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“Ponte Farnese” project by French artist Olivier Grossetête a collective work to be inaugurated on July 13 in front of Sisto Bridge

Christian Masset, France’s ambassador to Italy, welcomed to Palazzo Farnese (Farnese Palace) Pietro Salini, Chief Executive of Webuild; Virginia Lapenta, curator of Villa Farnesina; and Olivier Grossetête (via videoconference) for the presentation of the project “Ponte Farnese”, a bridge across the epochs.

The bridge, which will measure 18 metres in length, will be made entirely of cardboard with the participation of the public. For a few days, it will act as a symbolic connection between Palazzo Farnese (Farnese Palace) and Villa Farnesina. The bridge, which will be held in the air by three large, helium balloons each six metres in diameter, is the result of the genius of Olivier Grossetête. The French artist was inspired by an original design by Michelangelo Buonarroti, who imagined a connection between the two residencies of the Farnese family. Michelangelo’s project was abandoned following the death of Pope Paolo III. The bridge will come to life today, even in ephemeral form, with the work of art promoted by the French embassy and the Institut Français Italia with the support of Webuild in collaboration with Villa Farnesina-Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei that offered space in the palace’s auditorium for the collective workshop that will allow the Ponte Farnese to be built between July 8 and July 12.

The French ambassador promotes cultural events that reinforce relations between France and Italy, and Palazzo Farnese is an excellent location for the meeting of different worlds. **Ambassador Masset** said: *“The perfect union between past and present, represented by the Ponte Farnese, calls for a reflection to be made on what Italian and French artists have always studied. The audacity of Olivier Grossetête, who did not hesitate to accept with humility this ‘challenge’, makes it even more precious this perpetual study between past, present and future. For us, Webuild was a natural partner given its enormous experience as a builder.”*

“For Palazzo Farnese, Olivier Grossetête’s project is particularly important because it puts on display in a utopic way the bridge that Michelangelo would have wanted. Even if it will be up only for a few days, we can imagine, thanks to this work of art and the artist’s vision, what could have connected the two shores of the Tiber during the Renaissance,” he said.

"The strong significance of the public's participation reflects more than ever how the social and art are bound together. In this difficulty period, we are moving forward. It is a real party that will be offered to Romans and all those who will see the Ponte Farnese fly," he concluded.

Pietro Salini, Chief Executive of Webuild, said: *"We accepted with pleasure the French ambassador's invitation to support the art installation of Olivier Grossetête. We build works that last, and this surrealist idea of a virtual - but physical - bridge fascinated us. It is the expression of a poetic, collective gesture that brings to life the dream of a big client from the past. The bridge is the public work that I like the most. It represents the union of people, cultures and diverse epochs. The Farnese Bridge expresses the beauty of the participatory gesture, with common people united around a great project, virtual or physical, just as how it happened during the construction of the Genoa Bridge. Great works of art, in some way like great infrastructure projects, always represent much more than a simple work of genius. They tell stories, visions, desires, redesign cities, change people's lives and influence the course of events. And with this bridge today, we want to look to the future, a future of recovery – a real, sustainable rebirth that starts from this city, a heritage to humanity, reminding us how the architectural grandiosity of the Renaissance can again be revived to inspire use towards the future."*

At the Farnesina Villa, in addition to the workshops, there will be a dedicated tour entitled *I Farnese* (The Farnese). Among the magnificent antiques and rooms of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, visitors will be able to learn what connects the Farnese family to the villa and the garden. **The President of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Professor Giorgio Parisi**, said: *"The Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei is pleased to be associated with an artistic project of such high symbolic value, even more so in this historic moment in which a bridge across the epochs and between the institutional residences becomes also a symbol of European synergy for recovery. It is a reflection on architecture that suggests and shows a social project that invites the city's residents to come around the construction of a highly symbolic structure that reconnects roots, identity and community."*

Olivier Grossetête said of the project: *"Ephemeral by nature, like ourselves, these monumental participatory cardboard constructions are destined to disappear. The idea behind them is in the process, in the journey and in the collective experience that has as much meaning as the final form. This 'suspended' bridge, which in its being is inaccessible, connects us only to ourselves. It is the image of our rapport with the indescribable."*