



**Plotting The Urban Body Firenze  
Itinerary Water • North • Rifredi  
by Maria Pecchioli**

**MARIA**

Florence, a city that is both physical and metaphysical space.  
Come with me, we'll travel along the meridians of the urban body,  
we'll get to know water, wood, earth, fire and metal.  
The book of changes is our compass,  
hearing guides each step we take.  
Listen, breathe,  
let's dive into an upside underworld where everything you desire is real.

**THEME SONG**

Plotting the urban body.  
An underground itinerary of frequencies and memories.  
Breathe, listen,  
*Plotting the urban body* is an energetic bath for balanced ears

**AMBIENT SOUNDS**

tinkling coins and flowing water...

**ORACLE**

HESAGRAM 29  
K'An – The Abysmal  
WATER  
Plummet inside  
The water flows uninterrupted toward its goal.

**MARIA**

You are water springing from the top  
where you make up and break down your childhood games,  
you jump over small walls and enter scented gardens,  
you rush, shaping your body around smooth and angular forms,  
to the valley, where a working-class neighbourhood was.

**ORACLE**

Sit if you can.

Place your left palm on your left knee.

**SOUNDS**

voices echo from a distance, a factory siren howls

**MARIA**

What does a late 19<sup>th</sup>-century factory sound like?

Officine Galileo was the most important factory in town, for the number of employees, its quality production and history. The workers were 'well aware of being part of that myth'.

How much awareness is rooted in manpower?

**MALE VOICE (audio excerpt from film)**

But all of a sudden, the voice of the worker rises up and addresses the capitalist: "my labour is a commodity that I sell to you, you buy it because its use creates more value for you than what you pay me for it...".

How important is leisure time in the life of a twentieth-century man?

**MALE VOICE (audio excerpt from film)**

But I must reproduce my workforce day after day, in order to sell it again.

How great is the desire to share the joy as well as the effort and hard work?

**MALE VOICE (audio excerpt from film)**

I therefore demand a working day of normal length, and I demand it without any appeal to your heart...

FLOG – Fondazione Lavoratori Officine Galileo [Officine Galileo's Workers Association]

**SOUNDS**

Gongs, prolonged, almost whining metallic sounds and flowing water

**ORACLE**

Slowly close your fingers, from the pinky to the thumb

Look at your hand.

The clenched fist lies on your leg

Relax your gaze

**MARIA**

Downstream of the Montughi hill,

4 hectares of land stretch from North to West,

it was acquired after the war by the workers of the Officine Galileo

To become a leisure centre and a drugstore  
To provide the city with a place of culture,  
and to share unproductive time.

**MUSIC**

Adriano Celentano, *I ragazzi del juke box*

**SOUNDS**

Flowing water, distant children's voices and laughter

The grey concrete pool, where the Office Galileo's lenses were tested for decades, suddenly  
changed color: blue, turquoise, sugar paper blue.  
A pool of water splashing laughter, love, jealousy and passions freed from the grip of fascism...

A Dance floor  
bocce courts  
tennis fields  
a gym  
an Auditorium.

**SOUNDS**

Timid steps on pine needles, the rustling of the turning pages

And the playground where, at the end of the 80s,  
crumpled porno magazines are scattered around  
You find them near the benches where kids give their first kisses  
A stream of sticky saliva, like pine resin  
descends the hill in a whirling rush of emotions:

Rage, as you slam your racket into the net like a young Mcenroe for a lost ball...

**SOUNDS**

John McEnroe: *You can't be serious, you cannot be serious man....*

Affection, when you see the bent backs of retired workers playing bocce.

**SOUNDS**

Balls rolling, reverberating sounds of gyms, girls' laughter...

Humiliation, for not being able to perform athletic feats that come so naturally to fellow gymnasts;

Excitement, sneaking a glimpse of cellulose & ink penises and vaginas

Fear: being late for a concert.

Sadness: arriving just in time to see your love with someone else.

**ORACLE**

Raise the fist of your left hand straight in front of you  
at the same height as your ear.

**MALE VOICE (audio excerpt from film)**

...fighting to change the quality of life in the factory, also meant fighting for a different, more  
egalitarian and fairer society....

**MARIA**

The wave of the workers' movement that gave life to this place  
is the river in which you have placed your will and your values.

**SOUNDS**

Flowing water, Tibetan bell and metallic tinkles

**ORACLE**

Water flows on uninterruptedly and reaches its destination:  
The Abysmal repeated

**SOUNDS**

Flowing water, Tibetan bell and tinkling coins

**MARIA**

A crater to your left, 20 meters high  
9000 cubic meters of void, bounded by concrete columns and iron rods

**SOUNDS**

Water dripping and echoing like melting ice, industrial electro music theme

Rusty scaffolding and oily puddles sound like an Einstürzende Neubauten concert.  
Core drilling from the 1990s.

A 30-year, 10,950-day woodworm in the keel of a yielding hill.

This place is a contemporary ruin.

