



architektur +
raumplanung

Diplomarbeit

MAREMMA AMORIS TALES FOR A DISOBEDIENT EARTH

ausgeführt zum Zwecke der Erlangung des akademischen Grades eines

DIPLOM-INGENIEURS

unter der Leitung von

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Wien, im April 2025

Ich habe zur Kenntnis genommen, dass ich zur Drucklegung meiner Arbeit unter der Bezeichnung

Diplomarbeit

nur mit Bewilligung der Prüfungskommission berechtigt bin.
Ich erkläre weiters an Eides statt, dass ich meine Diplomarbeit nach den anerkannten Grundsätzen für wissenschaftliche Abhandlungen selbstständig ausgeführt habe und alle verwendeten Hilfsmittel, insbesondere die zugrunde gelegte Literatur, genannt habe.

Weiters erkläre ich, dass ich dieses Diplomarbeitsthema bisher weder im In- noch Ausland (einer Beurteilerin/einem Beurteiler zur Begutachtung) in irgendeiner Form als Prüfungsarbeit vorgelegt habe und dass diese Arbeit mit der vom Begutachter beurteilten Arbeit übereinstimmt.

KURZFASSUNG

Die Arbeit erkundet die Küstenlandschaften der Grosseto-Ebene in der Maremma-Region in Italien mit Hilfe interdisziplinärer und investigativer Methoden. Im Mittelpunkt der Betrachtung der natürlichen Architektur der Landschaft und ihrer Geschichte steht eine phänomenologische Annäherung an das Gebiet, die durch intensiven Austausch mit lokalen Fachleuten und örtliche Vereinen vertieft wird. Sie verbindet erzählerische Elemente mit kritischer Reflexion und verwebt so Theorie und Praxis durch eine facettenreiche Darstellung persönlicher Erfahrungen und dokumentarischer Methoden.

Die Studie widmet sich den fragilen Ökosystemen dieser Küstenregion im Übergangsbereich zwischen Meer und Land. Insbesondere die bedrohten Ökotope (Ökosysteme des Übergangs) der Feuchtgebiete sind als Wissens- und Biodiversitätsreservoirs von unschätzbarem Wert präsentiert. Die Darstellung des komplexen Zusammenspiels von menschlicher Präsenz, geologischer Entwicklung und wechselnder Biotope der Maremma-Ebene offenbart ein vielschichtiges Landschaftsbild, das natürliche Prozesse, großflächige anthropische Eingriffe und sich wandelnde kulturelle Narrative miteinander ganzheitlich verknüpft.

Diese Forschungsarbeit, die in der Schaffung einer interaktiven Installation vor Ort gipfelt, ist ein Hybrid aus lyrischer, emotionaler und didaktischer Herangehensweise, die darauf abzielt, verborgene Erzählungen und interdependente Netzwerke über Skalen und Sphären hinweg aufzuspüren, um ein neues Bewusstsein für nachhaltige menschliche Praktiken zu schaffen. Die Arbeit plädiert damit für einen sensibleren Umgang mit den Daseinsformen, die über das Menschliche hinausgehen, und den natürlichen Ressourcen, die sie erhalten, und erkennt deren Widerstandsfähigkeit, Fragilität und Potenzial an. Anstatt eine endgültige Schlussfolgerung anzustreben, begibt sich dieser Aufsatz auf eine Entdeckungsreise mit offenem Ausgang - eine Reise, die darauf abzielt, den Rahmen für territoriale Analysen neu zu definieren.

Diese Untersuchungsmethodik bietet nicht traditionelle Möglichkeiten durch die andere Landschaften untersucht und in der darauffolgenden Entwurfsphase beachtet werden können. Indem wir diese Praxis der beobachtenden Beobachtung und des tiefen Engagements auf weitere Fallstudien ausdehnen - und dabei sowohl auf das Spezifische als auch auf das Universelle achten -, kann man ein umfassenderes Verständnis der Verflechtung von Lebendigem und Nichtlebendigem sowie der natürlichen und kulturellen Dynamik eines Ortes kultivieren und letztlich bewusster architektonische Praktiken und regenerative Wege des Umgangs mit Land und Leben fördern.

ABSTRACT

This research offers a multidisciplinary investigative exploration of the coastal landscapes of the Grosseto floodplain, nestled in Italy's Maremma region. Blending storytelling with critical insight, it intertwines theory and practice through a diverse account of personal experiences and documentary methodologies. At the heart of this research on the natural architecture of landscape and its history lies a phenomenological engagement with the territory, nurtured through close collaboration with local professionals and associations.

The study delves into the fragile transitional ecosystems that define this coastal region, with a particular focus on the endangered ecotones of wetlands—reframed as invaluable reservoirs of knowledge and biodiversity. The focus on the intricate interplay between geological evolution and anthropic involvement highlights a complex territorial portrait that blends natural morphological processes, the human interventions shaped by extensive land reclamation, and the shifting cultural narratives that surround these spaces.

Culminating in the creation of an on-site interactive installation, this research is a hybrid of lyrical, emotional, and educational explorations, aiming to uncover hidden narratives and the networks of interdependencies across scales and domains—encouraging a renewed awareness of sustainable human practices. It advocates for a holistic and sensible engagement with the more-than-human world and the natural resources that sustain it, acknowledging their resilience, fragility, and potential. Rather than seeking a definitive conclusion, this approach embarks on an open-ended journey of discovery—one that aims to redefine frameworks for territorial analysis.

This investigative methodology offers new ontologies through which other landscapes may be studied and integrated into the design phase. By extending this practice of humble observation and deep engagement into further case studies—attending to both the particular and the universal—we can cultivate a richer understanding of the interwovenness of the living and non-living, and of the natural and the cultural dynamics of a place, ultimately fostering more conscious architectural practices and regenerative ways of tending to both land and life.

THANK YOU

Alcedo APS, Beppe Anselmi, Lorenzo Chelazzi, Mario Carri, Giulio Bardi, Alberto Pastorelli, il Parco Regionale della Maremma, la Biblioteca Chelliana, Simone Rusci, Laura Tonelli, Giorgio Zorzi, Sara Donzelli, Alessandro Fabbrizzi, Cristina of the *Biblioteca del Museo Archeologico e d'Arte della Maremma*, Carlo Bonazza, Fotografia e Territorio APS, Foroteca della Maremma, Joel Baldi, Melissa Moretti, Museo di Storia Naturale della Maremma, Francesco Turbanti, Niccolò Falsetti, Francesco Rossi, Isabel Rodriguez Ramos, Elisabetta Schimdtlein, Brigitte Pichler.

A METHODOLOGY MANIFESTO



the future. I do not regret leaving; at the time, it felt fitting, necessary. I didn't belong there—or so I thought. Indeed, physical distance often softens the sharp edges of sorrow and rejection. Living in Vienna allowed me to gradually loosen the emotional weight I had long associated with Maremma. With time, I grew gentler. I began to understand that my long-standing battle with the place, which I once saw as a curse, was rooted in ignorance and resentment. It wasn't the land I fought against—it was my own inability to see beyond the surface of my youthful anger.

When I first began my research, I was both excited and uneasy. A new world was unfolding before me—it felt right, but also overwhelming. The sheer volume of information I gathered was staggering, yet fragmented, often contradictory, sometimes incoherent. At first, I tried to rely solely on historical and scientific data, but the results felt flat, like a hollow regurgitation of other scholars' work. They hardly reflected what I truly needed to convey.

It was only after embarking on my field trips that my approach began to shift. I was fortunate to be guided by Giulio Bardi, a friend and local anthropologist, who generously shared his years of research and instilled in me a deeper curiosity about the region. As I spent more time on the land during the summer, the project gradually evolved into something more: a wandering journey through layers of space and time, where theory and practice engaged in a dynamic dialogue, continuously negotiating their presence and relevance within the work.

The attentiveness and curiosity required for this exploration found meaning through

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The attentiveness and curiosity required for this exploration found meaning through

the rich encounters I had with local mentors, professionals, and friends. These exchanges became pivotal moments, deepening my understanding of the landscape in ways I had not anticipated. What emerged from this tangible and intangible journey is not a single, cohesive narrative but rather a scattered anthology—a curation of personal perceptions intertwined with the intention of restitution. To present truthful images of the landscape is to offer not only its physical form but also its emotional, phenomenological, magical, and cultural landscapes: kinships, entanglements, and acts of care. This work is a miscellany—pictures, sensations, colors, smells, and sounds—each an incomplete yet significant part of my evolving relationship with the land.

Thus, the framework I present is not a closed, finite container of neatly organized information, but rather an unfolding landscape: territories within the territory, cultures within the culture, constellations within a complex cosmology of devoted presence. One that transforms a Maremma Amara—a bitter Maremma—into a Maremma Amoris, a Maremma of love.

Amoris, a Maremma of love.

“Uscire dallo spazio che su di noi hanno incurvato secoli e secoli è l’atto più bello che si possa compiere. [...] Per mantenersi in questo stato occorre non avere interessi da difendere, paure da sedare, bisogni da soddisfare; si raccolgono i dati, si dispongono nell’ordine opportuno e, al di là dei recinti dove si sta rinchiusi, si spalanca l’immensa distesa del possibile.”

“To step out of the space that centuries upon centuries have curved over us is the most beautiful act one can accomplish. [...] To remain in this state, one must have no interests to defend, no fears to appease, no needs to satisfy; one gathers the data, arranges them in the proper order, and beyond the enclosures in which we are confined, the vast expanse of possibility unfolds.”

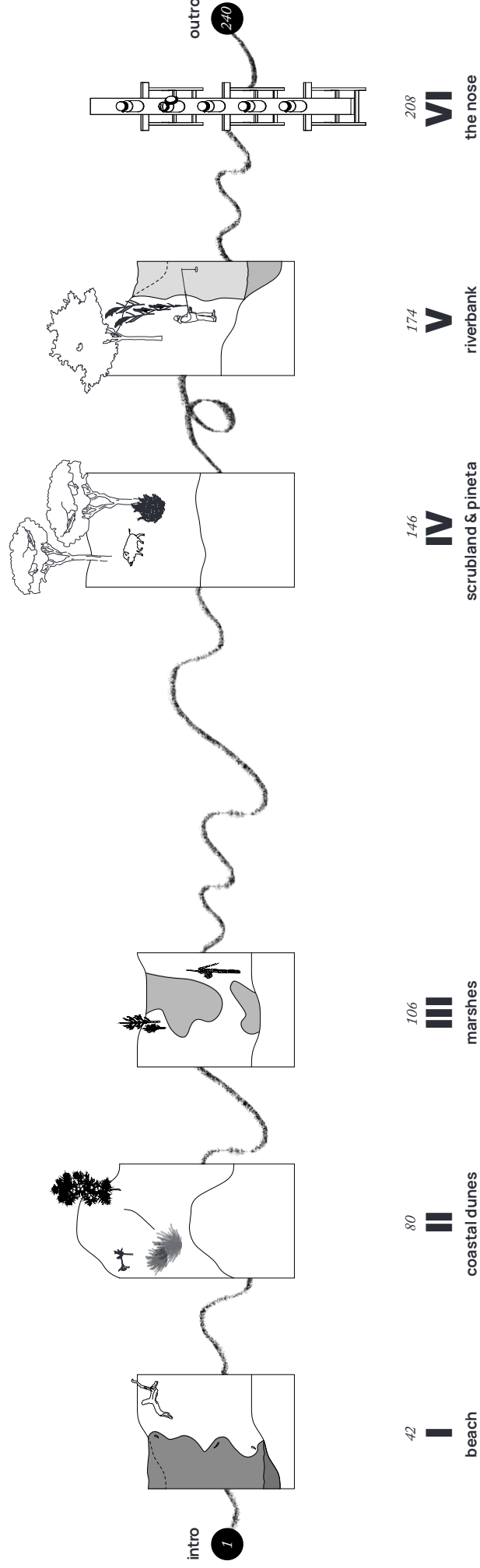
— Elmore Zolla, *Uscire dal Mondo* 1992

“Madonna, sta palude di merda, oh...”

“Damn, shitty swamp...”

— Marghi 2022

INDEX MAP



INTRO



0 Typical wind pump and drinking trough.

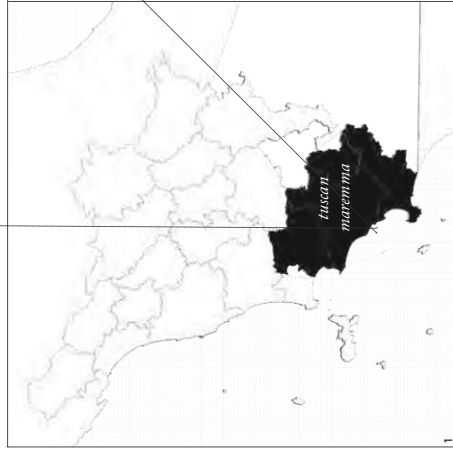
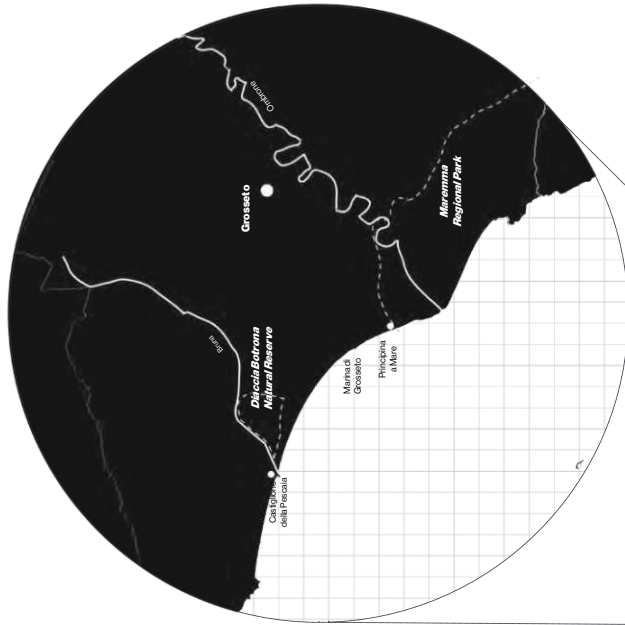
1. lat. *marūma* (VIII–IX century)
maritime, relating to the sea

2. spanish *marismas*
coastal flooded lands; brackish marsh, swamp, bog,
or water pond

3. proto-Germanic *marisko*
ancient term for marsh

MARÉMMA

noun f.



Maremma is “**mota**”,
the mire—a devouring swamp
that pulls you under, makes you
twist, makes you curse.
Maremma is an endless horizon,
stretching so vast it renders you
both infinite and small.
Maremma is a whispered secret,
which echo splits you in two.

Maremma is Kansas City,
Maremma is a curse, Maremma is
home.

Maremma is both land and
sea, yet it is neither one nor the
other. It resists definition, defies
borders, refuses to be tamed. It
suffers but does not surrender—a
fragile creature commanding re-
spect with its quiet, unrelenting
ferocity.

Its waters, both sweet
and salty, expand and retreat in a
dance both marvelous and mer-
ciless—sometimes quenching,
sometimes drowning. Its dunal
ribcage rises and falls with the
weary breath of the earth, while
acid, resinous scents trace shad-
ows of ancient, untamed worlds.

This is a story difficult to
tell, for it exists outside of time yet
settles deep in the bones, beneath
the clay, in the heart of a golden
field.



“...Precisamente dalla mola
vergine di Maremma, dicono che
prese la materia il supremo Iddio.
Veramente, meglio di così il pas-
sagio non poteva essere preparato”

“...From the untouched marshes
of Maremma, they say that the
Supreme God took His mat-
ter. Truly, the landscape could
not have been prepared more
perfectly.”

— da Arrigo Baglioni,
L'ederaia Maremma, 1953



“MARÉMMA DOLCE”

an idea of sweet Maremma...



2 Bogs, Punta & Uccellina Hills, Maremma Regional Park.
3 Pasture, windjump & cows, Maremma Regional Park.
4 San Leopoldo messuary, Fumara.
5 Casa Fossai Museum & Diaccia Botrona marshes.
6 Pines and poplars, Principina a Mare.
7 Pineda, Principina a Mare.

“E “MARÉMMA AMARA”

... and another one of bitterness and struggle

«Tutti mi dicono
Maremma, Maremma,
ma a me mi pare una
Maremma amara.

“Everyone tells me of
Maremma, Maremma,
but to me, it feels like a bitter
Maremma.

L'ucello che ci va
perde la penna
io c'ho perduto una persona cara.

The bird that journeys there loses
its feather,
There I've lost a dear soul.

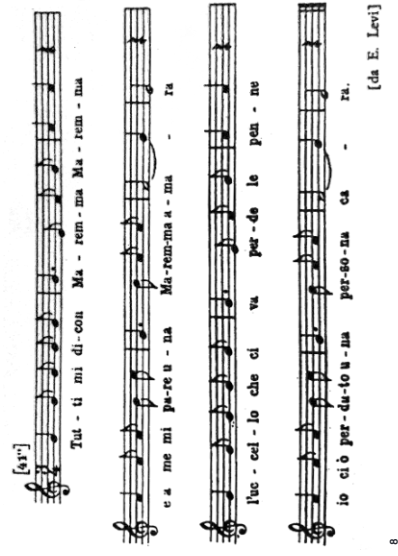
Sia maledetta
Maremma, Maremma
sia maledetta Maremma e chi l'ama.

Cursed be Maremma, Maremma,
cursed be Maremma and those
who love her.

Sempre mi trema l'cor
quando ci vai
perché ho paura che non torni mai.»

My heart always quakes when
you head there,
for fear you'll ne'er return”

— folksong, 1800s,
attributed to a woman



8 “Maremma Amara” musical score.

Every landscape is a reflection of the struggles, stories, and imprints left by those who have inhabited it—historical, indigenous, and foreign witnesses whose presence shapes the land as much as the land shapes them.

These emerging narratives are often mythologized, contradictory, fragmented—at times, even unjust. Yet, much like the shifting contours of the terrain itself, these voices intertwine to form a vast and intricate mosaic, one that ultimately carves out the essence of a place.

Reading a landscape is as complex as unraveling the interiority of a person. It demands new paradigms, heightened sensitivities, and a willingness to embrace ambiguity in the act of storytelling. The goal is not exhaustive accuracy, but the pursuit of authenticity—one that allows space for contradictions, half-truths, and the raw, untamed essence of reality.

In theory, the landscape of the Grosseto Maremma, like any other, is shaped by two inseparable forces: the tangible, physical transformations of the land and the intangible, ever-evolving cultural narratives woven around it. Together, these elements sketch the contours of its identity, revealing a portrait that is both deeply rooted and endlessly shifting.

1 THE PHYSICAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE TERRITORY



9



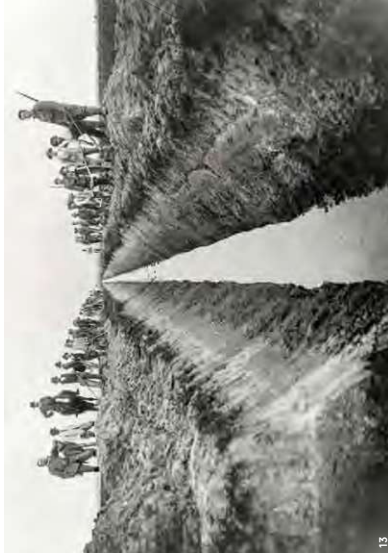
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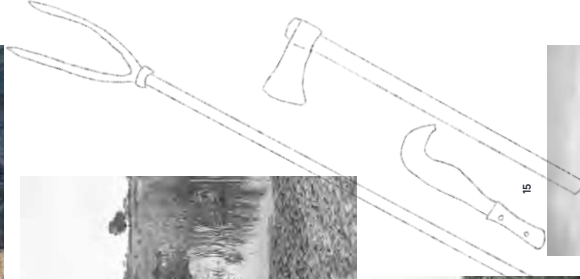
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13



14



15

9
Grosseto's Agricultural Consortium building.
10
San Brizio Abbey, Magliano.
11
Maremma shopping centre, Grosseto.
12
Reclamation works, Cecina.
13
Reclamation works, Puntina.
14
Drainage pump, Cecina.
15
Traditional rural tools.

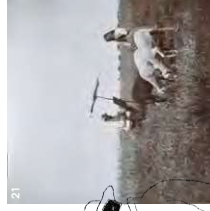
INTRO

8

16
Maremma, Memo Vagagnini, 1910s, oil painting.
17
Maremma cows in the prairie.
18
Maremma postcard.
19
Riding in Maremma, Giovanni Fattori, 1875, oil painting.
20
Drainage channel and scrubland, Maremma Regional Park.
21
Eugenio Cecconi paints plain area, Maremma, 1903.
22
Morelino di Scansano, local wine.
23
Horseback Butler.



20



21



19



22



16



17



18

2 THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY-SHAPING CULTURAL IMAGINARIES

9

INTRO

INTRO



Generations of beings—human and more-than-human—have depended on this emergence, and they still do. Even now, the same waters continue their quiet work, shaping the land, molding its contours, and inscribing the ever-unfolding story of Maremma.

The earth we walk upon in Maremma was not always as it is. Before land, there was only water—a vast, undulating expanse stretching to the horizon. “Once upon a time, it was the sea.” From this primordial sea, the floodplain rose, like Venus from the foam, shaped and sculpted by the ceaseless flow of two great rivers: the Ombrone and the Bruna. These ancient waters carved valleys, eroded cliffs, and carried sediments, depositing them in ever-shifting patterns—crafting a land where cities would rise and forests would take root.



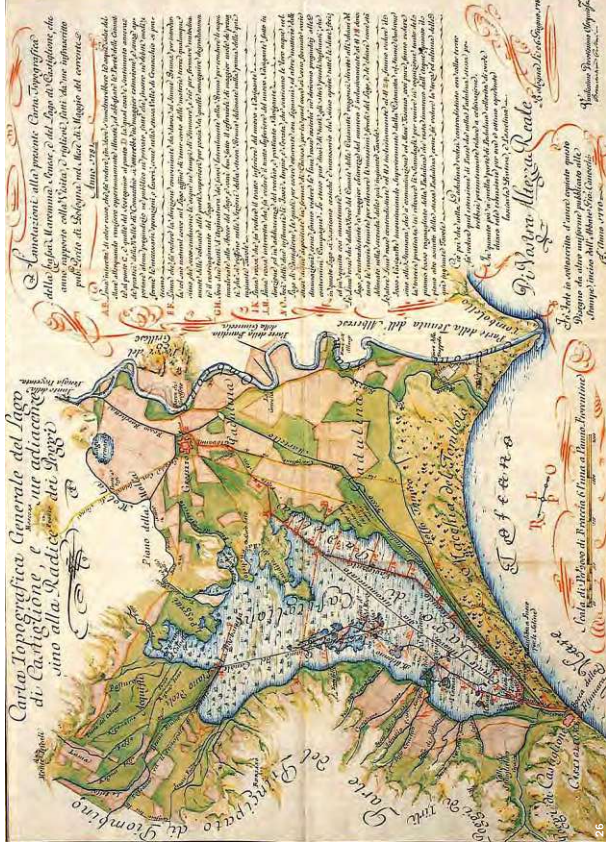
24 Current aerial view of the floodplain, 2024.

25 Fresco detail, Vatican Museums, 1580.

“Questa è la storia di un grande lago salato, antico seno marino, che il tempo calmò di storia e di terra, sul quale ora pascolano buoi, ma un tempo navigavano barche e luccicarono città.”

“This is the story of a big salty lake, ancient bay, which time filled up with history and earth, where now oxes graze, but once boats sailed and city lights sparkled.”

— from Roberto Ferrell, inscription on board 173, 1979



31
30
29
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1825-1830
1758
1830
1741
1695
1781

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1758
1695
1820-1830
1748
Circa 1840



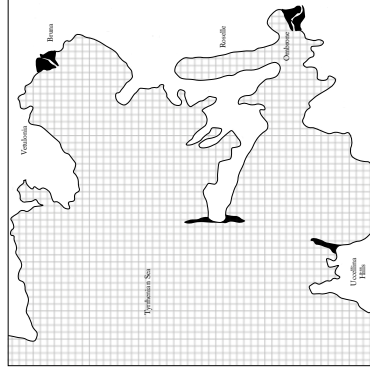
submerged land



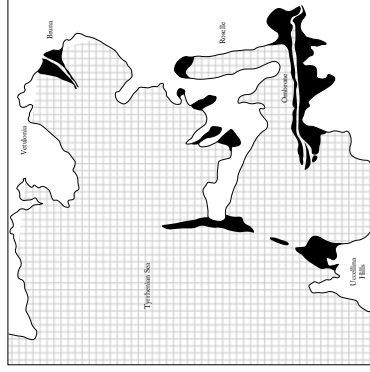
littoral & infill deposits



emergent land



6000 AC



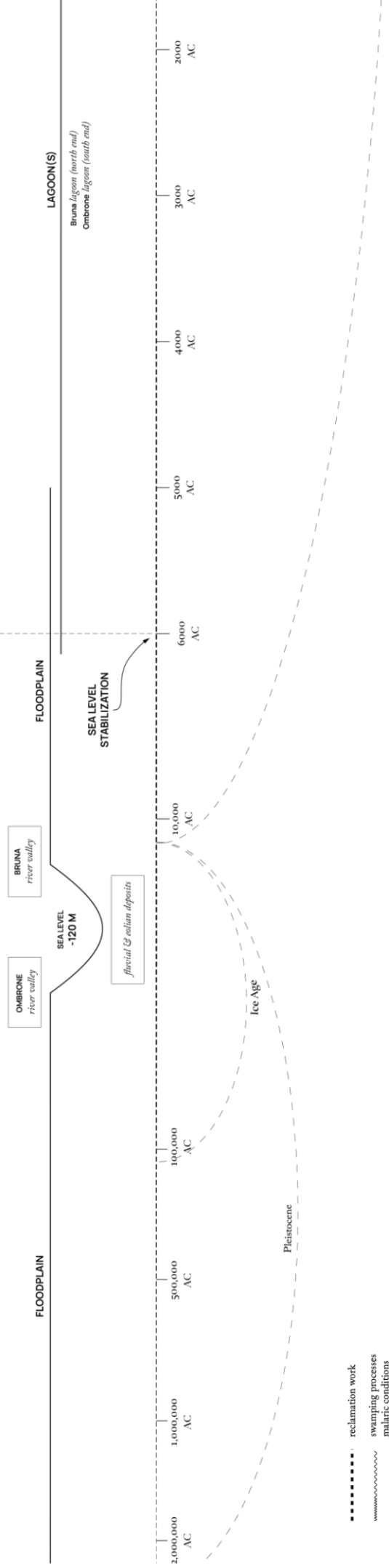
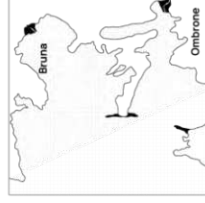
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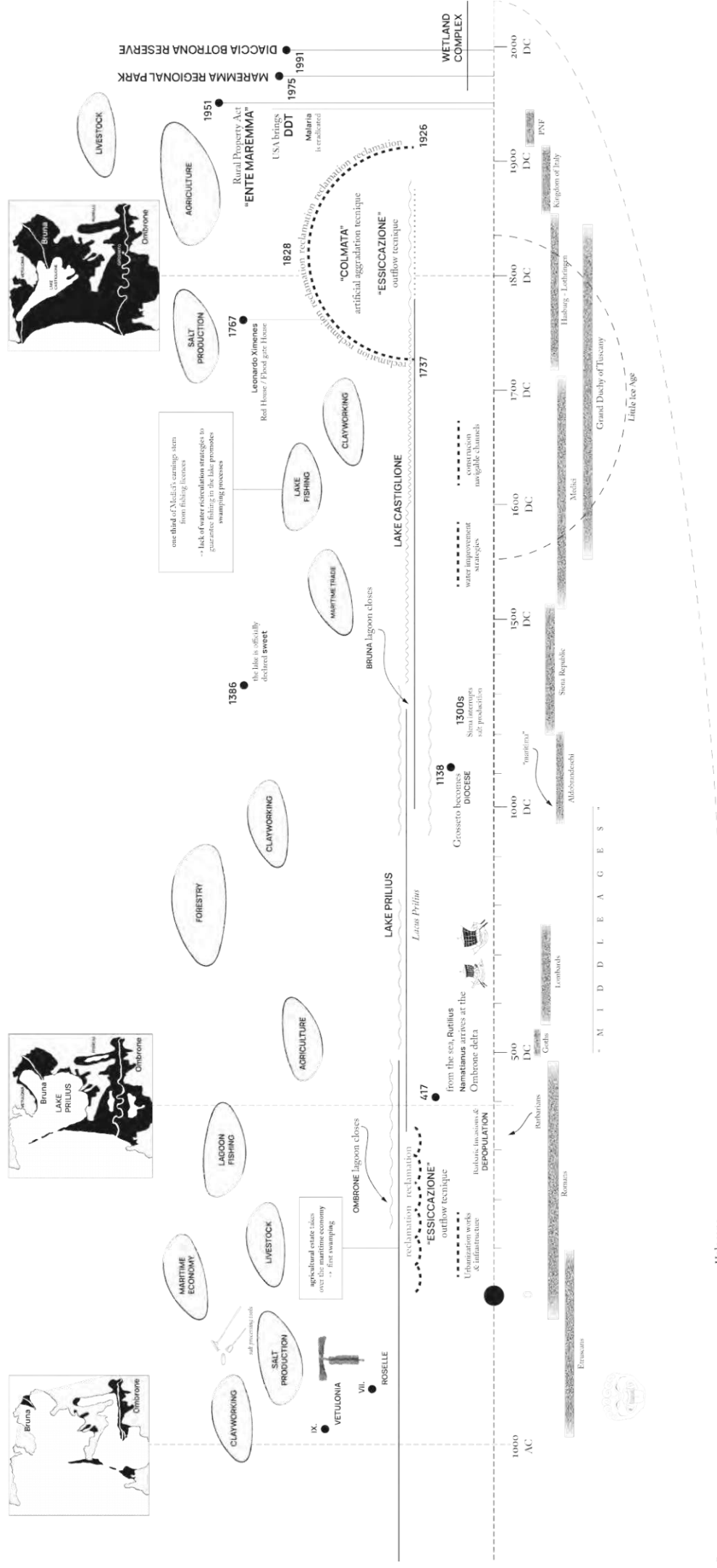


390 DC



1800 DC





For centuries, Maremma remained an inhospitable stretch of marsh and sickness—a land of stagnant waters and barren prospects. Long regarded as harsh and backward, it stood in stark contrast to the wealthier, more vibrant regions of northern Tuscany. This perception was born of isolation; Maremma was both geographically and culturally distant from the economic pulse of the region. Cursed by hardship, it was inhabited only by the few who dared to endure its burdens. Neglected and scorned, it seemed a forsaken domain, where even the earth itself conspired against its people.

The degradation of Maremma's landscape has been a recurring theme since the fall of Rome. Over time, the belief took root that the swampy terrain was the primary cause of this decline. The flooded, marshy regions were seen as nuisances—ecosystems to be drained and erased in favor of productive farmlands that could sustain human life. In this view, nature was the enemy, and human intervention the inevitable savior. A stark dichotomy emerged: nature bad, culture good. Reclamation projects were hailed as progress, while the environment was scapegoated as the cause of the region's misery.

Yet this paradoxical worldview would not go unchallenged. Centuries later, George Perkins Marsh, an American politician and ambassador, visited Maremma with a radically different perspective on environmental degradation. Invited by the statesman Bettino Ricasoli to witness the region's reclamation

efforts, Marsh began to question the prevailing assumption that human actions always improved the land. In his seminal work *Man and Nature*, first published in 1864, he writes:

"The western coast of Tuscany is not supposed to have been an unhealthy region before the conquest of Etruria by the Romans, but it certainly became so within a few centuries after that event. This was a natural consequence of the neglect or wanton destruction of the public improvements..."

Marsh was astonished by how wetland environments, essential for ecological balance, were scorned as useless, if not outright dangerous. Despite the evident role human neglect played in the region's decline, this connection went largely unrecognized. Marsh noted how many Italians

"generally believed that the insalubrious of the province was the consequence, not the cause, of its depopulation, and that, if it were once densely inhabited, the ordinary operations of agriculture, and especially the maintenance of numerous domestic fires, would restore it to its ancient healthiness..."

Moreover, the essential ecological functions of marshes and swamps were largely ignored in the discourse of the time. For centuries, these landscapes were vilified, so deeply ingrained in the cultural narrative that Maremma itself came to symbolize failure, stagnation, and desolation. The region seemed cursed with a fate both imposed and self-inflicted, its land condemned to neglect and ruin. It took an outsider—someone like Marsh—to recognize what both the local people and the government failed to grasp.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the battle against malaria was waged with pesticides. The marshes were drained, their territories reshaped through final, heavy-handed infrastructural interventions that nearly wiped them from the

map. Yet in recent years, a slow but significant shift has taken place. Protected areas such as the Maremma Regional Park and the Diaccia Botrona now serve as sanctuaries for the last remnants of these ancient wetlands, preserving the final bastions of the region's original landscape. Still, the scars of Maremma's misunderstood past remain, continuing to shape the health of both the land and its people.

Landscapes are not mere backdrops to human history—they are the very stage upon which history unfolds. They are intricate, living systems, woven from a myriad of interlacing processes. Bound to interaction, they rely on fragile equilibriums and unspoken rules of coexistence. I believe that architecture, when applied thoughtfully to the study and analysis of landscapes, can reaffirm and strengthen the bond between humans, more-than-humans, and the earth—our **Gaia**—by illuminating the unexpected, the ambiguous, the unseen.

"Perhaps in our world today, our archipelagic world of Relation and Rhizome, the basis and the role of architecture will no longer be to show the monument, but to show the invisible. The aesthetic of the invisible brings us back to the aesthetic of the void and the infinite, which need not produce anguish, but hope." (Édouard Glissant).

40 Culture vs Nature, collage



CURSED GEOGRAPHIES

“Maremma” is not merely a territorial marker; it is a landscape steeped in both curse and curse-laden legend. In Tuscany, the very utterance of this word transcends its geographical roots, becoming a vessel for venomous invective. A beloved and inventive tool in the art of Tuscan insult, Maremma serves as a volatile prelude to a litany of curses—its presence thickening the wrath that follows, forging an intimate link between geography and emotion.

Here are some examples:

“MAREMMA BONA!”

“MAREMMA MAIALA!”

“MAREMMA IMPESTATA!”

“MAREMMA BUCAIOLA!”

Unlike the typical outbursts that target the sacred, Maremma’s curse turns its fury toward the earth itself—a realm both revered and reviled. Here, frustration does not lash out at divine figures or heavenly forces, but at the very soil beneath one’s feet—a soil that has given life, yet also withheld it. This choice may stem from a deeper, almost mythic connection: Maremma was once seen as a capricious god, not one of benevolence but of wrath, bestowing riches only to turn away

human nature: when rage wells up and reason falters, it is often easier to curse something tangible—something you can touch, something both beloved and despised—the motherland itself.

In Maremma, where the earth is as much a curse as it is a cradle, it is not the distant heavens that feed most present, but the palpable, indifferent soil.

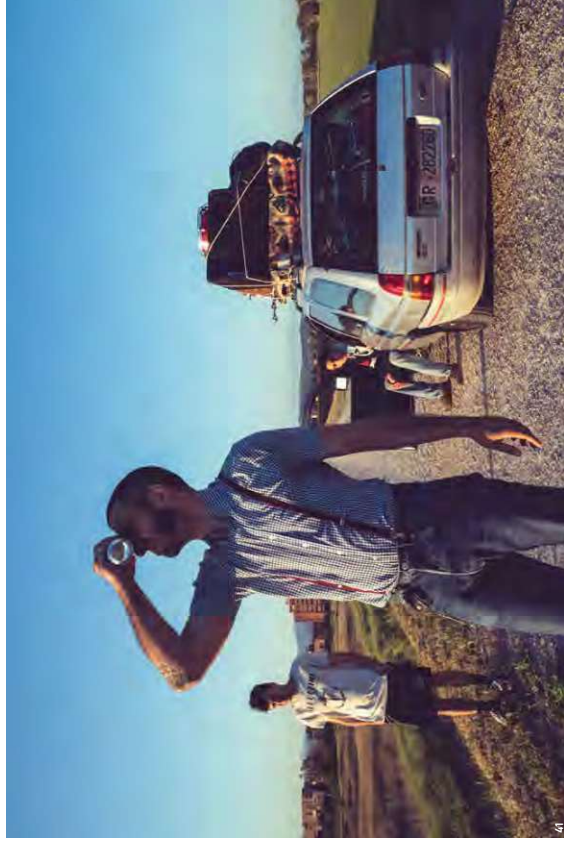
Grosseto, 2008.

Edo, Iac, and Miche are friends and musicians. They have a punk hardcore band, they are young, they are talented, they dream big. But there’s a problem: they live in Grosseto, which, unfortunately, lies at the heart of that real and metaphorical swamp known as the Maremma.

Margini, a 2022 film directed by Niccolò Falsetti and written by him alongside Francesco Turbanti, brings a sense of isolation, defeat, and marginalization to the screen—an inescapable part of the Tuscan Maremma’s

identity and a very personal and shared experience for the authors. The film speaks plainly: despite the limits, the margins, it is precisely this murky landscape that shapes and fuels the story, turning its protagonists into heroes on a journey toward redemption, toward a new vision of home, toward an **elsewhere** that seems ever less rural and ever more radiant.

WELCOME TO THE SWAMP!



