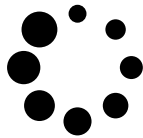


AN-ICON



THE ITALIAN JOB
- Job N. 3, Lazy

Sunday (2022)

by Emilio Vavarella in conversation
with Sofia Pirandello

VR

Performance

POV

Portrait

360-degrees

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From the Environment
to Virtual Reality

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THE ITALIAN JOB - Job N. 3, *Lazy Sunday* (2022)



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in conversation with SOFIA PIRANDELLO, Università degli Studi di Milano, <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-4477-9199>
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Lazy Sunday is the third work in *THE ITALIAN JOB* series. Started in 2014, straddling the distance between Italy and the United States, this series intends to highlight the hidden structures behind themes such as artistic legitimacy, virtuality, immaterial labour and 2.0 relationships between artists and curators. *Lazy Sunday* takes shape after an invitation to participate in a virtual residency within the spaces of the 12th Atelier of Casa degli Artisti in Milan. The artist accepts the invitation, overturning the assumptions of the residency: instead of participating at a distance, Vavarella transforms his point of view into an open space for the virtual participation of other people. The work consists of a 12-hour film made with a 360° camera and shot continuously on August 8 2021, on an ordinary day. Starting at 9:40 a.m., Emilio Vavarella filmed the events of one of his summer Sundays, recording his every activity, from waking up until the evening. The film has been shown in the space set up in the Casa degli Artisti, where visitors took on the point of view of the artist using a Virtual Reality headset.

Keywords [VR](#) [Performance](#) [POV](#) [Portrait](#) [360-degrees](#)

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SOFIA PIRANDELLO: *Lazy Sunday* was produced in response to a call for you to make a VR work during a remote residency; the idea was to create a workspace, an online artist's studio. With your work, you decided to overturn these premises: you transported us between Cambridge and Boston, opening a window on your everyday life, changing the cards on the table a bit as regards the roles of the people involved. I am thinking above all of us curators and the public. What kind of experience does this result in for the parties involved, in your opinion?

EMILIO VAVARELLA: Actually, on an empirical level, you would be better equipped to answer the question, because it was in a way your role, along with Elisabetta's, that was partially turned on its head. And those who enjoyed the work could, or should, answer the question. Because I, after all, could not share their point of view either...From my perspective, it was about working simultaneously on several fronts. On the theoretical front, I was interested in exploring the idea, or ideology, of immersion, precisely because it represented the starting point of your research project, and offered so much food for thought.

From a conceptual point of view, I was interested in creating a work that seemed very straightforward and direct, like the other works in this series, but capable of opening up multiple discourses and various types of analysis and interpretation.

From the point of view of the material production of the work, I needed to give concrete material form to my ideas by bringing the dimension of *techne* as close as possible to that of *logos*, and I needed, as requested in your invitation, to use Virtual Reality.

And finally, from an interpersonal point of view, it was important to me that no matter how much my operation was cloaked in a certain irony, unscrupulousness, and even a certain amount of irreverence, it was still clear that it was not a boutade, but an operation driven by a deep desire to get to the bottom of all of these issues.

And precisely because each of my works stems from a synthesis between concept and material, the synthesis came very naturally and spontaneously, almost as if it were something absolutely necessary.

SOFIA PIRANDELLO: *Lazy Sunday* was conceived as the third chapter of a series, *THE ITALIAN JOB*, dedicated to the relationship between artists and curators in the realisation of online works. What are the two works that precede *Lazy Sunday* and what are they about?

EMILIO VAVARELLA: First of all, all the works in *THE ITALIAN JOB* series share a number of characteristics related to the mode of production, the geographical context of the works, and the issues addressed.

The conditions of production reflect general socio-technical changes: production through (technical and social) networks; production at zero cost to the artist; production in the absence of a traditional artist's studio; and alternative forms of monetisation of artistic practice.

With regard to geography, the artist's position straddling two countries, Italy and the United States, should be emphasised. But also a position straddling online and offline and at the intersection of material production and intellectual work.

The issues addressed, all interconnected, are originality, technical reproducibility, the relationship between original and copy, artistic legitimisation and the value of the work of art.

The first work in the series was in 2014. I had been selected for a digital artist residency on the theme of cloud computing entitled *embarrassment party*, created and directed by Marii Nyröp. My project consisted of stealing the entire residency plus the eleven works created by seven other international artists. The work, or operation, was supported by curatorial texts by Lucrezia Calabrò Visconti and Marii Nyröp.

The second work is entitled *An-Archiving Game*, and is from the following year. I created a virtual exhibition in the form of an animated GIF using photographs from the FBI's archive of stolen artworks, the "National Stolen Art File." I then offered physical copies of the stolen photos for sale using an experimental open source platform that offers a decentralised, peer-to-peer, tax-free, censorship-free online network through which to trade in Bitcoins. This second project was accompanied by curatorial texts by Monica Bosaro and Emma Stanisic.

