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**PAD #17 | LANDSCAPE – ART VS DESIGN****O. EDITORIAL #17**

Towards a possible “liquid mapping” by Anna Mazzanti & Matilde Marzotto, *guest editors* **005**

**I. MAPPING THE MEDITERRANEAN. THE DESIGN THIRD SPACE**

Visual Territories and Communicative Landscapes. Mapping and Configuration of Complex Phenomena by Vincenzo Cristallo & Miriam Mariani **018**

The *Seascape* beyond the Physical Dimension. How Data Design could Display Complex Marine Environments by Matteo Aimini & Lucilla Calogero **036**

Design in Digital Cartography. Evolving Landscape Narrative Tools for Territorial Exploration and Enhancement of Local Heritage by Paola Menzardi & Pier Paolo Peruccio **060**

Places in Lieu. Mediterranean Sedentary and Nomadic Living Spaces by Alberto Bassi, Giuliana Califano & Tommaso Listo **077**

**II. DESIGN VS ART IN MEDITERRANEA AREA**

Ulysses Does Not Come back Home. From Maps of Migration, Small Constellations of Artistic Influences in the Mediterranean Landscape by Marco Borsotti & Sonia Pistidda **104**

Visual Grammar of the Mediterranean Landscape: Chromatic, Iconic and Object Identities by Raffaella Trocchianesi **133**

Drawing the Place’s Soul. Designing the Representation Experience in the Schist Villages by Graça Magalhães **160**

**III. DOCUMENTS. ARTISTIC PROJECTS FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA**

Landscape is a Space of Action and Thought by Costanza Meli **183**

Becoming Garden. Notes on the Creation of a Planetary Garden by Miguel Georgieff, Michele Loiacono & Sergio Sanna **206**

Adrian Paci’s Art House in Shkodër: a Common and Shared Space between Cultures and Art by Martina Marolda **231**

**V. BIOGRAPHIES**

About the authors **257**



# **DESIGN VS ART IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA**

# Drawing the Place's Soul. Designing the Representation Experience in the Schist Villages

**Graça Magalhães**

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## **Keywords**

Drawing, Image, Landscape, Design, Project.

## **Abstract**

In this paper we will discuss the question of landscape representation as a crossing between art and design as from the project *Drawing the Place's Soul*. Underlying the project is the idea – that serves as an argument for landscape representation – of drawing as a visual language and as project's matter (medium). In the field of Visual Studies, images and, in this case, drawing are an unavoidable presence of the 21st century, as an iconographic bond, politically participative in the ethical valorization of people and territories. The choice of the medium (drawing) promotes craft as a bodily action, also deeply associated with the landscape. Methodologically, it was sought that the experience, free of constraints, would be able to provide information for the internal evaluation of the territories and for the way they are disclosed. The initial experiment was carried out in three territorially and circumstantially differentiated villages (whose territory is deeply deserted and which, in summer 2017, was hit by violent forest fires) and will be presented and analyzed here from a perspective that sees landscape as a purpose for the interception of art and design through the practice of drawing.

## 1. Introduction

Firstly, we will use the polysemy of the concept of *landscape* that derives from the fact that the term refers to the representation made from the perception of space and, simultaneously, to the territory itself, through its present and past artifacts. Such polysemy also refers to the action of representing (drawing) from two different perspectives: the contemplative and individual nature of the designer's perception makes representation an artistic tool as an alternative to a coded representation which describes morphological and environmental features. These two ways of seeing the territory are naturally differentiated and, consequently, they imply different communication systems, showing, over time, formally and politically, the divergent and conflicting character of the representation.

The question posed here reflects on the practice of drawing, originally associated with the artistic and on how it is bended in the design project. This question is approached as from the project *Drawing the Place's Soul*, considering the idea of landscape representation as a crossing between art and design. The experiment took place during the summer of 2018 in three villages of a vast territory in the interior of Central Portugal and was carried out mainly as fieldwork in Schist Villages (Aldeias do Xisto), a project, in turn, proposed as part of the design work developed and funded by the Agency for the Touristic Development of Schist Villages [ADXTUR] for the promotion and dissemination of the villages.