41 “Margini”, set photo, 2022

WATER MEMORIES



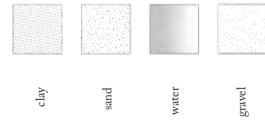
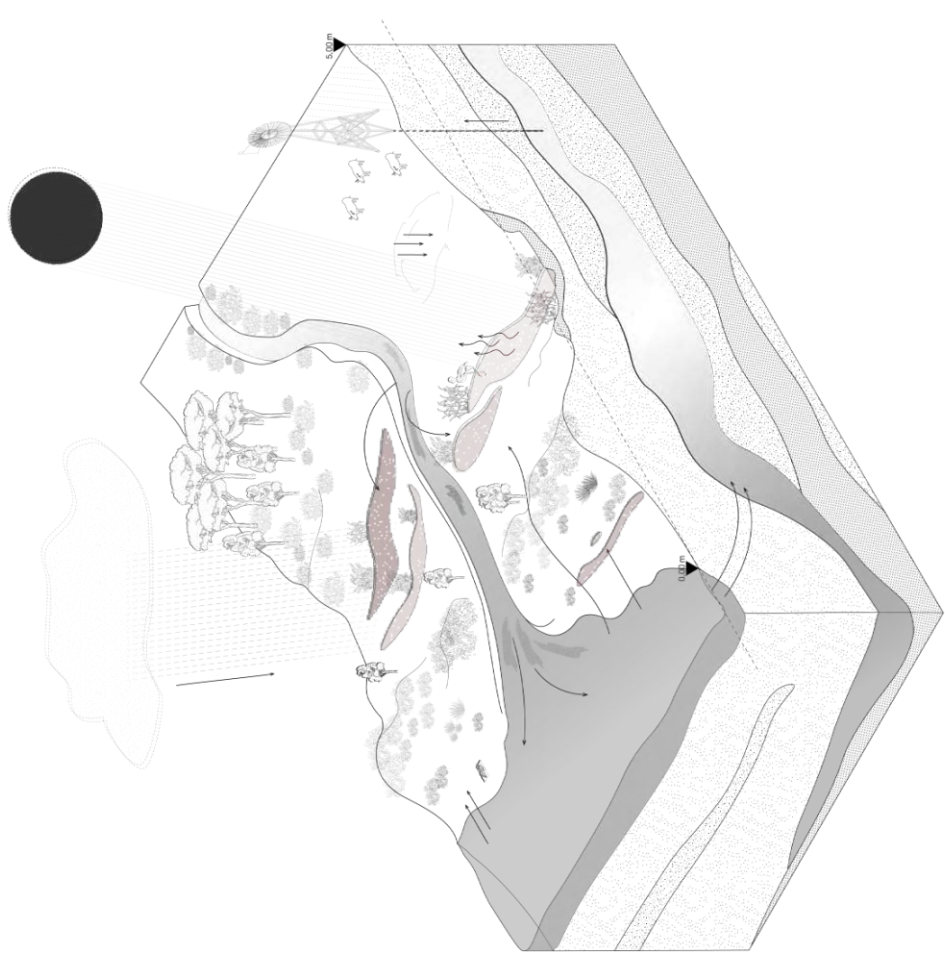
“The true eye of the earth is water.”
— Gaston Bachelard, *L'Eau et les rêves*, 1942

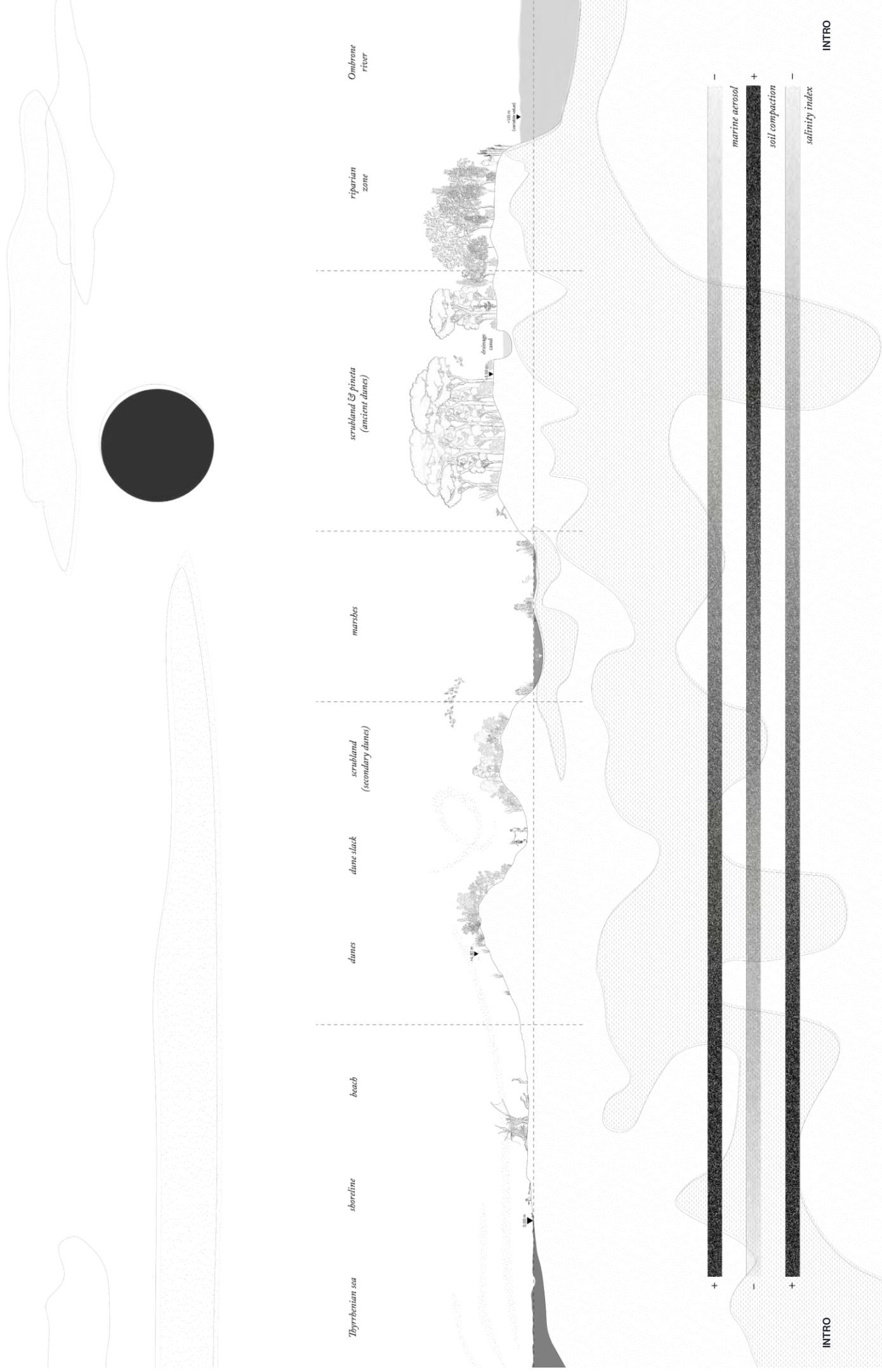
42 Ontonagon sweetwater.
43 British marsh water.
44 Sea saltwater.



Instead, what matters is recognizing these spaces as **territories**—places of difference, entanglement, and complex regimes of co-existence, where boundaries are fluid, relationships are constant, and the whole is far greater than the sum of its parts.

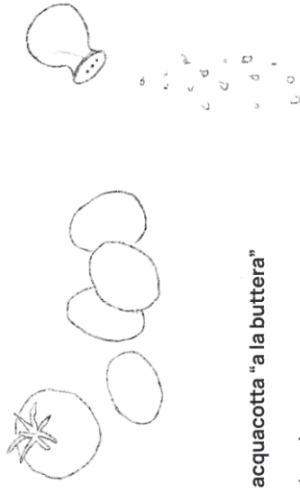
The Grosseto floodplain unfolds like a living tapestry, a gradient of habitats stretching from the sea to the land, where ecosystems shift from the clarity of freshwater to the briny complexities of brackish and salty environments. Here, nature and human presence intertwine in a rich tableau where **water** reigns as the primary protagonist. These diverse yet interconnected habitats are known as **transitional ecosystems**—a term that speaks to the fluid, ever-changing nature of their identities. The ecosystems within this gradient evolve, shifting in response to fluctuating salinity levels and the ebb and flow of the sea. In doing so, they trigger a cascade of reactions and renegotiations, creating a dynamic interplay of life. To draw sharp lines between these **ecotones** would be an exercise in futility—an approach that holds little ecological value.





ACQUACOTTA

aka "cooked water"



The Maremmani's connection with water is also explicit in their culinary tradition: **acquacotta** ("cooked water") is the Maremma soup made from water and stale bread, an ancient and humble dish that once nourished in hard times, adapting to whatever ingredients were at hand. Even when served cold, it accompanied workers in the woods, in the fields, and in the mines.

There is no fixed recipe for this dish, as every family still adapts it according to necessity and the seasons. Here, I offer a version, but I invite the readers to prepare it in true tradition—by letting creativity guide them and turning necessity into virtue.

(acquacotta recipe based on the book "Vo' laudammangà? ricette maremmane commentate in dialetto da Merisè Mimmi", 2003)

acquacotta "a la buttera"

4 servings

- * 300g of onions
- * 400g of stale bread
- * 1 glass of olive oil
- * 250g of ripe tomatoes
- * 1 stalk of celery
- * 100g of pecorino cheese
- * 4 eggs
- * water
- * salt
- * chili

1 slice and sauté the onions, chili, and celery.

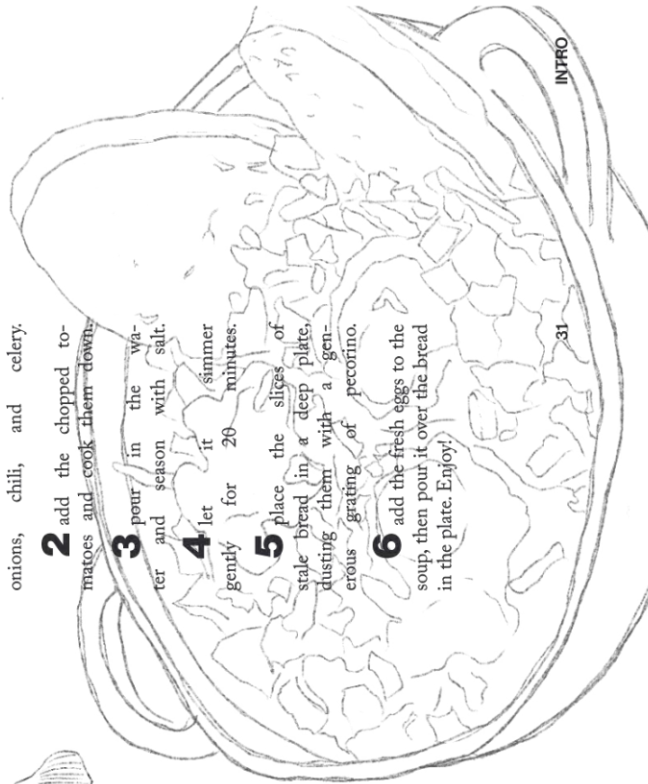
2 add the chopped tomatoes and cook them down.

3 pour in the water and season with salt.

4 let it simmer gently for 20 minutes.

5 place the slices of stale bread in a deep plate, dusting them with a generous grating of pecorino.

6 add the fresh eggs to the soup, then pour it over the bread in the plate. Enjoy!



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"Acquacotta" and its ingredients.

*Se l'formaggio 'un lo chiami cacio,
se la formica 'un la chiami cudera,
e l'ombra 'un la chiami meria,
che maremmano sei, porca miseria!*

If you don't call cheese 'cacio,'
if you don't call the ant 'cudera,'
and if you don't call the shade 'meria,'
then what kind of Maremmano
are you, for heaven's sake!

— local proverb,
from Mario Barberis, Vocabolario Maremmano, 1994



Beppe Anselmi (1956) is former Maremma Regional Park ranger, naturalist, documentalist and incredible storyteller.

Lorenzo Chelazzi (1949) is a biologist and one of the last untamed explorer. He is an avid collector of marine and terrestrial treasures.

Mario Carrì (1948) is a former land registry clerk of the Grosseto province with a passion for archival maps and documents.

ALCEDIANI

Alcedo APS, local association

Alcedo APS is a social promotion organization born in 2012, founded by a passionate group of friends and local enthusiasts. Under the leadership of President Beppe Anselmi, alongside Lorenzo Chelazzi and Mario Carrì, they have woven together the historical and natural knowledge of Maremma into a social project that seeks to share the beauty and complexity of its landscapes. Through multidisciplinary initiatives and collaborations, they engage artists, artisans, institutions, and schools to cultivate ecological awareness and

strengthen the local social fabric, embracing creative and innovative approaches to land stewardship. I had the immense privilege of collaborating with them on my research, following their guidance on field trips and uncovering dimensions of Maremma that had previously remained hidden from view. Their headquarters, **La Bilancia**—named after the traditional fishing liftnet—rests at the threshold of the Maremma Regional Park. Once a humble fisherman's hut on the left shore of the Ombrone River, La Bilancia now stands as a sanctuary for exchange and community, a verdant refuge dedicated to shared environmental practices.

They welcomed my ideas and curiosity with warmth and generosity, eager to share the wealth of knowledge embedded in their work—an inheritance born of decades of attentive, intentional presence on this land. Their mentorship extended far beyond academia; it forged a connection that transcended the formalities of research. Meeting their families, listening to their stories, and envisioning the future of Maremma together was an honor I will always cherish.

Our many rich interactions, along with their unwavering educational mission, stand as a vibrant testament to their dedication to safeguarding both the tangible and intangible heritage of Maremma.

48 Beppe Anselmi, Lorenzo Chelazzi, Mario Carrì.



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52 Beppe Anselmi and Mario Carrà at La Stoccola.
53 Beppe Anselmi during workshop day with middle schoolers.
54 Lorenzo Chiezzzi on the bridge over the drainage channel, Maremma Regional Park.

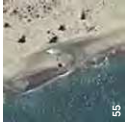
49 Beppe Anselmi during workshop day with middle schoolers.
50 Lorenzo Chiezzzi, Ombrone mouth, ramshackle building, Maremma Regional Park.
51 Beppe Anselmi during workshop day with middle schoolers.

In the following pages, we will meander through five archetypal territories of the Grosseto flood-plain, each one revealing itself as a didactic compass, guiding us through the vast **archipelago** of habitats that compose this unique landscape. Here, where these spaces become **stages for the multi-species life** that flourishes within them, a complex web of material and immaterial happenings, interactions, and entanglements rises to the surface, all coexisting. This journey through the landscape is not just a linear exploration; it is a **circulation** gesture—a movement that attempts to gather every kind of phenomenological encounter, every recounting, documentation, archival fragment, and sample as vessels of a multiscalar research deeply rooted in care, presence, and curiosity. This is not a mere academic investigation; it is a quest born from the need for new meanings, from the desire to form deeper connections, to uncover a sense of belonging, and to find fresh lenses through which to view this corner of the planet—and, through it, the whole world. It is a search that seeks personal reconciliation with the space itself, one that emerges from the study of its territorial multitudes. How we tell our stories—how we shape and craft them—reveals something essential about who we are, about the things that linger within us, the longings that drive us. So, let me speak plainly and without pretense: I am doing this to heal. And for that, I could not be more grateful.

“You jump from one rock to another, from one landscape to another, and each time this movement is actually moving you. You may read fragments as chance encounters on the page, as separate, but they are a whole: they are distinct, but they connect.”

—Edouard Glissant,
From *The Archipelago* Conversations, 2021

BEACH



55



60

COASTAL DUNES



56



61

MARSHES



57

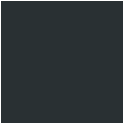


62

SCRUBLAND & PINETA



58



63

RIVERBANK



59



64

55-59 5 territory, 2024. Aerial view, Google Earth.
60-64 5 territory, soil impressions.

THE EYE

interview with *Carlo Bonazza*, Marenmma's photographer

CB Photography helped me a lot to understand Marenmma. It taught me to observe not just the landscape but the places themselves, with their stories, changes, and the traces left by those who lived here before. Often, I found myself photographing changes as they happened or right after. That's the privileged moment—the suspended instant when something is finished, and we don't yet know how it will evolve. Photography has a lot to do with death; it represents not reality, but what has been. I remember one time when a subject asked me to take a photo and said, "Take my paralysis!"

VM What does Marenmma mean to you?

CB Marenmma is where I found myself living. When I was a child, I found it inhospitable. My family was from elsewhere, we were almost immigrants. My parents came here for work... it wasn't easy. Like my friends, I dreamed of the city through the cinema and television of those years, we dreamed of something far away. This distant place I longed for, I lived it for years, only to rediscover, much later, that I had a home here in Marenmma. Today, I live just 50 meters from my childhood home—it's been a complete rediscovery.

VM When did your profession influence your relationship with the landscape?

into zones, imagining a hypothetical day starting from the sea, like pirates, and moving inland through millennia of history. I wanted to see the Marenmma as the theater of many lives, including my own. And there, I was surprised because I never thought this approach would give me work, but above all, that it would offer so much freedom since I handled both production and distribution. I walked through the landscape and felt free; I didn't have to answer to anyone. Marenmma, for me, has taken on the sacredness of the place where I spent my life, and I dedicated myself to it. Working with my friends from the **Archivio delle Tradizioni Popolari** (Archive of Popular Traditions of Grosseto Marenmma, Ethno-anthropological archive established in 1979 by the municipality of Grosseto, initiated by Roberto Ferretti, *n.e.*) helped not only me but also the image of Marenmma, which was being rebuilt thanks to the contribution of eminent figures and the interest in my recent, more cinematic and experimental work, compared to my earlier days. I remain essentially a landscape photographer. Despite the advances in technology, my method remains the same: look, wait, and the desire to tell a story by freezing a moment and a place that won't last forever. I agree with Diego Mormorio, a sicilian photography historian, who says that photographing is like inhabiting a place; recognizing it, making it yours, finding your point of view,

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Carlo Bonazza (1952) is a photographer and a teacher with a passion for landscape, tradition, and archival work. His work in Marenmma is widely recognized and celebrated.



"I agree with Diego Mormorio, a sicilian photography historian, who says that photographing is like inhabiting a place: recognizing it, making it yours, finding your point of view, and choosing how to represent it."

and choosing how to represent it. That's what I do in Marenmma; I inhabit it through photography.

VM Over the years, you have carefully archived many photographs taken in Marenmma, ranging from the second half of the 19th century to much more recent times. What is your relationship with the photographers who came before you?

CB I feel a kind of brotherhood with them; they too wandered through space, trying to bring something home. They are ancestors, and I feel a bit like them. When I look at their photos, the first thing I think about is the effort they made in carrying all that bulky equipment for miles, then I look for the uniqueness in their work. I enjoy positioning myself among them, but not as an artist, rather as someone who worked and walked to represent some-

65 Carlo Bonazza in his studio, Grosseto.

shacks by the sea in Marina di Grosseto, *n.e.*)...photography is perfect for capturing things that are about to disappear, and I've always been curious about changes. Sure, if I see the Marina beach with those high-rises, it seems like a poor man's Dubai to me, I really don't like it, so I turn around and photograph the rest before that disappears too... even though I try to avoid it, there's a certain nostalgia for how things were and for the time that passes. I like the involuntary humor in certain landscape changes—the strong contrasts, the neat vineyards that make the hills look raked, combed, but without the zen garden feeling, the hills without trees. Gardens, houses—these are all "man-made toys", as Saint-Exupéry once said. I don't want to say, "Things were better when they were worse," no one would go back, both for historical reasons and for the progress made, but we must be very careful because we are destroying things that are very difficult to restore.

VM What is your relationship with ecology and conservation?

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INTRO

How do you approach the current changes in the landscape?

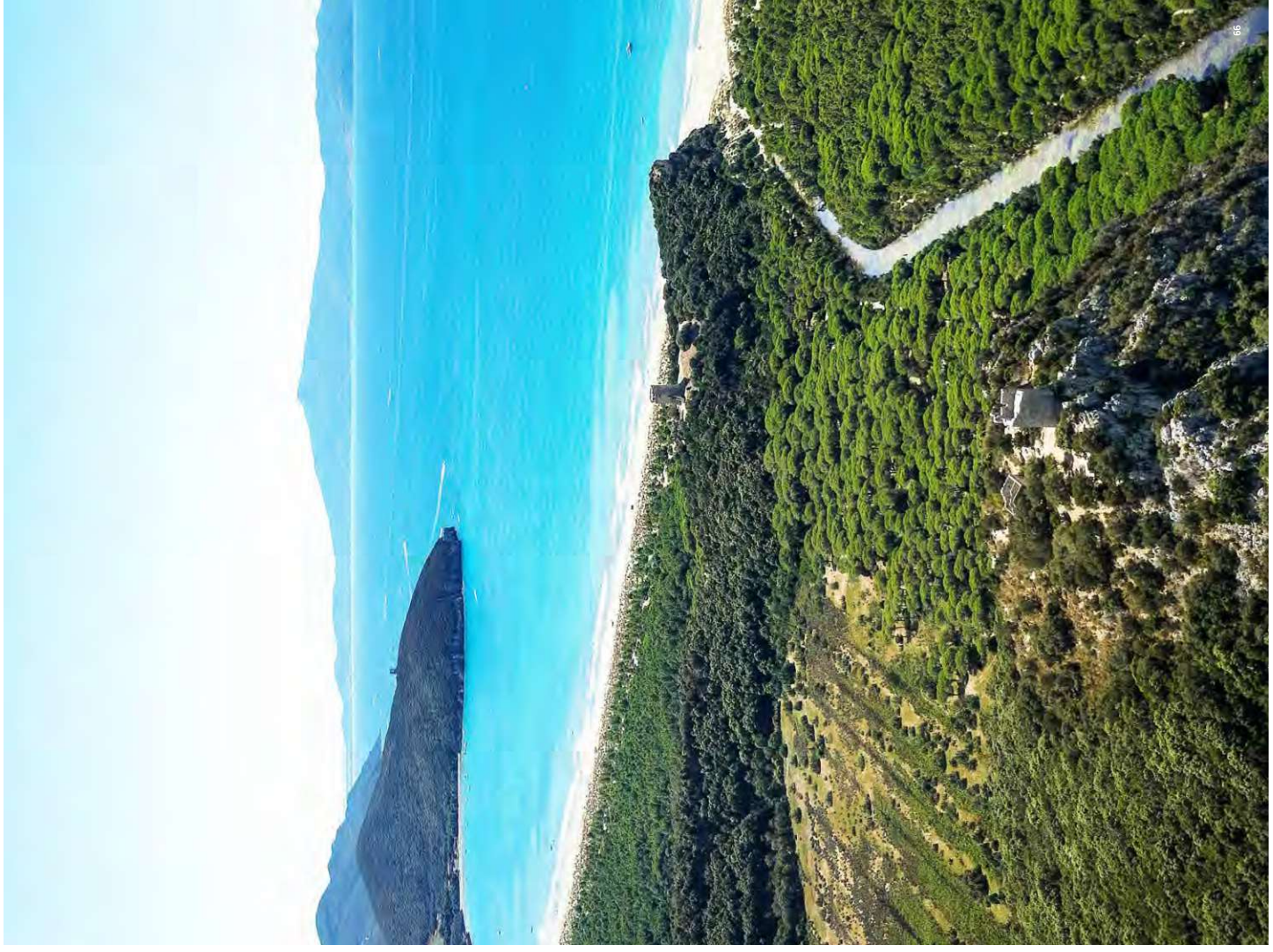
CB

It's a problem I feel deeply, like many, although I'm a bit skeptical about some extremes. "Politics is not gardening," a friend used to say. Ecology is an issue that sometimes seems less urgent than hunger and cold, but I don't know... we are certainly many, and we need to take care of the environment around us. When I think about ecological, social, and temporal sustainability, I realize how complex and intertwined everything is, and that there are no easy answers. In fact, I'm wary of anyone who offers them. The fact is, everything looks beautiful from a distance... for example, wind turbines are very controversial, both for those who claim they disturb bird flight and for those who find them aesthetically unpleasant. But if we think about the wind pumps in wells, now symbols of Maremma and brands of companies, they were once considered ugly, but now they are part of nostalgia. I wonder if contemporary discussions suffer from the same shortsightedness. Wind turbines are necessary, and who knows what stories children born seeing them will tell...

INTRO

40

66 Carlo Bonazza, *Arresi* / wien, 2008



I BEACH

The Edge of the Sea

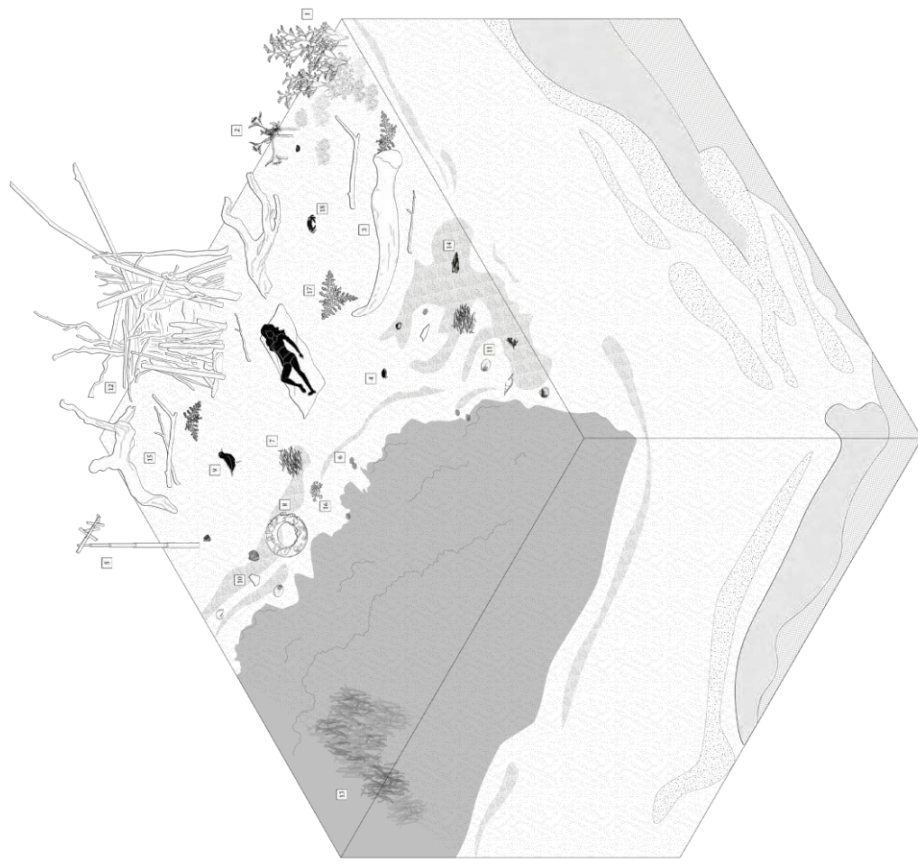


0 "La spiaggia", cyanotype print.

"The shore is an ancient world, for as long as there has been an earth and sea there has been this place of the meeting of land and water."

— Rachel Carson, *The Edge of the Sea*, 1955

- | | | |
|----------------------------|----|-------------------------------------|
| seawater
32.5‰ salinity | 1 | <i>Limonium etruscum</i> |
| magnetite | 2 | <i>Pancreatium maritimum</i> |
| clay | 3 | whale's rib |
| gravel | 4 | <i>Talitrus saltator</i> |
| groundwater | 5 | reed pinwheel |
| sand | 6 | <i>Posidonia oceanica eggropili</i> |
| | 7 | <i>Zostera marina</i> |
| | 8 | oyster-encrusted tire |
| | 9 | <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i> |
| | 10 | pottery fragments |
| | 11 | <i>Ostrea edulis</i> |
| | 12 | driftwood huts |
| | 13 | <i>Posidonia oceanica</i> |
| | 14 | charcoal |
| | 15 | driftwood |
| | 16 | <i>Ulex lactuca</i> |
| | 17 | <i>Salsola kali</i> |
| | 18 | <i>Callinectes sapidus</i> |



This journey begins with a threshold—a shifting, liquid boundary where the Tyrrhenian Sea and the Maremma coast meet in an endless, restless embrace. I stand at the water's edge, where land and sea engage in an circular conversation, advancing, retreating, claiming and conceding, their dialogue written in foam and sand. I've known these shores since I was a child, but I crave for new eyes, curious, brave, attentive.

Pools of saltwater bloom in hollows, glistening like captured fragments of the tide, only to vanish as the sea reclaims them, folding them back into its ceaseless rhythm. The waves break and whisper, their voices a soft, insistent murmur—the sound of the world's edge dissolving into the infinite.

On the horizon, the sea and sky fuse into a seamless blue, a place where distances are illusions and possibilities stretch beyond sight. It is a threshold not only of earth and water but of time itself, where echoes of ancient journeys linger. Here, one night of sixteen centuries ago, **Rutilius Namatianus** stood as I do now, arriving in Maremma, a traveler seeking refuge, a witness to the shifting tides of empire and exile.

I think of him, of those who ventured before him, of the fear that must have clung to their skin like salt, the vastness before them dark and unknowable. What courage it must have taken to step beyond the shore, to trade certainty for the beckoning unknown.

I walk along the damp dock, the sun a gentle hand upon my skin. Above me, the sky unfurls in boundless layers of light and silence. The sea breathes, the earth lingers, and between them, another little corner of a new world unfolds.



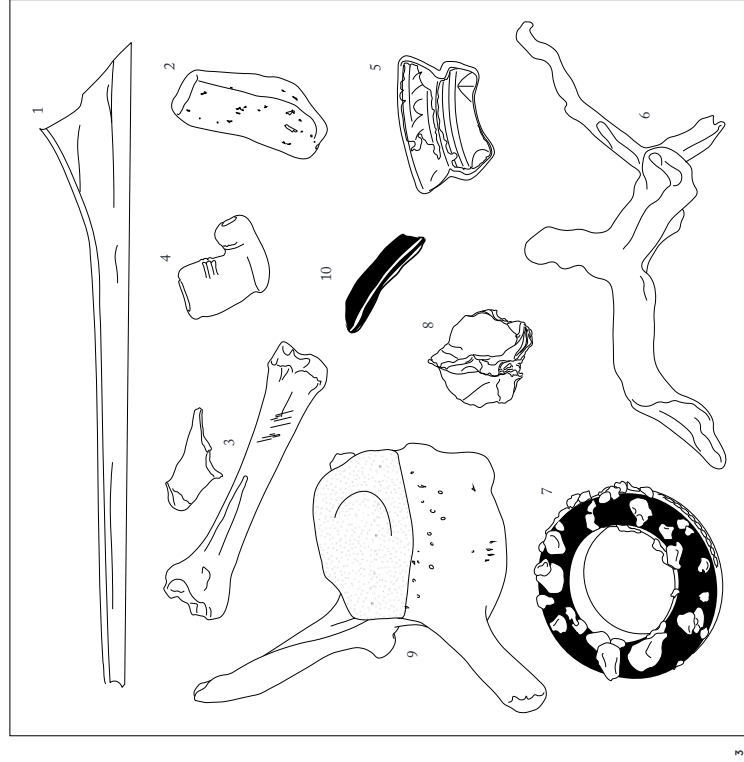
GIFTS THAT KEEP ON GIVING

Whenever I am fortunate enough to wander to the beach during off-season, with the treasure of time stretching before me, my favorite kind of hunt begin—a quiet communion with the sea’s offerings, a game of chance played with the tides. There is an electric thrill in the not-knowing, in the gentle suspense of discovery. What gifts has the water carried this time? Perhaps a shell, spiraled into an impossible geometry, a brick bejewelled by salt and time, or even the ghost of something once discarded—an entire refrigerator, its stark utility transformed by oyster shells and encrustations of calcite, turned from refuse into relic, from ruin into wonder.

Lorenzo Chelazzi and his wife share this reverence for wayfaring objects. Like me, they are eager seekers, collectors of the lost and the overlooked, of the drifted, of things that have shed their old purposes to become something new. We delight in the childlike joy of unearthing the unexpected, each discovery a doorway into speculation, into stories both remembered and invented, binding us ever closer to this shifting, living edge of the world.

Every object speaks, if only you are willing to listen. Walk to the nearest shore with curiosity and care, and you will find that you are not merely seeking—you are receiving. The sea does not simply give; it bestows, choosing what to return to your sight, what to conceal in the depths of water and the unnoticed, and what to turn into something wholly unimagined.

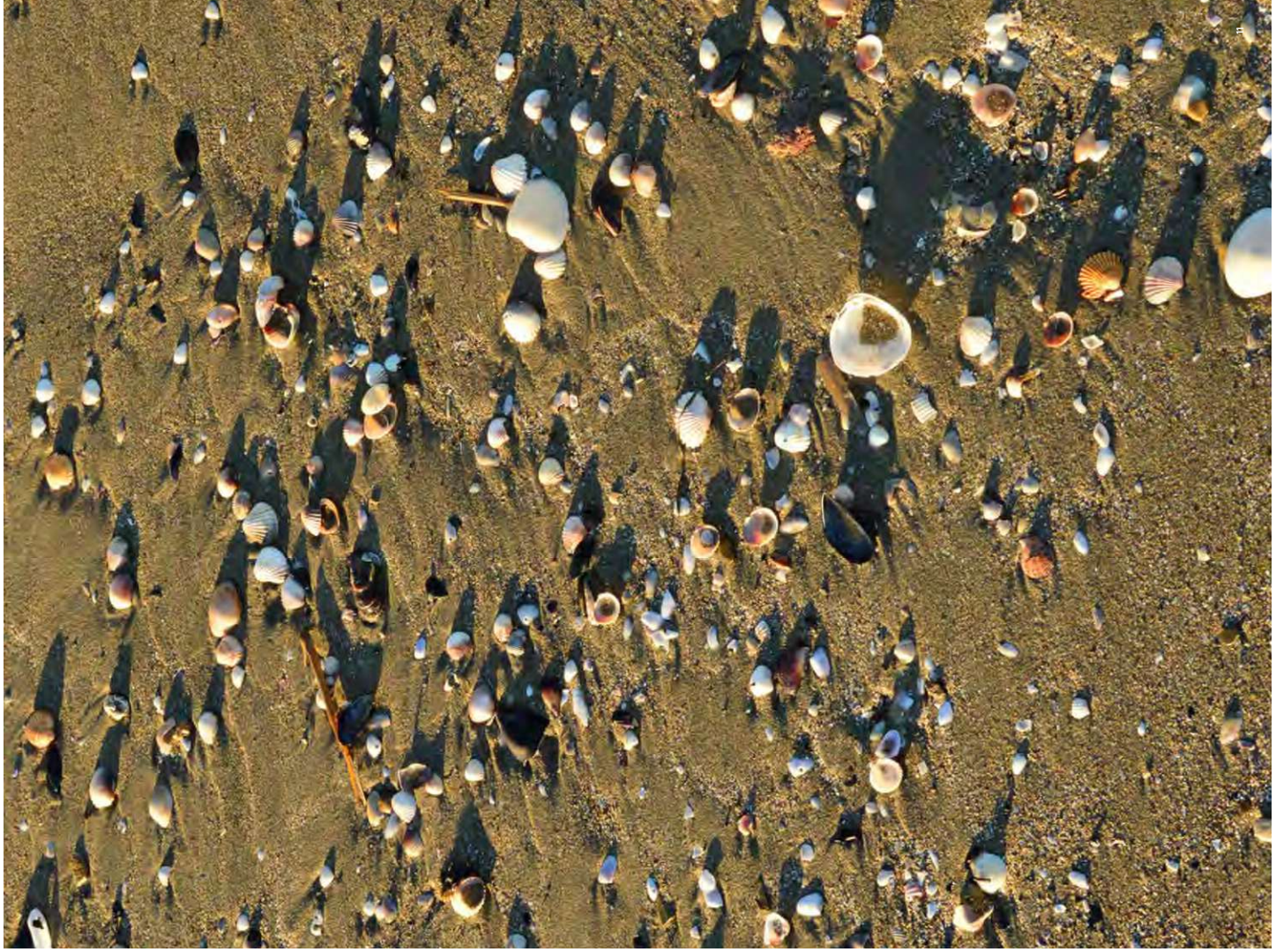
3 Shore findings





- 1 boat's keel, roman period
- 2 old brick, medieval period
- 3 equid femur bone for sharpening blades, Roman period
- 4 pipe of a fisherman from Gaeta, around 1850
- 5 decorated food container, medieval period
- 6 driftwood
- 7 heavy tire encrusted with oyster shells
- 8 "bifacial" oyster, encrusted
- 9 whale vertebra
- 10 food cooking container, roman period

- 4 Shell, Marina di Grosseto.
- 5 Pipe of a fisherman from Gaeta, dated around 1850.
- 6 Encrusted "bifacial" oyster shell, Marina di Grosseto.
- 7 Bivalve clam, Principina a Mare.
- 8 Oyster shell, Principina a Mare.
- 9 Oyster shell, Marina di Grosseto.
- 10 Blue crab shell (*Callinectes sapidus*), Marina di Grosseto.
- 11 Shells on the shore, Marina di Grosseto.





12 Driftwood detail, Principna a Mare.



13 View of the beach, Principna a Mare.



14 Driftwood detail, Principna a Mare.



15

At long last, all manner of debris—whether born of sea or river—complete their journey, finding solace upon the shore. Here, at this liminal meeting of earth and water, they find rest and transformation, entering the cycle of the shore anew.

The accumulation of organic matter on the beach is a mesmerizing phenomenon, where each fragment is a testament to nature's endless choreography. **Driftwood**, algae, animal carcasses, and more, arrive cyclically, weaving together a symphony of life and death. These are the quiet denizens of a serene, yet eerie, cemetery, where the cycle of life is both honored and renewed.

This uncanny, yet calming, landscape of remnants serves as a vital thread in the intricate web of the shoreline ecosystem, nourishing the food chain, offering shelter to the creatures of the

shore, and playing an essential role in the consolidation of the shoreline itself. Moreover, such remains enrich the chemical balance of the sand, enhancing the biological vitality of the coast.

One of the species that has come to call these organic accumulations home is the little **fratino** bird [*Charadrius alexandrinus*], which lays its eggs between scattered trunks and other organic relics. The presence of humans, compounded by the growing tide of waste that invades the ecosystems, threatens not only the existence of the fratino, but the whole fragile harmony of debris cycles, which disruption decreases the overall health of the coastal habitat.

16

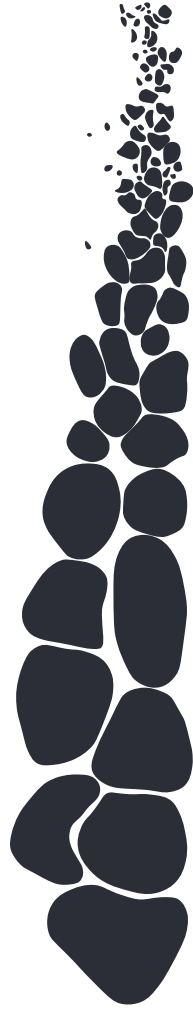
HAPPY GRAVEYARDS

THE JOURNEY OF A GRAIN OF SAND



The sand of the floodplain coast consists of a mixture of sediments of both alluvional and marine origin. Its grains, of medium granulometry, fall beneath **2 mm**, earning it the title of “**very coarse sand**”.

— from Museo di Storia Naturale della Maremma



BOULDER
(>256 mm)

COBBLE
(256 - 16 mm)

PEBBLE
(16 - 4 mm)

GRANULE
(4 - 2 mm)

SAND
(2 - 0.063 mm)

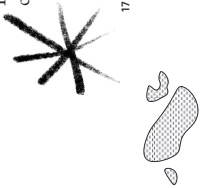
SILT
(0.063 - 0.0039 mm)

*gravel
conglomerate*

*sand
sandstone*

*mud
mudrock*

It takes **100,000 years** for a
clay deposit to form!