SOFIA PIRANDELLO: Immersive experiences, artistic or otherwise, often aim to involve those who participate in them thanks to a strong interactive dimension. You made a twelve-hour film in which, as you yourself pointed out, the highlights are those in which you read a book, eat an ice cream, take a motorbike ride, and chat on the terrace on a lazy summer Sunday. It is often said that VR is capable of recreating the world we live in, and you have decided to do this in a way that the viewer might not expect: you have provided twelve hours of your life and the chance to be present. Elisabetta wrote in this regard that there is no climax, all the moments are equally important and interesting. What prompted you to create a 360° film with these characteristics?

EMILIO VAVARELLA: I believe that spending an entire day in someone else's shoes is as interesting as it is impractical, for innumerable reasons. The duration of the work then has as much to do with how I recorded my point of view as with how I imagined it would be enjoyed, i.e. a one-off projection, from morning to night, performative and un-repeatable. A kind of live performance filmed for deferred broadcast. With the hours of the night, the darkness, the immobility of the body, the negation of the image, marking its beginning and its end. If I had made cuts and editing, arbitrarily, the meaning of the work would have inexorably slipped through those same cuts. Editing would have produced a semantic structure that would have interfered

with the very idea of “live action.” Only the annihilation of the montage, or at least its reduction to a minimal, almost non-existent form, makes it possible to focus on the content of the frame, which in turn is 360°, thus itself free of the cuts made by the image frame.

The 360° element, I believe, serves even more to negate the idea of immersiveness it promises. Because, while it provides an immersive image, there is in a sense a discomfort in immersion that becomes glaringly obvious when one finds oneself cramped and constricted within an image that is as impenetrable as it is immersive.

SOFIA PIRANDELLO: At first, *Lazy Sunday* may seem an extremely sincere work: you lay bare your everyday life without veils, you share everything and everyone with us. When we enter the film, we put ourselves in your shoes. Yet, one thing we soon realise is that even if we spend hours immersed in your environment, we will never have the experience you have had. Both as an artist and as a researcher, what is your stance on the rhetoric of presentiality and immediacy of immersive media such as 360° cinema and Virtual Reality? Are we ever really present in such a context and in what way?

EMILIO VAVARELLA: The work offers exactly what it promises: it provides the artist’s point of view. On the other hand, this type of residency is mainly aimed at this, and every artist has in a way a duty to please the patrons they decide to work with.

The interesting thing, for me, is that the ideology implicit in the discourses related to immersivity cloaks this work with a desire for sharing and identification which is not currently possible, and perhaps never will be, but which arises almost automatically in the spectators / viewers.

The work promises the audience the possibility of experiencing a recording in Virtual Reality, but it is the expectation linked to this type of fruition that immediately cloaks the work

with a desire, partially conscious and partially unconscious, for immersion and identification with other bodies.

Then there remains the question of access to the artist, to his body as much as to his mind. I believe that there has long been a deep fascination with artworks also as a means of immersion in the minds of artists: it is perhaps a history of art in reverse that has yet to be written. But this is undoubtedly there.

I like Elisabetta's interpretation of the work, speaking of a "faceless self-portrait," linked in various ways to other works of mine. I am thinking of *The Sicilian Family*, which merges my family memories with images of my relatives, but blends everything into impenetrable glitches; I am thinking of my genetic portrait at the MAMbo Museum in Bologna, of the series *The Other Shapes of Me*, in which I exist as a digital clone in textile format, but still impenetrable, unreadable. In *Mnemograph* I trace my childhood memories but without letting anyone else have access to them.

In a way then, all these works are a form of negotiating, in an era dominated by visibility, the need to make oneself visible, readable, recognisable, and accessible. I think it is more interesting to deny all this regime of absolute visibility, and thus always remain partially invisible, inaccessible, or unrecognisable.

SOFIA PIRANDELLO: *Lazy Sunday* is a film, but it is also a performance, in a more or less broad sense: a performance which you carried out by filming subjectively for twelve hours straight last summer and which was only available for twelve hours on January 23 this year, at the Casa degli Artisti in Milan; it is for those who wear helmets, ideally for twelve hours, and who have to physically bear the burden that reliving even just an ordinary day entails. Does this have anything to do with betraying the promises of entertainment often linked to VR in order to rethink the use of this medium in an alternative way?

EMILIO VAVARELLA: This has to do with my desire, traceable in all my works regardless of the medium used, to create a space for reflection. We could call it a critical space within which to exercise one's thoughts. The long, even boring times of an anti-spectacular and prolonged fruition can bring about this critical space.

But it also has to do with a certain way of seeing reality, which for me is a constant performance, or metamorphosis, of events, of flows, to which we give order and which we try to break up and segment according to our own arbitrary logic and our own forms of experience. By offering to the public a kind of mirrored experience of a day in my life I necessarily gave form to my own idea of what reality looks like.

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UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO
DIPARTIMENTO DI FILOSOFIA
"PIERO MARTINETTI"



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