**Language and Culture Show and Tell: Italian**

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**Transcript**

**Slide - Introduction**

Ciao a tutti!

My name is Cristina Massaccesi and I teach cinema, comics and Italian language at University College London.

During this brief show and tell we will:

* Observe a beautiful image of the city of Rome etched by Giuseppe Vasi in 1765;
* See how Rome has changed between the 18th century and the 21st;
* Look at some images of ancient and modern Rome;
* Talk about the Grand Tour;
* Learn how to ask and give directions in Italian.

To begin, here’s a map of Italy. Can you locate Rome on the map? I’ll give you 10 second to try!

**Slide – Who was Giuseppe Vasi?**

Before showing you the beautiful etching held at the UCL Art Museum, I’d like to tell you something more about its author: Giuseppe Vasi.

Vasi was born in 1710 in Corleone in Sicily and died in Rome, where he spent most of his life, in 1782. He was a famous architect and engraver but nowadays, we remember him mainly for his *vedute* – panoramic images that reproduce different areas of the city of Rome. Between 1747 and 1761, Vasi worked on his most ambitious project, a series of ten books, each containing 20 etchings, images incised on a metal plate and then processed through the use of specific chemical substances. The work was collectively entitled *Le magnificenze di Roma antica e moderna* (The Wonders of Ancient and Modern Rome).

Why is his work important?

Vasi’s books are very interesting, not only as a work of art, but also because they were supposed to be used as a sort of travel guides for those who travelled to Rome either on pilgrimage or as part of their Grand Tour (more on this later!). Today, Vasi’s etchings are a precious source of visual information about the shape and the structure of Rome in the 18th century.

In the next slide I will show you the etching. Take a few seconds to observe it carefully.

**Slide – the etching**

Vasi etched this *veduta* of Rome from the top of the Gianicolo, a hill west of the river Tiber, that offers a splendid panoramic view of the city (if you ever visit Rome, don’t forget to take your own shot from the terrace on the Gianicolo!). It’s hard to guess from this PowerPoint, but Vasi’s etching is really large. It’s composed of six sheets put together and measures in total 2.6 meters per 1.06 meters. The image is dedicated to Charles III, King of Spain. If you’re wondering why Vasi dedicated his work to a Spanish king, this can be easily explained. Vasi came from Sicily and Sicily, like the rest of southern Italy, was at the time part of the Spanish kingdom. For Vasi it was natural to offer one of his works as a homage to his king. If you look carefully at the image, in the foreground at the left you can see Vasi himself sketching his panorama. It’s also possible to see some of Rome’s landmarks.

Let’s take another look at the etching to locate Vasi and some of the famous places in the *veduta*

**Slide – locating Vasi and landmarks**

In the etching we can see

Vasi and important places such assuch as

Saint Peter’s cathedral

the Mausoleum of Emperor Hadrian, usually called Castel Sant’Angelo

the river Tiber winding through the city

the Pantheon

the Isola Tiberina

**Slide – ancient Rome vs modern Rome**

Despite looking quite big, in 1765 the population of Rome was that of a modern London borough, around 150,000 citizens

Nowadays, it has over 2 million inhabitants

In the next few slides, I’ll show you a contemporary view from Mount Gianicolo and the landmarks in Vasi’s etching as they look today

**Slide – Modern view from Mount Gianicolo**

Show Castel Sant’Angelo and the Altare della Patria, a monument built in honour of the first king of Unified Italy, Victor Emmanuel II.

**Slide**

Saint Peter’s Cathedral

Castel Sant’Angelo

**Slide**

The Pantheon

The Isola Tiberina

**Slide – Travelling to Rome**

Despite the ups and downs of history and the big changes in terms of extension and population, throughout its history, Rome has always been a very important travel destination for political, religious and cultural reasons.

There’s even an old Italian saying that goes: “Tutte le strade portano a Roma” – All roads lead to Rome

In the 18th century, when Vasi made his *vedute*, Rome was going through a phase of renovation and splendour that had started in the 17th century when Rome was transformed into a Baroque city. The 1700s are the years that see the construction of many important landmarks, such as the completion of Saint Peter’s Cathedral and the work on the Trevi Fountain and the Spanish Steps completed respectively in 1762 and 1792. The richness of Rome’s artistic and cultural heritage turned the city into one of the most important stops in the Grand Tour.