CLAY
($<4\ \mu\text{m}$)

mud
mudrock



THE FEAR OF THE SEA

The Marenmani have never been a people of the sea; they have always preferred the brackish waters of the lagoon or the freshwater currents of the river. Only a century ago, the beach was a rare, perilous destination—one that few dared to approach. “Until the 1920s, in some coastal places, children who swam in the sea during summer were met with resounding slaps. The sun was harmful, and more than one person boasted of never having set foot on the beach.” (from *L'invenzione della Maremma* collectible cards)

Then came the economic boom, and with it, the rise of **coastal tourism**. The once-quiet Maremma beaches were suddenly crowded, transformed into bustling resorts, their shores now burdened by tons of concrete upon which streams of visitors suddenly projected their ideas of relax, wealth, and appropriation.

Today, the overwhelming tide of mass tourism remains fundamentally at odds with the delicate ecological balance of the coast. Buildings rise, waste accumulates, and the summer influx of vacationers renders the coastal ecosystems increasingly fragile.

“Il mare era un deserto minaccioso”
“The sea was a threatening desert.”

— *L'invenzione della Maremma*, 2001



19



19

Castiglione della Pescaia, 1905.
Marina di Grosseto, 1950s.

20



“Tornan l’ore sì ma non più quelle”
“The hours return, yet not those
anymore”
—Inscription on a rock
found at the Scanzano monastery



21 Castiglione della Pescaia, 1905.
22 Beach collage.



23



26



24



25



27

23 Trash on the beach, Principina a Mare.
24 "Niente rifiuti in spiaggia grazie" / "no trash on the beach thank you", Principina a Mare.
25 Trash on the beach, Principina a Mare.
26 Fishermen's trash, Principina a Mare.
27 oyster-encrusted tire found on the shore, Marina di Grosseto.

ALIENS

*"Non c'è peggior pena che ragionare
co' i coglioni e passeggiare sull'arena"*
"There's no worse sorrow than
reasoning with fools and walking
on dry sand."

— local proverb

MELISSA

“C’è una canzone popolare toscana che reca il titolo di “Maremma Amara”, perché tutti sanno e hanno sempre saputo che il nostro territorio è tutt’altro che ospitale. Era un luogo di lavoro e aria insalubre, luogo dove non di rado ci si poteva ammalare di malaria, luogo che si cercava di evitare.

La Maremma è un luogo chiuso, dal quale escono ed entrano poche voci esterne, ma nel quale quelle interne rimbombano come se le colline che lo circondano facessero loro da eco. La chiusura che si ha verso est viene però compensata ad ovest dal mare, sul quale il territorio si spalanca e dal quale non si può fare a meno; si spalanca e schiude l’anima di chi vi abita accanto. Le novità vengono portate dall’esterno dai turisti nei pochi mesi estivi, che

ciare questa lentezza si apprezza il colore dei filari delle viti che cambiano colore e diventano rossi in autunno e verdi e rigogliosi in estate, finché non arriva il periodo di vendemmia e i paesi indossano i loro addobbi migliori e si aprono all’esterno per festeggiare. E questa vita lenta fa assaporare qualunque dettaglio, godere del fluire del tempo delle giornate scandite da tramonti marittimi e delle stagioni che trasformano il paesaggio. La lentezza permette di apprezzare la bellezza mai sfacciata tutt’intorno. La Maremma non è un territorio vivace, non è una meta verso la quale in molti rivolgono uno sguardo. Occorre mettersi in ascolto, amarla e prendere coscienza della sua spiazzante concretezza.

E quando si riesce a farla, la Maremma è casa.”

“La lentezza permette di apprezzare la bellezza mai sfacciata tutt’intorno. La Maremma non è un territorio vivace, non è una meta verso la quale in molti rivolgono uno sguardo. Occorre mettersi in ascolto, amarla e prendere coscienza della sua spiazzante concretezza.”

con il dissolversi della bella stagione si dileguano lasciando che la vita torni a fluire tranquilla con i suoi ritmi rurali. E’ fruttante che sei un bambino sei felice di vivere tutto l’anno vicino al mare e poter godere delle infinite estati fatte di bagni e sabbia, senza la fretta di dover ripartire per tornare in città alla fine della settimana. Nell’adolescenza questo comincia a non bastare più. Tutto sembra chiuso, tutto sembra esaurito, nulla sembra entusiasmare.

Ma la vita è lenta in Maremma e se si decide di abbrac-



There is a traditional Tuscan song titled “Maremma Amara”—“Bitter Maremma”—because everyone knows, and has always known, that this land is far from hospitable. It was a place of grueling labor and unwholesome air, where malaria lurked in the stagnant waters, where toil was met not with abundance, but with hardship. A land people feared, a

lush green to the burning hues of autumn; the villages, dressing themselves in celebration as the harvest comes; the rhythm of the sea, of the seasons, of the land itself. Nothing here is ostentatious, yet everything endures.

Maremma is not a place of spectacle. It does not demand attention, nor does it easily reveal its wonders. It requires patience,

“Nothing here is ostentatious, yet everything endures. Maremma is not a place of spectacle. It does not demand attention, nor does it easily reveal its wonders. It requires patience, devotion, and a willingness to embrace its disarming practicality.”

land people sought to escape.

Maremma is closed off, its borders guarded by silence, its voices contained within hills that echo them back, keeping them near. To the east, this isolation is deepened, yet to the west, the land breaks open toward the sea—a vast, magnetic pull that draws all toward it. Here, the land breathes wide, and so do those who live beside it. Newness arrives only in the brief shimmer of summer, carried in by tourists. But as the warm season wanes, so too do the visitors, and life returns to its quiet, rural rhythm.

As a child, living by the sea feels like an endless gift—long summers stretch out like golden ribbons, the waves calling with no end. There is no rush to leave, no frantic return to the city. But then, adolescence arrives, and the gift begins to feel like a cage. The same landscapes, the same faces, the same slow rotation of days. The horizon no longer beckons—it hems you in.

Yet Maremma moves at its own pace, unhurried and deliberate. If one surrenders to this slowness, a different beauty unfolds. The vineyards, shifting from

devotion, and a willingness to embrace its disarming practicality. But once you do, Maremma becomes home.”

The blue king crab is an alien and invasive species that has rapidly colonized the Italian coasts in recent years. Originating from America, it journeys across the seas in the **ballast water** of industrial ships. Trapped within, eggs and individuals travel vast distances, only to awaken on newly conquered shores.

The female blue king crab dwells in the sea, laying her eggs in its depths, unaware of a new predator adapting to her sudden presence along the coast: the **octopus**. The male, on the other hand, primarily inhabits freshwater rivers, though with seasonal exceptions—females may venture into rivers in spring, while in winter, males migrate toward the sea in search of milder waters.

How can the presence of the blue crab be managed, thereby restoring ecological balance? By turning invader into sustenance!

Legambiente and **Alcedo APS** confirm that not only is it permissible to fish for and consume the blue king crab, but it is actively encouraged; abundant in number and pulpy in content, its Latin name, *sapidus*, promises a meal bursting with flavor.

IL GRANCHIO BLU

Callinectes sapidus

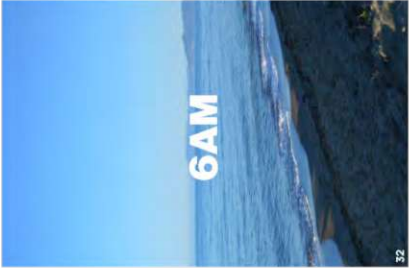


28



28
29
30
31
Blue crab (*Callinectes sapidus*, Inework Illustration, Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024).
Event with focus on the blue crab (*Callinectes sapidus*, Legambiente + Alcedo + Meremna Regional Park, Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024).
Beppe shows how to open the shell of the blue crab (*Callinectes sapidus*, Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024).





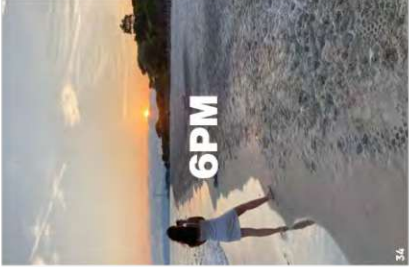
6AM

32



12PM

33



6PM

34

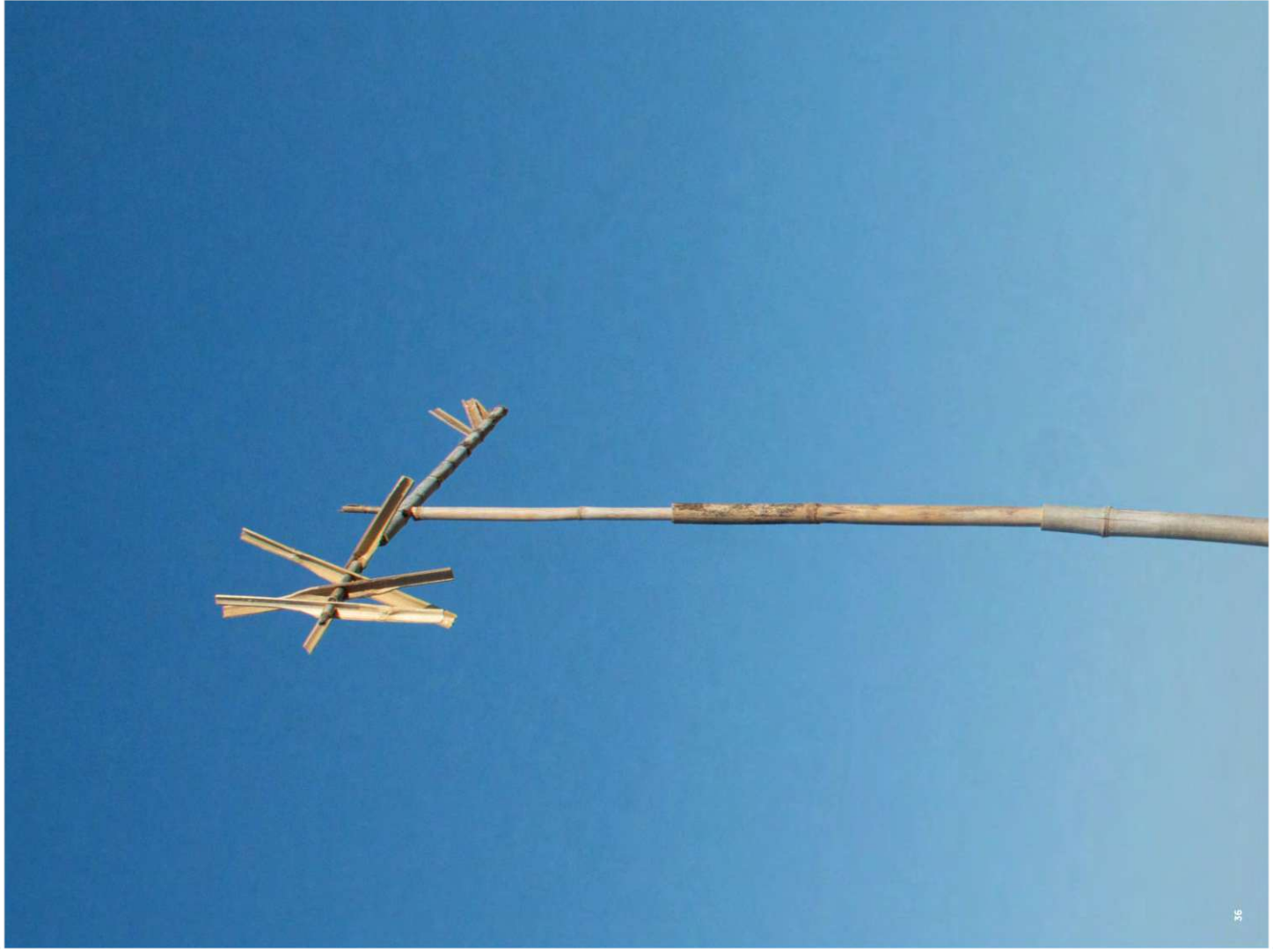
In the summer, if you can resist the pull to remain in bed, you may arrive at the shore just in time for the first golden rays of sunlight to spill across the horizon, revealing a quiet miracle: solitude. The air is thick with the intoxicating scent of sea daffodils, their fragrance carried on the soft, early breeze. The expansive shoreline hums with its rhythmic symphony, offering its daily bounty to those who venture before the world stirs to life.

For now, the sounds of bathers, the vibrant patches of towels, and the artificial forest of umbrellas belong to another realm—one that has not yet invaded this untouched moment. But the tranquility is brief.

“This is the only time I visit the beach in summer,” Beppe remarks, a tinge of anguish betraying his placid smile.

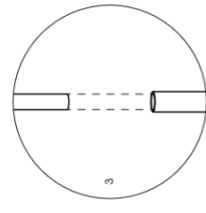
AGARDEN OF ONE’S OWN



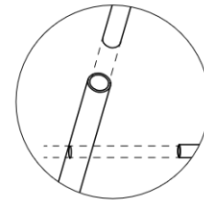


material

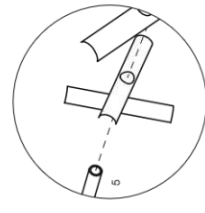
- * a knife, or something sharp
- * a good eye
- * dry reed stems
- * a decent breezy shore



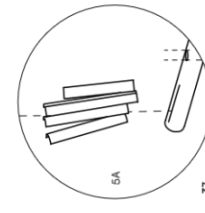
1 Wake up from your afternoon nap on the beach.



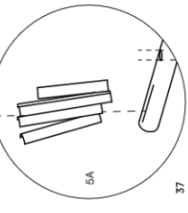
2 Seek out different sizes of reed stems (*arundo donax*, *phragmites australis*, etc.) that you can find stranded the shore or near the dunes.



3 Combine these stems, their diameters tapering toward the top until the desired height is reached.



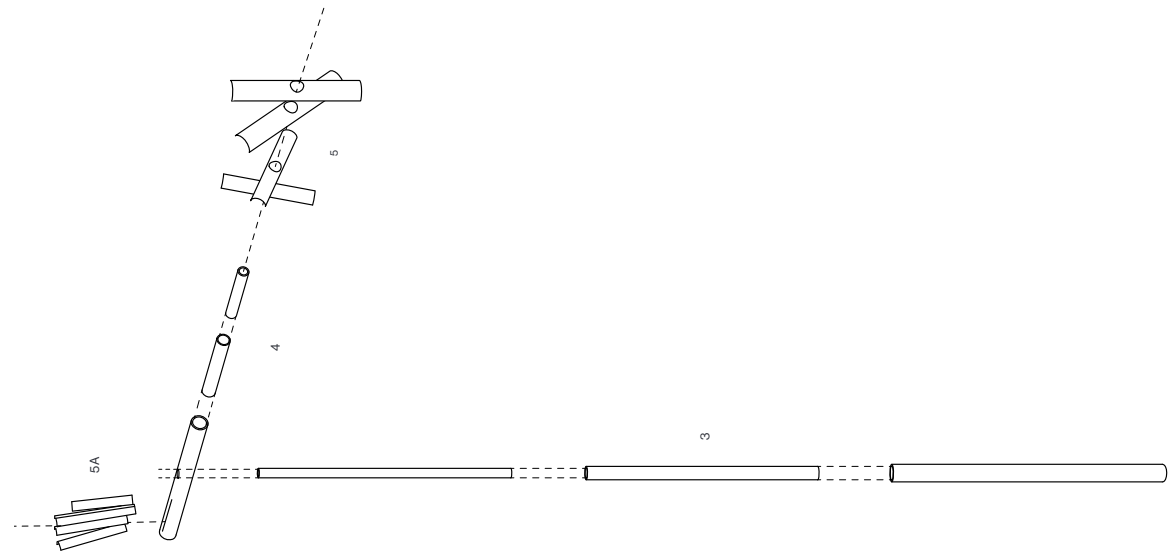
4 Apply the same principle with to onstruct a smaller, perpendicular spindle. Fix the base to the spindle through careful carving, ensuring stability.



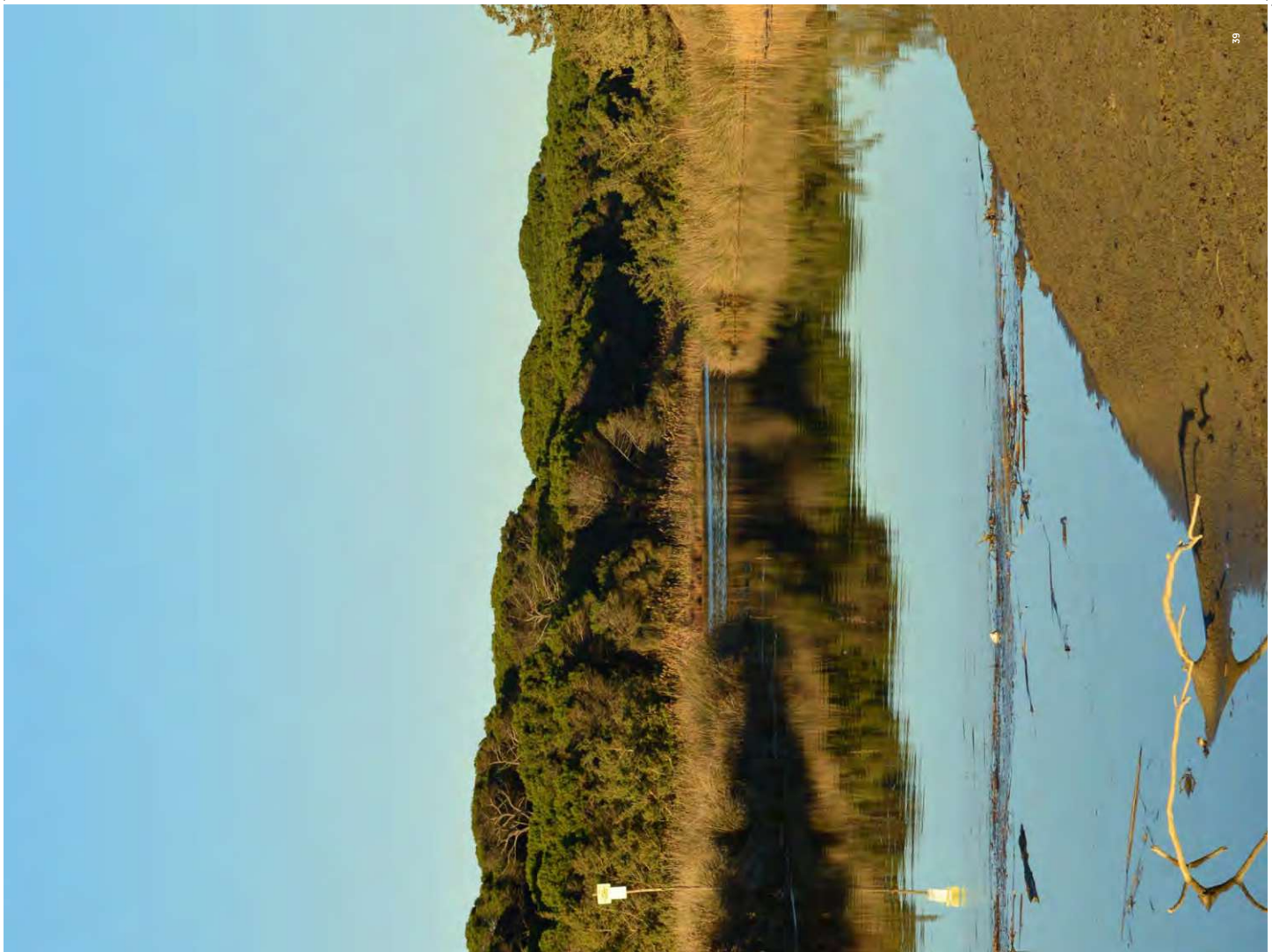
5 Take some of the split stems—cut lengthwise—and slide them onto the spindle, forming delicate blades. Leave them loose enough to spin freely. Use more split pieces to fashion the tail (#5A).

6 Choose the perfect spot to anchor your pinwheel, letting it catch the wind's whisper.

REED PINWHEEL



39 San Leopoldo outlet, Fiumara



A massive fish lies stranded on the shore—perhaps a whale, perhaps a great shark. No one witnessed its arrival, yet here it is, surrendered to decay. Its slimy flesh peels away in strips, unveiling first the glistening entrails, then the stark geometry of bone. The stench is unbearable, yet the carcass, like some dark magnet, draws both humans and birds to it in curious pilgrimage.

Now that the flesh has vanished, the bones begin to murmur other tales. This is no marine creature skeleton—it belongs to the dragon once slain by San Guglielmo in the cursed land of Malavalle, its carcass a symbol of triumph over evil.

To this very day, only one last, pale creature's rib rests in the church of Tirlì. Yet, when the night falls, some swear they hear deep, guttural cries drifting through the air. Somewhere, somehow, someone keeps searching for its missing piece.

— rewriting of the legend of the stranded whale, folkloric knowledge

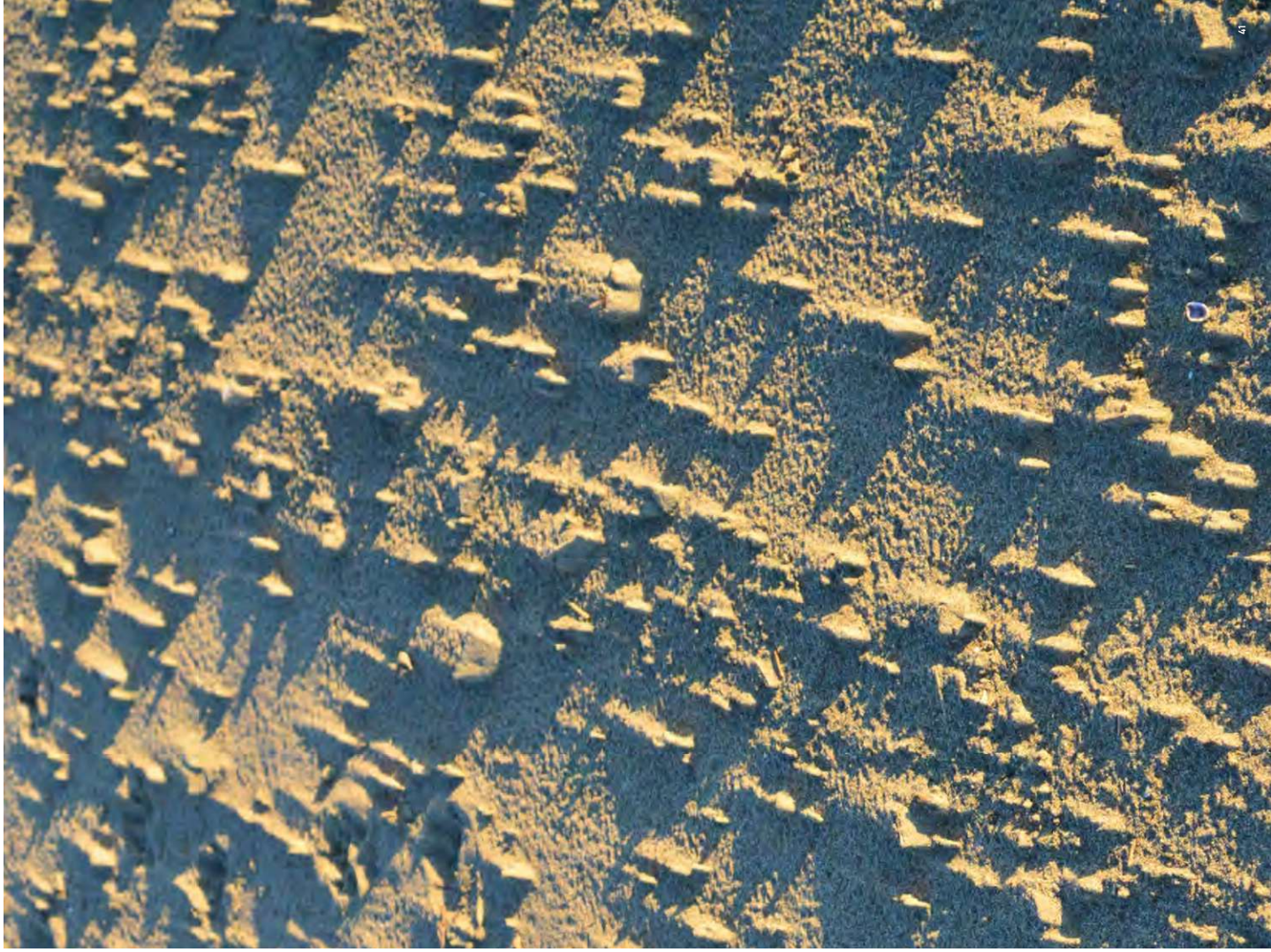
LOVELY BONES

BEACH

74



41 Sand morphologies after a windstorm, Valentina Minicelli, winter 2025.



THE BIRTH OF SEA SALT

was once an essential industry is now little more than a historical relic. Saltworks have left behind only faint traces—scattered remains, ruins, old records.

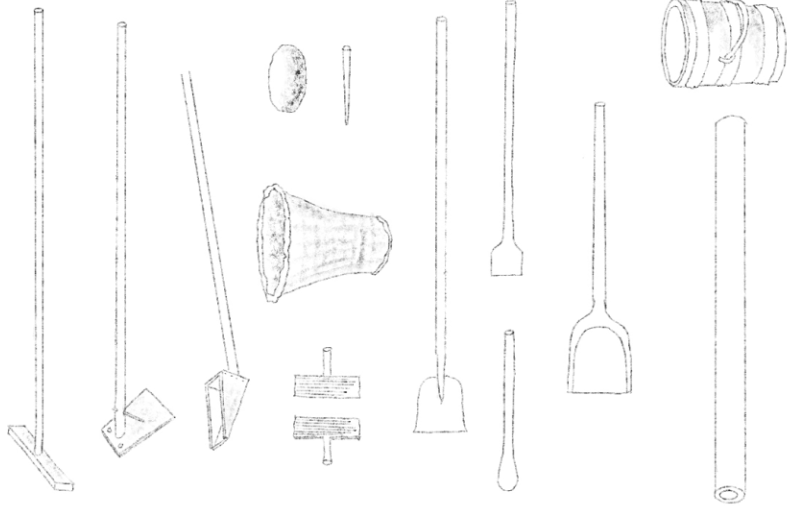
Still, salt lingers. In the dry season, crystals cling to leaves and stems or bejewel the soil's surface, while a familiar saltiness drifts through the parched, sun-scorchd air.

Without **sodium chloride**, life on Earth would cease to exist. Since ancient times, human presence along the Maremma coast and the former Lake Prile has been inseparable from the large-scale production of sea salt—the very essence and soul of the sea.

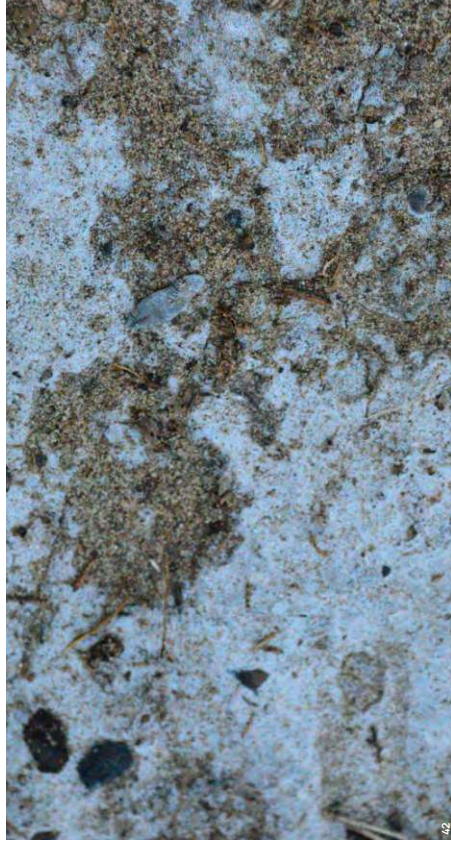
Once known as the gold of antiquity, salt was indispensable for both human and animal survival. It preserved meat and fish, made certain plants edible, and played a crucial role in dairy production. Only later did its power as a flavor enhancer become fully appreciated.

Harvested during the summer months—when high evapotranspiration and minimal rainfall created ideal conditions—salt was extracted through a carefully managed process. Seawater was channeled into shallow pools of varying sizes, where it slowly evaporated, leaving behind crystalline deposits that were collected and stored for trade. Salt was so abundant that Grosseto became a vital hub in the salt economy. Even today, within the city's historic center, one can still admire the **Cassero del Sale**, a medieval warehouse that once safeguarded this precious resource.

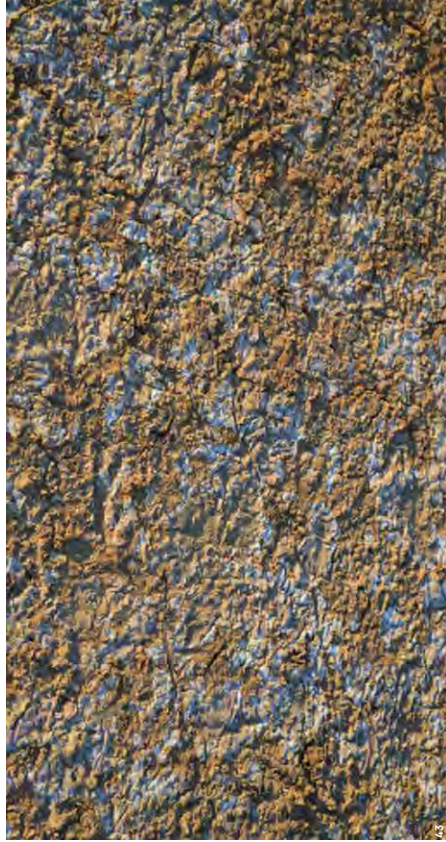
Over the centuries, knowledge of salt's properties expanded, as did its uses and methods of production. In Maremma, particularly around the Trappola area and the shores near Lake Castiglione, numerous salt works have been documented. Yet, salt production in these regions has long since ceased, and what



41



42

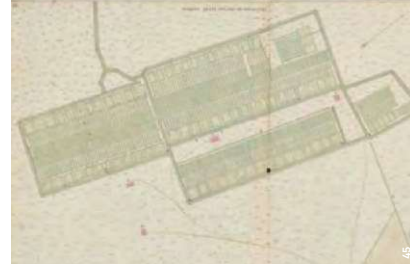


43



44

41 Saltworks tools. Inwork illustration adapted from Diderot Bernard, 1751
42 Salt crystals on the beach, Valentina Mincoletti, summer 2024
43 Salt crystals behind the dunes, Valentina Mincoletti, summer 2024
44 Salt crystals near the marshes, Valentina Mincoletti, summer 2024



45



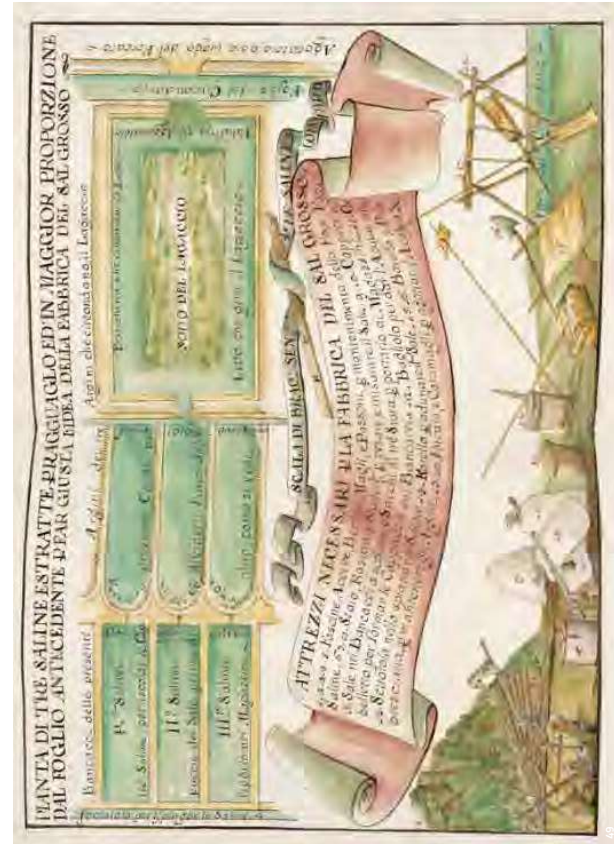
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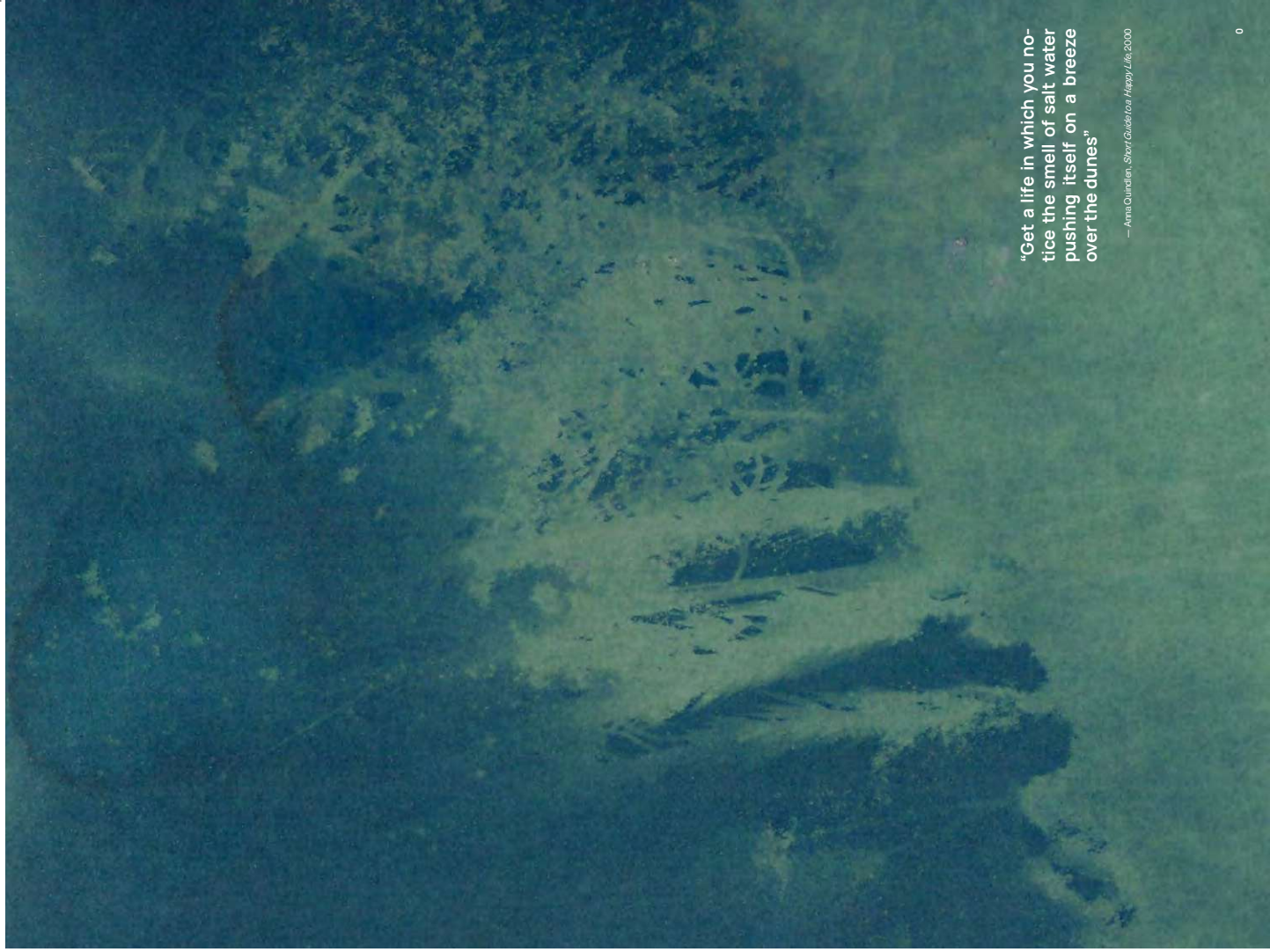


50

45 Saltworks map, 1750-1759
46 Saltworks map, 1759-1759
47 Saltworks map, XVII DC
48 Saltworks map, 1600-1620
49 Saltworks map, 1757
50 Saltworks map, 1759

II COASTAL DUNES

Moving mountains



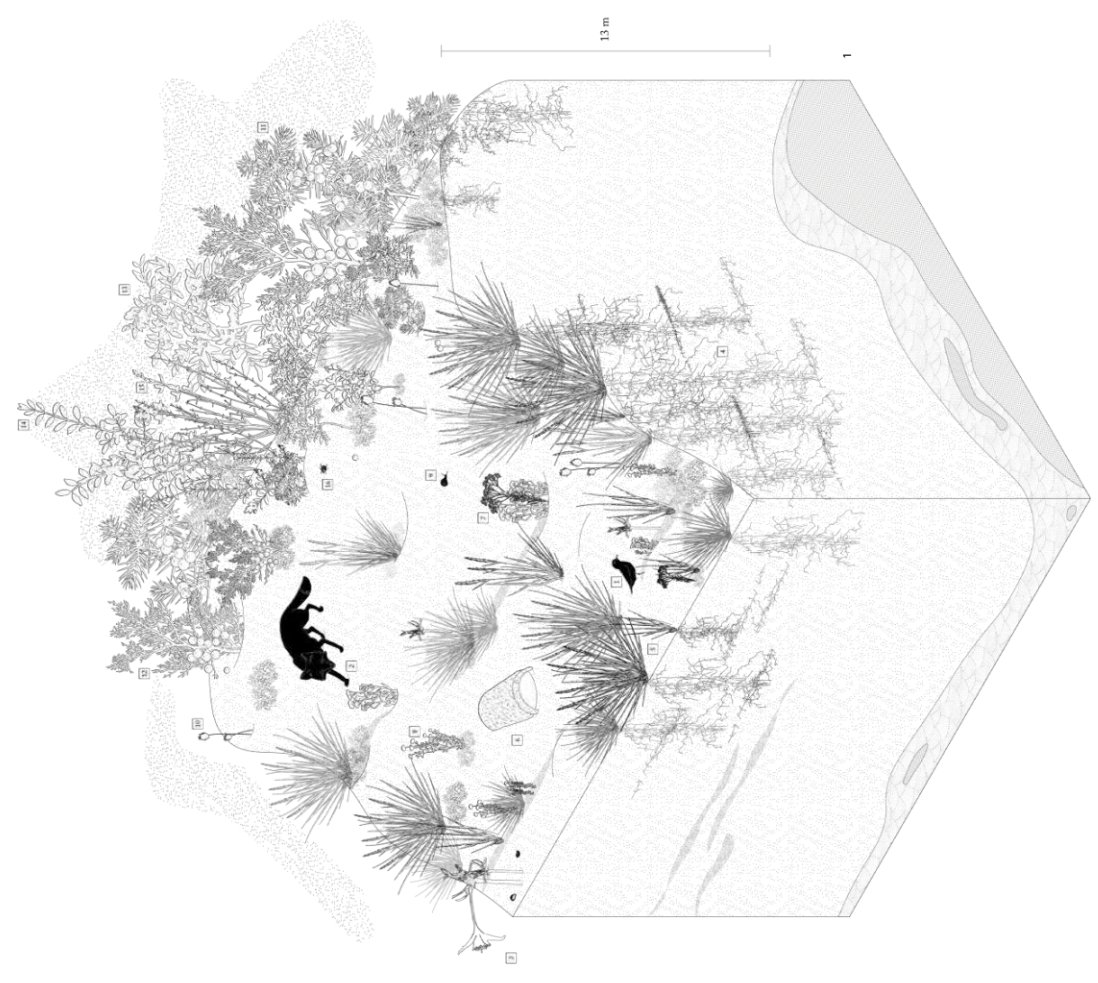
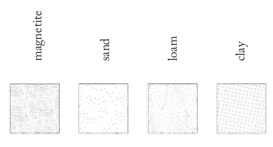
0 "Laduna", cyanotype print.

