

## Roman notes

## A New Yorker works to celebrate the Tiber

By Elisabetta Povoledo

For the past few weeks, the Tiber has become navigable again, at least in part. It took the city nearly a century to give the historic river its due, something that a New York City artist has spent the better part of two decades thinking about.

Since she first came to Rome as a Fulbright scholar 20 years ago, artist Kristin Jones has been drawn to the tract of the Tiber River that runs from Ponte Sisto to the Ponte Mazzini. This stretch, she says, is absolutely straight and coincidentally happens to have exactly the same dimensions as the Circus Maximus. "It's so significant to have an abstract void in this ancient city," she said. She described "her" section of the river as "grand with a sense of majesty and neglect."

Since then Jones has been working on an ambitious festival centered around the Tiber that would involve visual artists, writers and composers from both sides of the Atlantic. Her project was featured in a recent exhibit at the Roman Aquarium, consisting of a series of projects for the Tiber by dozens of architects.

"I want people around the world to question the role of nature within the urban environment," she said. "I think artists can really help in the reorganization of the neglected spinal cord of the city."

Scheduled for June 2004, Jones' multidisciplinary festival, which she named "Tevereterno," or Eternal Tiber, has acquired non-profit status through its affiliation with an arts center in New York called The Kitchen. It's also gotten nods of support from Rome's city hall and the blessing of Macro, the contemporary art gallery.

Jones thought the heightened interest spurred by the boat service would help her cause, which is in a crucial and slow-going fund-raising phase to raise the one million euros for the launch of the project. "Its success shows that Romans want to do something about their river," she said. "The ultimate goal [of the festival] is to celebrate the river."

The success of the water boats is an indication that Romans have not forgotten their waterway. Now an American artist wants to revitalize its soul and cultural essence. Perhaps the maxim should be changed: When in Rome, do as the New Yorkers do.

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