namely where we live and how we inhabit our cities, with profound political, social and environmental consequences;

Mobility, how we move and the resulting effects on efficiency, liveability and sustainability;

Environment, which investigates the impact of cities on the fragile balance of the Planet;

Society, which tells how cities are complex social mechanisms and how the way we choose to live in them can enhance or, on the contrary, impoverish quality of life.

Through images of cities such as Paris, London, Berlin, New York, Beijing, Lagos, Tokyo, Mexico City, São Paulo, Mumbai, Bogotá, Addis Ababa and others, placed alongside maps of demographic growth and visualizations of mobility flows, a comparative geography of contemporary metropolises is composed.

This section features author photographs by **Iwan Baan**, **Olivo Barbieri**, **Martin Roemers**, **Francesco Jodice**, **Giovanna Silva**, **Armin Linke** and **Peter Bialobrzeski**.

ROME IN THE WORLD'S IMAGINATION

Rome in the World's Imagination, a section curated by **Paola Viganò** with **Maria Medushevskaya**, is a survey through works, texts, maps and images of the ways in which the city has been seen, interpreted, narrated and inhabited by generations of artists, writers, travelers and intellectuals.

Rome as a city of grace and hospitality – with national churches, foreign academies and artist residencies – but also as the stage of mass tourism, portrayed with irony and precision by contemporary photographers. Rome is an “inner homeland” in the words of Ingeborg Bachmann, a “city of the soul” for Lord Byron, the setting of cosmopolitan salons for Stendhal, a psychic metaphor in which all eras coexist for Sigmund Freud.

References include artists such as **Giulio Paolini**, **William G. Congdon** and **Cy Twombly**, the unmistakable photographs of Martin Parr, as well as texts by writers and theorists including **Vernon Lee**, **Edith Wharton**, **Germaine de Staël** and **Henry James**.

THE DNA OF ROME

The concluding section, *The DNA of Rome*, addresses a question that is as simple as it is vertiginous: what is Rome's DNA today? Who are the Romans and where do they live, which neighborhoods are greener or more built-up, where families with children are concentrated and where the elderly, which areas are most exposed to social and environmental vulnerabilities? At the heart of this chapter is the largest physical model ever created of the entire Municipality of Rome today, commissioned by MAXXI and composed of 953 terracotta tiles, at a scale of 1:7,500. A three-dimensional landscape that becomes an exceptional platform onto which maps and data relating to population density, income, ageing, distribution of green areas, accessibility to services and exposure to heat islands are projected.

A new photographic series by **Marina Caneve**, destined for the MAXXI Collection, explores Rome in 2025 in its everyday life. Not the postcard city, but rather its “behind the scenes”: capers removed from the Tiber embankments, travertine quarries filled with sulphurous waters, horses behind Corviale, traces of wild nature scattered through urban layers.

The exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue, curated by **Ricky Burdett** and **Izabela Anna Moren**, conceived as a study and working tool that explores in depth the themes addressed along the exhibition path (Corraini Edizioni, bilingual Italian/English edition).

PUBLIC PROGRAM

The exhibition is accompanied by a series of talks devoted to Rome, its myth, and its prospects in the contemporary world. The programme opens on **27 January** with **Lucio Caracciolo**, drawing on the latest issue of *Limes*, to reflect on the role of the *Urbs* in the ongoing geopolitical transformation: a historical model of empire and *res publica* capable of

generating order and social cohesion, now more necessary than ever. The series continues on **12 February** with a conversation between **Ricky Burdett** and **Francesco Rutelli**, moderated by **Maria Emanuela Bruni**, President of the Fondazione MAXXI, focusing on the challenges and opportunities facing cities in the 21st century. On **20 February**, the focus turns to photography and urban representation with **Francesco Jodice**, **Giovanna Silva**, and **Olivo Barbieri**. The programme concludes with a lecture by **Andrea Giardina** on the myth and anti-myth of Rome, and a conversation with **Paolo Conti** based on his latest book, ***Il caso Roma. Una rinascita possibile?***

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