"Get a life in which you notice the smell of salt water pushing itself on a breeze over the dunes"

— Anna Quindlen, *Short Goodbye* Happy Life 2000

0

- 1 *Charadrius alexandrinus*
- 2 *Vulpes vulpes*
- 3 *Pancreatium maritimum*
- 4 pioneer plants root systems
- 5 *Ammofila arenaria*
- 6 rusty gas cylinder
- 7 *Helichrysum italicum*
- 8 *Santolina chamaecyparissus*
- 9 *Theba pisana*
- 10 *Lagurus ovatus*
- 11 *Juniperus phoenicea*
- 12 *Juniperus macrocarpa*
- 13 *Ligustrum vulgare*
- 14 *Pistacia lentiscus*
- 15 *Spartium juncum*
- 16 *Psammobius sulcifrons*

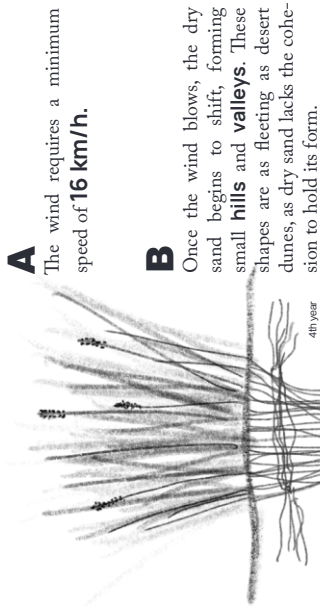




Coastal dunes are sandy hummocks that rise in parallel to the shoreline. These natural guardians protect not only their shore but all the ecosystems that lie beneath them. They regulate the sand supply along the shoreline, replenishing eroded beaches, while they shield the other floodplain habitats from the winds, the salty marine aerosol, and the encroaching rise of water levels.

A coastal dune of this region typically comprises **13 meters** of **sand**, beneath which layers of **loam** and **clay** are found; its formation and evolution hinge on three primary factors:

- A. the wind**
- B. the sand**
- C. the flora**



3
Ammophila arenaria

4
Stages of the formation of a dune.

THE BIRTH OF A COASTAL DUNE

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE FOR A MOUNTAIN TO DISAPPEAR?

During one of my walks along the beach, I came across a fascinating specimen: a sandy conglomerate that, in contrast to the amorphous qualities of the sand, appeared rigid and resistant. This is a completely natural element that forms the innermost structure of the dunes—a kind of **"dune brick"** born from the union of sandy soil and the root bundles of dune plants. Together, these two components create a sort of natural mortar that binds the grains, allowing the dune system to solidify and endure.



5



6
5
"Dune brick".
Coastal erosion, disrupted rock system.

Coastal dunes are not formed overnight—they might require decades to grow and stabilize. But when they vanish, they take with them the fragile ecosystems and the myriad creatures they harbor, setting off a **chain reaction of ecological decline** that ripples through the plain.

Coastal tourism and its sprawling infrastructure bear much of the blame for the cutting and erosion of these dunes. Once disturbed, the dunes lose their protective quality, and the once-shielded habitats begin to deteriorate. The winds, once held in check, now sweep freely, and the sea begins to infiltrate the land, eroding both soil and biodiversity. With each passing season, the survival of countless plant and animal species grows more uncertain.

The *pineta*, the pine-woods, integral habitat to this coastal landscape, suffers as well. Without dunes to protect them, the trees begin to bend under the strain. The canopies shed their leaves prematurely, and in time, the trees succumb, drying out.

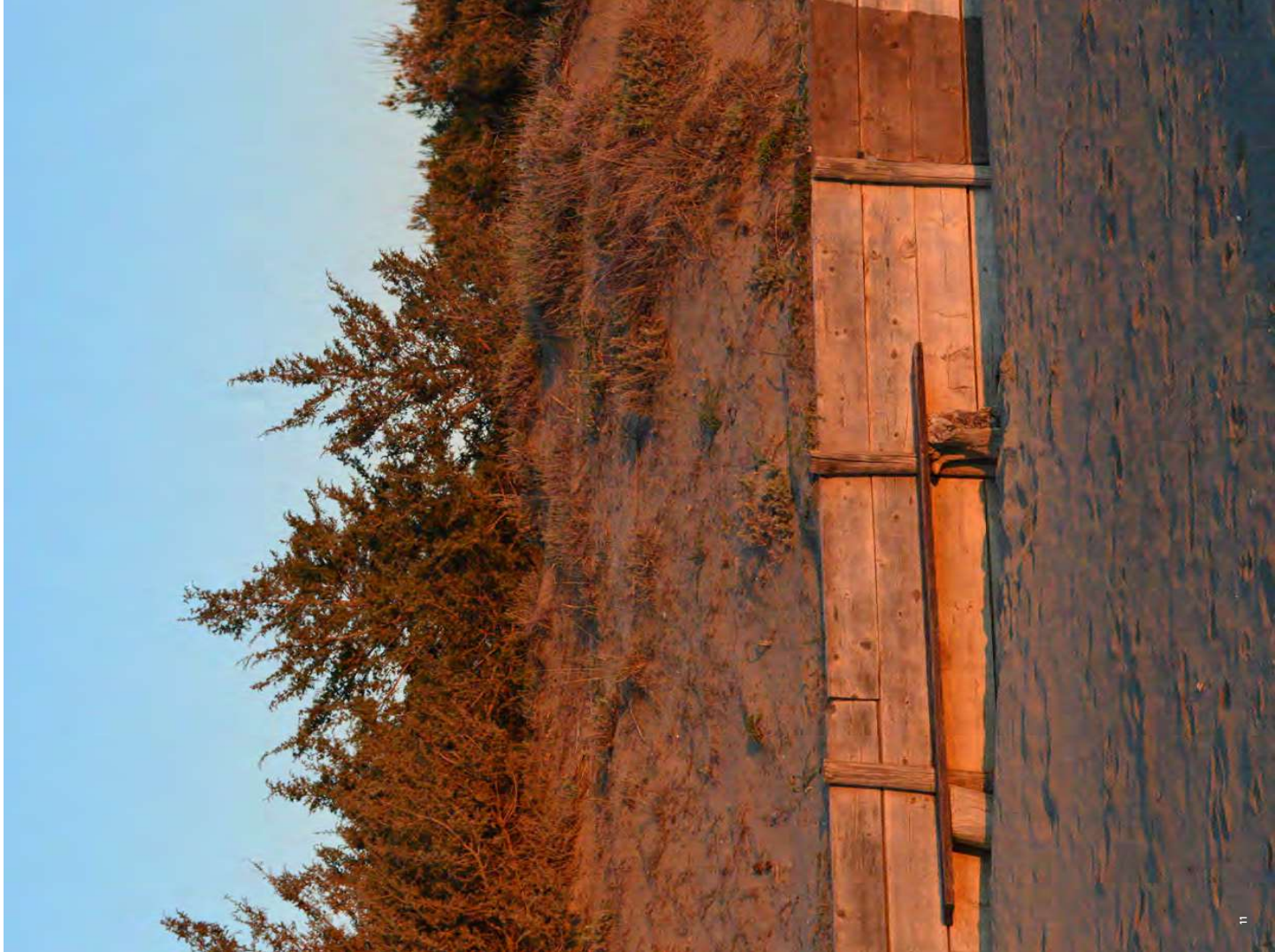


7

8
7
Absence of a dune.
Dried pines on the coast, Meremba Regional Park.



01
6

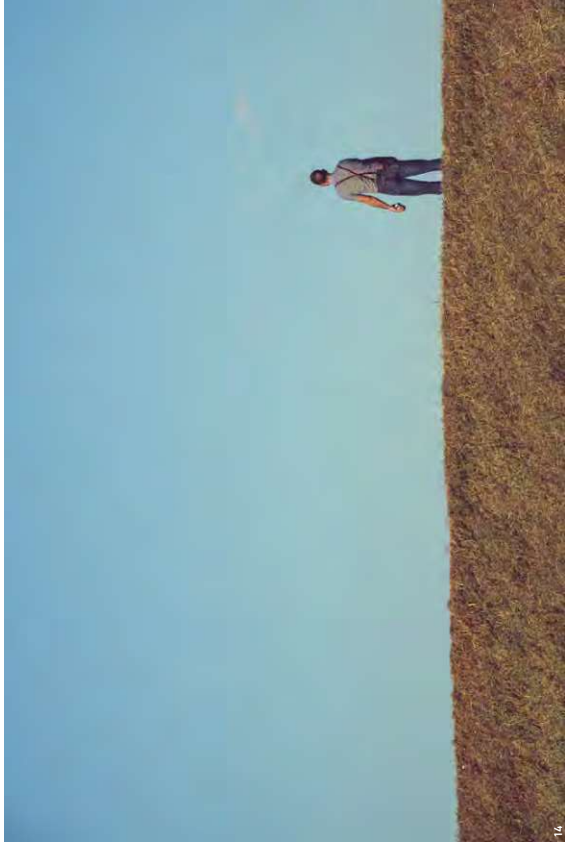


11 Dune interrupted, Principina a Mare.
12 Remains of the floor of a summer beach club, Principina a Mare.
13 Remains of a summer beach club, Principina a Mare.

*“Siamo sempre a due ore da tutto:
a due ore da Roma, a due ore da
Firenze, a due ore da Pisa!”*

“We’re always two hours away
from everything: two hours from
Rome, two hours from Florence,
two hours from Pisa!”

— Margit, 2022



14



15

IL RUZZOLAMERDE

dung beetle

The **ruzzolamerde**, also known as **cacaiolo**, is the most common dung beetle found on the beaches and dunes of Maremma.

A coprophage, it transports and burrows into animal droppings of all kinds, often traveling long distances. Its elegant, striped exoskeleton refracts light and heat.

Though gifted with wings, it cannot fly, making it easy to spot—observe the sandy coast carefully, and you will find it. A restless worker, once it secures its prize, it emerges from its “fecal” hideout to seek more, enriching the soil with essential minerals.

15
14
“Margit”, set photo, 2022
Dung beetle on the dunes, Marina di Grosseto.

GIULIO

“Bisogna essere disposti a leggere i segni del paesaggio e le assenze, i silenzi anche; allora ecco comparire le creature dell’immaginario, e le voci di tutti quelli che ci hanno preceduto.”

“Tutto dipende da ciò che si cerca, io qui ho trovato ogni cosa o quasi, anche la giusta voglia di fuggire per sapere dove tornare.

La Maremma ha il dono della varietà, tempestata com’è di storie, culture, dialetti che cambiano ad ogni manciata di curve: in un luogo del genere si può trovare l’esotico in casa. Ogni piccolo spostamento qui è un viaggio e se poi dalla costa ci si muove verso la montagna diventa un’avventura.

Bisogna essere disposti a leggere i segni del paesaggio e le assenze, i silenzi anche; allora ecco comparire le creature dell’immaginario, e le voci di tutti quelli che ci hanno preceduto.”



“Everything depends on what one is seeking. Here, I have found almost everything—even the right kind of urge to flee, if only to discover where I truly belong.

Maremma holds the gift of variety, scattered with stories, cultures, and dialects that shift with every twist and turn of the road. In a place like this, the exotic is not distant—it is woven into the familiar. Every small journey feels like an expedition, every path from the coast to the mountains unfolds as an adventure.

One must learn to read the signs of the landscape—its absences, its silences. Then, suddenly, the creatures of the imagination emerge, and with them, the voices of all those who came before us.”

“One must learn to read the signs of the landscape—its absences, its silences. Then, suddenly, the creatures of the imagination emerge, and with them, the voices of all those who came before us.”



I've rarely had the fortune to see a fox up close. Like brigands, they remain elusive, their presence only truly acknowledged when fate strikes them down—usually beneath the wheels of a car on the Aurelia road—allowing us to study them, though always from the distance that all wild creatures, untamed and free, seem to demand.

Foxes roam unbound across Maremma, moving with quiet confidence, always finding what they need—earthworms and mice in lean times, or a hapless hare, tricked by its own curiosity, which, as the saying goes, always kills. Their proud muzzles, elegant knives cutting through the air, and their fiery tails—both stabilizers in the hunt and blankets in the damp embrace of a muddy den—are the details of a feral, perfect design.

And when, by some rare stroke of luck, you find yourself locking eyes with one of them, time seems to pause—held in the stillness of an unspoken connection, as if you've been caught in some subtle enchantment.

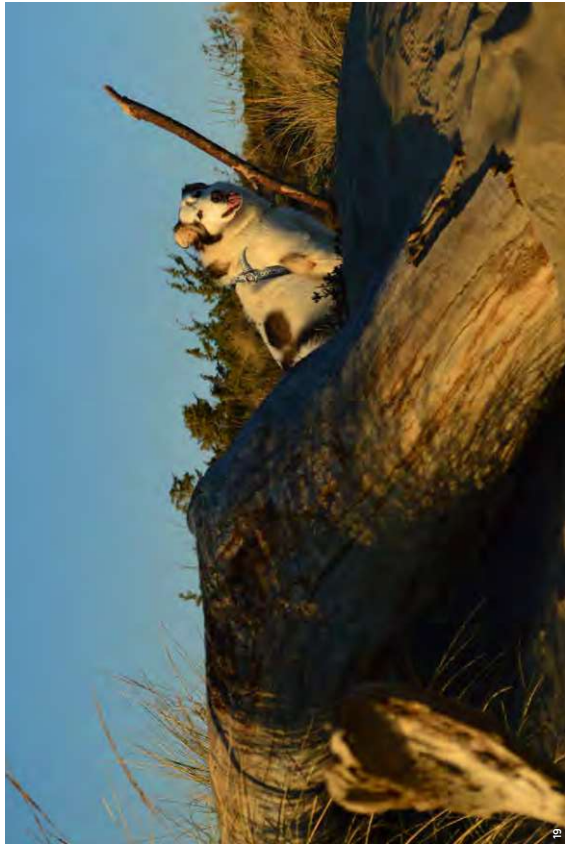
Though I've rarely seen a fox so close, sometimes, luck is kind.

LA VOLPE

vulpes vulpes



17 Baby fox in the garrigue, Castiglione della Pescaia.



I weave through the low-hanging branches of **juni-pers** and **mastic** trees, their leaves brushing softly against my skin as I begin my climb. The air is thick with a scent reminiscent of pinewoods, yet tinged with a **sweetness** that is uniquely of this place. Soon, I reach the summit, and before me unfolds a breathtaking view—an endless stretch of sky meeting the sea, with the distant islands of **Montecristo**, **Giglio**, **Elba**, and even **Corsica** standing as a stark witnesses to the worlds that emerge and submerge at their horizon. I inhale deeply, savoring the briny, salty air, and let the soft, peach-colored rays of the setting sun bathe me.

In that moment, a quiet thought slips through my mind: one day, these moments might live only in my memory, carried on the wind, a whispered echo of sun and sea.

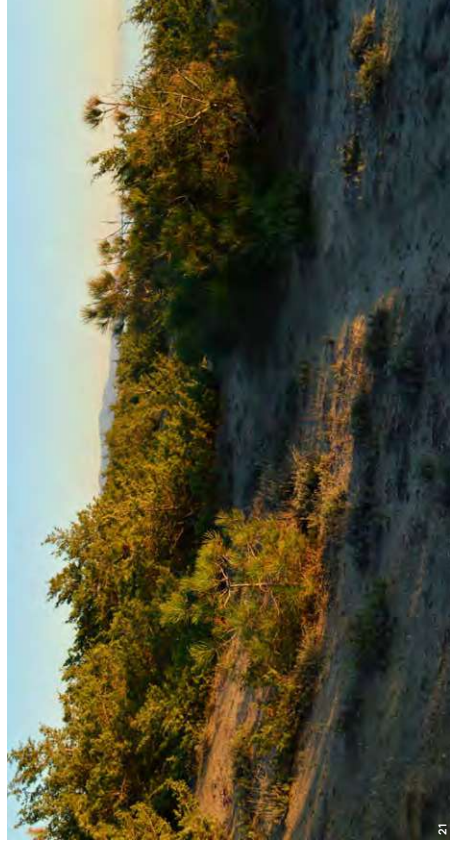
As I walk among the dunes, I can't help but feel the same thrill that my dog, Sole, experiences when she reaches the sandy hills. A shepherd by nature, she instinctively seeks the highest vantage point, her keen eyes scanning the horizon, observing everything below with meticulous care—she absolutely loves being up there.

I understand her completely. As I move through the dunes, stepping carefully around the delicate vegetation, I feel like an explorer on the verge of discovering fragile, untouched lands—places that call for reverence, not conquest. The intricate patterns in the sand seem to beckon, inviting me to tread lightly, to walk with reverence.

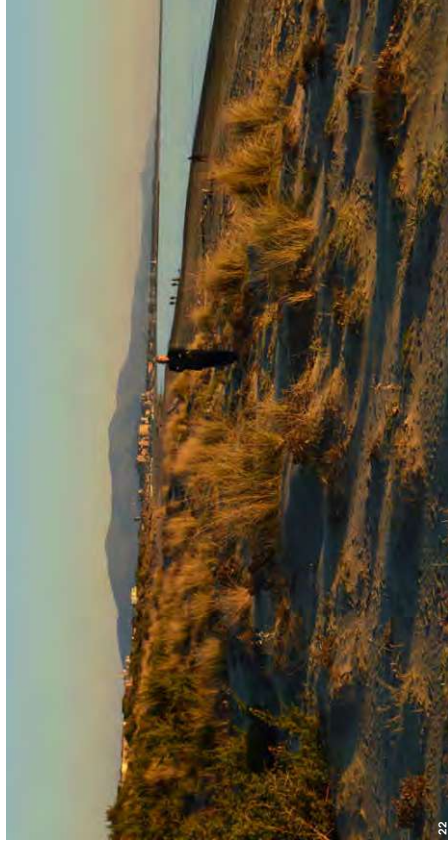
18 Dune at sunset, Marina di Grosseto.
19 Sole on the dune, Marina di Grosseto.



20



21



22

23 Dune at sunset, Marina di Grosseto.
20:22 Climbing a dune, Marina di Grosseto.



23

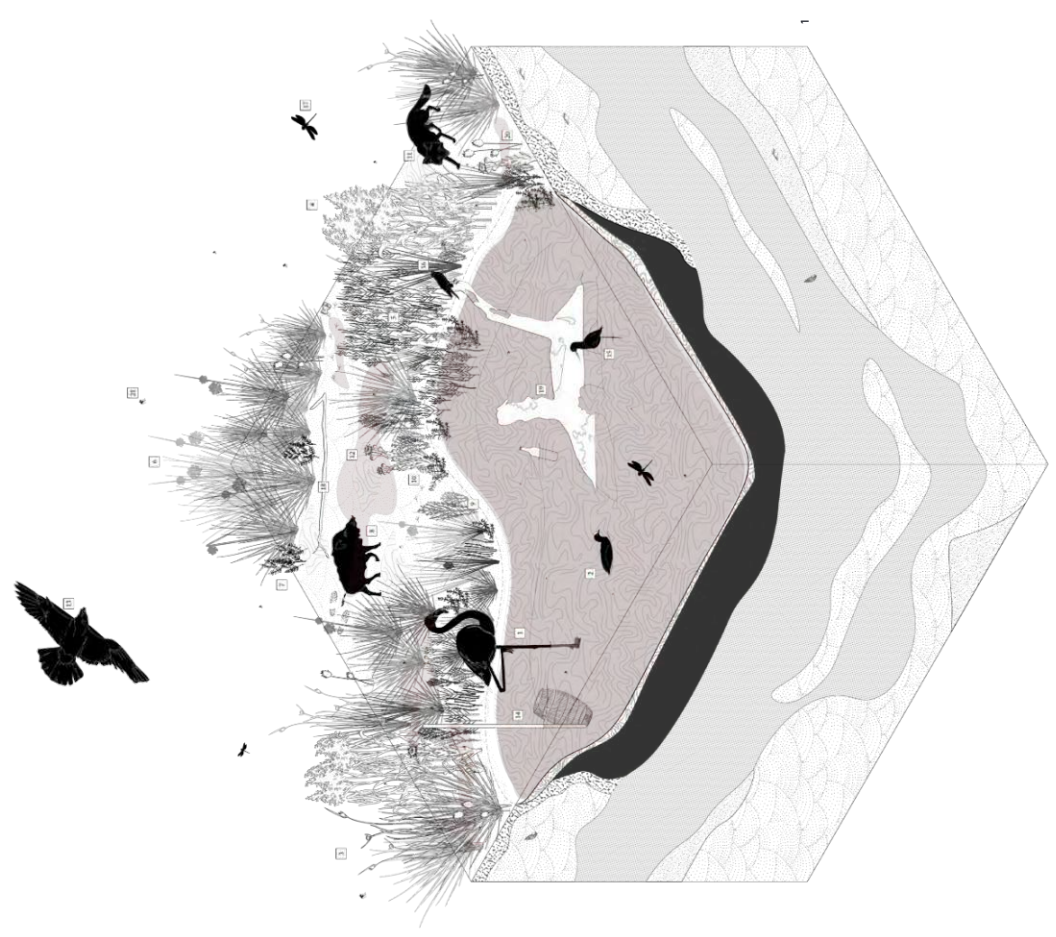
III **MARSHES**
The Gut

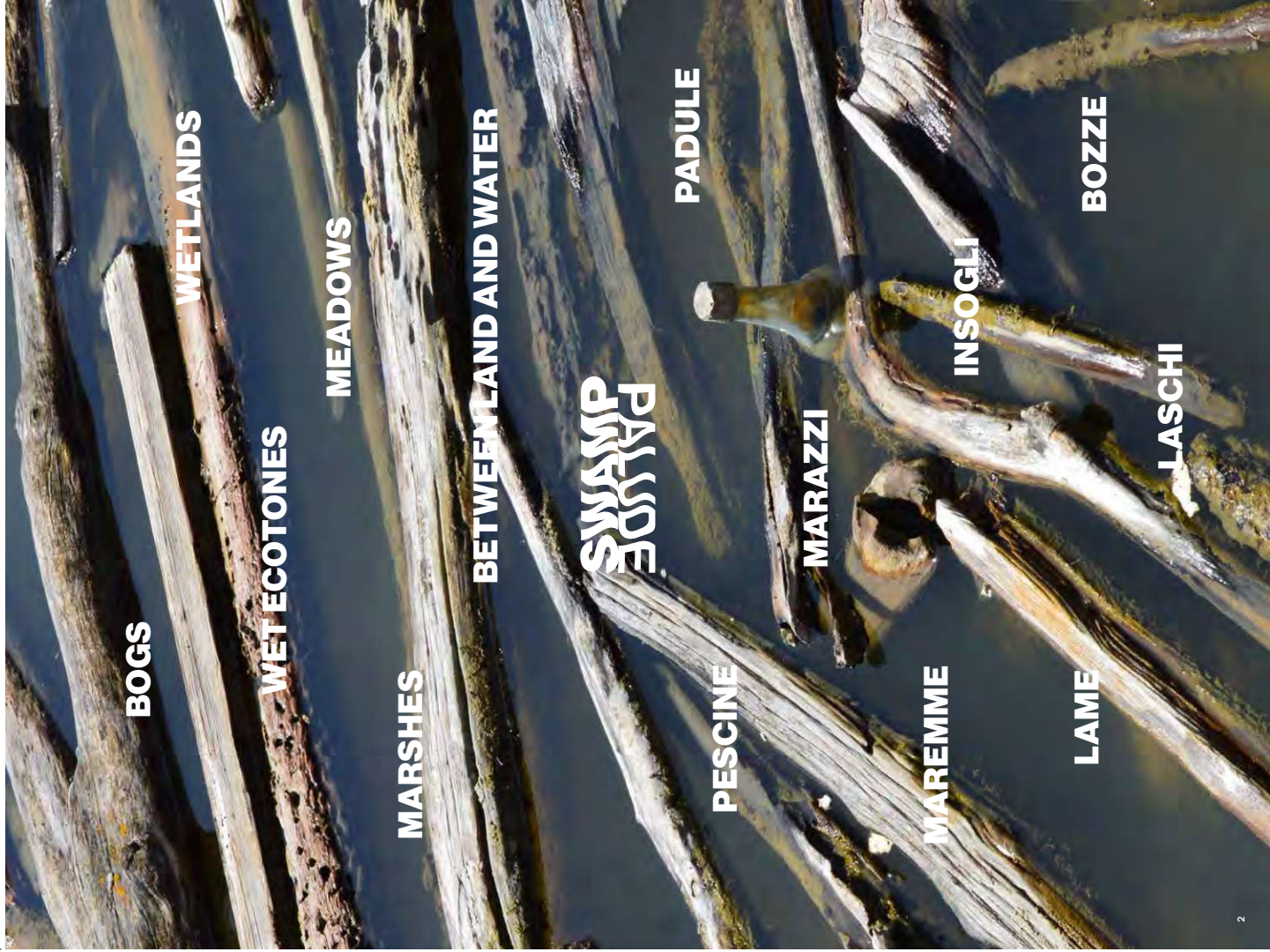


"Hope and the future for me
are not in lawns and culti-
vated fields, not in towns
and cities, but in the imper-
vious and quaking swamps"

— Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, 1854

- | | |
|---|---|
|  | 1
<i>Phoenicopterus</i> |
|  | 2
<i>Fulica atra</i> |
|  | 3
<i>Scoenus nigricans</i> |
|  | 4
<i>Phragmites australis</i> |
|  | 5
<i>Salicornia perennis</i> (Salicornietum) |
|  | 6
<i>Juncus acutus</i> |
|  | 7
<i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i> |
| | 8
<i>Sus scrofa</i> |
| | 9
<i>Artemisia caerulescens</i> |
| | 10
<i>Halimione portulacoides</i> |
| | 11
<i>Vulpes vulpes</i> |
| | 12
<i>Limbarda crithmoides</i> |
| | 13
<i>Circus aeruginosus</i> |
| | 14
swamp fish trap |
| | 15
<i>Himantopus himantopus</i> |
| | 16
<i>Circus pygargus</i> |
| | 17
<i>Libellula</i> |
| | 18
Butter's hook |
| | 19
decaying vegetation (tannin) |
| | 20
<i>Lagurus ovatus</i> |
| | 21
<i>Culicidae</i> |





distant from the rhythms of daily life. The last regional refuges endure in the **Sterpaia Park** (est.1993), in the **193 hectares** of the **WWF Orti Bottagone** oasis, in the northern reaches of the **Maremma Regional Park** (est. 1975) covering a total of **700 hectares**, and finally in the **Diaccia Botrona Nature Reserve** (est. 1996) near Castiglione della Pescaia, already recognized in 1971 as area of international importance by the Ramsar Convention. There, **1,273 hectares** of wetlands still hold onto their ancient nature, hosting a huge variety of species that depend on such ecosystems for their survival.

When we speak of wetlands—of bogs, marshes, and swamps—we invoke a myriad of in-between worlds, **liminal ecosystems** born from the shifting embrace of land and water. These fluid landscapes, similar yet profoundly diverse, arise from the delicate balance of water entrapment—some shaped by the rhythmic pull of the tides, others nourished by the gift of rain and floodwaters.

Once, Maremma's coastal marshlands stretched vast and unbroken, shaping both the land and the people who made it their home.

But the region's morphology has been unraveled, deconstructed by centuries of land reclamation efforts. What was once a defining presence has been reduced to fragmented remnants, confined within the protective boundaries of **nature reserves**.

Today, the surviving marshlands of Maremma persist only in safeguarded pockets of the floodplain, ghostly echoes of what once was. Their seclusion points to a severed connection—where once they stood at the heart of local contercultural identities, they now remain peripheral,

2
flooded prairie, driftwood and glass bottle, Maremma Regional Park.

its distinctive sulfuric stench.

Other elements weave into this alchemical composition as well: **tannins**, leached from decaying vegetation; **carbon** (C), **sodium** (Na), and **chlorine** (Cl) carried in by the sea; **nitrogen** (N) and **phosphorus** (P), fueling algal blooms.

To step into a marsh-land is to step into a **visceral space**—an intimate encounter with the raw mechanics of life and death. The air is thick with pungent scents, the water dark with rot, the flora in constant surrender to decay. It is a place both unsettling and mesmerizing, where the body reacts before the mind can make sense of the unease. Yet, in its slow churn of decomposition and renewal, the marsh reminds us that transformation is not only inevitable—it is essential.

Marshes rival rainforests in biodiversity. They sequester vast amounts of carbon, filter water, and stabilize ecosystems, acting as both **reservoirs** and **regulators**—absorbing nutrients and breaking down toxins. Not only they host a huge variety of species that would otherwise not survive; in function and microbiology, they resemble the gut, a metabolic system that digests, decomposes, and purifies, enriching the soil that surrounds it. Their health is not just crucial for biological activity but for the survival of all adjacent habitats.

These are anaerobic landscapes, where water suppresses oxygen, slowing decay to a near-suspended state. The **iron** (Fe) and **sulfur** (S) present in the water undergo both **oxidation** (in oxygen-rich surface layers) and **reduction** (in the oxygen-starved depths), painting the marsh in hues of rust and bronze while releasing



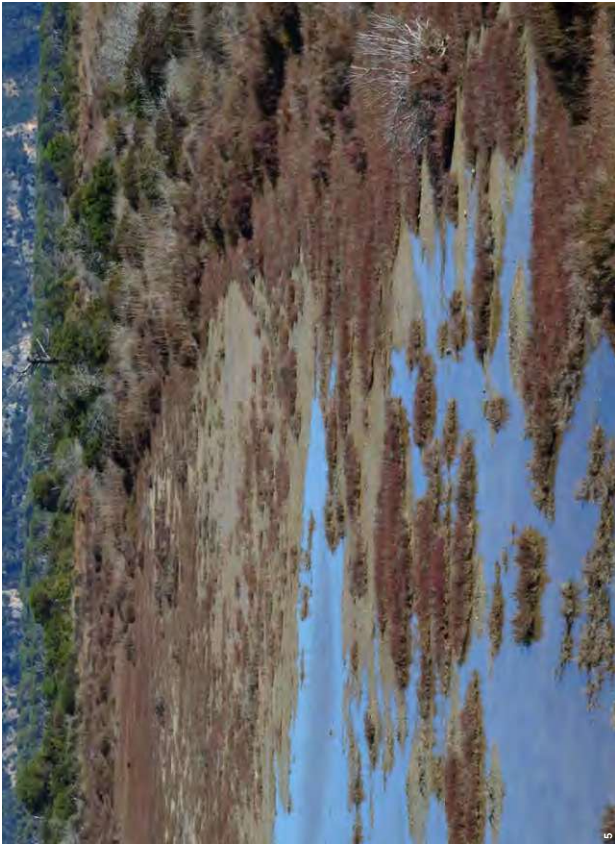
"In alcune parti l'acqua è salmastra e ristagna al di sotto del livello del mare, in altre fluisce lenta, piena di tartaro, da letti di travertino. Ai piedi delle colline si trovano una moltitudine di sorgenti calde che formano stagni, chiamati lagoni. Alcuni sembrano produrre borato di sodio: le fumache emettono zolfo; i bulicami, bollono eruttando gas mefitici. L'aria sovrastante non è altro che un ammasso di vapori che talora ondeggia ma di rado scompare. Essa deriva dalla corruzione di una vegetazione lussureggiante, malcolente, in via di putrefazione, dagli innumerevoli insetti, dai rettili e dai pesci sia vivi che morti.

L'intera natura fa in modo di tener lontano gli uomini da questa regione fatale; eppure l'uomo è capace di assuefarsi al proprio veleno, se ben dosato.."

"In some parts, the water is brackish and lies lower than the sea: in others, it oozes full of tartar from beds of travertine. At the bottom or on the sides of hills are a multitude of hot springs which form form pools, called lagoni. A few of these are said to produce borax: some, which are called fumache, exhale sulphur; others, called bulicami, boil with a mephitic gas. The very air above is only a pool of vapours which sometimes undulate, but which never flow off. It draws corruption from a rank, unshorn, rotting vegetation, from innumerable insects, from living and dead reptiles and fish.

All nature conspires to drive man away from this fatal region ; **but man will ever return to his bane, if it be well baited."**

— Joseph Fourier
in *Remarks on Antiquities, Arts and other objects
Excursion Italy in the Years 1822 & 1823*



4 Old saltworks, Maremma Regional Park
5 Bogs and scrubland, Maremma Regional Park



6 Brackish marsh water detail, Mieris van Regional Park.

ments embodies the uncanny and ambivalent qualities of nature that Western thought has long rejected in favor of an anthropocentric vision of a profitable, obedient world. With their cyclical and visceral nature, swamps challenge the modern human wish to be "other" than nature, forcing to recognize the narrowness of the modern modes that stand in contrast to the extended natural rhythms, the inevitable decay, and the cyclical renewal.

This sobering reflection finds expression in Giacomo Leopardi's concept of **natura matrigna**, "step-mother nature"—a nature that seems distant, even cruel, indifferent to the human attempts of domestication and control over landscapes. The realization of helplessness can produce a deep-seated disgust for decay and mortality, turning the swamp into a **monstrum**, a physical manifestation of the earthly limitations that Modernity seem to dismiss. But perhaps, once one learns to forgive and accept a planet that thrives way beyond human control, it is possible to reconnect with the natural world and embrace notions of humility, coexistence, and acceptance. Wetlands reveal the cyclical nature of the world's and humans' mortal existence, showing how life gives way to death, and how death, in turn, nurtures life: swamps appear monstrous only when one insists on separation.

We and swamps are more alike than one wants to recognize: both made from the same humus, the same pulsing filth that breathes, decays, and transforms. As Donna Haraway writes, "We are humus, not Homo, not Anthropos; we are compost, not posthuman." Recognizing this truth is not a surrender—it is an invitation to belong.

In ancient Greece, swamps represented the gates of Hell. In Egypt, the swamp was instead the symbol of fertility, the womb where all life begins.

The eerie silence, the acrid smell of putrefaction, the perception of an ancient presence—ungraspable, worthy of respect, yet also threatening. And then the water, so much water, but opposite in manifestation to the throbbing sea waves: still, stagnant, an almost solid matter concealing secrets and filth beneath creaseless, mirroring surfaces.

The concept of the swamp is **culturally ambiguous**: it embodies the cruel nature of life, where rotting and decaying flesh sinks back into the earth, punished, absorbed, reborn. In most Western languages, the word "swamp" carries symbolic and moral connotations of unwholeness, stagnation, and lack of opportunity. Swampy landscapes defy order, remaining amorphous and shifting, refusing the human impulse for structure and control.

Whenever territories and natural constellations resist domestication or evade frameworks of opportunism, the humans' modern frameworks that separate culture and nature become fragile, unstable, untrustworthy. This realization acts as a painful reminder while fueling the desire of many modern societies to erase the "disobedient" variables in favor of more "tamed" landscapes, i.e. natural spaces that can be controlled and exploited. The character of swampy environment

WE, (&) THE SWAMP

AKA nature versus culture*

*When I refer to culture as opposite to nature I allude to rather recent Western scholarship, which has been using the date of modernity starting from the Industrialization.

As Philippe Descola writes:
"The opposition between nature and culture is not as simple as it seems. Not only is it not as clear as it seems, but it makes no sense to anyone except the Moderns, but moreover it appeared only at a late date in the course of the development of Western thought itself."
(*Being and Nature and Culture*, p. XX).

*"C'è qualcosa che non esplode mai
E tu in piedi senza sonno
Mi vedi*

*La palude che ti circonda
Oggi il vento urla più forte
Lo senti, lo senti, lo senti?"*

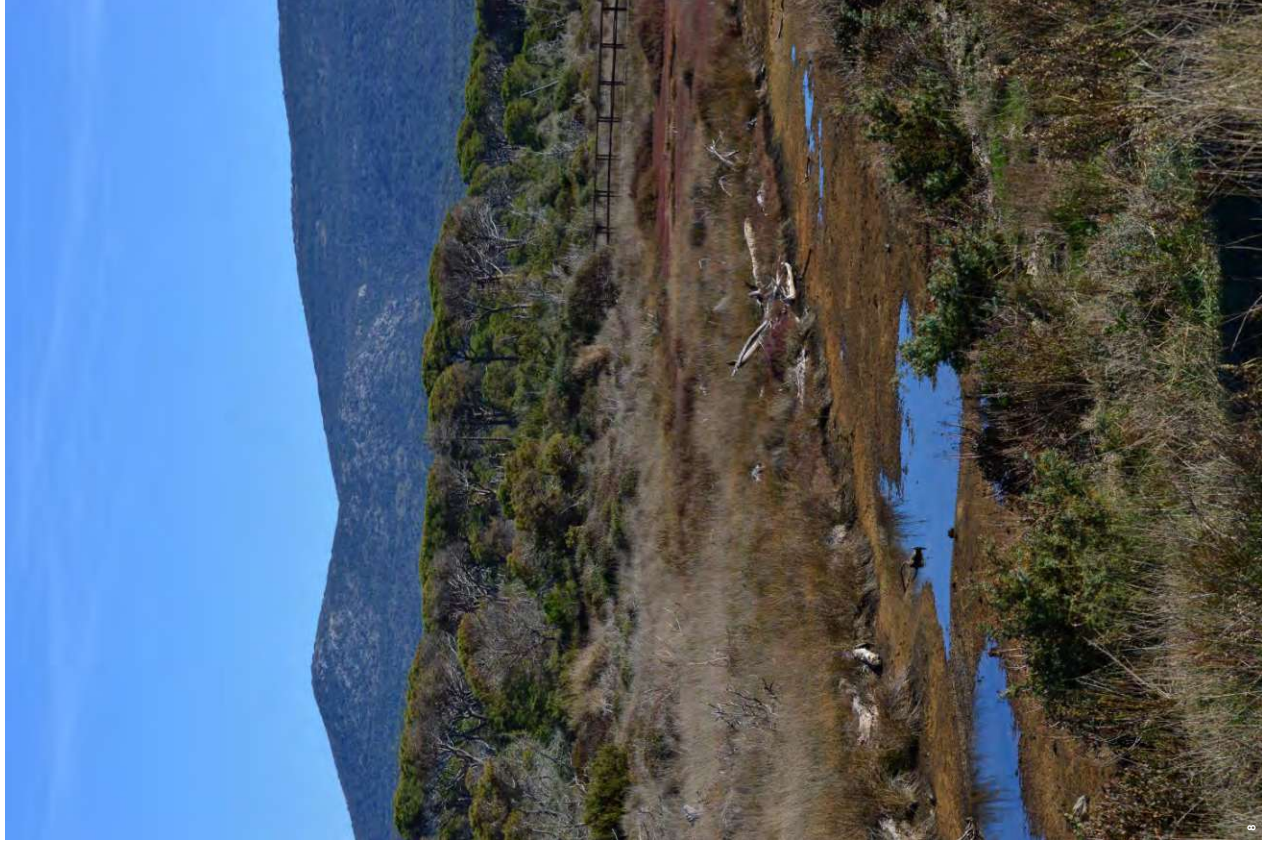
"There's something that never
explodes
And you, standing sleepless
You see me

The swamp will surround you,
Today the wind screams louder,
Can you feel it, feel it, feel it?"