Drawing was the chosen medium within the field of Visual Studies and, therefore, inscribing image as an unavoidable

presence of the 21st century, assuming an iconographic bond, politically participative in the ethical valorization of people and territories.

The experience was initially implemented in 3 villages: Janeiro de Cima (Zêzere); Ferraria de São João (Serra da Lousã) e Aldeia das Dez (Serra do Açor) and counted with the presence of six designers, two people who took care of the documentation (photography and video), a coordinator and a supervisor in articulation with ADXTUR.

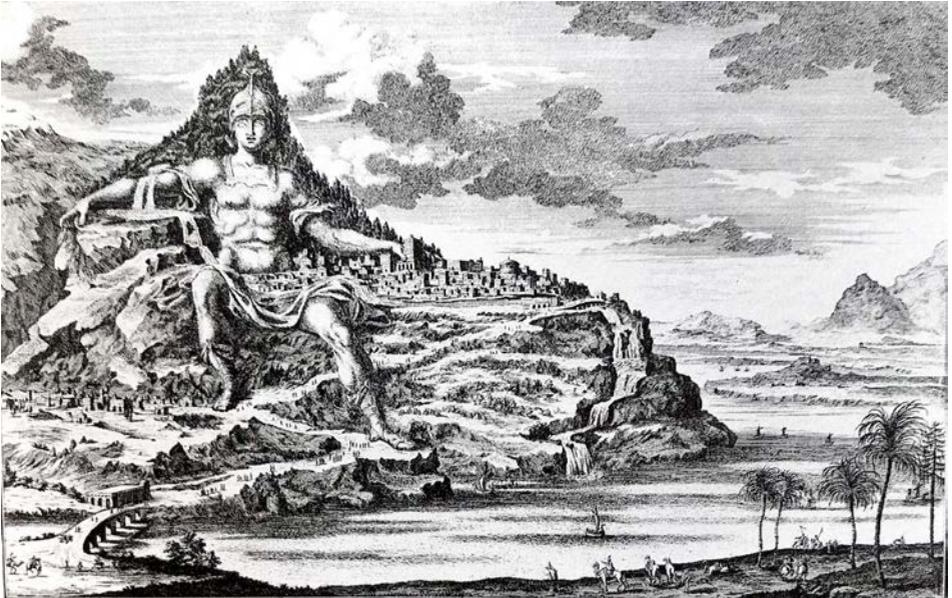
## 2. From the Name to the Landscape History

According to Carlo Tosco (2007), the name *landscape* (*paisagem*), connected to visual representation in general and to art in particular, has no common meaning, even among the languages of the same origin (Latin). The late medieval term *paese*, which extends to the Latin languages and from which the word landscape derives, used to denote a large expanse of land regardless of its territorial or legal limits. Therefore, landscape painting or drawing is not from the outset associated with the representation of territory but, above all, imposed as a means of perception of space. The term that identified the representation with particular artistic qualities – *pittura di paese* – originates in the Renaissance, referenced in 1481 in Tuscany, concerning Paolo Uccello's painting<sup>1</sup>. However, the term as an artistic technical word is only clearly identified in France as a neologism of the word *paysage* and most likely comes

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1. Paolo Uccello as referred by Cristoforo Landino, in 1481: “buono compositore et vario, gran maestro d'animali et di paesi”

from Fontainebleau school<sup>2</sup>. What has been disseminated and accepted between the Romance languages has no direct correspondence in German or in English language once in those languages the designation endures in the use of compound words associated with the root *land*: *landschaft* or *landscape*. Historically, the *subjective* representation of landscape was most of the times linked to the visual and literary arts, while the *objective* representation of landscape was related to legal and political planning and was determined by the scientific objectivity of the nineteenth century. If about the former we can say that it mimics and symbolizes reality, about the latter we say that it seeks the meaning (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** J. B. Fischer von Erlach, *The Mount Athos monument of Dinocrates to Alexander the Great (A Plan of Civil and Historical Architecture)*, 1721, engraving.