A hollow iceberg threatening to swallow up the bottom and top of the hill.

**SOUNDS**

Water dripping and echoing like melting ice, dull sound that makes the body vibrate, almost  
like an earthquake... and finally drops of water - rain - on metal, rhythmic...

**ORACLE**

Thus the superior man walks in lasting virtue  
And carries on the business of teaching

**SOUNDS** - drops of water and the rain blur into the sound of a fence played with a stick like a xylophone

**MARIA**

I play football,  
I steal pencil cases,  
I slam the classroom door.  
I run, down the corridor, I'm angry and lost, because...where do I go?  
I go back.  
I love my curly-haired teacher, I hate my teacher with straight hair.  
I adapt, I go to the canteen, I have a favourite friend who prefers another friend  
I cry and say *boh* (*I don't know*) all the time...

**ORACLE**

Can you say "boh" with a gesture?  
Bring your shoulders towards your ears.  
And turn your palms slightly outwards.  
Release your shoulders and palms.  
Exhale pronouncing the sound boooo

**MUSIC**

Leopold Stokowski, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*

I break down, I don't learn to ask for help  
I play football, I score  
I want a role in the play, I get it

**MUSIC**

Leopold Stokowski, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*

The straight-haired teacher takes away my role, I hate her.  
I would have played a kid who finds a treasure in the attic.  
I find myself in the ranks of the ghosts,  
I'm a clumsy, graceless ghost, I drop the sheet, I give up.  
The curly-haired teacher comforts me, I love her.

**SOUNDS**

Water sounds in crescendo

**ORACLE**

Repeat the movement three times

**MARIA**

Flooding river

**ORACLE**

1

**MARIA**

I have no control over my emotions

**ORACLE**

2

**MARIA**

I like s k o o l

**ORACLE**

3

**MARIA**

I hate school. What can I do about it? Boo

**ORACLE**

Maria!

**MARIA**

Eh?

**ORACLE**

Do not shrug!

**SOUNDS**

Flowing water and gongs

**ORACLE**

The Abysmal repeated

If you are sincere, you have success in your heart, and whatever you do succeeds

**MARIA**

You are a wave that grows and flows into a storm  
down the hill, in the Rifredi district.

In front of the Guardia di Finanza headquarters, in Via Morti sul Lavoro.

Here is a recently renovated playground

with high, claustrophobic metal fences, blocking the view of what remains of the

Officine Galileo factory, an example of inventiveness, craftsmanship, science and defense of human  
integrity in workers' struggles since 1910.

## **SOUNDS**

Reverberating, metallic sounds, flowing water, street sounds

## **MARIA**

The foundation of the factory in an area where other factories had already settled made Rifredi - a suburb in the countryside at that time - a workers' centre where socialist ideas were widely circulated.

## **SOUNDS**

Reverberating, metallic sounds, interference bursting like Coca Cola bubbles, street sounds and streetcars

After 70 years, in 1980 Officine Galileo moved to Campi Bisenzio, and in 1981 the municipality of Florence assessed a feasibility plan for a Contemporary Art Centre (CAC) in this area. The first batch of work began in 1990 and continued until 2000, renovating 9,500 square metres, at a cost of 22 billion old lire...

...and... then, everything jams up, promises and money return to the dust.

## **SOUNDS**

Interference

There are two exceptions: the night of November 9th, 2002 and March 2003.

## **SOUNDS**

Interference and archival recordings

The evening of November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2002 you have the *Glotek* party flyer in your hand. You're exhausted, you've been marching and dancing for hours at the European Social Forum, a river of beautiful people from all over Europe, in search of redemption after Genoa. You are not from Florence and you've missed all the trains back, your friends are excited by the crowd and happy because they know they are pursuing the right causes.

## **MALE VOICE (archival recording)**

November 9th 2020: at the end of the Social Forum's anti-war day, unknown assailants have occupied the former Officine Galileo site in Rifredi, where a contemporary art centre was supposed to be built in Florence, a symbol of the city's cultural stagnation...

The flyer says 'have a break'. But you do not want to sleep, you head for the party, to the so-called Ex Meccanotessile Rifredi.

## **ARCHIVAL RECORDING**

A bunch of youngsters cheer, a gate squeaks open

**FEMALE VOICE (archival recording)**

Hello, yes, we just got in...

**MALE VOICE (archival recording)**

...there are five different sounds, DJs from all over Italy and more than 2000 participants, the municipality files a complaint against unknown persons....

**SOUNDS**

Fingers tapping on a computer board

**MARIA**

The next day, you write:

Subject: on Glotek

Date: Sun, 10 Nov 2002

Glotek was probably anything but a typical technorave: very few drugs, sounds from techno, reggae and trance, people who mostly came from the Social Forum and very few professional technorangers. But, guys, what a venue! Terrific!

The future museum of contemporary art of Florence in Piazza Dalmazia.

Wedged between several large apartment blocks and an imposing Guardia di Finanza building, the area is very large and is a surviving part of the huge Officine Galileo. In the central part, there are cast-iron columns. It was built around 1910 and declared a national monument in the 1950s.