— Margini/2022



7



8

7 "Margin", set photo, 2022
8 Bogs, scrubland, Ucoallina Hills, Mawemna Regional Park.

The true culprit of malarial infection was finally unmasked in 1889 when Charles-Louis Alphonse Laveran identified a protozoan of the Plasmodium family. Nine years later, Giovanni Battista Grassi pinpointed the **Anopheles Maculipennis** mosquito as the disease's vector.

Yet the irony was bitter: the eggs of these mosquitoes were not found in thriving, healthy brackish swamps but rather in flooded freshwater pools, shaded and stagnant—troughs, irrigation ditches, drainage channels (Pastorelli). It was not the brackish marshes that had betrayed them, but their own interventions; the battle was never against the swamp, but against the shortsightedness of modernity.

The **"faceless plague"** now had a name, but the battle was far from over. It took the Second World War, when the Americans brought freedom and DDT from overseas. The land was drained, the fever subsided, but something else lingered: long after the last malarial fever wave broke, the swamp habitat remains cursed in the minds and the stories of those who once dreaded it. Its waters are still whispered about as stagnant, treacherous—though the real sickness had never belonged to the marshes, but rather to the blindness of those who sought to domesticate it.

Swamps and marshes have long carried a terrible reputation in Maremma. For centuries, no distinction was made between brackish marshes formed near the sea and temporary flooded depressions. Malaria had haunted dry seasons since the Middle Ages, and people commonly cursed the fumes of the marshes, the mingling of salt and fresh water, the whims of unfair gods, cruel destinies—never suspecting their own hand in the swamping processes of wetlands, such as through lacking of proper land management.

The first documented reclamation efforts began under Leonardo Ximenes with the construction of the **Casa Rossa** and its floodgates on Lake Prile in 1765. Yet, they were deemed a failure. Decades later, in the 1830s, engineer **Alessandro Manetti** launched a new wave of infrastructural projects—this time with greater success.

Then, during the Fascist regime, swamps and marshes, once silent witnesses to the rise and fall of civilizations, were branded as enemies—dark, untamed forces resisting the farmer's plow and the engineer's will. The marshland, once merely seen with suspicion, was now the enemy of progress—wild, unruly, standing in defiance of order.



Chironia lanceolata



10

DISEASES & BELIEFS



12



9
10
11
12
Jesus's bark.
Original Cytox 50% DDT package
Magazine Mal'aria n. 3, 1962.



29.9‰



31.1‰

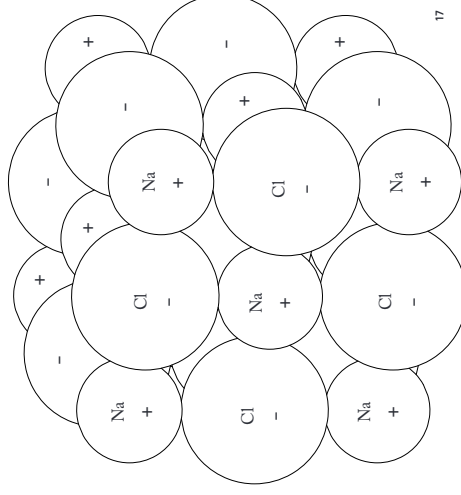


50‰

Salt does not rise; instead, it moves with the water in which it is dissolved. When salty water fills the interdunal depressions, the salt gradually accumulates, intensifying the salinity index, reaching levels far greater than those of seawater. As the heat intensifies, the water evaporates, leaving the salt to crystallize at the bottom, creating a stark, white tapestry on the earth's surface.

These specific conditions—an interplay of heat, water, and salt—transform the now dry, swampy terrain into an ideal space for the formation of salt crystals.

However, it's crucial to acknowledge the dynamic nature of salinity. The levels fluctuate dramatically between the summer months and the wet, winter season. In August, salinity can soar to as high as **50‰**, but during the off-season, it plummets to as low as **15 ‰**, a change driven by rainfall and the reduction in evapotranspiration.



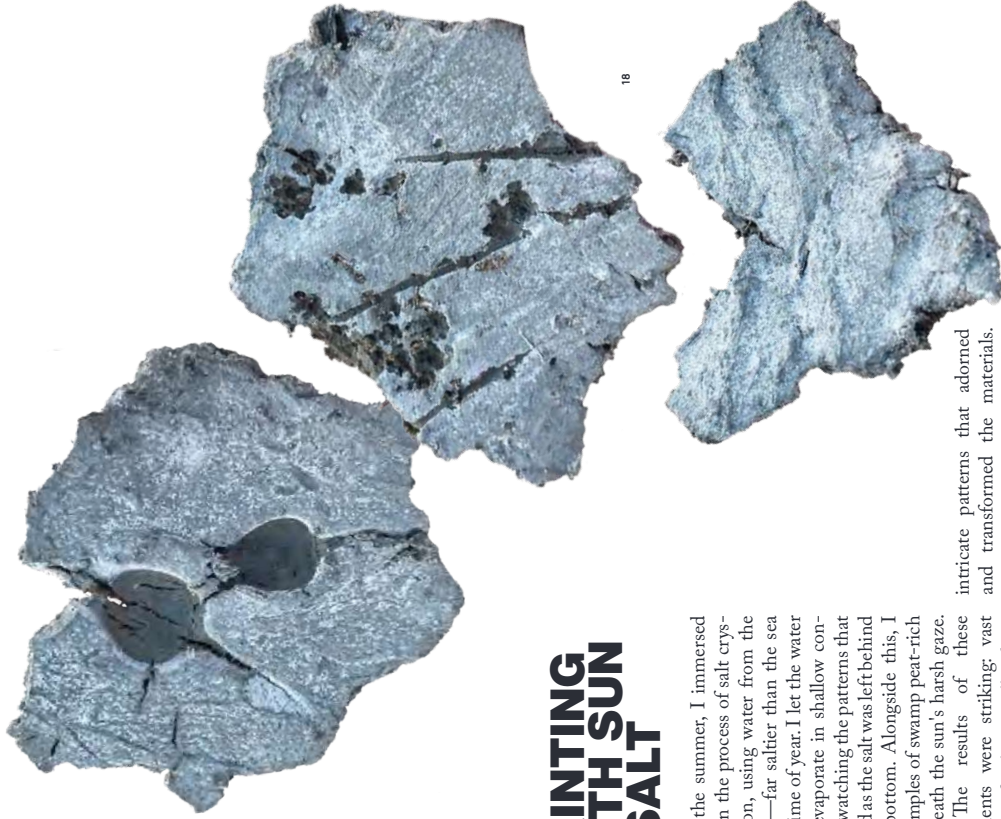
THE SALT OF THE EARTH

13 Detail of salt crystallization on soil
14-16 Different water salinity indices in marshes and bogs, Marenzeller Regional Park.
17 Sodium chloride configuration diagram.

PAINTING WITH SUN & SALT

During the summer, I immersed myself in the process of salt crystallization, using water from the swamps—far saltier than the sea at this time of year. I let the water slowly evaporate in shallow containers, watching the patterns that emerged as the salt was left behind at the bottom. Alongside this, I dried samples of swamp peat-rich soil beneath the sun's harsh gaze.

The results of these experiments were striking: vast amounts of salt crystallized on every surface it touched, forming intricate patterns that adorned and transformed the materials. These crystal formations were not just random; they were like delicate signatures of time, telling a story of moments, of change, and of the relentless passage of time itself—each pattern unique, irreplaceable.



18

18 Sun dried marsh soil
19 Salt crystallization patterns.



19

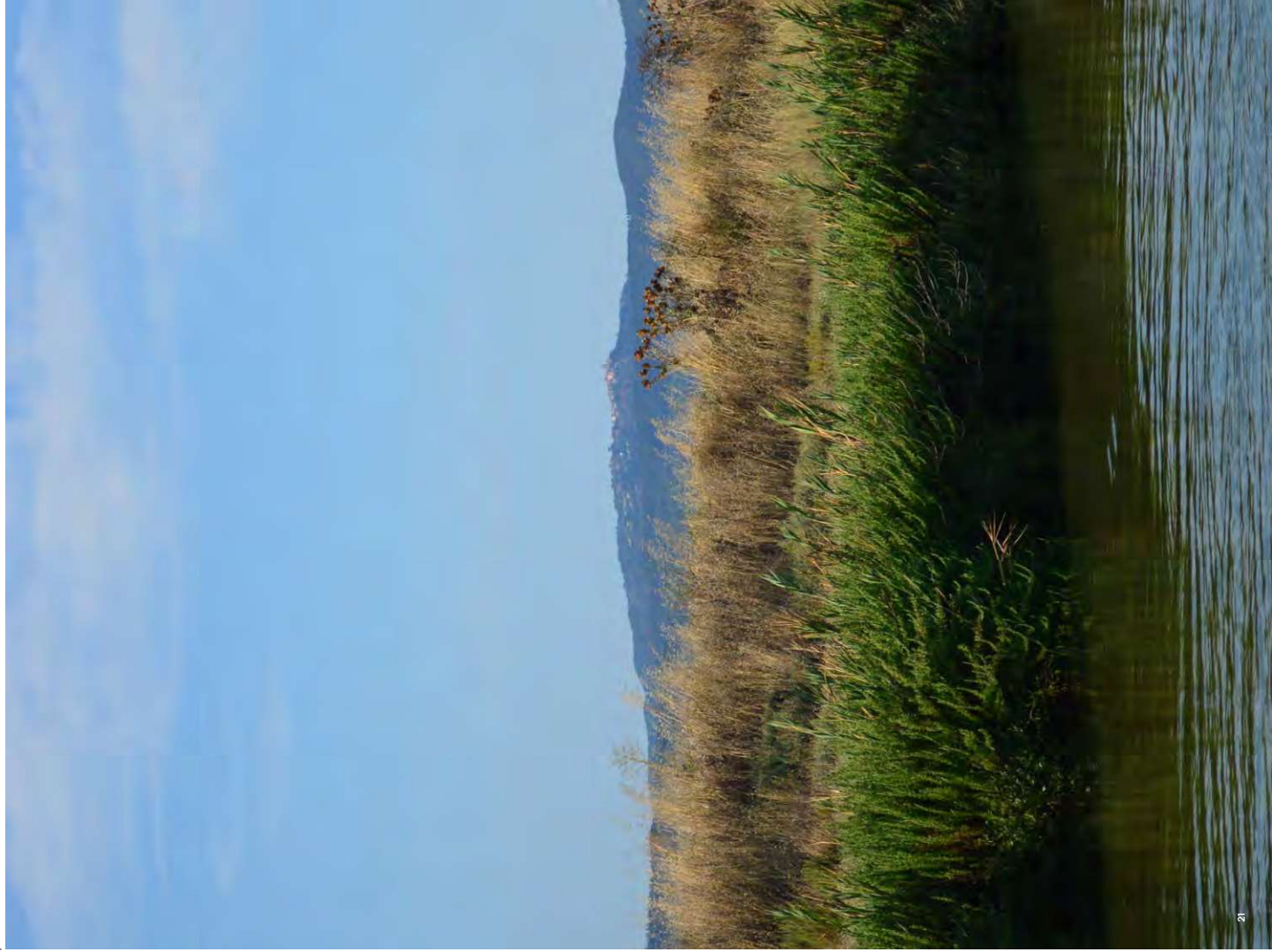
PALUDE VS. PADÙLE

palude (it.): definition of swamp, most often carrying negative connotations — insalubrious, unwholesome, unhealthy, stagnant.

Padùle (local marenman dialect): the space of happenings and interaction, an environment and a *milieu* where multispecies communities live and profit from the swamp.

Padùle is mostly written with a capital letter as it is intended as a proper noun rather than as a territorial description.





CACCIATORI DI PADULE

Swamp hunters

"Four in the morning: the cold is paralyzing, the Main Channel is a sheet of ice, the darkness is deep, and all around is silent, as if wrapped in a spiral of stillness"(Pieraccini).

Above all, there was a dense sense of waiting, then suddenly, a shot—two. They were hunting waterfowl: mallards, moorhens, coots. The rhythm of such life unfolded slowly, almost timelessly.



hole, their fate was sealed: they would never find their way out.

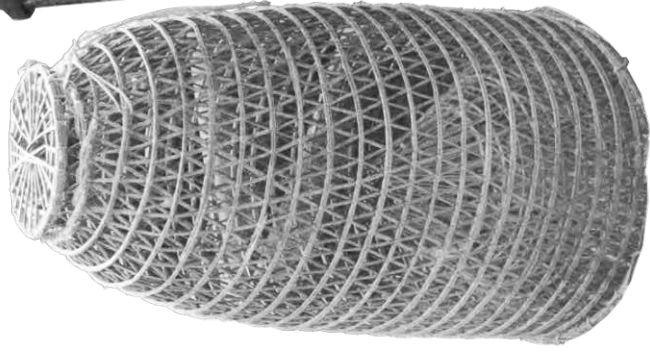
Typically, these traps were anchored in the swift currents of the marsh, secured to a stick or cane driven deep into the mud.

The old swamp fish traps are veritable works of art—objects of striking elegance, their sinuous lines and meticulous craftsmanship born from the careful weaving of reeds. These traps were shaped according to the environment in which they were placed and the specific type of catch they were designed to capture.

Inside, the traps held deadly snares for the unfortunate fish—primarily eels, grey mullets, and pikes. Once they slipped through the top

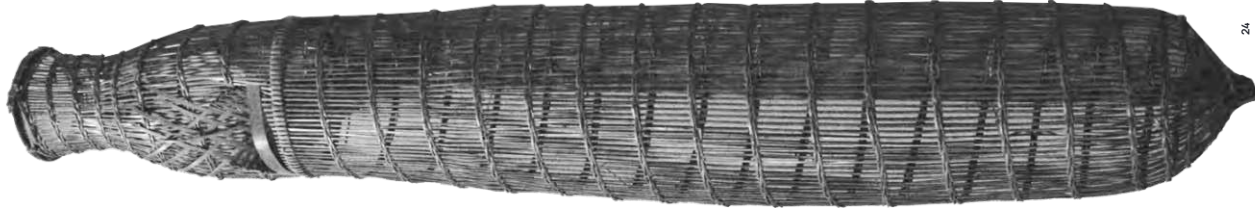
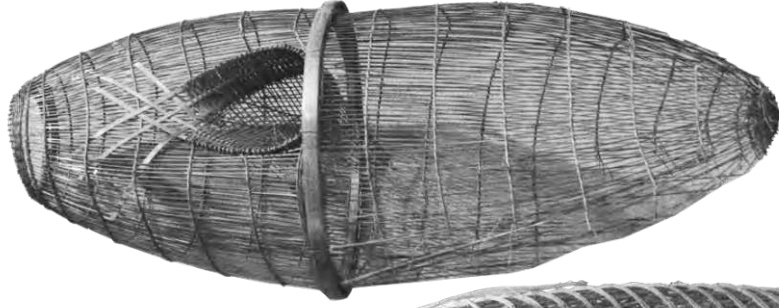
NASSE PADULANE

marshes fish traps



MARSHES

130



24

25
24
Traditional fish traps for lagoon and swamp fishing.
"La Casa Poesa", "The Red House" Museum building.



25

“... Il padule... droga... droga... il padule è senza tempo... è un mondo senza tempo, è un mondo... la cosa più importante era il silenzio... per me... per me la cosa più bella del padule è il momento in cui al tramonto...per una frazione di tempo cortissima che intercorre tra il tramonto e la notte... saranno cinque minuti... quattro cinque minuti che avviene il silenzio!
Lei le sente cantare allora tutti l'ucelli mè mè brè tub... l'insetti, eh... in quel mentre pub! Si spegne la luce come se 'un ci fosse più nessuno...”

“... The padule drugs you... yes, it drugs you...the padule is timeless... it is a world without time, a world... the most important thing was the silence...for me... for me the most beautiful thing about the padule is that moment at sunset when...for a fleeting instant between sunset and night... it might last five minutes... four, five minutes where silence descends!

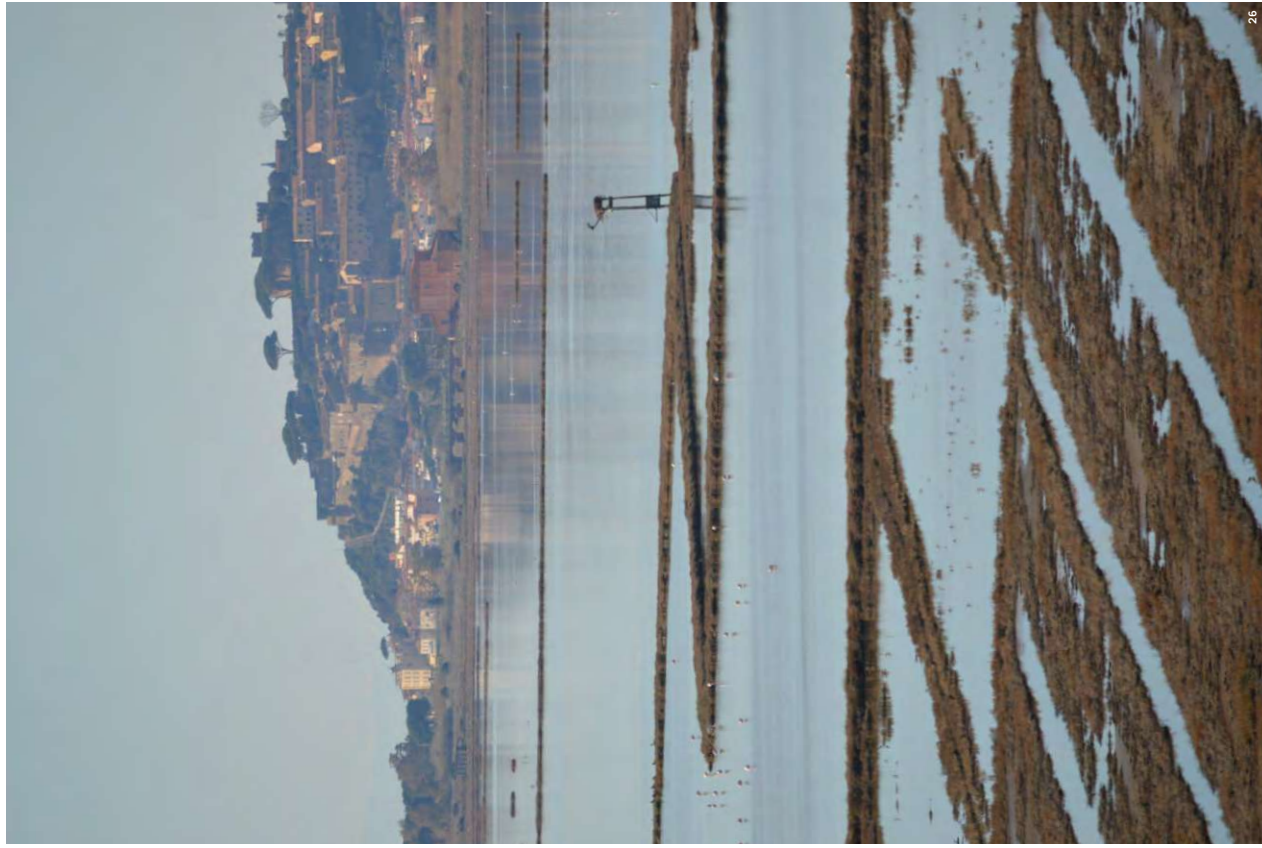
She first hears them all sing the birds: *mè mè brè tub*...the insects...and right in that moment, *pub!* The light goes off, as if no one were there anymore...”

—author unknown,
from *L'invenzione della Meremina*, 2001



Castiglione della Pescaia

(Roman name: *Salêbrone*) is a village located near the outlet of the Bruna River. Despite its coastal location, which might suggest a maritime identity, Castiglione actually extends towards the lagoon. The town's layout clearly faces north, towards the ancient **Lake Prilius** (the current Diaccia Botrona), while its seaside is enclosed and protected by fortifications.



26 Diaccia Botrona' marshes and Castiglione della Pescaia burg



27

26-31 Local earthenware findings.
27 My hands after a swamp clay sampling.

The Grosseto floodplain is largely composed of silts and clays, which can mainly be found in the southern part of the Ombrone River basin, where the wetlands and the river's "paleo-deltas" are located. This material, with its warm grayish tones when raw, turns to vibrant shades of orange and red during firing. This color change occurs because of its **high iron content** (ferrous iron, Fe²⁺), which oxidizes during firing, turning into ferric iron (Fe³⁺). The use of clay and ceramics production has been widely documented in these areas: in addition to a vast array of findings, from Roman shards to medieval fragments, there are still the remains of many furnaces once operated by the so-called "**Matterai**", or brickmakers. Alone within the Maremma Regional Park, many furnace remains can be found (near the helipad, in *Spegolatta*, and in *Lasco*).

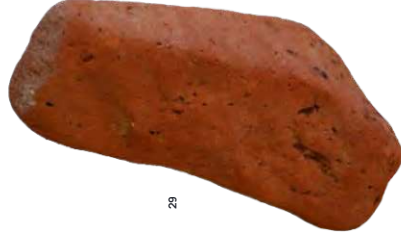
KILNS, BRICKS & CROCKS

clay usage in Maremma

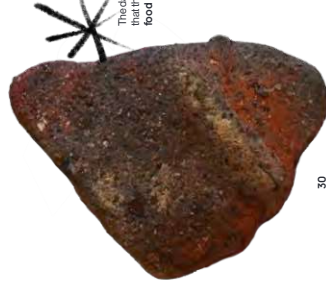


Quartz crystals were often mixed with clay in ceramics to make them more flexible and resistant to thermal shock.

28



29



The dark color indicates that this shard was used in food cooking.

30



31

135

MARSHES

PADÙLE CLAY



The sample shows a rusty orange, indicating a probable higher concentration of iron oxides and silicates. The composition is rich in dihydrate probably Calcium Sulfate Dihydrate (gypsum).



32 Integral reserve, Marzema Regional Park.
33 Clay soil sample, wet.
34 Clay soil sample, air dried.
35 Clay soil sample, burnt (900°C).

ONE DEGREE OF SEPARATION



The sample presents with very distinct streaks of colors ranging from intense orange, where iron oxides are present in large quantities, to dark brown, where the presence of the components of the compound, or the possible presence of Calcium Sulfate Dihydrate (gypsum). No calcium carbonate was detected through testing.

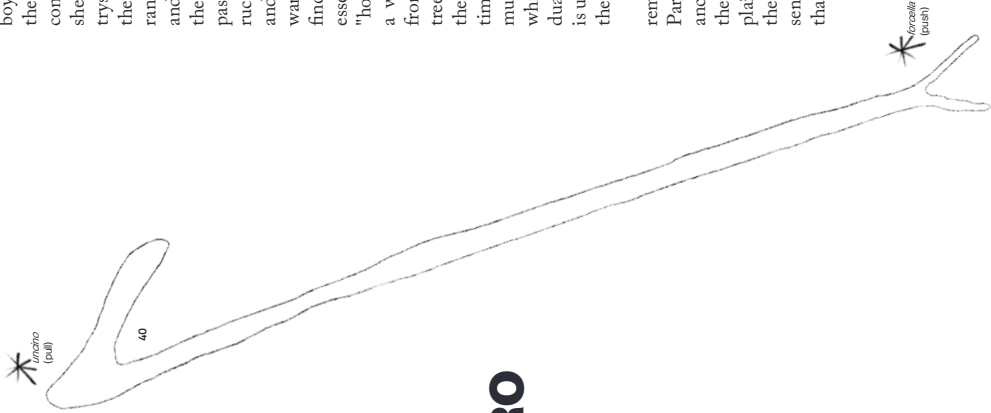


36 "Diaccia Botronar" marshes, Castiglione della Pescaia.
37 Clay soil sample, wet.
38 Clay soil sample, air dried.
39 Clay soil sample, burnt (900°C).

local lat. **butoros**
oxen herder

The *buttero* is a part of Maremma's soul, a figure woven from both history and myth. This local cowboy has long been the steward of the land, its wild figure in stark contrast to the quieter, pastoral shepherd typical of Italy's countryside. Mounted on horseback, they are the keepers of the free-range cattle of Maremma cows and oxen that guide them through the flooded meadows, into the pastures bordered by spiny maruca plants [*Palurus spina-christi*] and towards the “*valle calda*,” the warm valley, where the cattle can find refuge during winter. Their essential tool, the **uncino**—the “hook”—is a trusted companion: a wooden staff, carefully chosen from **cornel**, **mastic**, or **olive** trees, must stand as tall as to reach their forehead; such cane, sometimes called the “third hand,” must be straightened over fire while still green. Its shape serves a dual purpose: the hook at the top is used for pulling, and the fork at the bottom is for pushing gates.

Today, only four **butteri** remain in the Maremma Regional Park, preserving the flame of an ancient and proud heritage. As they ride the vast, open floodplain, they keep alive the spirit of the legends, carrying with them a sense of nostalgia for a way of life that is rapidly disappearing.



uncino
(pole)

40

forcella
(bush)

IL BUTTERO

the Maremma cowboy



40 Traditional 'uncino', buttero tool
41 Buttero and maremman cow livestock, collage.

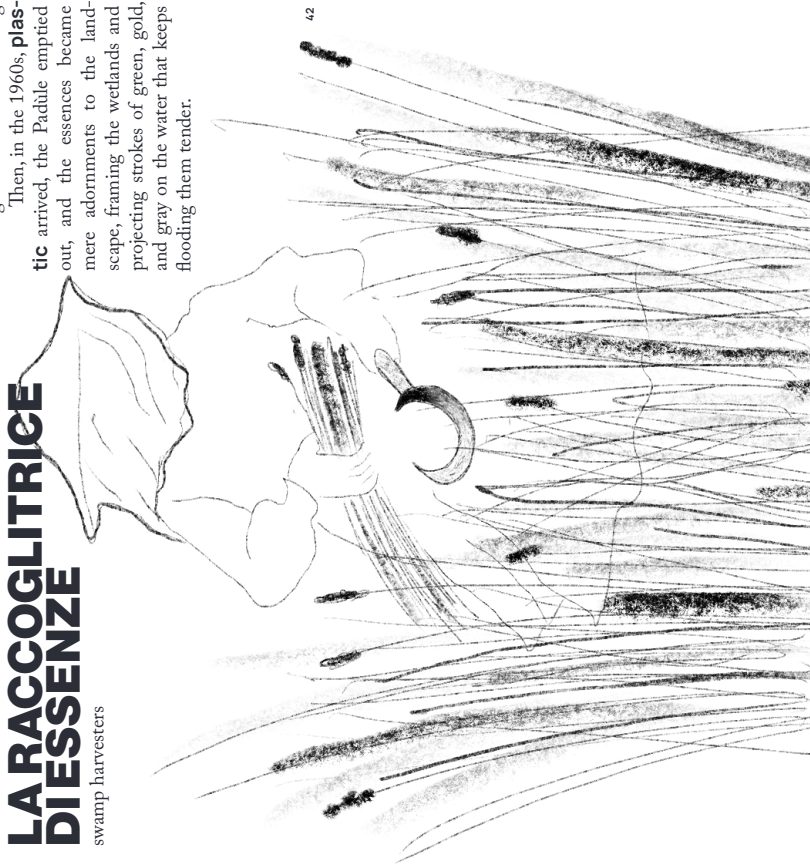
Gathering swamp plant essences was mostly a task for women.

In the summer, plants were harvested based on the salinity and the humidity of the surrounding environment, on the "sex" of each plant—a categorization based on the knowledge and experience of the gatherers in the marshland rather than on universal scientific concepts—and on the specific use they were sold for. Using a **falcina**, a sickle, the **scarzòlo** (m.) [*Carex pendula*] was cut for chair weaving, the **biodolo** (f.) [*Typha latifolia*] for mat-making, the **cannuccia** (f.) [*Phragmites communis*] for baskets and fish traps, the **salicchio** (m.) [*Carex elata*] for chair seats, the **giunco** (m.) [*Juncus acutus* & *Juncus maritimus*] for baskets, panniers, and bindings, and **paglia** (f.) [*Cladium mariscus*] for roof coverings and straw for bottling.

Then, in the 1960s, **plastic** arrived, the Padule emptied out, and the essences became mere adornments to the landscape, framing the wetlands and projecting strokes of green, gold, and gray on the water that keeps flooding them tender.

LA RACCOGLITRICE DIESSENZE

swamp harvesters



42 Swamp harvester, line-work illustration.
43 Chiarolungo marsh, Merano Regional Park.





44

Artemisia caerulescens
ARTEMISIA

vermouth, absinthum
(distillation)
digestive properties



The flooded coastal prairies and saltmarsh formations of Maremma are characterized by high salt indices that fluctuate seasonally. These environments are home to a wealth of **halophyte plants** — from the ancient Greek ἅλας (halas) meaning 'salt' and φυτόν (phyton) meaning 'plant' — that thrive in harsh, low-water, high-salinity conditions. Their bold taste makes them excellent for culinary preparations, while for some, the mineral composition is utilized in salt production and glass manufacturing techniques (in the form of **soda-rich ashes**).



46

Halimione portulacoides
PORTULACA DIMARE

greensalt (dried & grinded)
salads (raw)



Salicornia perennis
SALICORNIA

relish (pickled or fermented)
greensalt (dried & grinded)
salads (raw)



47

Salsola kali
SALSOLA

salt (dried & grinded)
glass (ash)



45

AN ACRE BANQUET

MARSHES

142

Limbarda crithmoides
ENULA MARINA

relish (pickled or fermented)
greensalt (dried & grinded)
salads (raw)



48

143

MARSHES



49

winter



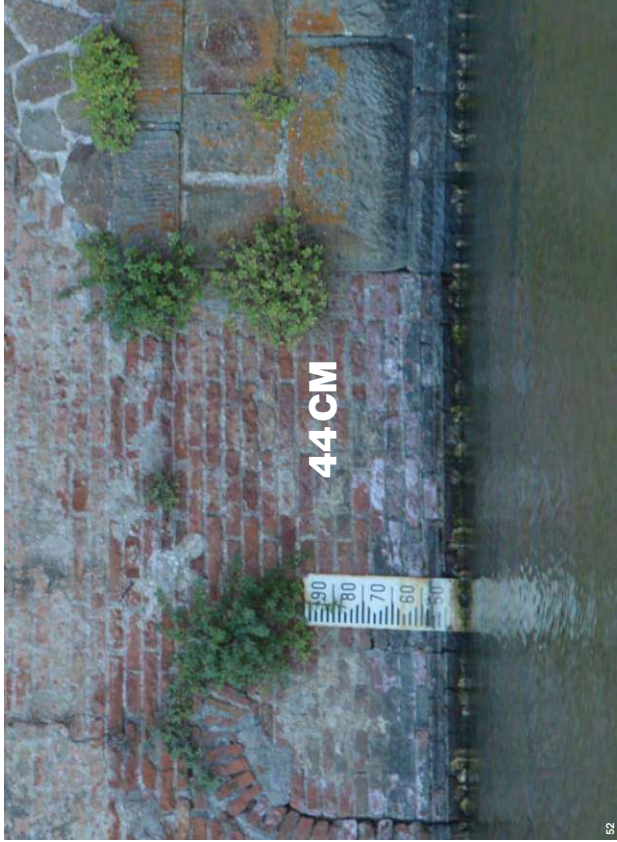
51

summer



50

52 CM



52

44 CM

49 "Diaccia Botrona" marshes and Castiglione della Pescaia.
Marsh water level detail, Casa Rossa, Diaccia Botrona.

51 "Diaccia Botrona" marshes and Castiglione della Pescaia.
Marsh water level detail, Casa Rossa, Diaccia Botrona.

IV SCRUBLAND & PINETA

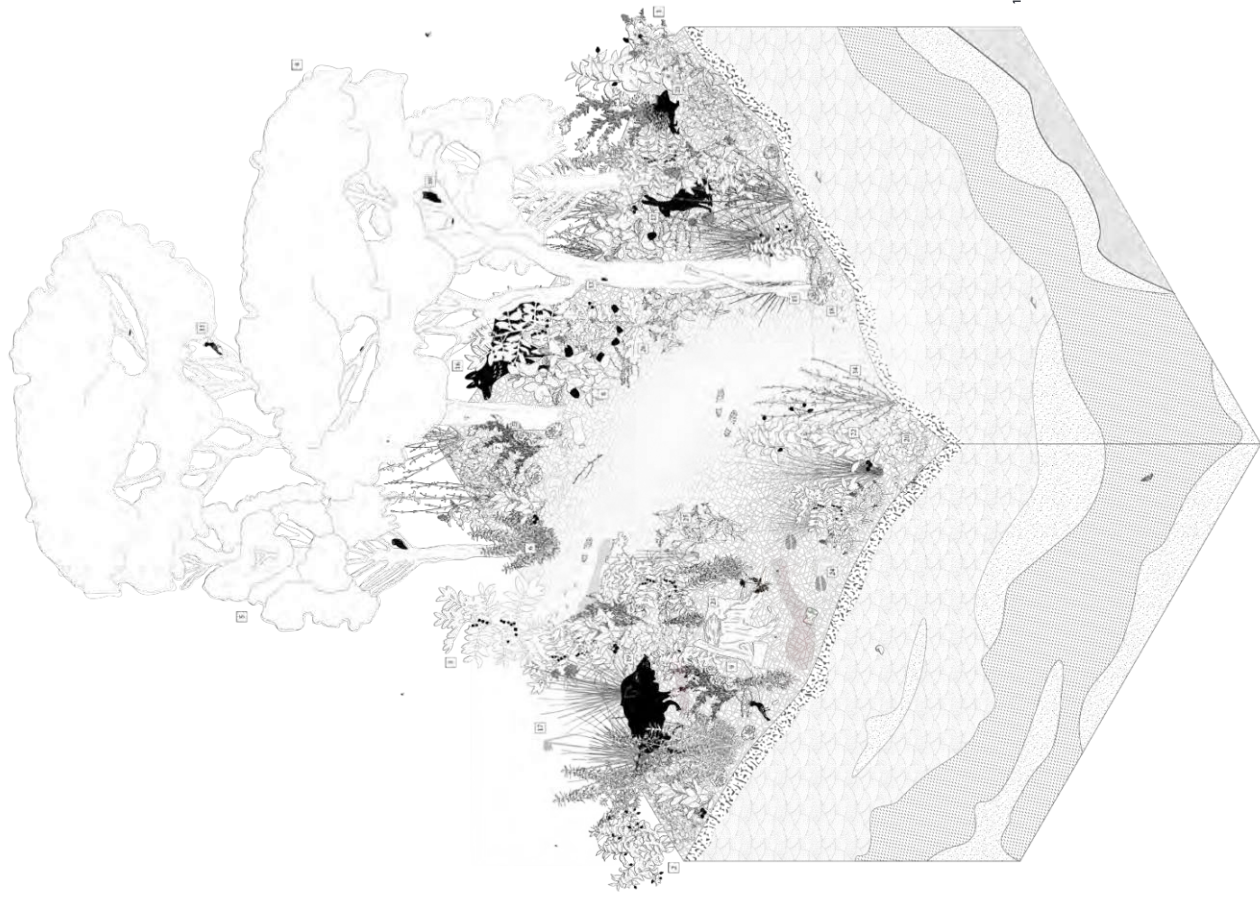
Silva

0 "La macchina", cyanotype print

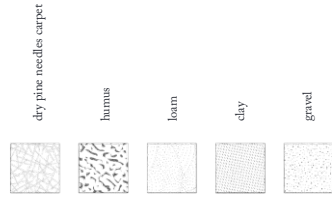
"Boschi abbandonati e per-
ciò sopravvisuti: vergini, si
aprono, ci abbracciano..."