As presented by Jorge Gaspar (2001), referring to Giuseppe Dematteis, from the point of view of geography, this dichotomy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, saw landscape from two fundamental trends:

1. the landscape as a symbol, i.e., as a set of signs to be interpreted;
2. the landscape as a model, i.e., as a rational construction that explains the external reality.

In the first case, the visual representation is driven from the symbol to the subject of the representation. In the second case, it is constructed from the representation model that seeks the object. As Martin Warnke points out:

The politicization of landscape moods obviously began when painting had discovered landscape as landscape per se. As the technique of the “atmospheric landscape” was developed in Venice, it was here that landscape was first endowed with qualities that made it possible not only to construe, but to experience the meaning of a Picture (Warnke, 1994, p. 16).

Starting from the Modern Age, the landscape associated with the figurative arts is usually related to the aesthetic of the sublime. In the Romantic period, the landscape will approach the idea of *spirit of the people* through its geographical – territorial and environmental – condition. Also the *spirit of the place* (*Geist des Ortes*) had its great moment in late 18th century Germany, where the first romantics announced their encounter with nature through the combination of art and science.

*Landschaft* is the core theme of *Naturphilosophie*. The transition from the artistic (aesthetic) concept of landscape to the scientific domain occurs with the pioneer of geography - Alexander Humboldt.

Humboldt presented a new way of perceiving the natural world to the European bourgeoisie. (...) The German geographer thus founded the new approach to the “objective” dimension of the landscape: the contemplation of nature was no longer a poetic pastime, but the first step towards a scientific understanding of the cosmos (Tosco, 2007, p. 42).

Thus the pioneer of the historical understanding of the concept of landscape as a field of historiographical investigation is Jacob Burckhardt. As a Renaissance scholar, Burckhardt returns to the joint dimension of man and nature.

### 3. Survival of the Form

For Tosco (2007), Joachim Ritter (Cassirer’s student) had the merit of bringing the concept of landscape back to its aesthetic dimension by giving particular attention to the symbolic aspects of culture and narrowing the relationship between man and nature. In Tosco’s interpretation - based on Ritter - from the point of view of art, nature becomes *landscape* (image) when contemplation is transformed into aesthetic enjoyment, offering the world a *fairer* approach to nature and individualizing an aesthetic relationship with it. The role of art in the development of the idea of landscape is modernist in that it defines figurative arts and, in particular, painting, as the true space of creation, conducting our perception for the aesthetic

contemplation of nature. We intend to consider the concept involved with different areas – from geography to biology, from history to ethnography, from art to anthropology. In particular, we seek the idea of landscape image as a privileged tool for the valorization of the territory, which implies representation as a strategic factor for communication. Thus, landscape is both design and History (Fig. 2).

