

The colour photographs grouped under the title "In Rome, by night" were taken between 1975 and 1995, during some one-month stays, at a time when I had enough time and money to do without commissioned reportages and to freely roam the squares and alleys of Rome's "centro storico".

This didn't happen very often, therefore, my wanderings around Rome at night, one after the other, lasted about six months overall.

During a short stay, I was struck by the feverish beauty of Rome's summer evenings. From sunset onward, Romans flock to the squares that characterise the heart of the city. After a torrid day, they come seeking for coolness near the monumental fountains that stand in Piazza di Spagna, Piazza del Popolo, Piazza Navona, or Piazza della Rotonda. There, against the background of churches and palaces darkened by the night, the Romans perform their theatre. In the show that the city offers herself, they are actors and spectators at the same time.

The setting is build from layers of centuries, the music is the hustle and bustle of thousands of voices challenging the sound made by the water of the fountains. What a spectacle!.... You eat, you drink, you look, you let yourself be looked at, you touch the still-warm stone, the skin of the city, and you talk and talk... until late night.

I had developed a passion: photographing in Rome, at night. Shooting at night was no small endeavour because, in the first place, I decided not to use a flash, whose light would have struck the people I was photographing. To capture beautiful subjects, I had to remain discreet, unnoticed, and to spend time... and still more time.

Photographing in colour with very little light, or even in the dark, sometimes without even clearly discerning what I had in my viewfinder, both distressed and excited me. The problem with colour is its "pretty", aestheticizing side. In Rome, at night, I had perhaps dealt her a fatal blow; in any case, I had avoided postcards.

As always happens in photography, there were many failures, many *fiascos*, and some successeful outcomes, which, thanks to patience, eventually made up a homogeneous whole. The pitch dark backdrop of the night gave unity to scenes photographed years apart, and Rome, being "eternal", guaranteed the permanence and consistence of the scenery. But the stars of the celebration were the people of Rome, who, one evening after another, come to rediscover their city, to talk to her, to touch her, and to love her freely.