— Lucio Battisti, *Il mio canto libero*, 1972

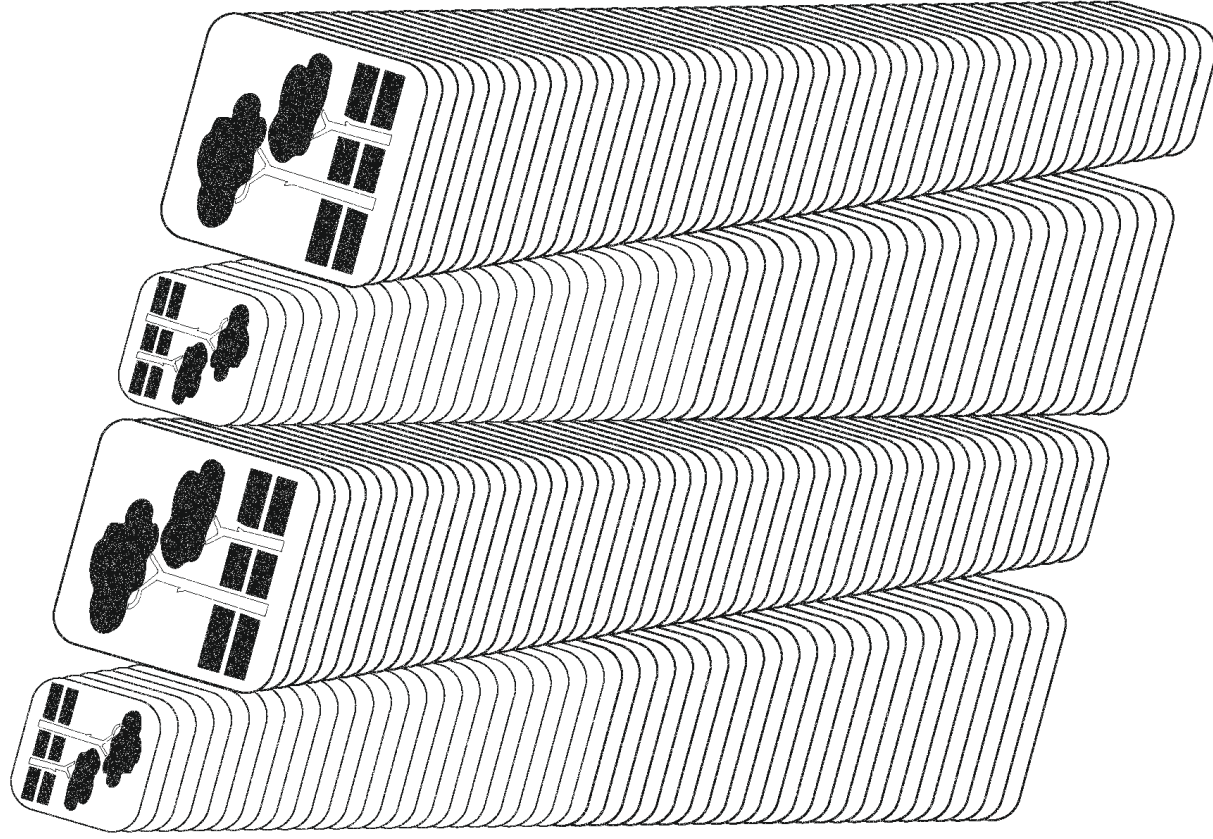
0



- 1 *Ligustrum vulgare*
- 2 *Myrtus communis*
- 3 *Pistacia lentiscus*
- 4 *Pinus pinea*
- 5 *Pinus pinaster*
- 6 *Rosmarinus officinalis*
- 7 *Erica multiflora*
- 8 *Quercus suber*
- 9 Coaler's axe
- 10 *Otus scops*
- 11 *Upupa epops*
- 12 *Lepus europaeus*
- 13 *Citadidae* (exoskeleton)
- 14 *Spartium juncum*
- 15 Bandit's blunderbuss
- 16 *Canis lupus*
- 17 *Juncus acutus*
- 18 Cones & nuts (*Pinus pinea*)
- 19 *Sus scrofa*
- 20 *Bryophyta*
- 21 *Hystrix cristata*
- 22 *Arbutus unedo*
- 23 dried/rotten pine trunk stump
- 24 Maremma cow's prints
- 25 *Smilax aspera*
- 26 *Quercus robur*



SEMIOTICS OF A COASTAL IDENTITY



space filled with **sentimental resonance** and **identity-shaping** qualities.

Perceived as wild yet accessible, mysterious yet understandable, it presents a portrait of a untamed-but-tamed nature. Its origins, however, are far removed from the wildness that wishfully typify it. The coastal pineta is, in fact, a human intervention. Yet its symbolic power, coupled with the longevity of its presence on the territory, has woven it into the fabric of the **emotional and symbolic landscape** for at least the past five centuries. It has become a permanent fixture for the community—a shared roof under which both sorrows and triumphs have unfolded.

However, the current threat of its extinction casts a shadow over such legacy, giving rise to shared anxieties and fears. The thought of losing the **pineta** space brings forth a crisis of identity for the locals; in case of its disappearance, they would face a void difficult to interpret, threatened by a future filled with uncanny visions, where reinvention feels nearly impossible, and where the “woods” space can become a symbol of menace again.

If you travel westward along any road in the province, you will inevitably come across signs that, with the guidance of arrows and symbols, point you towards the sea.

Here in Maremma, the signs are different from other parts of Italy: first, we can observe two or more horizontal bands representing the sea, the meeting point between water and sky; in the foreground, the drawing of two pines standing tall, making the street signs truly contextual. At first, one might think that they represent maritime pines [*Pinus pinaster*]²—when in reality, they are domestic pines [*Pinus pinea*]. In the collective imagination of the Maremma coast, in fact, the **pineta** (f.), i.e. the coastal pinewoods of domestic pines, is inseparably bound to the “beach” territory in particular, and to the regional identity in general.

Thus, the space of the coastal **pineta**, along with that of the **beach** both crucially inform both the local identity, lived within the region, and the touristic **image branding** that defines the region outside its borders.

The **pineta** territory is rich in collective meaning—a



IL BRIGANTE

the outlaws and the rebels

Domenico Tiburzi, known as **il Livellatore** ("the Leveler"), remains etched in the history of Maremma as the last of its notorious brigands. His astute mind secured him a series of unspoken agreements with the law, and he was able to maintain control of these untamed spaces for twenty-four years.

Elusive, fierce, and unforgiving, yet inevitably magnetic: despite his crimes—living off robberies, violence, and intimidation—he was the only outlaw that the Maremmani would never speak ill of. His name carried a

certain awe, for in defying the establishment, he embodied a rebellious spirit that resonated with the wild nature of the land.

Tiburzi's life came to an end in 1896, when he was shot by the Carabinieri in the fields of Capalbio, his body aged and worn.

The only existing photograph of him was taken **post-mortem**, forever freezing in time a man who had fought fiercely against society's norms—one who, only in death, could no longer defend his resistance.

3 Bandit in the pineta, collage.
4 Cicada exoskeleton on pine trunk.



THE BIRTH OF THE PINETA

dunes, and its massive presence along the coastline provided an shield from the marine aerosol

Since its introduction, the pineta has required constant **replenishment and care**, as the domestic pine, though resilient, rarely surpasses 200 years, even under optimal conditions.

Before these vast plantations of domestic pines took root, the coastal wildlands were home to forests of Atlantic maritime pine [*Pinus pinaster*] and Phoenician juniper [*Juniperus phoenicea*] along the coastline, with Pedunculate oaks [*Quercus robur*] further inland (Andrei, Core).

While the maritime pine presence remains significant near the coast, the domestic pine-woods have gradually encroached further inland. However, the balance is shifting. Today, these pine forests are facing considerable threats due to neglect and the cessation of cultivation: coastal erosion, soil salinization, natural pathogens, and human activity, including the risk of wildfires, all contribute to their decline.

In response to this crisis, a reforestation initiative within the Maremma Regional Park is being considered: the conversion of the pineta into a **ginepreta**, a juniper scrub dominated by *Juniperus phoenicea*. This proposal draws on the historical presence of these species along the coast and their natural resilience to harsh conditions. The Phoenician juniper, reaching heights of 10 to 12 meters, offers a sustainable, ecologically compatible alternative—one that preserves both the aesthetic and environmental integrity of the region.

If the term “scrubland” describes the wild, spontaneous vegetation that thrives in Maremma, the same cannot be said for the *pineta*, the coastal domestic pine forest, which, in Tuscany, spans roughly **13,000 hectares** (Rombai). In older times, however, it covered even vaster stretches of coastal regions. “It was said that in the mid-1800s, the *pineta* was so vast in these areas that if you jumped from one pine to another from Alberese, you could reach Grosseto,” recalls Lorenzo Chelazzi. Traces of pinewoods can be dated as far back as the Roman times—in the Castiglione della Pescaia area—, while plantations like the **Pineta Granducale** in the Maremma Regional Park are much more recent: planted during the second half of the 18th century under the rule of the Lorena Duchy, this pinewood is still standing today.

Native to **Anatolia**, the domestic pine [*Pinus pinea*] was introduced in Tuscany by the Etruscans and was gradually spread across the coast. Initially, it was planted to reclaim land, acting as a protective barrier for agricultural fields. Its timber, but even more its pine nuts, became valuable commodities, ensuring its widespread cultivation. Moreover, its long, deep roots helped stabilize the



- * shorter, bushy crown
- * salinity adaptivity
- * oblong pine cones
- * make NO pine nuts

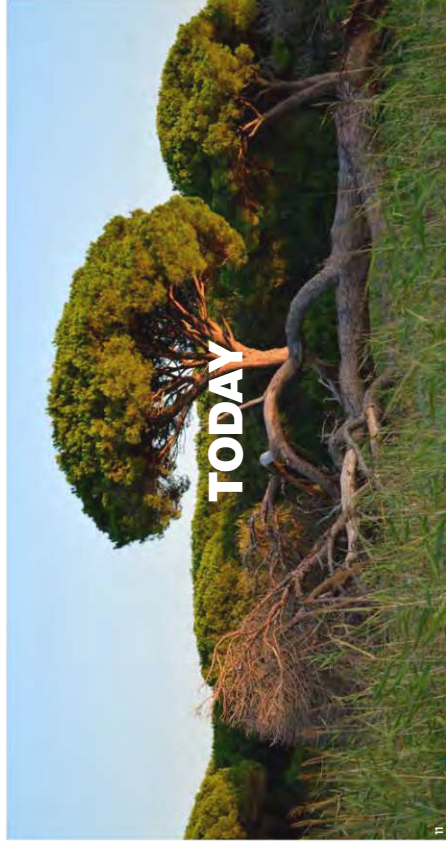
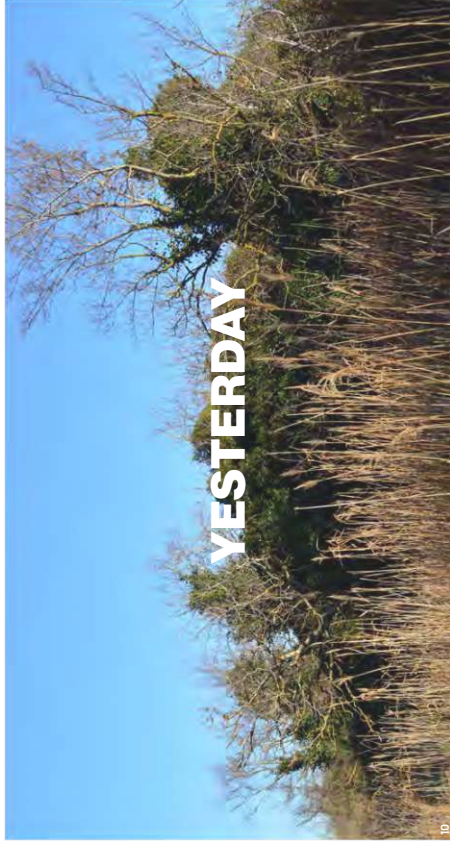
- * taller, “cauliflower-shaped” crown
- * NO salinity adaptivity
- * rounder pine cones
- * make pine nuts



It could be tricky to distinguish the domestic pine from the maritime one, especially with younger individuals. One way to succeed is to rub on the pine needles: in the case of the domestic pine, you won't smell much; otherwise, your nose should fill up with a **strong resin scent**!

THERE ARE PINES, AND THEN THERE ARE PINES...

5-6 Pinus pinaster, tree habit and pinecone detail
7-8 Pinus pinea, tree habit and pinecone detail



9
View of the "warm valley", Maremma Regional Park
10
Original floodplain forest, Pontil di Badia
11
Pineta, Pinchipan a Mare
12
Juniper phoenicea



“...oggi fanno vedè le foto di quar-
ant’anni fa... Se vai oggi vedi grosse
macchie di marrone; non stanno
facendo niente. Perché non hanno
capito - o fanno finta di non capire
- che la pineta è una coltivazione.
Non è una macchia spontanea. E
come tale va trattata.”

“...today they show pictures
from forty years ago... but if
you go there now, you’ll see large
patches of brown; they’re doing
nothing. Because they haven’t
understood—or pretend not to
understand—that the pine forest
is a cultivation. It’s not wild veg-
etation. And as such, it must be
treated.”

— da Barci, *Onir/ambiente*,
intervista ad un residente, 2021



16



17

The wood of the domestic pine, unlike its wild counterpart, lacks the durability and strength needed for traditional construction. While it grows rapidly and is easy to work with, its softness renders it unsuitable for long-lasting structures. In Maremma, **chestnut** wood from the slopes of Mount Amiata, or the resilient juniper wood, known locally as **sabina**, were far more common in building.

However, the domestic pine had its own valuable contributions. It provided the raw materials for charcoal, resin, and pine cones used for fuel. The pine nuts, of course, were harvested diligently by the **pinottolai**—the pine nut gatherers—who not only reaped the rewards of this hard work but also managed the delicate balance of tending to the *pineta* and tasked with planting the next generation of seeds.

Interestingly, despite its limitations as a construction material, the port of Castiglione della Pescaia, dating back to the Medici time, seems to be built upon trunks of domestic pine.

13 Pine nuts harvesting process, Maremma di Grosseto, archive photo.
14 *Pinus pinaster* cones and pine nuts.
15 *Pinus pinaster* trunk.
16 *Pinus pinaster* cone detail.
17 Typical anatomical characters of *Pinus* ss.



*"Ma mi spieghi cosa vuoi fare? Oh!
Mi spieghi cosa vuoi fare in questa
città di merda? È inutile che ci
provi! L'unico modo è prendere e
andare via!"*

"Can you tell me what you want
to do? Can you explain what you
want to do in this shitty place?
There's no point in even trying!
The only way is to pack up and
leave!"

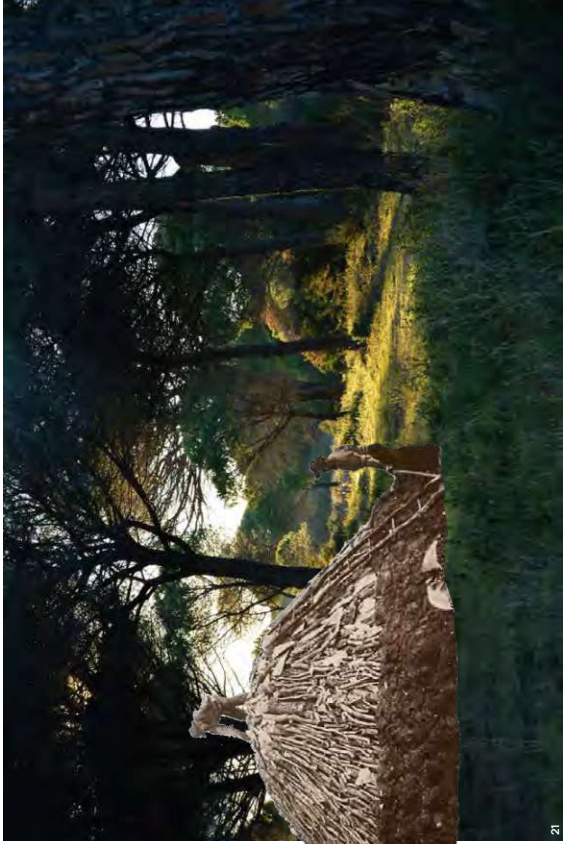
— Margit, 2022





20

"vita tremenda, vita disperata"
"terrible life, desperate life"



21

IL CARBONAIO

the charcoal burner

"Each year, as September unfurls its golden hue, a procession of carbonai makes their way to Maremma from the distant lands of Pistoia and Arezzo. Their skill in forging coal is unrivaled, and some whisper that their mastery stems from ancient, shadowed pacts with forces unknown, even sinister.

These men of the woods dwell in huts they've built with their own hands, isolated from the world, tucked deep within the embrace of the forest. Life is unforgiving, and the warmth of the charcoal kiln offers little solace. Through the long, grueling winters, they endure with the quiet hope of returning home by May, when the fire season begins once again..."

Charcoal kiln and charcoal burners' hut, raw earth construction 1907; archive photo.

20

21

JOEL

zato si infilava a forza nei polmoni, non lasciava respirare, faceva mancare l'aria. Allora mi fermai. Una volta depositatasi la polvere non c'era più niente, neanche la voglia di vivere. Dovevo ricominciare da capo: stavolta non potevo ipotecare niente, dovevo scolpire io stesso, sulla materia dura e tangibile, i solchi delle idee nelle quali abitare. Niente più prestiti dalla società.

Credo esista una forza di gravità orizzontale che aumenti l'attrazione verso casa all'aumentare delle ferite che ti ritrovi

“Credo esista una forza di gravità orizzontale che aumenti l'attrazione verso casa all'aumentare delle ferite che ti ritrovi sulla pelle. Con la fatica dell'aver tentato il sogno di altri, tornare in Maremma è stata l'opportunità di comprendere cosa fossero la pace, il respiro, la quiete. In questo la Maremma è simile al Giappone rurale: sensorialmente densa, concentrata sull'qui ed ora”, avvolta da riti (svolgari, a differenza di quelli giapponesi) non meno carichi di senso riflessivo. A quel punto per me la Maremma finalmente diventava casa. Non una viscoperta ma un'abitazione, un cambio di paradigma su cosa sia importante.”



Non apprezzi una particolare natura, non apprezzi particolari manifestazioni folcloristiche maremmani, né il Morellino di Scansano. Ho finito per girare un po' il mondo, e ho visto cose che in Maremma non potranno mai esserci, che viaggiano su una incommensurabilità estetica di altro ordine. Non apprezzi in particolare niente, ma tutti questi elementi friniscono per disegnare un paesaggio geografico ed emotivo che ho scoperto calzarmi bene. È il vestito delle piccole cose, delle passeggiate al tramonto, del clima mite e della varietà degli

“C'era la narrativa comune, forte, vissuta come un vanto, che Grosseto fosse la tipica terra da lasciare. Salutare per sempre Grosseto, nell'età della giovinezza liceale, pareva la cifra distintiva di chi contava qualcosa, nel tentativo di aumentare il valore presente con un'ipoteca sul proprio futuro lontano dalla città-provincia. Io non facevo certo eccezione.

Il mare, il sole, la montagna e i parchi naturali erano questioni di scarsa rilevanza, buone per chi era costretto a vivere di mezzucci, rintanato dietro un brutto quasi-dialetto che prendeva in prestito i fonemi romani, la c'aspirata, gli atteggiamenti spavaldi come reinterpretazione dei fasti del granducato e le bestemmie raccolte dalla terra brulla calpestata da butteri e cacciatori. Tutto questo come fosse “italiano corretto”, forti nell'ospitare la storia e la statua di Andrea da Grosseto, appena avanti al museo etrusco.

Nella bolla che abitavo, tutto questo era sciatteria. Vivevamo i grandi sogni che, chissà perché, non abitano mai insieme a noi, nella nostra stessa terra, ma stanno sempre molto lontano, in città enormi, metropoli, tra i grattacieli e il traffico.

Poi lo strappo. Nella corsa all'ineguire i sogni il polverone al-



laced with blasphemies pulled from the rugged earth of cowboys and hunters. This was presented as “proper Italian,” standing with pride before the statue of Andrea da Grosseto, watching over the Etruscan museum.

In the bubble I inhabited, all of this felt like mediocrity. We lived for grand dreams that never seemed to take root here, always shimmering elsewhere—in sprawling cities, among skyscrapers, in the ceaseless motion of metropolises.

Then came the rupture. In the chase for dreams, I kicked up so much dust it clogged my lungs, leaving me gasping. So I stopped. And when the dust finally settled, there was nothing left—not even the will to live. I had to start over, but this time I could mortgage nothing. I had to carve my own space, shaping it with my own hands in the hard and tangible substance of reality. No more borrowing from society.

I believe there is a kind of horizontal gravity that pulls us back home, growing stronger with each wound we bear on our skin. Worn down by the effort of chasing someone else's dream, returning to Maremma became my chance to understand what peace, breathing, and quiet were.

“There was a prevailing narrative, shared with pride, that Grosseto was a land meant to be left behind. Saying farewell during the fervent years of high school was a rite of passage—an investment in a distant future, far beyond the provincial town. I was no exception.

The sea, the sun, the mountains, and the natural parks were matters of little importance—reserved for those who stayed behind, speaking in a coarse almost-dialect, borrowing Roman phonemes, aspirating consonants, carrying themselves with a swagger meant to recall the grandeur of the Grand Duchy, their speech

way, Maremma reminds me of rural Japan: sensorially dense, rooted in the present, steeped in rituals—vulgar ones, unlike Japan's, but no less meaningful.

For me, Maremma did not become home through rediscovery, but through acceptance—a shift in what truly matters.

I don't cherish any single aspect of nature here, nor any spe-

cific folklore, nor even the famed Morellino di Scansano wine. I've traveled, seen things Maremma will never have—things of a different aesthetic order. But together, its fragments weave a geographic and emotional landscape that, somehow, fits me well.

It's not about grandeur, but the quiet fabric of life's small details—the evening walks, the mild climate, the shifting landscapes of vine and sea, the closeness of loved ones, the familiarity of ancient faces, whether from my own childhood or the childhood of civilization itself. Maremma is proof that space is infinitely divisible, that with the right lens, microuniverses emerge—mycelial, earthy, teeming with silent life.”



22



23



27



28



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25



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31



32

BENDING DOWN

Pineta's floor tiles

22-32 Different floor details from the pineta floor, Marina di Grosseto, Principina a Mare, Maremma Regional Park



LA VACCA MAREMMANA

Maremma cow

winter, the smoke from their nostrils rises into the cold air, a quiet testament to their vitality. Maremma cows are not prolific milk producers, but they often give birth to twins. It is said that once, for the weaker of the two calves, a wet nurse would be assigned as a last chance at survival.

The Maremma cows still carry the echo of its ancestor, the *Bos Taurus Macraeros*. When you meet its gaze, calm and majestic, it feels as though you are drawn into an ancient womb—a place of darkness, silence, and profound peace. Its stare holds an almost hypnotic power, compelling you to look away, as if its gaze embarrasses you, reminding you of something forgotten. Then, in a blink, it vanishes silently into the landscape, leaving you questioning whether it was ever truly there, or if it was just a fleeting dream. The sounds of the herds grazing—the rhythmic crunch of hooves on the earth, the steady rise and fall of their breath amplified by the land—are small glimpses of a sacred animal life. In the

34
33
"Insegno", iron-rich clay pond, Maremma Regional Park.

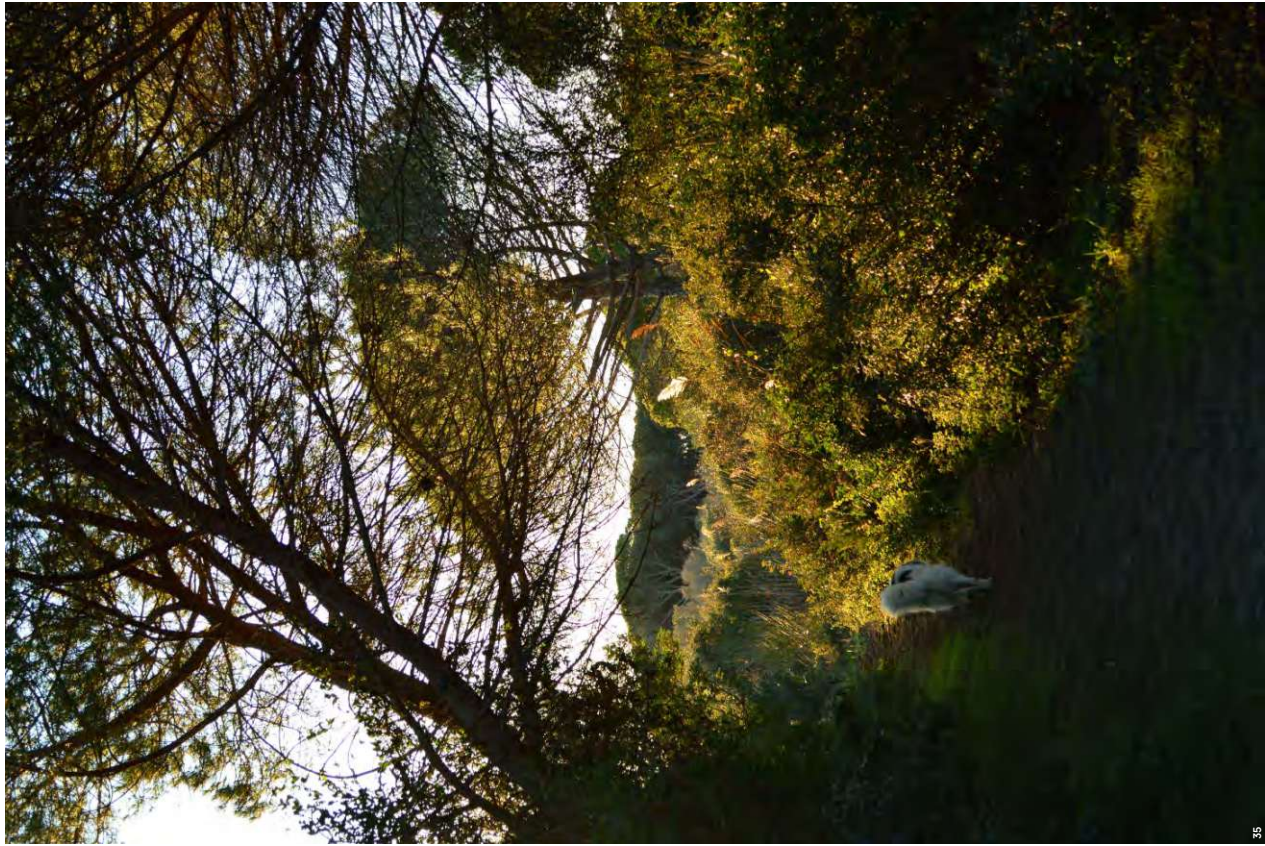
The *pineta* is drying out. Yet, that endless grid of trunks, standing tall and unyielding, still seems infinite, impenetrable, invincible.

Walking among these trees, with their tangled shrubs and dense undergrowth, offers both protection and adventure in equal measure. Since we brought a dog into our lives, the pine forest has transformed into a space of both practical and emotional pilgrimage.

I find joy in the way the perspective closes in, shrinking the trunks and leaving no room for any horizon. For here, the horizon becomes an external, distant notion—unnecessary, irrelevant to the world inside. In this cocoon of acrid smells and thick, enveloping humidity, the outside world fades away. I delight in crossing what seem like impassable passages, weaving through the labyrinthine paths, and following the steep curves of ancient dunes, now home to twisted, gnarled roots. In these moments, everything that exists is contained within the forest's embrace; the outside no longer matters.

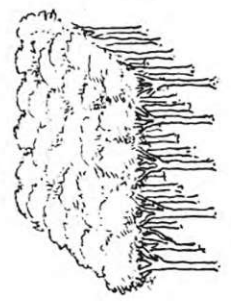
But it is the most beautiful moment of all when, each day, for just a brief half hour, the sun pushes its way through the branches. The light spills in, brushing red and orange onto beams of deepening green, while the fiery rays seem to bless the forest before nightfall. "You've done well today," the sun seems to say, gently caressing the pines. "Now I'll turn off the light."

35 Pineta, Principina a Mare

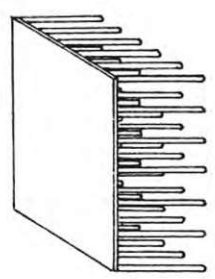




36 Two kinds of root, Leon Krüger, 1974.
37 Forestry work detail, Maurina di Grosseio, winter 2024.



2 KINDS OF ROOTS LK 24



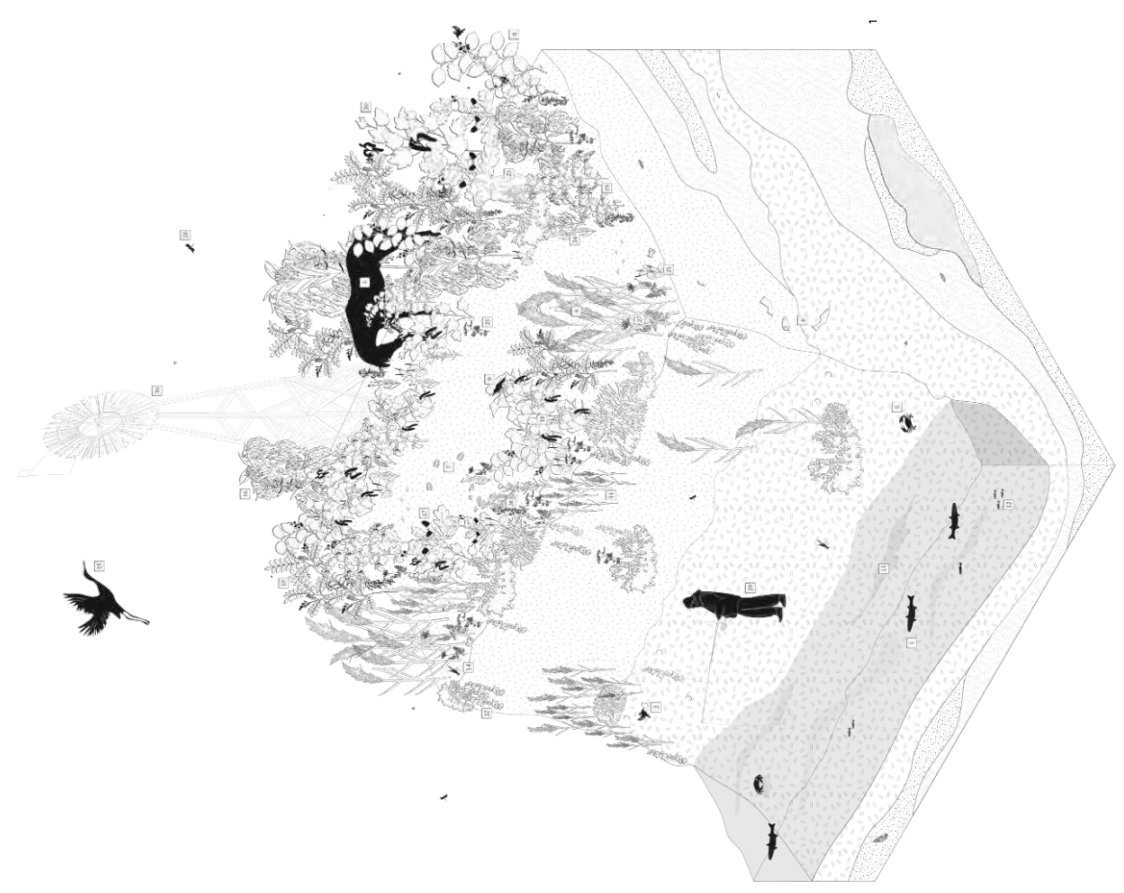
V **RIVERBANK**
Repairing riparian



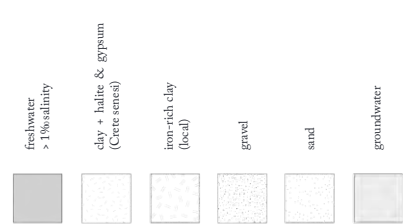
0 "Il fiume", cyanotype print.

"Everybody should be quiet
near a little stream and
listen"

— Ruth Kass, Open House for Butterflies, 1960



- 1 *Mugil cephalus*
- 2 *Alcedo atthis*
- 3 *Equus ferus caballus*
- 4 *Arundo donax*
- 5 *Callinectes sapidus*
- 6 ancient earthware
- 7 Maremma cow's print
- 8 *Populus nigra*
- 9 *Merops apiaster*
- 10 *Robinia pseudoacacia*
- 11 *Arundo plinii*
- 12 *Gambusia affinis*
- 13 river water's suspended sediments
- 14 *Procambarus clarkii*
- 15 *Ardea alba*
- 16 *Salix alba*
- 17 *Quercus robur*
- 18 *Ulmus minor*
- 19 *Paliurus spina-christi*
- 20 *Populus alba*
- 21 *Plantago major*
- 22 *Hedera helix*
- 23 Diana Umbronensis
- 24 *Silene*
- 25 *Foeniculum vulgare*
- 26 *Nigella arvensis*
- 27 *Daucus carota*
- 28 *Libellula*
- 29 Fisherman
- 30 Wind pump



LA BRUNA

 $n.f$

✱ it originates as an emissary of Lago dell'Accesa (Massa Marittima, Grosseto)

* 50 km watercourse

350 km² watershed

*subsoil is rich in silts and clays (in the terminal section)

* contains particles from the **Colline Metallifere** (Metalliferous Hills): iron, but also cadmium, arsenic, lead...

*the subsoil is rich in **silts** and **clays** (in the terminal section).

L'OMBRE

n.m.

✱ it originates between San Giovanni d'Asso and Buonconvento (Crete Senesi, Siena).

land that, little by little, emerged from the blue embrace of the sea. Through this grand sedimentary process, the land was

Through this grand sedimentary process, the land was

shaped—rebellious, yet generous, a layered tapestry of **clay** and **3,494 km² watershed**. **silt, gravel and sand.**

* highest suspended load of both organic and inorganic sediments.

* the terminal stretch is characterized by a lentic environment, poor in oxygen.

* transports about 18 tons of sediments each year.

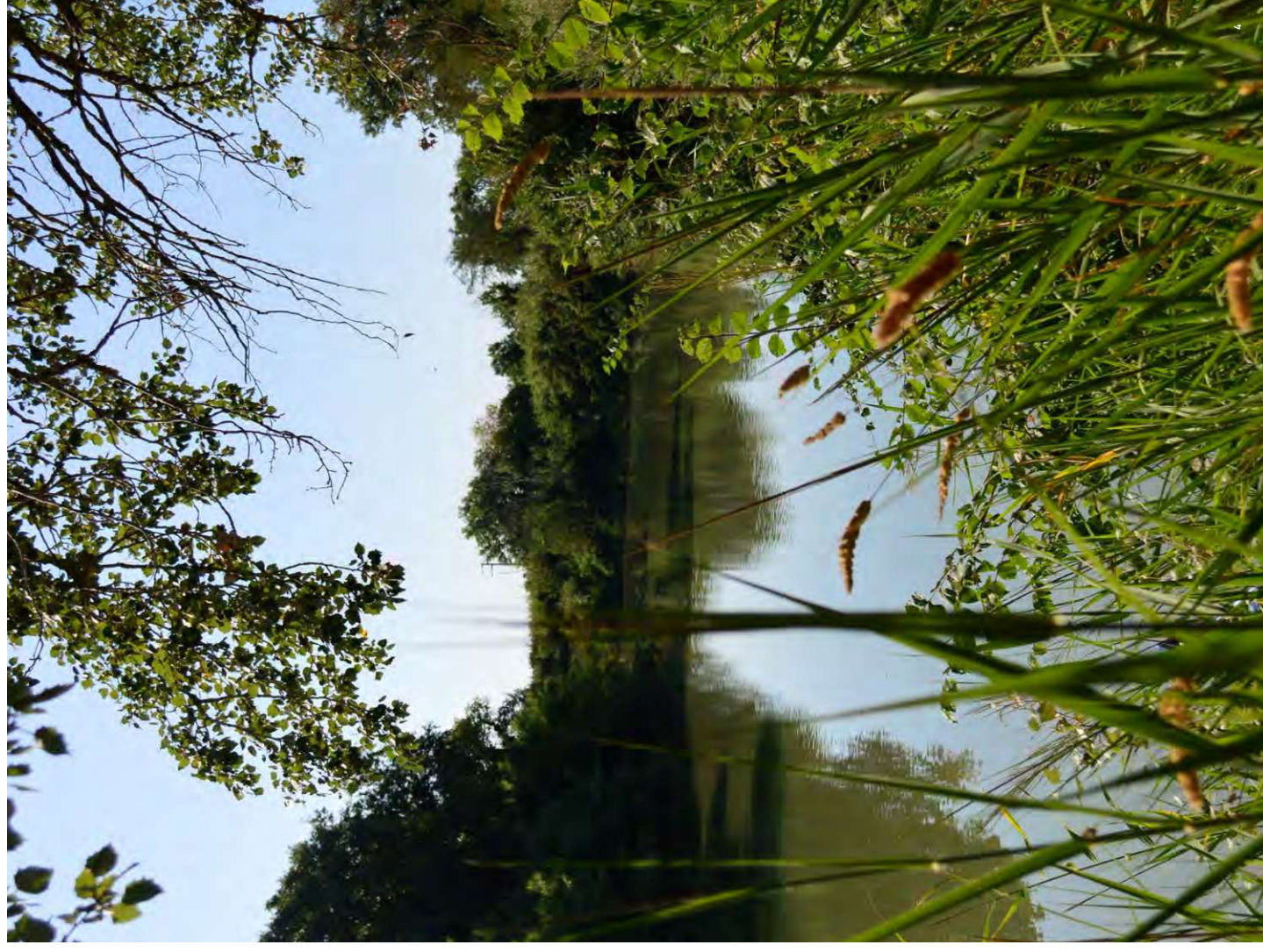
* the subsoil is rich in **gravel** and **sand** (in the terminal section).

A landscape born from the patient toil of water and time, the alluvial plain stands as the tangible gift of two rivers—the Ombrone and the Bruna. During the last glacial period, these waters carved and sculpted deep valleys into the **Pleistocene** crust, flanking a central ridge that once stretched toward the sea.