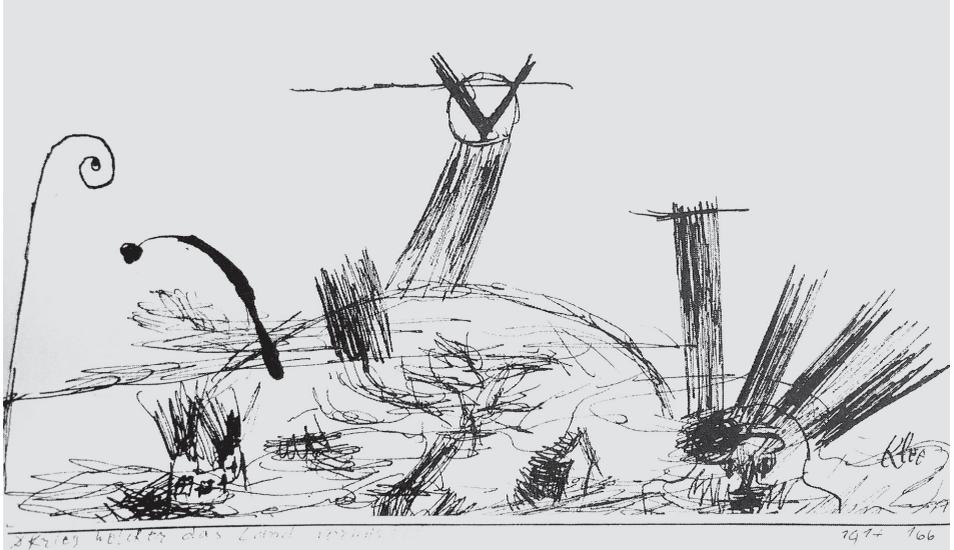


Figure 2. Paul Klee, *The war that devastates the land*, 1914, ink on paper.

More important than *looking* at the territory and the community is *being* in the territory with the community, so that the representation becomes *present-image*, making the invisible visible, revealing rather than showing.

Nowadays we speak about the programmatic *status of places* for establishing invariables structures and the rules of transformation of a territory, respecting and appreciating the local identity. The sensibility is taking on a new scientific dignity.

The environment is not only a question of economic and legal forces trying to balance an ecosystem, but it is also a source of stimuli for the populations that are of great value in defining the quality of the place.

The importance given to the representation of the territory of the Schist Villages, through the project *Drawing the Place's Soul* was promoted by ADXTUR not only as an intentional way of perceiving the territory, but also as a means to give back to the territory and their communities images in which they recognize each other. The general assumptions of the project were the following:

1. the idea of an *environmental image* implicit in the territory's representation that would be determinant for the self-esteem of people and places, whose perception is no longer individual, but a collective phenomenon, subordinated to the appreciation of the group, where the collective image fits into the collective behavioral framework;
2. the importance attributed to the symbolic aspects of the places as they contribute to the analytical process of self-representation, where individuals recognize themselves as spectators and actors, feeling themselves integrated within the images of representation;
3. to fill the place's meaning through the representation of their artifacts that are a representative identity value for the populations.

In this case, the designer is an agent in the territory. It's all about a plural thinking of the landscape as a cultural phenom-

enon. We argue for a representation of an *inductive* geography that starts with participation rather than previous rational argumentation. Concerning the models available, they are the phenomena themselves experienced *in loco*. In the experience carried out in Schist Villages, the idea of landscape encompasses the experience of perceiving and acting, deduced from the territory and transformed into drawing.