Do you know what the Grand Tour was?

**Slide – the Grand Tour**

The Grand Tour was a journey made by young aristocrats (especially British ones) usually started their Grand Tour when they were about 21-year-old and travelled across Europe to complete their formation.

They were normally accompanied by a *chaperone* and, if they were wealthy enough, by a troop of servants.

Where do you think they would stop along the way? Think about it for a few seconds before looking at a map with the traditional itinerary of the Grand Tour.

The map that you’re observing now gives you an idea of the typical itinerary of the Grand Tour. The itinerary was not set in stone and depended on many variables, such as the finances of the travelling party and the political situation of the country visited where a war or a rebellion could slow down the journey’s progress or force a change of itinerary.

The journey usually started from Dover or Calais and proceeded by coach to Paris where the traveller would stop for a while to be further educated in the crucial skills of a young nobleman: fencing, dancing, riding and the French language. From Paris, the travelling party would cross the Alps to enter Italy. The most common stop in Northern Italy was Turin that was soon followed by Florence where the traveller would stop for a few months to discover the wonders of Renaissance culture. The next stop after Florence was Rome that was appreciated in particular for its historical heritage and for Renaissance and Baroque churches and squares. In Rome, the young aristocrat would enjoy archaeological tours and often pose in Roman attire in front of the remains of temples and columns. After Rome, the Grand Tour could proceed further South towards Naples and, at times, even Sicily and then moved back up North towards Venice that was often another lengthy stay and was considered by the travellers one of the most “Italian” places to visit in the country. After crossing the Alps again, the Grand Tour would continue either to Vienna or Munich, Berlin and Heidelberg (German cities were particularly appreciated for their important universities) and then move towards Belgium and Holland to allow the travelling party to cross the Channel and return to England.

**Slide – Asking for directions**

Imagine to be on a modern version of the Grand Tour. You arrive in Rome but cannot find your accommodation. Instead of asking for directions in English, you decide to do it in Italian to absorb the culture and language of the place where you’re going to spend some time. But how do you it?

The first thing to do is to learn some basic words, such as *dove* (where) and *come* (how).

Using these two simple words, you can build up two important sentences that will help you move around the city. The first one is: *Dov’è* (where is…) and the second is *Come vado* (How do I go…).

Listen to the following dialogue between you and a passer-by.

You are at the train station and need to find the Hotel Gianicolo.

Also imagine that the person you’re talking to is young and you can be informal with them.

**Slide - dialogue**

You: *Scusi, dov’è l’Hotel Gianicolo?* [Excuse me, where is the Hotel Gianicolo?]

**OR**

*Scusi, come vado all’Hotel Gianicolo?* [Excuse me, how do I go to the Hotel Gianicolo?]

Passer-by: *Per andare all’Hotel Gianicolo gira a destra al semaforo. Vai dritto fino all’incrocio e poi svolta a sinistra. Cammina per cinque minuti fino alla piazza e poi gira nella seconda traversa a destra. Fermati quando vedi l’ingresso dell’hotel.* [To go to the Hotel Gianicolo turn right at the traffic light. Go straight ahead until the crossroads e then turn left. Walk for five minutes until the square and then turn into the second side street on the right. Stop when you see the entrance of the hotel]

**Slide - vocabulary**

There are some important verbs to remember:

* *Andare* = to go
* *Girare* = to turn
* *Andare dritto* = to go straight ahead
* *Svoltare =* to turn
* *Camminare* = to walk
* *Fermarsi =* to stop
* *Vedere =* to see

And some words that we use to give directions:

* *A destra* = right
* *Al semaforo* = at the traffic light
* *Dritto* = ahead
* *All’incrocio* = at the crossroads
* *A sinistra* = left
* *Fino a* = until
* *Alla piazza* = to the square
* *Traversa* = side street

**Slide - conclusion**

These are just some examples of verbs and words we use to give directions in Italian but try to memorise them and you’ll see how handy they can be when you’ll do your personal Grand Tour of Italy!

Thank you for your attention!