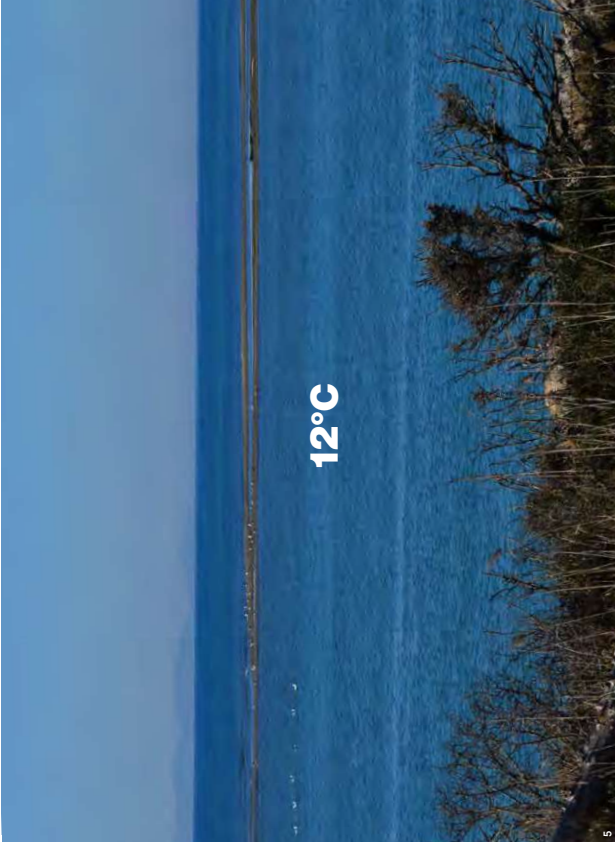
From the **Crete Senesi** came halite, gypsum, and clay; from the **Metaliferous Hills**, iron-rich earth. Rocks, minerals, and silt intertwined in a slow alchemy, settling into the damp, fertile soil of the floodplain—

RIVER

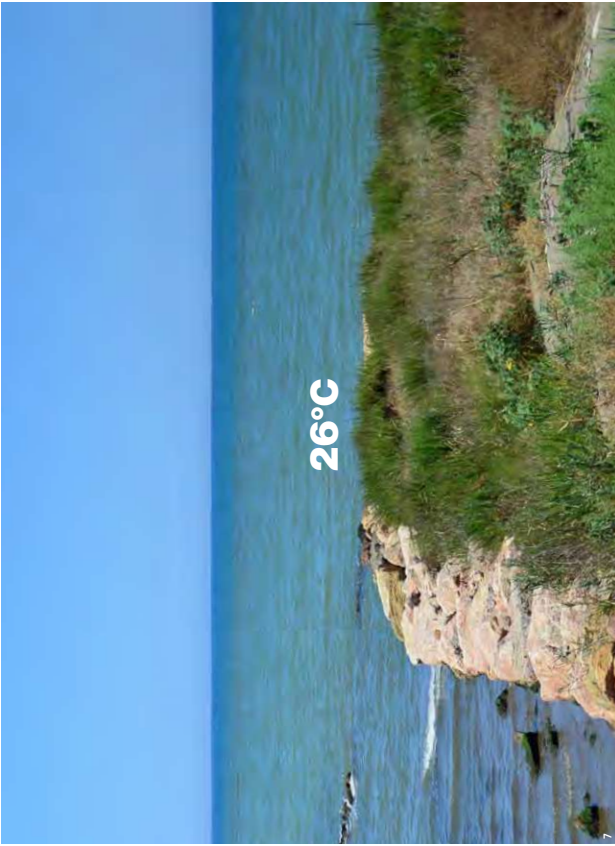
178



2 Bruna course meander.
3 Ombrone course meander.
4 Ombrone river in summer.

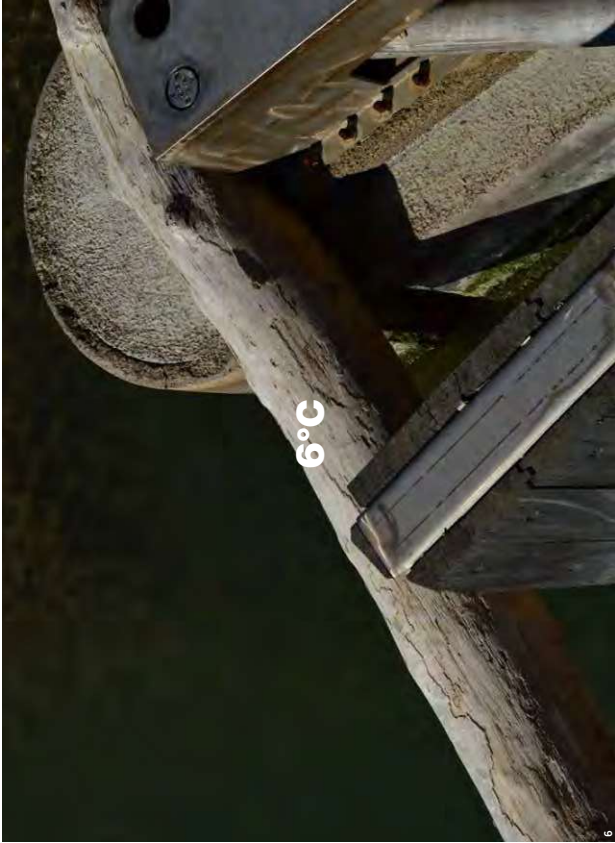


winter



summer

^ v



5 Sand deposition in front of the Otrone mouth.
6 Open floodgate, main drainage channel

7 View of the Otrone mouth.
8 Closed floodgate, main drainage channel

BURNING BRIDGES

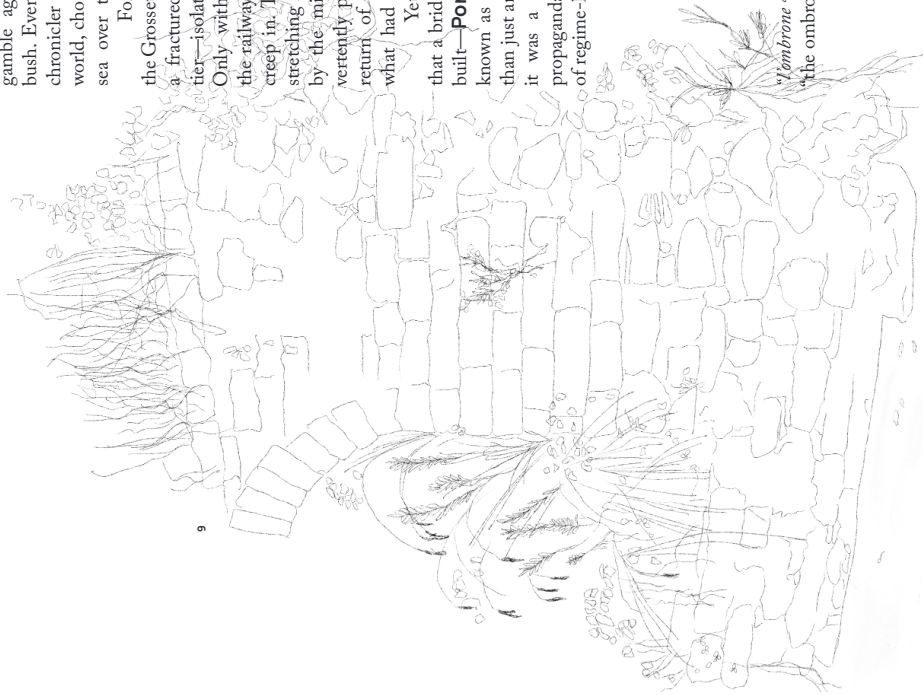
For centuries, Maremma was a land severed by water, where bridges were lost to time and neglect. The destruction perpetrated by the Goths of the so-called “di-ruto” (destroyed) Roman bridge—known ominously as the “**Devils Bridge**” on the Ombrone, along with the destruction of the crossings “Virgil’s Bridge” over the Osa and the Albegna, left the region without stable passage. Roads, too, were treacherous, their upkeep surrendered to floods and lack of maintenance, making travel a gamble against nature and ambush. Even Rutilius Namatianus, chronicler of the late Roman world, chose the certainty of the sea over the peril of the land.

For nearly **1,300 years**, the Grosseto Maremma remained a fractured, near-mythical frontier—isolated, feared, untamed. Only with the construction of the railways did change begin to creep in. The new infrastructure, stretching its veins into the wilds by the mid-19th century, inadvertently paved the way for the return of bridges, reconnecting what had long been left adrift.

Yet, it was not until 1929 that a bridge for pedestrians was built—**Ponte Mussolini**, now known as Ponte Spadino. More than just an infrastructure project, it was a monument to fascist propaganda, a calculated gesture of regime-led progress.

*“L’ombrone vuole il suo boccone”
“the ombrone needs its bite”*

— local proverb



RIVER

182

9 “Devils bridge”, Maremma Regional Park.
10 *Daucus carota* flower.

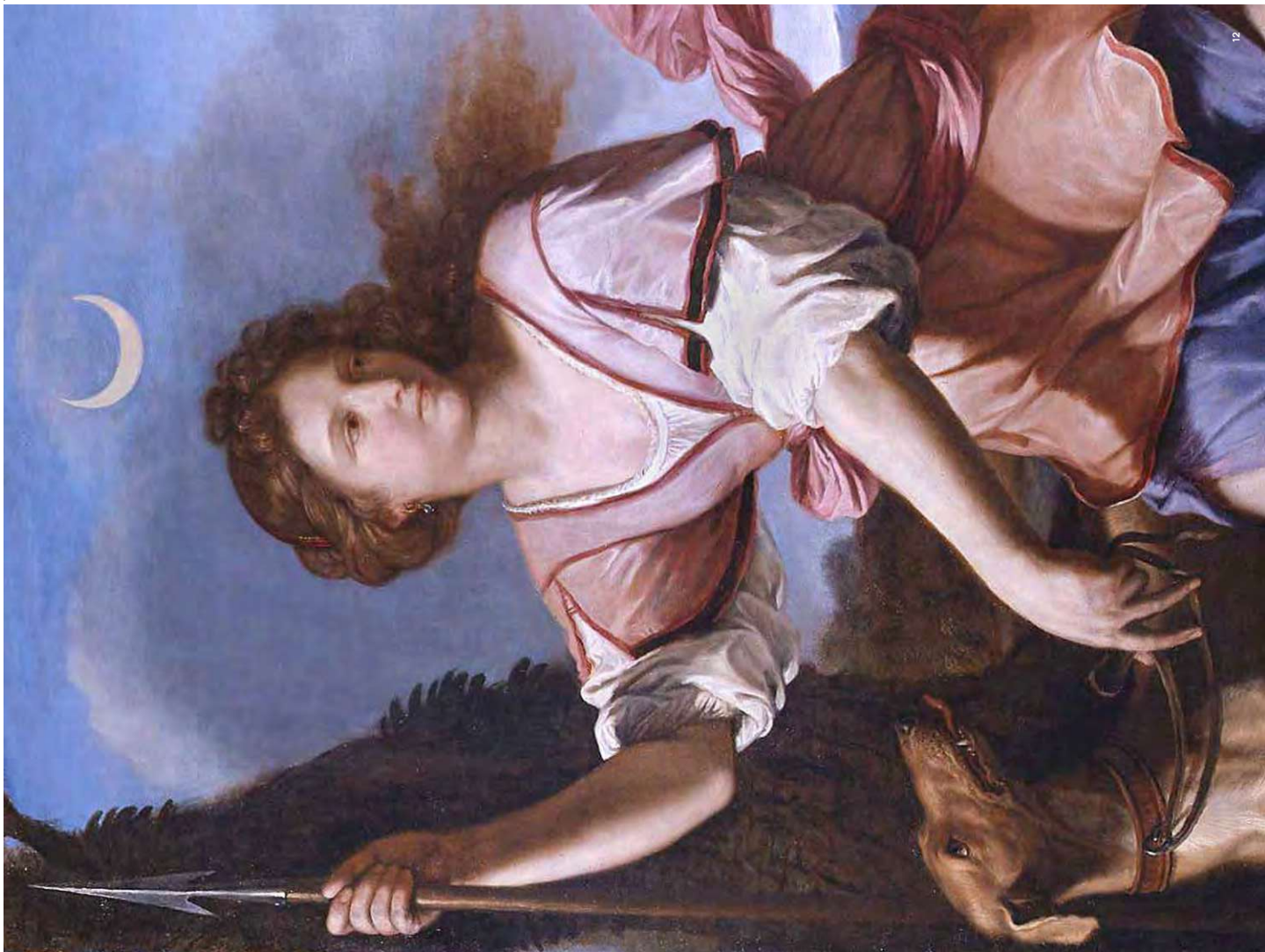


DIANAĒ VMBRONENSI
DIONYSIVS
QHATERIBVI ONFI
SERVOS
DONVM DEDIT

11

RIVER

184



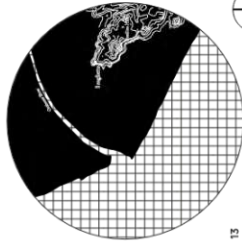
11 Dedication inscription found at the Scoglietto temple, Maremma Regional Park.
12 Diana the Huntress

THE HORNS OF THE MOON

Diana Umbronenis, guardian of the Ombrone and its untamed dominion, was once revered by the Romans, who saw in her both the river's protector and the spirit of the wilderness that thrived along its banks.

In 2009, a temple dedicated to this goddess was unearthed within the heart of the Regional Park of Maremma, at Scoglietto—a rocky cliff that, in ancient times, stood far closer to the river's mouth.

Layered by centuries, the temple's remains still whisper of forgotten rites and whispered invocations. Reaching them is no easy feat: one must climb a rugged path, cutting through a dense tapestry of cork oaks, lentisk, and wild olives—a pilgrimage through nature itself, where Diana's presence lingers in the hush of the leaves.



13

Diana

late lat. Diana
old lat. Jana

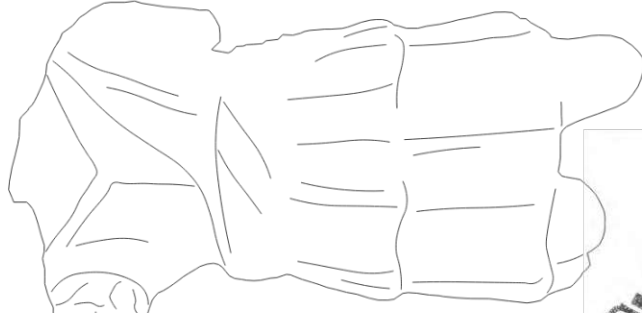
ancient Italian goddess of the moon, patroness of virginity and hunting, later identified with Greek Artemis, and through her with eastern goddesses such as Diana of Ephesus.

Umbronenis

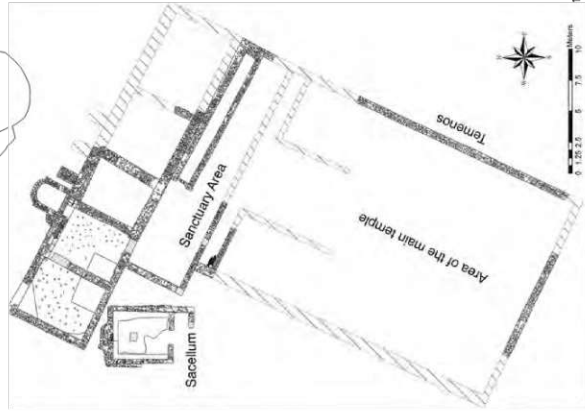
it. *Umbria*, Italian region
lat. *umbra*, shadow

of the Ombrone river.

“silvarum patrona et domina, Diana, es”



14



15

13 Scoglietto location map.
14 Diana Umbronenis with the statue.
15 Temple's original plan.



16



17



18



20



21



22

16-22 Diana Umbronenis temple remains.

BEPPE



dolci colline che si uniscono alla pianura. Quest'ultima è attraversata dal nostro "sacro fiume", l'Ombrone, che con i suoi meandri giunge fino al mare, modellando le riposanti spiagge con un continuo dinamismo.

Il mio lavoro di guardiaparco ha amplificato e rafforzato questa visione. Fin da giovane, ho condiviso i valori della conservazione della natura, comprendendo il loro legame con la qualità della vita.

Quando nel 1986 sono stato assunto al Parco della Maremma, ho potuto esprimere appieno le mie attitudini, dedicandomi alla didattica ambien-

"Ho quasi sessantanove anni e ho trascorso tutta la mia vita in questo piccolo territorio della provincia di Grosseto, che mi ha donato un profondo senso di appartenenza ai valori espressi dalla natura e dalla storia.

La natura mi richiama costantemente alla realtà e al vivere quotidiano: lavorando, coltivando e studiando. Dalla storia, invece, nasce in me un sentimento di gratitudine verso le generazioni che si sono sacrificate, lottando e interagendo con un territorio difficile, a lungo segnato dalla malaria.

Ancora oggi, la Maremma custodisce luminosi esempi di civiltà, mi ritrovo spesso a riflettere sulla storia recente dei Medici e dei Lorena, il cui operato ha contribuito al miglioramento del territorio attuale, o sull'organizzazione dei monasteri Benedettini che lo risollevarono dalle decadenze medievali. Le ricche testimonianze etrusco-romane mi circondano ovunque, mentre mi capita spesso di immergermi nelle tracce lasciate dagli uomini della preistoria. A volte, basta trovare una piccola sbaggia di diasprio lavorato, raccolta durante una passeggiata, per sentire un brivido che attraversa il filo della nostra storia.

Amo e apprezzo la varietà di ambienti che offre la provincia di Grosseto: dal cono vulcanico del Monte Amiata, dove sono nato, alle



"I am nearly sixty-nine years old, and my entire life has been rooted in this small corner of the Grosseto province—a land that has instilled in me a deep, unwavering sense of belonging to the values woven by nature and history.

Nature is my constant guide, anchoring me to the rhythms of daily life: working, cultivating, studying. It calls me back to what is essential, reminding me of the quiet wisdom held in the cycle of seasons. History, in contrast, stirs in me a profound gratitude for those who came before—the generations who toiled and sacrificed, shaping this land despite its challenges, despite malaria's long shadow.

Even today, Maremma preserves luminous examples of resilience and civilization. I

"Nature is my constant guide, anchoring me to the rhythms of daily life: working, cultivating, studying. It calls me back to what is essential, reminding me of the quiet wisdom held in the cycle of seasons. History, in contrast, stirs in me a profound gratitude for those who came before—the generations who toiled and sacrificed, shaping this land despite its challenges, despite malaria's long shadow."

often reflect on the legacies of the Medici and Lorena families, whose efforts transformed the land, or on the Benedictine monasteries, which revived it from medieval decline. Traces of

Etruscan and Roman ingenuity surround me, and at times, I find myself drawn even further back—immersing in the silent echoes left by prehistoric hands. A single shard of worked Jasper found on a walk can send a shiver through me, as if history itself breathes through the stones.

I cherish the striking variety of landscapes that unfold within the Grosseto province: from the volcanic cone of Monte Amiata, where I was born, to the rolling hills that dissolve into the plains. Through it all runs our sacred river, the Ombrone, meandering toward the sea, sculpting beaches in its patient, ceaseless motion.

My work as a park ranger deepened this connection. From a young age, I embraced the values of conservation, understanding their inextricable link to the quality of life. When I joined the Maremma Regional Park in 1986, I found the space to fully dedicate myself to this calling—committing my days to environmental education and scientific research.

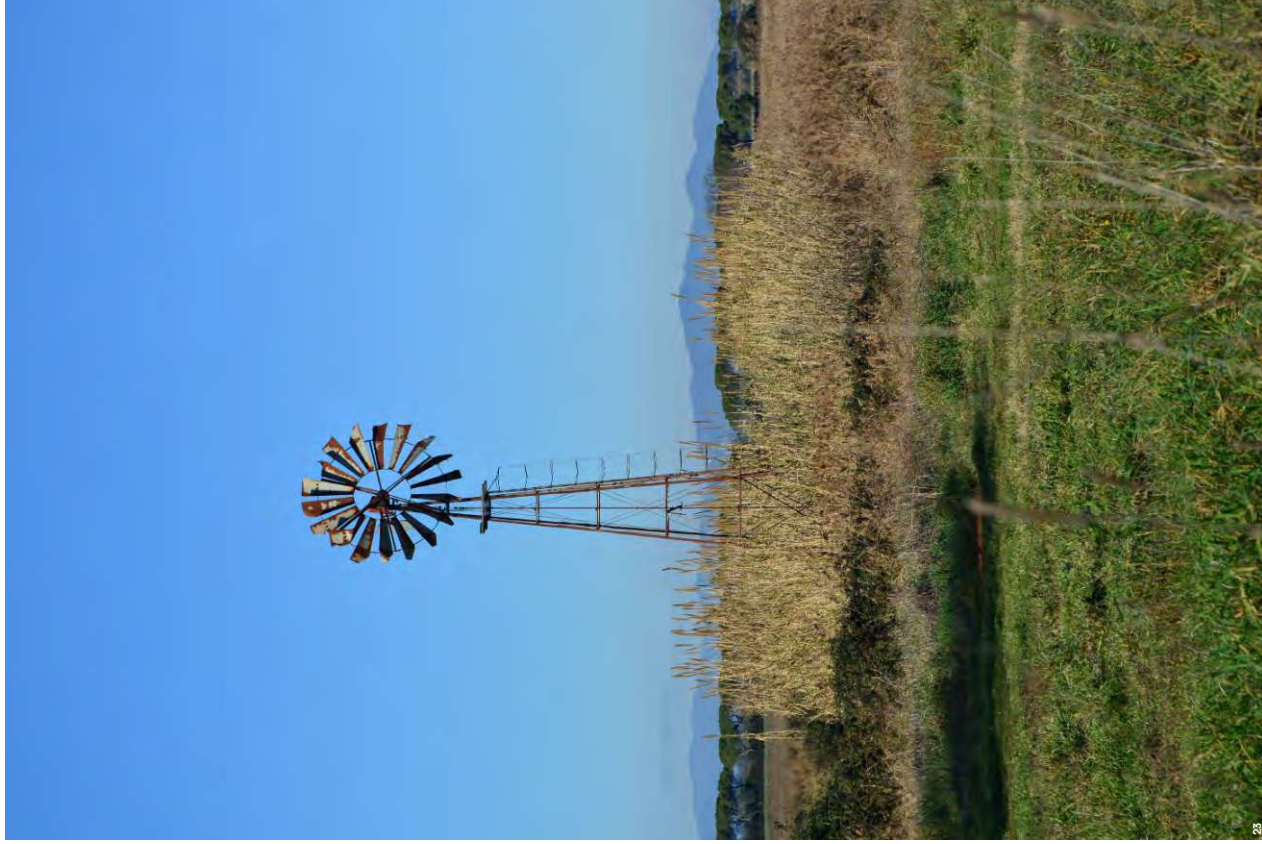
Now retired, my work continues through the Alcedo association. As a volunteer, I organize workshops for students, citizens, and people with disabilities, nurturing a shared responsibility for this land. The association's mission is to foster a bond between community and environment—to teach sustainability, to spread scientific knowledge, and to keep alive the folk traditions that have long given Maremma its voice."

At the dawn of the 20th century, in his workshop beside the elementary schools on Via Mazzini, Grosseto, **Raimondo Vivarelli** dreamed of the Wild West. America called to him, yet he saw no great divide between that distant frontier and his own Maremma: the same vast horizons, the same dust-laden air, the same stubborn defiance against the relentless march of progress. Inspired by this vision, he created something that would forever tie the real and cinematic destiny of his homeland to those legendary prairies across the ocean—he patented his own **wind pump**. A simple yet ingenious tin structure, it fills the watering troughs without relying on electricity or fuel, powered only by the restless breath of the wind.

Maremma is still scattered with these wind pumps—some rusted and forgotten, others still turning as they always have. Relics of a bygone era, they stand across the land like silent symbols of resistance to modernity and its exploitative ideologies. One can count them while crossing the countryside or simply observe their blades like weary sunflowers bowing to the gusts, their faint creaking a whisper that drifts through the air.

LA POMPA A VENTO VIVARELLI

the Vivarelli wind pump



23 Typical wind pump, Maremma Regional Park



IL PASTORE

the farmer

rhythmic bark of the Maremma dogs, and the restless bleating of sheep. The shepherd and his family follow, blending into that undulating white sea of reciprocity. The shepherd, with his flock, is welcomed by the farmers of the plains in exchange for the gift of milk. It's a barter of sustenance, the rhythm of an ancient collaboration.

The next morning, very early, they set off once more, the music of their movement echoing across the land. They will return to the mountains only when the plantain, also known as the “**spring hour-glass**” [*Plantago officinalis*], has shed its last blooms, signaling the arrival of the dry season.

When autumn arrives, the shepherd knows it's time for **transhumance**. It's too cold on the mountains; this flock must descend to warmer lands for the winter. They move down the Apennines as a procession, but unlike solemn pilgrimages, there is no quiet reverence—only a symphony of sounds: the clang of bells, the

24 Verghera (shepherd's hut), archive photo.
25 Shepherd and horses, collage.

LA STECCAIA

redirecting water

countless individuals who toiled here, whose sweat and dreams built a new future for themselves and for generations to come.

Even now, the Ombrone River seems intent on erasing that dam, its bed nearly swallowed by the sediment it has deposited over the years. And though many sediments have crossed the barrier, pressing onward, a great quantity of debris stops here, at the foot of this silent monument—feeding the lush island that continues to rise and flourish against every demolition, the last one only twenty years ago—dreaming of a sea it will never touch.

How many ambitions does man hold, constructing and deconstructing according to his own measure? In the end, Nature asserts its dominion, restoring its boundaries, and in Maremma, it is she who triumphs. Wild, untamed, and eternal, relegating humanity to its fate of fleeting, unforeseen circumstance.

There is a small pyramid that rises amidst the vibrant green that hugs the Ombrone River.

We are east of Grosseto, right outside the city. The air is warm, comforting, and a profound tranquility fills the space—this is not a place often visited. The sound of the water grows stronger as we near the viewpoint. Beppe and Mario have brought me here to explore one of the key landmarks in the region's reclamation history. As I read the inscription on the marble plaque adorning the monument, the significance of the moment sinks in: in 1830, **Leopold II of Lorena** ordered the construction of a 6-meters-high dam to redirect the river's waters, feeding them into ditches and canals.

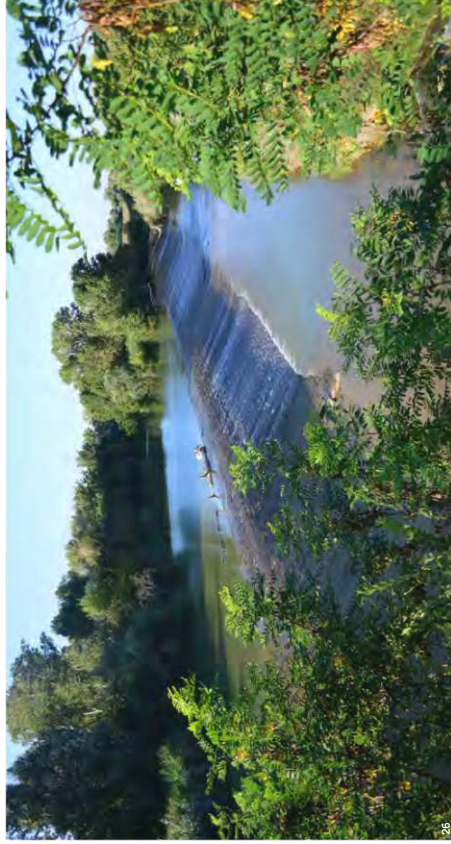
The creation of the **Ponte Tura**, with its sluices, regulated the river's flow into the Diversion Canal, which was created to bring water into the city. This monumental hydraulic work was a turning point in the reclamation efforts, setting in motion the transformation that would shape Maremma into the land we recognize today.

I pause, taking in the view, feeling the weight of history that surrounds me. I think of the

«IN QUESTO CANALE ESCAVATO NEL CORSO DI 160 GIORNI FU IL DÌ 26 APRILE DELL'ANNO 1830 ALLA PRESENZA DELLE LL. AA.II. E RR. IL GRANDUCA E LA GRANDUCHESSA DI TOSCANA, INTRODOTTA L'ACQUA DEL FIUME OMBRONE LA QUALE VELOCEMENTE SI CONDUSSSE FIN DENTRO IL LAGO DICASTIGLIONE DELLA PESCAIA E DIMOSTRÒ AI NUMEROSI SPETTATORI COME QUEL VASTO CENTRO DI INFEZIONE E DI STERILITÀ POTEVA PER I DEPOSITI DELLE ACQUE TORBIDE CANGIARSI IN UNA VASTA E FLORIDA COLTIVAZIONE»

“IN THIS CHANNEL EXCAVATED OVER THE COURSE OF 160 DAYS, ON THE 26TH OF APRIL IN THE YEAR 1830, IN THE PRESENCE OF THEIR ROYAL HIGHNESSES, THE GRAND DUKE AND GRAND DUCHESS OF TUSCANY, THE WATER OF THE OMBRONE RIVER WAS INTRODUCED, WHICH QUICKLY FLOWED INTO THE CASTIGLIONE DELLA PESCAIA LAKE, DEMONSTRATING TO THE NUMEROUS SPECTATORS HOW THAT VAST CENTER OF INFECTION AND STERILITY COULD, THROUGH THE DEPOSITS OF MURKY WATERS, BE TRANSFORMED INTO A WIDE AND FLOURISHING CULTIVATION.”

—inscription on the marble plaque of the Steccaia monument.



26



27



28

26 River dam, "La Steccaia".
27 Sedimentation island, "La Steccaia".
28 Tura flood gate, "La Steccaia".

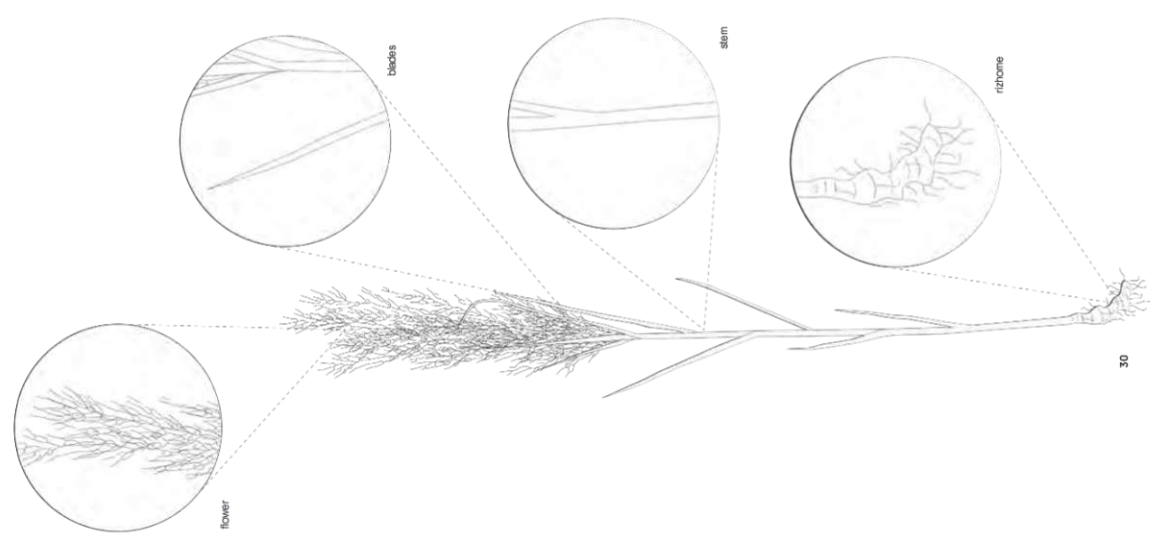


The *Arundo plinii*, an invasive reed species that flourishes in abundance along freshwater streams and that can be harvested from June to October, holds a unique place in both the historical and the present-day ecological narrative. In ancient times, its inflorescences, prized for their durability and flexibility, were often transformed into practical natural brushes—"spazzolini" or "spolverini". These particular flowers, harvested at the right time, surpassed the ones of *Phragmites australis* and of *Arundo donax* in terms of longevity and adaptability of their products.

Yet, beyond the valued inflorescence, the rest of the plant remained rather underappreciated. In the quest for sustainability, however, new horizons open: every part of *Arundo plinii* can be considered usable through a zero-waste lens, where the so-called leftover material gains new purposes.

This vision challenges not only our view of invasive species as a threat but also offers a richer, more harmonious way forward—one where these plants are seen as a resource rather than an obstacle. It is an invitation to bring back **ethnobotanical practices** that have long faded, reviving them with a renewed spirit of collaboration with nature, and simultaneously reasserting their value for both environmental health and the resilience of artisanal culture.

26 *Arundo plinii* flower texture detail



Arundo plinii

AN ARUNDO LIVINGROOM



To make a brush, depending on the diameter and use, between 30 and 65 inflorescences of *Arundo plinii* are needed, which should be cut leaving 15-20 cm of stem.

The inflorescences can then be grouped together and tied either with the leaves of the *Arundo*, or in traditional fashion with a branch of white willow [*Salix alba*] for a more flexible and durable binding. Finally, one can choose to leave the flowers' ends at irregular lengths or to trim the tips for a more uniform result.

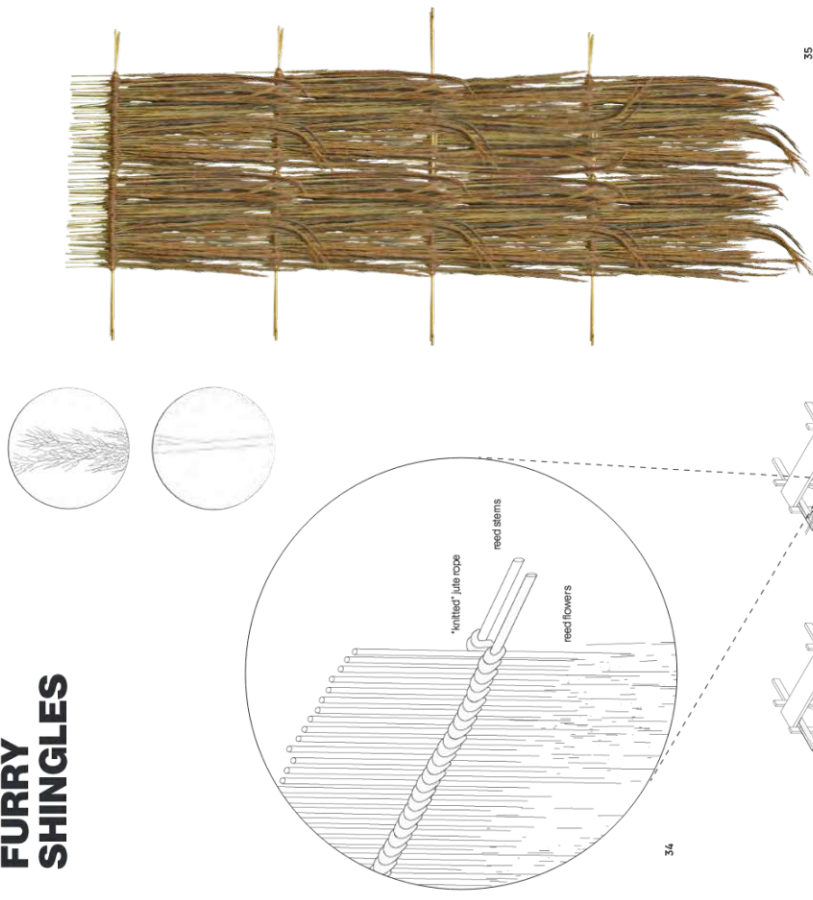


SPOLVERINO AKA WITCHBRUSH

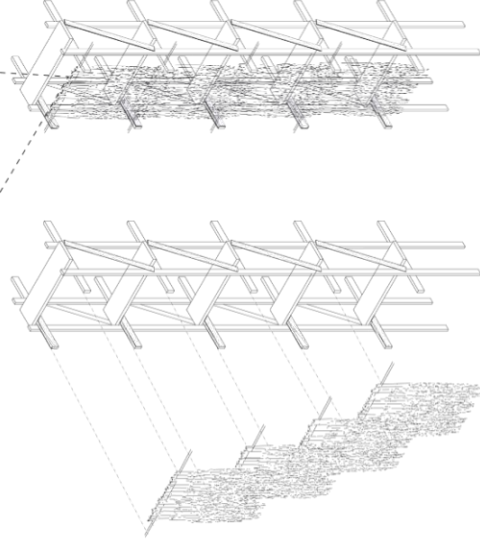
RIVER

198

FURRY SHINGLES



34



36

Just as the inflorescences of *Carex pendula* were traditionally used to cover hut roofs, the inflorescences of *Arundo plinii* can also be used as a completely natural cladding material: resistant and hydrophobic, they can be fixed perpendicularly to their stems using traditional weaving techniques. These can then be installed as shading elements in a staggered offset system of soft tiles.

199

RIVER

The leaves of the plant, fibrous in texture and long and pointed still green, can be used while still material suitable for weaving in the creation of rugs and mats. Once the weaving is completed, the leaves are left to dry in order to consolidate their new structure. Below, an example of a **plain weave** technique using the whole leaves.



37

LEAF MAT

RIVER

200



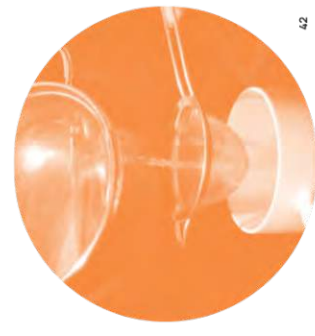
39



40



41



42



38

Preparation

✱ *Arundo Plinii* rhizomes

✱ a knife, a pot & a strainer

1 remove the small roots from the rhizome, then cut it into pieces.

2 fill a pot with water.

3 add the rhizome pieces to the water and bring it to a boil. Wait until the water turns a light yellow.

4 once boiling, let the pieces simmer for 10 more minutes.

5 Strain the water into a teapot or directly into cups, removing the rhizome pieces. Your decoction is ready to be enjoyed!



RIVER DECOCTION

201

RIVER

"Ma a Grosseto come si fa!? Il problema di Grosseto e i grossetani è che non hanno voglia di rischiare! E anche voi giovani siete una generazione moscia, siete una generazione di merda, dai!"

"But in Grosseto, how do you even manage?! The problem with Grosseto and its people is that they don't want to take risks! And you young folks—you're a dull generation, a shitty generation, come on!"

— Marghi, 2022



43



44

43 "Marghi" self photo, 2022
44 Fisherman on Ombrone riverbank, Maremma Regional Park.

A late summer's hush, the scent of damp earth, and my eyes searching for new specimen and mysteries. Then, in an instant, I met it—a creature small yet defiant, rising on its spindly legs, claws lifted high like a warrior caught mid-battle cry.

Its color captivated me first: a red so raw, so visceral. Then, its size: ten centimeters of misplaced bravado, an uninvited guest of these spaces.