Glotek was a strong, very strong statement to the city: the museum - under construction for over 20 years – was used by artists for the first time, in spite of bribed critics and bigoted professors. It was an experimental festival, nothing was taken for granted, neither the audience nor the music nor anything else.

A big kiss to everyone

Hi *tazz*er!

You're great!

**SOUNDS**

Waves and gongs blur into street sounds: an ambulance speeding past, a child skates along the pavement

**MARIA**

Today, if you peek carefully through the fences, you can see an imposing and severe metal sculpture in the courtyard leading to the former factory.

It is the Biomechanical Venus, created in March 2003. It is made of steel tubes, fragments of concrete, from the sweat of artists, activists, musicians, poets and pirates, gathered under the name of Odyssey for Space, a wave of initiatives that swept through the city in the early 2000s.

### **MALE VOICE (archival recording)**

... Our odyssey began with this eviction, we have taken to the streets every day to report the situation to the public...

Temporarily Occupied Zones - TOZ - for artistic purposes, reclaimed spaces for experimentation and cultural contamination,

### **MALE VOICE (archival recording)**

... a self-managed social centre to give life to our projects, areas of experimentation to give ourselves tools for the growth of non-commodified artistic practices, where we can create a circuit of self-training, self-production and circulation of knowledge and culture, where we can practise the right to space....

### **MARIA**

The Odissea (movement) is the underground lymph that opens the door to the new millennium, it emerges from manholes and construction sites and explodes into the streets, squares and parks, pumping up the volume of the city.

### **MALE VOICE (archival recording)**

... against any urban regeneration subservient to the dominant economic powers, against all attempts to criminalise the realities of self-organisation, against all evictions....

### **SOUNDS**

Techno music, a video camera is switched on

### **MARIA**

I zoom in and out, I have a small Canon, I film my steps,  
I make films with built-in filters, they are horrible, I always press STOP when I shouldn't, I urge, I listen, I am willing to help, I mingle.  
I wear a blue suit, gloves, but shards of glass resin get under my skin, I search for meaning.

One morning, lost in the bare rooms of this empty museum, I meet a young man with bagpipes. He plays and everything rumbles.

### **ARCHIVAL RECORDING**

The sound of bagpipes fills the space

### **MARIA**

What happens to the city under siege, when a man plays a bagpipe, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, inside an abandoned factory?

I wonder who, among the managers and workers from the last century, would have even remotely imagined or dreamt of this space brought to life by such a social movement.

## **ARCHIVAL RECORDING**

Young people chatting while working at the occupied site

The self-published fanzine *// Mostro* reports:

In March 2003, work begun on the construction of a huge seven-metre high statue, the Biomechanical Venus. On April 25th, Florence will be invaded by acrobats and sound hawkers. The Venere will parade, accompanied by the many people who have built it, designed it or simply thought of it.

## **ARCHIVAL RECORDING AND SOUNDS**

Voices fade into the sound of rising waves, the sound of water gushes

## **VENERE BIOMECCANICA**

I watch over future memories from this place, which is my home.

I protect from a multitude of hollow words and useless ribbon cuttings.

From the silence that surrounds me, I generate the visions that preceded me

## **ORACLE**

Wherever you are, get a glass of water

## **VENERE BIOMECCANICA**

thirst for life

## **ORACLE**

take a sip of water

## **VENERE BIOMECCANICA**

Thirst for words

## **ORACLE**

Can you hear the sound of water down your oesophagus?

## **VENERE BIOMECCANICA**

Thirst for battles

## **ORACLE**

take a sip of water

## **VENERE BIOMECCANICA**

Thirst for hearts beating in unison

## **ORACLE**

Can you hear the sound of water running through your veins?

### **VENERE BIOMECCANICA**

I want to stay right here, where I was created

### **SOUNDS**

water, waves breaking

### **ORACLE**

Take a pen and paper and write these words down

### **VENERE BIOMECCANICA**

To the Municipal Council of the City of Florence

### **SOUNDS**

dripping water, metallic interferences, vibrating space

### **VENERE BIOMECCANICA**

I ask you to find a permanent site for me in the area of the Ex Meccanotessile Officine Galileo, where I was created and where I have resided for the last 18 years.

I am Venere Biomeccanica, monument and memory of the highly symbolic, social and artistic value that *Odissea per lo Spazio* has represented for the city of Florence.

I ask you to recognize the generative power and self-determination that I represent, granting me the title of Contemporary Monument” and placing me permanently within the area.

Sincerely

Biomechanical Venus

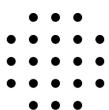
### **MARIA**

You can go to [change.org](https://change.org), sign the petition and share.

Thank you for lending your arms, hands and signature to Venere Biomeccanica.

This itinerary ends here. We head east, where the Sun is born, the house of Wood.

### **SOUNDS OF WOOD, PERCUSSION.**



RadioPapesse