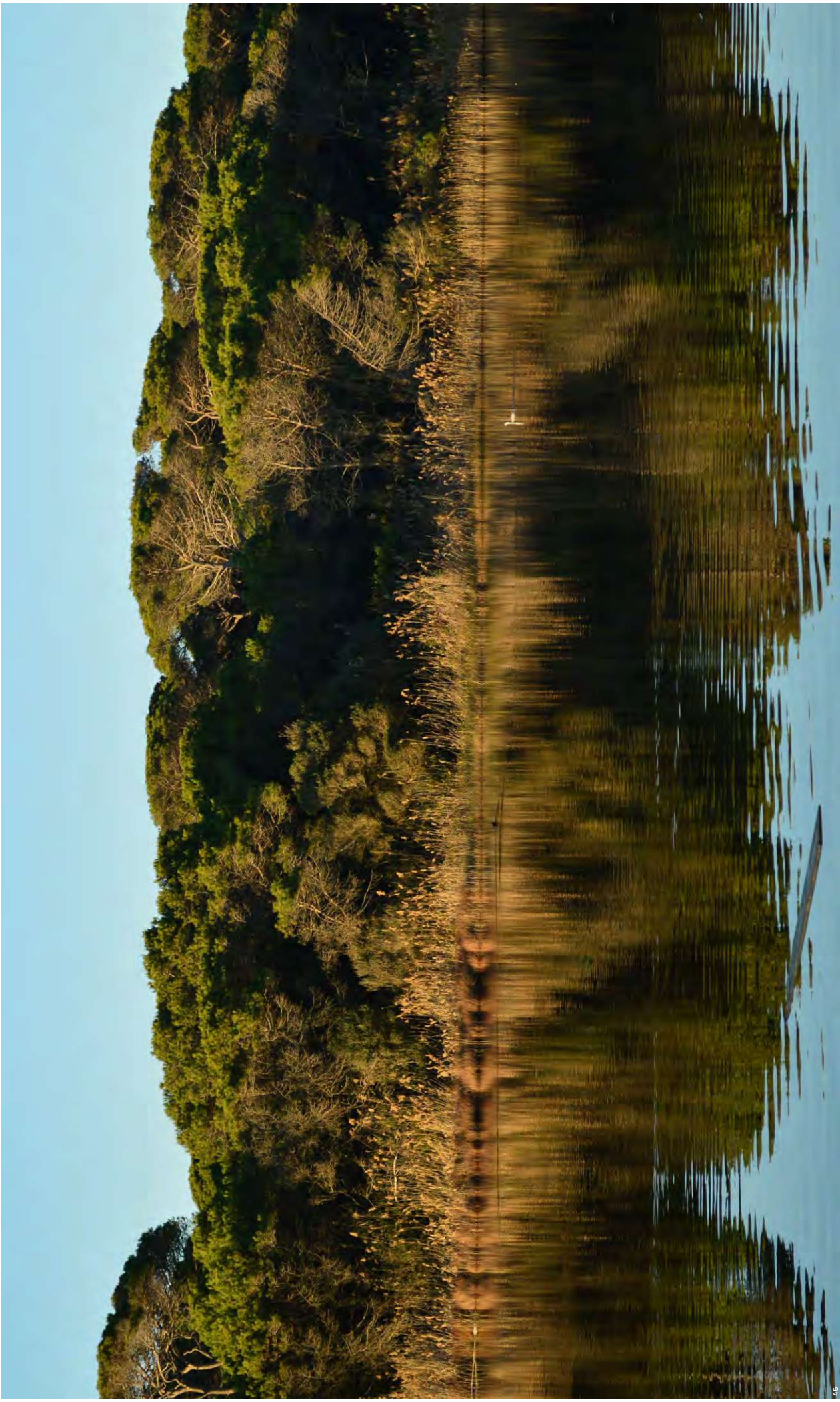
Only later did I uncover its origins—distant swamps of the **Mississippi Delta**, a wanderer brought here by human in an attempt to commercialize it locally. Its presence then rapidly spread through the rice fields and freshwater streams, unchecked. No predators in these region temper its presence, drive only by its own hunger. They call it the “killer crayfish”.

IL GAMBERO KILLER

Procambarus clarkii / Louisiana crayfish

45 Louisiana crayfish (*Procambarus clarkii*).





46

VI THE NOSE

September smellscape

0 *Aspirare raw earth sculpture, Isabel Rodriguez Ramos.*



“The act of smelling something, anything, is remarkably like the act of thinking itself. Immediately, at the very moment of perception, you can feel the mind going to work, sending the odor around from place to place, setting off complex repertoires throughout the brain, polling one center after another for signs of recognition, old memories, connections.”

—Lewis Thomas
A Long Line of Cells: Collected Essays, 1985



The realization of this work was made possible thanks to the collaboration with Accademia Mutamenti and my participation in the sixth edition of the artistic residency project **DUNE - ARTE PAESAGGI UTOPIE**, which took place from September 9 to 15, 2024. **DUNE** is a transdisciplinary creative campus in nature, conceived by Giorgio Zorzi, that uses the language of art as a tool for exploration, enhancement, and inner reconnection with the environment.

1
Installation on site, september 2024.

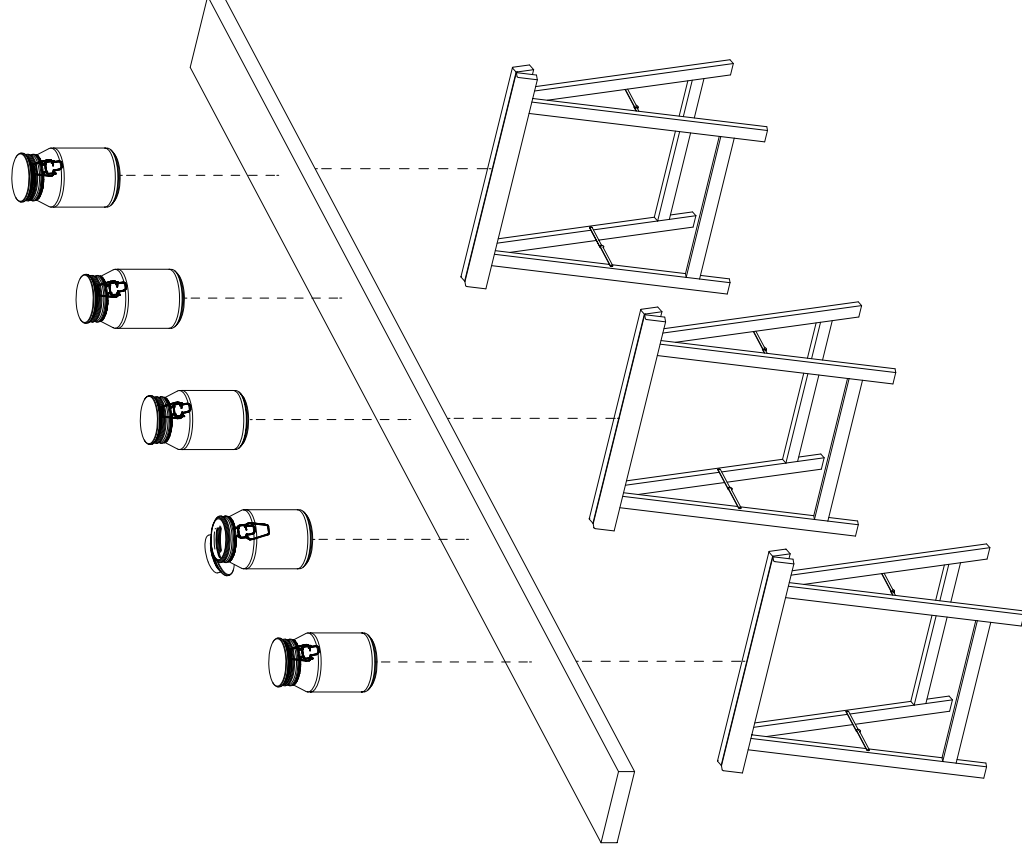


The Maremma wetland complex breathes through its scents—unfolding in layers of coexistence and progression, shaping the seasonal **smellscapes** of the flood-plain. To capture these ephemeral fragrances, I composed odorous hybrids, part diorama, part terrarium, distilling the essence of the five archetypal territories.

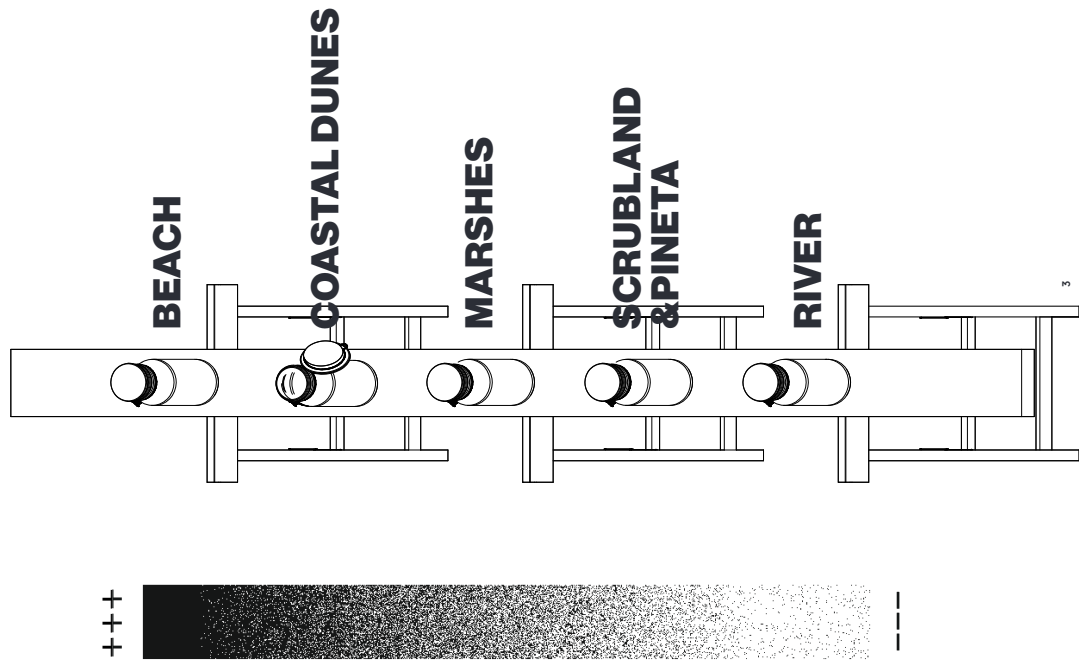
Before observing the jars, the visitors were invited to close their eyes, lean in, and inhale deeply—allowing scent to guide their first impressions. This was not just an act of smelling, but an **exploration of the landscape through senses, memory, instinct, and emotion**. To decode reality primarily through the nose is to encounter it beyond **intellectual abstraction**, awakening dormant bonds, and rekindling profound ties that may have frayed over time. Like the Proustian *madeleine*, scent has the power to unlock involuntary memories, shifting perceptions and reweaving connections between people and places, between nature and culture.

In curating these jars, I included both potent, unmistakable smells, and faint, nearly imperceptible ones—subtle traces that might escape immediate notice but nonetheless contribute to the composition's authenticity. The scents preserved within became a still-life of the flood-plain as it existed in September, unfiltered by aesthetic or cultural hierarchies. In fact, fragrance and odor stood equal, neither beautified nor censored—only present.

For a single day, the installation stood—an **ephemeral offering**, fated to decay. In its foretold rotting, the piece mirrored the fragile beauty of the landscape itself, calling for recognition and conscious tending practices.



3 x wooden trestles
1 x 4 M wooden plank
5 x 5 L glass jars



4 Visitors interacting with the installation.





5



"I can't smell much... We'd need a bit of wind in this jar..."

"I recognize the scent of water—not as intense as on the shore, but still present..."

"If I focus, I catch a vegetal note from the algae, before the damp sand takes over..."

5 Installation, aesthetic illustration.



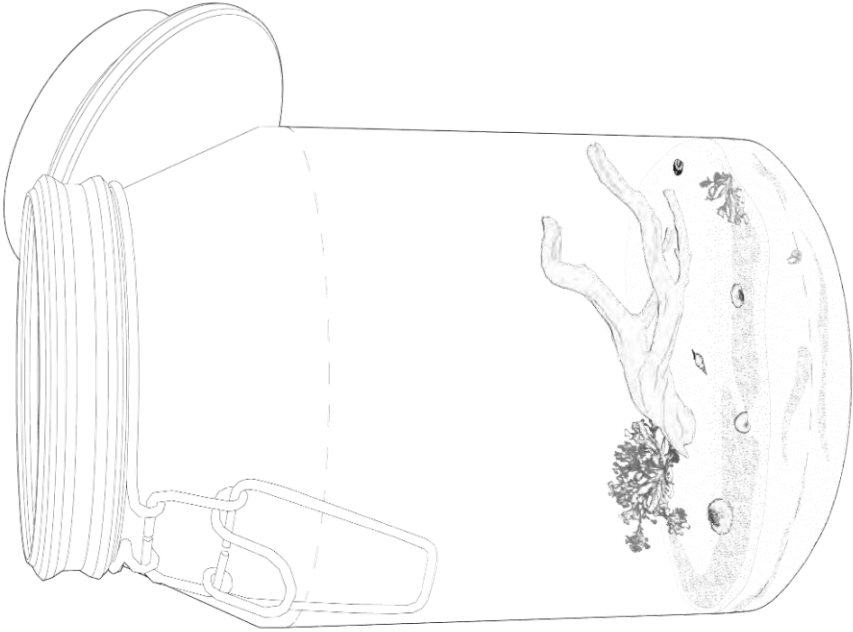
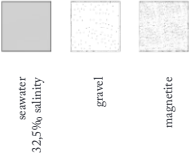
*U l v a
lactuca*



*O s t r e a
edulis*



*s e a
driftwood*

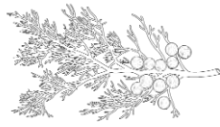




"At times, it feels like the scent
of the *pineta*, but then it softens
with the juniper and the sea lily."

"This one is my favorite—the flo-
ral note comes through so clearly."

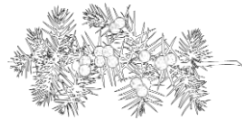
"I love the warmth it carries, as if
the sand itself were exhaling."



*Juniperus
macrocarpa*



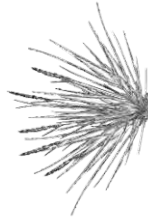
*Helicbrysium
italicum*



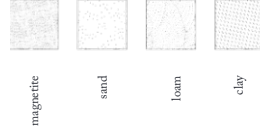
*Juniperus
phoenicea*



*Pancratium
maritimum*



*Ammophila
arenaria*



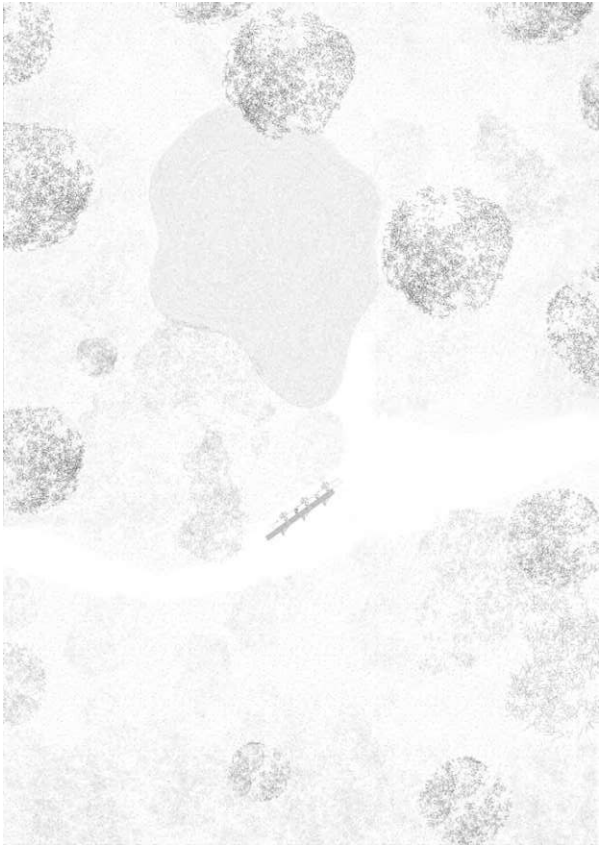


6

THE NOSE

224

8 Installation detail, river jar.



1000 1 2 3 5 10



9

225

THE NOSE



"This one is intense—I don't really like it... acrid, unpleasant... there's this rotten scent that overwhelms you, too strong to enjoy."

"This is the it, exactly—the smell I used to notice when I played near the bogs as a child. I remember it perfectly—it's like being right back there."



Salicornia
perennans



Limbarda
crithmoides



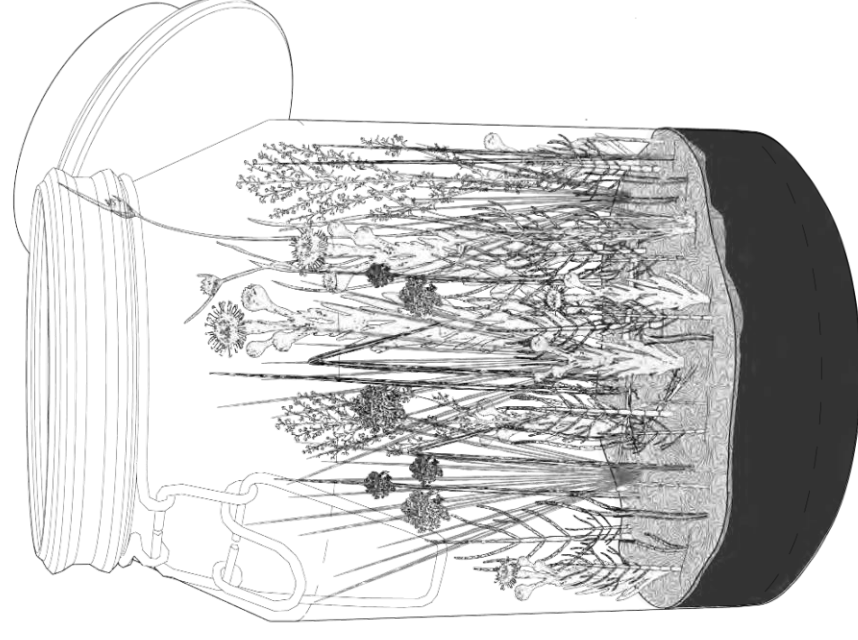
Juncus
acutus



Schoenus
nigricans



Artemisia
caeruleascens





11 Detail of "marshes" and "scrubland & pinet" jars.
12 Installation and site context.

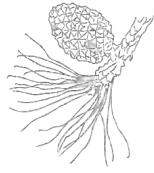


"The scent of resin is intoxicating."

"Good smell, yes, it's like the *arbre magique*..."

"You can sense an slightly acidic, damp note among the balsamic tones..."

"It's exactly the same smell we experience at our house when we go down to the green."



P i n u s
pine



P i n u s
pinaster



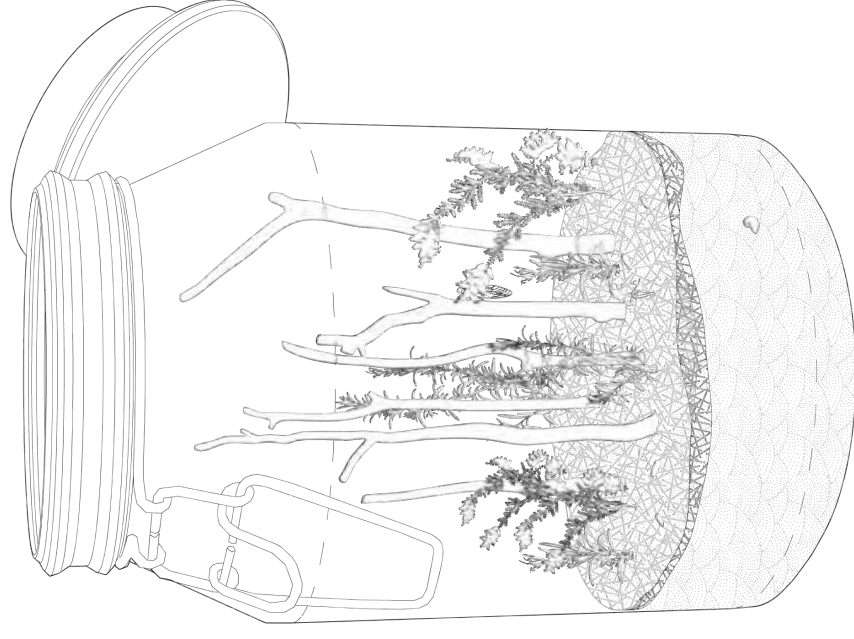
C i c a d i d a e
(nymphal
exoskeleton)



E r i c a
multiflora



R o s m a r i n u s
officinalis





14



"It doesn't have much of a scent... I preferred the last one."

"I catch a hint of wheat, and a faint trace of decay—just a whisper of it."

"I detect a faint trace of fennel, then that unmistakable dampness. This one feels wetter, stronger, more present than the first one."



*A r u n d o
d o n a x*



*F o e n i c u l u m
v u l g a r e*



*D a u c u s
c a r o t a*



OUTRO

view, only to slip away just as quickly. I needed to uncover the invisible threads binding each thought to another. I needed discipline. I needed clarity.

The most challenging part was deciding what to keep and what to leave behind. Again and again, I faced the maddening paradox: what I omitted often felt more significant than what I chose to tell. But this process taught me something invaluable—to trust my instincts. To lean into intuition in my creative decisions, just a little more than I ever dared before.

The same lesson echoed through my first experience curating an installation in nature. It was overwhelming—demanding, intense—but when I finally stood before my audience, explaining my work, watching visitors interact with what I had created, something unexpected happened. The piece took on a life beyond my intentions. It resonated in ways I had never foreseen, unfolding layers of poetry, wonder, and new possibility.

This book is deeply personal—just as personal as the image of the landscape each person crafts through experience. After all this effort, I do not claim to have made groundbreaking contributions to territorial or cultural discourse. I do not yet feel worthy of speaking about it as an expert. No amount of study or reading can keep pace with the ever-expanding horizon of discovery. Each new revelation simply folds into a larger, ever-unfinished mosaic. And so, it matters what kind of picture one chooses to create.

Now that this journey is over and this book stands as proof of its finiteness, I can speak to the depth of transformation it sparked in me. Through research, I found not just answers, but healing. Not solutions, but reconcilia-

tion. The ambition for exhaustive knowledge gave way to a deeper longing—for authenticity. I surrendered to the landscape—to its muddy soil, to the multitudes of bodies that inhabit it, to its ambiguities, to its contradictions. And in that surrender, I fell in love with Maremma—not as an idea, but by yielding to the elusive charm that belongs only to the fuzziness and uncertainty of something real.

This is, ultimately, my point. The world's opacity demands more than mere observation and study—it calls for openness, encounter, and curiosity. It asks for your full presence, your unwavering dedication. It urges you to lean in, to look deeper, to peer through.

Curating this book was an intricate act of weaving—a careful threading together of countless fragments gathered over the past year, interwoven with unexpected contributions from my past experiences.

I collected everything that could possibly be collected during this time of study and observation: hurried handwritten notes scrawled in pursuit of fleeting conversations, half-formed thoughts tapped into my phone, spontaneous snapshots seized in a moment of instinct. Some of it was brilliant. Some of it was utterly useless. And when I realized—back in Vienna, with no way to rewrite, retake, or revisit what was lost—frustration consumed me. Tracing it all back, trying to make it make sense, became an ordeal. I found myself bouncing between scribbled pages and phone memos, digital diagrams and photographs, voice recordings and sketches, objects and memories. Again and again, the bigger picture flickered into

Elisabetta Maria Schmidlein (1989) is an architect and a researcher at TU Wien. She specializes in earth and low-tech architecture, resource-efficient design, and the practical application of natural building materials, pursuing independent research in earth architecture, design and architecture. Her work involves developing earthen material mixtures and conducting material studies in Tuscany.

COMMENTARY

by Elisabetta Maria Schmidlein

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Rosa shows in his theory of resonance, to nature no longer being perceived as a counterpart, but only as a useful object. This not only weakens our ecological awareness, but also impoverishes our very existence.

It is precisely for this reason that academic work such as this project is so important. By dealing with the architecture of an ecosystem such as the Maremma Regional Park, it promotes a new perception of nature. Such studies combine biological, geological and anthropological knowledge with architectural thinking, showing that man is not the center of attention, but part of a delicate network.

How we see nature determines how we act. Those who see it as a dynamic system will treat it differently from those who see it only as a source of raw materials. But this change in perception requires time, reflection and a willingness to observe natural processes. Only in this way can we realize that the environment is not a static framework, but a constantly changing structure that we influence - often without understanding the long-term consequences.

Architects in particular have a crucial responsibility here. Their most important task is to make decisions with full awareness of their ecological and social impact. Architecture is not the isolated design of spaces, but always an intervention in existing systems. At a time when building processes are becoming ever faster and more resource-intensive, it is crucial to act with both creative and ethical reflection. Every decision - from the choice of materials to the adaptation of the landscape - has far-reaching impacts.

The Maremma Regional Park and the other natural reserv-

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OUTRO



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Intro

- Wind pump and delving trough, Maremma Regional Park, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2025.
- Grosseto Maremma and Grosseto Floodplain zoom-in, inework illustration by Valentina Minioletti.
- Bogs, scrubland, pineta and the Uccellina Hills, Maremma Regional Park, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.
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- "Maremma Anra e" musical score, transcribed by E. Lavi, from *Maremma Anra*, 1888.
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- "San Bruci" Abbey, Magliano photo by Valentina Minioletti, spring 2016.
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- "Morello di Scarsano", inework illustration by Valentina Minioletti.
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- Map of the Grosseto floodplain, 1825–1830, Castore Archives.
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- Topographic map of the Grosseto Province, 1820–1830, Castore Archives.
- Map of the Castiglione Lake and its customs, 1695, Castore Archives.
- Plan of the Grosseto Maremma, of the Castiglione Lake and of the Tirapoli customs, 1758, Castore Archives.
- Plan of the Grosseto Maremma, of the Castiglione Lake and of the Tirapoli customs, 1758, Castore Archives.
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- Collage "Scrubland & Pietha", installation, photo by Valentina Minioletti, Principina a Mare, summer 2024 + Montepescali, 1941, Giulio Guiccardini Corsi-Salvati, Archivio Guiccardini, Sesto Fiorentino, Courtesy of Fototeca della Maremma.

- Morello di Scarsano, photo, 2022, Courtesy of Francesco Rossi.
- Ombrone river near the Azzedo PS headquarters, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.
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- Water and interactions, inework illustration by Valentina Minioletti.
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- Beppe Anselmi during workshop day with middle schoolers, La Bianca, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.
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- Beppe Anselmi during workshop day with middle schoolers, "La Bianca", photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.
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IMAGE CREDITS

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- "La spiaggia", cyanotype print by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.
- Beach habitat cube, illustration inework by Valentina Minioletti.
- Beach, Marina di Grosseto, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.
- Beach Indrago, inework illustration by Valentina Minioletti.
- Shells on the shore, Marina di Grosseto, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2025.
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- Driftwood detail, Principina a Mare, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

12 View of the beach, Principina Mare, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

13 Driftwood detail, Principina Mare, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

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15 "Fratino" spaghetti (C¹⁴ analysis), Maremma Regional Park, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

16 Genomulemy diagram inspired by Alcedo APS, notations from the Udden-Wentworth granulometry scale, Inework illustration by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

17 "San Leopoldo" channel outlet, Fiumara, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2025.

18 View from the Castiglione della Pescaia, Giulio Gucciarini Corsi Salvati, 1905. Archivio Gucciarini. Courtesy of Fototeca della Maremma.

19 View from the water, 1950s, Marina di Grosseto, Carlo Bonazzas postcards collection. Courtesy of Fototeca della Maremma.

20 View from the beach, Principina Mare, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

21 "Niente rifiuti in spiaggia grazie" / "no trash on the beach thank you", Principina a Mare, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

22 Fishermen's trash on the beach, Marina di Grosseto, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

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24 Oyster -encrusted tile found on the shore, Principina a Mare, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

25 Calligraphic sapidula Inework illustration, Valentina Minioletti.

26 Calligraphic sapidula Inework illustration, Valentina Minioletti.

27 "Eutrophication" of the Ombrone mouth, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

28 Eutrophication of the Ombrone mouth, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

29 Eutrophication of the Ombrone mouth, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

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32 Beppe shows how to open the shell of the blue crab for consumption / *Callinectes sapidus*, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

33 The beach at 6PM, Alberese, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

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36 Beppe Ascoli on the beach at 6AM, Alberese, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

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39 San Leopoldo outlet, Fiumara, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2025.

40 Whalebone, Inework illustration by Valentina Minioletti.

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45 Saltworks map, Trappola, 1750-1759, Firenze State Archive. Courtesy of Lorenzo Chelazzi.

46 Saltworks map, Trappola, 1750-1759, Firenze State Archive. Courtesy of Lorenzo Chelazzi.

47 Saltworks map, Trappola, XVI-XVII Century State Archive. Courtesy of Lorenzo Chelazzi.

48 Saltworks map, Trappola, Pier Antonio Montuccia, 1757, Castello Archives.

49 Saltworks map, Trappola, Pier Antonio Montuccia, 1757, Castello Archives.

50 Saltworks map, Picchio di Castiglione, 1759, Castello Archives.

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3 "Mare" street signs, Inework illustration by Valentina Minioletti.

4 Formation of a dune diagram, Inework illustration by Valentina Minioletti.

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13 "Margini" movie set photo, 2022, courtesy of Francesco Rossi.

14 Dung beetles on the dunes, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

15 *Spartium junceum* on the dunes, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

16 *Spartium junceum* on the dunes, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

17 Dune as sunset, Marina di Grosseto, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

18 Dune as sunset, Marina di Grosseto, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

19 Sole on the dune, Marina di Grosseto, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

20 The bottom of the dune, Marina di Grosseto, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

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6 Buckleish marsh water detail, Maremma Regional Park, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2025.

7 "Margini" movie set photo, 2022, Courtesy of Francesco Rossi.

8 Bogia, scrubland prairie, Maremma Regional Park, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

9 Bogia, scrubland prairie, Maremma Regional Park, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

10 Original supply of mine tablets package, distributed to the local population by the Italian kingdom for currency making, March 1943, photo by Valentina Minioletti. Courtesy of Lorenzo Chelazzi.

11 Excerpt from the magazine "Malaria, mela maremma, n°3", 1952.

12 Original Cyfox-50% DDT package distributed by the Americans for the Italian population, 1945, photo by Valentina

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Minioletti, Courtesy of Lorenzo Chelazzi.

13 Detail of salt crystallization on flooded soil during the dry season, Maremma Regional Park, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

14 20.9‰ marsh water salinity index, Salinometer measurement, Maremma Regional Park, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

15 31‰ marsh water salinity index, Salinometer measurement, Maremma Regional Park, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

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21 Main channel bank, "Duccia Botrona" marshes, Castiglione della Pescaia, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

22 Collage Swampthunder, 1970s, from *Il libro del Padule, 893* - Main channel, "Duccia Botrona" marshes, Castiglione della Pescaia, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

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25 La "Casa Rossa", "Red House", silica gale and museum building, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

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33 Clay soil sample 1, wet, photo by Valentina Minioletti, spring 2024.

34 Clay soil sample 1, air dried, photo by Valentina Minioletti, spring 2024.

35 Clay soil sample 1, wet, photo by Valentina Minioletti, spring 2024.

36 "Duccia Botrona" marshes, Castiglione della Pescaia, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

37 Clay soil sample 2, wet, photo by Valentina Minioletti, spring 2024.

38 Clay soil sample 2, air dried, photo by Valentina Minioletti, spring 2024.

39 Clay soil sample 2, burnt (900°C), photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

40 Clay soil sample 2, burnt (900°C), photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

41 Collage of the "Duccia Botrona" marshes, Castiglione della Pescaia, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

42 Collage of the "Duccia Botrona" marshes, Castiglione della Pescaia, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

43 Collage of the "Duccia Botrona" marshes, Castiglione della Pescaia, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

44 Collage of the "Duccia Botrona" marshes, Castiglione della Pescaia, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

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46 Collage of the "Duccia Botrona" marshes, Castiglione della Pescaia, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

47 *Halimolol peruviana* sample, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

48 *Limbaria ciliatoides* sample, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

49 *Limbaria ciliatoides* sample, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

50 Water level detail at la "Casa Rossa", "Duccia Botrona" marshes, Castiglione della Pescaia, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

51 View of the "Duccia Botrona" marshes and Castiglione della Pescaia, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

52 Water level detail at la "Casa Rossa", "Duccia Botrona" marshes, Castiglione della Pescaia, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

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1 Scrubland landscape habitat cubes, Inework illustration by Valentina Minioletti.

2 "Mare" street signs, Inework illustration by Valentina Minioletti.

3 Collage "Domenico Turbuz", 1886, Ausonio Ulivi, Archivio Grazzale Present. Courtesy of Fototeca della Maremma + Pineta, Principina a Mare, summer 2024.

4 *Casuarina equisetifolia* sample, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

5 *Pinus pinaster* detail, Inework illustration by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

6 *Pinus pinaster* tree habit, Inework illustration by Valentina Minioletti, rework from *The Architecture of Trees*, 1983.

7 *Pinus pinaster* detail, Inework illustration by Valentina Minioletti, rework from *The Architecture of Trees*, 1983.

8 *Pinus pinaster* tree habit, Inework illustration by Valentina Minioletti, rework from *The Architecture of Trees*, 1983.

9 "Warm valley", "Colungo", Maremma Regional Park, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2025.

10 "Warm valley", "Colungo", Maremma Regional Park, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2025.

11 *Juniperus phoenicea* detail, Marina di Grosseto, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

12 *Juniperus phoenicea* detail, Marina di Grosseto, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

13 *Pinus* nuts harvesting, unknown date, Marina di Grosseto, Archive Consorzio di Bonifica 6 Toscana sud. Courtesy of Fototeca della Maremma.

14 *Pinus pinaster* detail, log found in the pineta, Marina di Grosseto, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

15 *Pinus pinaster* cone and green nuts, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

16 *Pinus pinaster* wood detail, log found in the pineta, Marina di Grosseto, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

17 Typical anatomical characters of *Pinus* ss. from *Formularioeasmi, Cambio*, 2019.

18 "Margini" movie set photo, 2022, courtesy of Francesco Rossi.

19 *Pinus pinaster* detail, Inework illustration by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

20 Traditional pine wood construction, 1907, Bartolucci, Archivio Giulio Gucciarini Salvati, Sesto Fiorentino. Courtesy of Fototeca della Maremma.

21 Collage "Carbonia" (charcoal kiln), 1830s, Archivio Dandi. Courtesy of Fototeca della Maremma + View of the pinewoods, Principina a Mare, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

22-32 Pineta, different floor details, different flora, organic layers producing peat through decomposition, deforestation of the pinewoods, Principina a Mare, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

33 "Isoglio", iron-rich clay pond, "Mungilio", Maremma Regional Park, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2025.

34 Maremma cow cattle, Maremma Regional Park, photo by Valentina Minioletti, summer 2024.

35 Pineta, Principina a Mare, photo by Valentina Minioletti, spring 2024.

36 Pineta, Principina a Mare, photo by Valentina Minioletti, spring 2024.

37 Pineta, forestry work, Marina di Grosseto, photo by Valentina Minioletti, winter 2024.

V River

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2 Bruna river course, linework illustration by Valentina Minoletti.
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4 Ombrone river, near the Alcedo APS headquarters, photo by Valentina Minoletti, summer 2024.
5 Seasonal sand sediment in front of the Ombrone mouth, photo by Valentina Minoletti, winter 2024.
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9 "Devil's bridge", linework illustration by Valentina Minoletti.
10 *Daucus carota* flower detail, photo by Valentina Minoletti, spring 2024.
11 Graphic restitution of the dedication inscription found at "Scoglietto", Paolo Nannini from *Diana Umbronensis a Scoglietto Santuario, Territorio e Cultura Materiale (200 a.C. – 550 d.C.)*.
12 "Diana Cacciatrice", Guercino, 1658. Oil on canvas. 96,8 x 121,3 cm. Fondazione Sorgente Group, Roma.
13 "Scoglietto" location map, linework illustration by Valentina Minoletti.
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16-18 Details from the "Diana Umbronensis" temple remains, different stone and brick perimeter walls, winter 2024.
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20-22 Details from the "Diana Umbronensis" temple remains, different stone and brick perimeter walls, winter 2024.
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24 "Vergheria" (Shepherd's hut), date unknown, Ausonio Ulivi, Collezione Giovanni Contini, courtesy of Fototeca della Maremma.
25 Collage: Farmer in Seggiano, 1924, Paul Scheuermeier. Courtesy of Fototeca della Maremma + Horses and prairie, Maremma Regional Park, photo by Valentina Minoletti, summer 2024.
26 River dam, "La Steccaia", photo by Valentina Minoletti, summer 2024.
27 Sedimentation island, "La Steccaia", photo by Valentina Minoletti, summer 2024.
28 Tura bridge flood gates, "La Steccaia", photo by Valentina Minoletti, summer 2024.
29 *Arundo plinii* texture detail, photo by Valentina Minoletti, summer 2024.
30 *Arundo plinii*, linework illustration by Valentina Minoletti.
31 Brush detail, *Arundo plinii* leaves binding, photo by Valentina Minoletti, summer 2024.
32 Brush detail, *Salix alba* binding, photo by Valentina Minoletti, summer 2024.
33 *Arundo plinii* brush prototype, photo by Valentina Minoletti, summer 2024.
34 *Arundo plinii* wall element system detail, linework illustration by Valentina Minoletti.
35 *Arundo plinii* wall elements system prototype, photo by Valentina Minoletti, summer 2024.
36 *Arundo plinii* wall elements, constructive system proposal, linework illustration by Valentina Minoletti.
37 *Arundo plinii* leaf mat prototype, photo by Valentina Minoletti, summer 2024.
38 *Arundo plinii* roots, photo by Valentina Minoletti, summer 2024.
39-42 *Arundo plinii* roots decoction process, photos by Valentina Minoletti, summer 2024.
43 "Margini", movie set photo, 2022, courtesy of Francesco Rossi.
44 Fisherman on the Ombrone riverbank, photo by Valentina Minoletti, summer 2024.
45 "Louisiana crawfish" (*Procambarus clarkii*), photos by Valentina Minoletti, summer 2024.
46 "San Leopoldo" channel outlet, Fiumara, photo by Valentina Minoletti, winter 2025.

VI The nose

- 0 "Re/spirare", Isabel Rodriguez Ramos, raw earth sculpture, photo by Isabel Rodriguez Ramos, Principina a Mare, summer 2024.
1 Installation on site, 42°41'19"N 11°00'06"E, photos by Valentina Minoletti, september 2024.
2 Installation elements, axonometric linework illustration by Valentina Minoletti.
3 Installation conceptual diagram, linework illustration by Valentina Minoletti.
4 Visitors interacting with the installation, 42°41'19"N 11°00'06"E, photos by Valentina Minoletti, september 2024.
5 Installation, axonometric illustration by Valentina Minoletti.
6 "Beach", jar, linework illustration by Valentina Minoletti.
7 "Coastal dunes", jar, linework illustration by Valentina Minoletti.
8 "River", jar, Installation detail, 42°41'19"N 11°00'06"E, photos by Valentina Minoletti, september 2024.
9 Plan, installation and context, linework illustration by Valentina Minoletti.
10 "Marshes", jar, photos by Valentina Minoletti, september 2024.
11 Detail photo of "Marshes" & "Scrubland & pineta" jars, photos by Valentina Minoletti, september 2024.
12 Installation and context, 42°41'19"N 11°00'06"E, photos by Valentina Minoletti, september 2024.
13 "Scrubland & pineta", jar, linework illustration by Valentina Minoletti.
14 Visitors interacting with the installation, 42°41'19"N 11°00'06"E, photos by Valentina Minoletti, september 2024.
15 "River", jar, linework illustration by Valentina Minoletti.

Outro

- 0 Me on the canoes on the Ombrone, photo by Mario Carri, summer 2024.