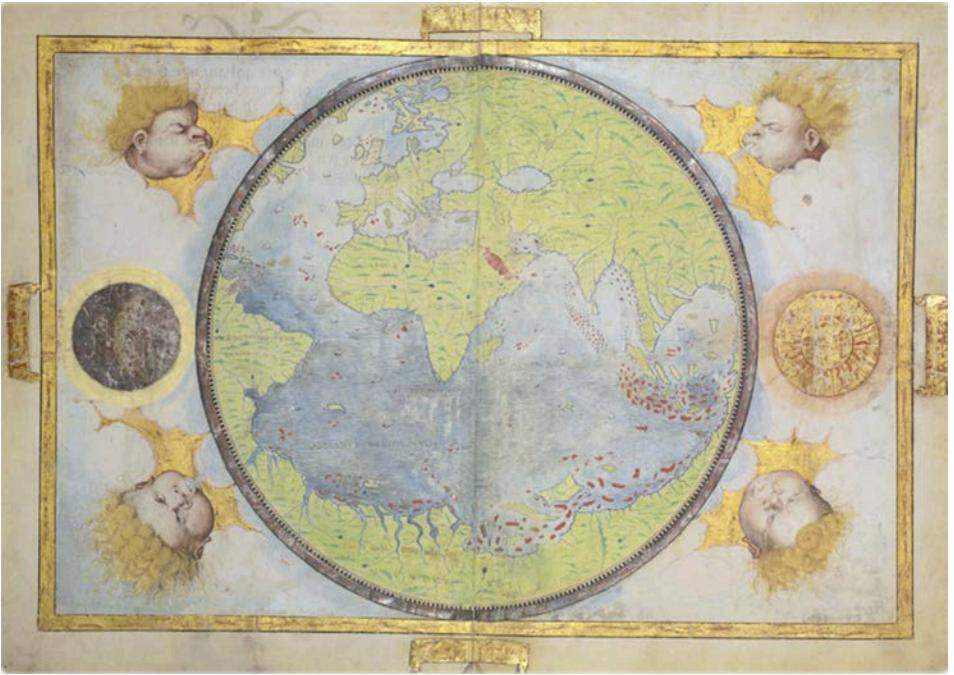
#### 4. Rhetoric of Images

The rhetoric of images has always been connected to the idea of territory and has been gathering *connected knowledge*. In the Renaissance, with the improvement of instruments and technical knowledge, the representation of the territory began to include illuminating artists and painters. The visual images of the territory were refined in connection with the identification and recognition of the territory but also with the strategies of power that sometimes manipulate those same images (Fig. 3).<sup>3</sup>

Nowadays visual images from the territory have a double provenance: technical-scientific, as data that, according to operative codes and conventions, answers to the geographical description with a certain degree of abstraction, and images that result from the proximity to the subject of representation. The first type of images uses rational understanding as a graphic tool, the second uses accidental perception to reach a sensitive understanding.

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3. The *World Map of Miller Atlas* shows the oceans surrounded by continents and spread the idea of an impossible maritime connection between Occident and Orient as the first circumnavigation made by Fernão de Magalhães. Thus this map gives an example of graphic expression as a tool for geopolitics manipulation.



**Figure 3.** Lopo Homem, Pedro Reinel, Jorge Reinel (cartographer), António de Holanda (painter illuminator), *Atlas Miller World Map*, 1519, Paris National Library

According to Joan Torelló (2015), this contradiction is combined in the interpretation of the term *chorography*: the description of a particular territory, linked to art. Chorography would have its origins in the 16th and 17th centuries (as well as the landscape image) in regional narratives based on historical places and its witness value relied on the chorographer *in situ*. According to the author, chorography, through its urban views (drawn or engraved), would bring to the geography more intuitive conditions to decipher the territory. These images were of great importance for the iconography and symbology of sovereign power. Your power was asserted both through commission (commissioner) and also by the

status of the maker (the artists replace the artisans or the cartographer painters). If the difference between technical and artistic image may seem consensual today, it was made at the expense of the abstraction degree that the deciphering of knowledge requires.

According to Denis Cosgrove (1989) the development of representation goes hand in hand with the concept of landscape of the 16th and 17th centuries, sharing the visual attention given to the territory as opposed to the scientific aspect of the map.

#### **4. *Drawing the Place's Soul***

*Drawing the Place's Soul* is a project that uses drawing as an image (result) and instrument and seeks, primarily, to contribute to the cultural enhancement and, consequently, to the communication and dissemination of Schist Villages. Drawing is proposed as the subject matter for landscape representation: the territory and the communities. The chosen method was freehand drawing seen as the prosaic action of the gesture in the conduction of manual instruments, an action deeply associated with nature and landscape.

It was sought that the images would function not only as simulacrum, but as '*present-images*' committed to an ancient time that characterizes both nature and drawing. To this end, experience was considered implicit the balanced between perception and meaning, knowledge and curiosity, interest and confrontation, reflection and closeness, conjugation and distance, and many other attributes that are, by nature, the matter of drawing. Thus, the result was to be born from the proximity with the territory and the people and, therefore, would involve the subjects and the models of the representation.



**Figure 4.** Eliane Beytrison, *Aldeia das Dez*, *Drawing the Place's Soul Project*, 2108, 410x3000mm, ink on paper.

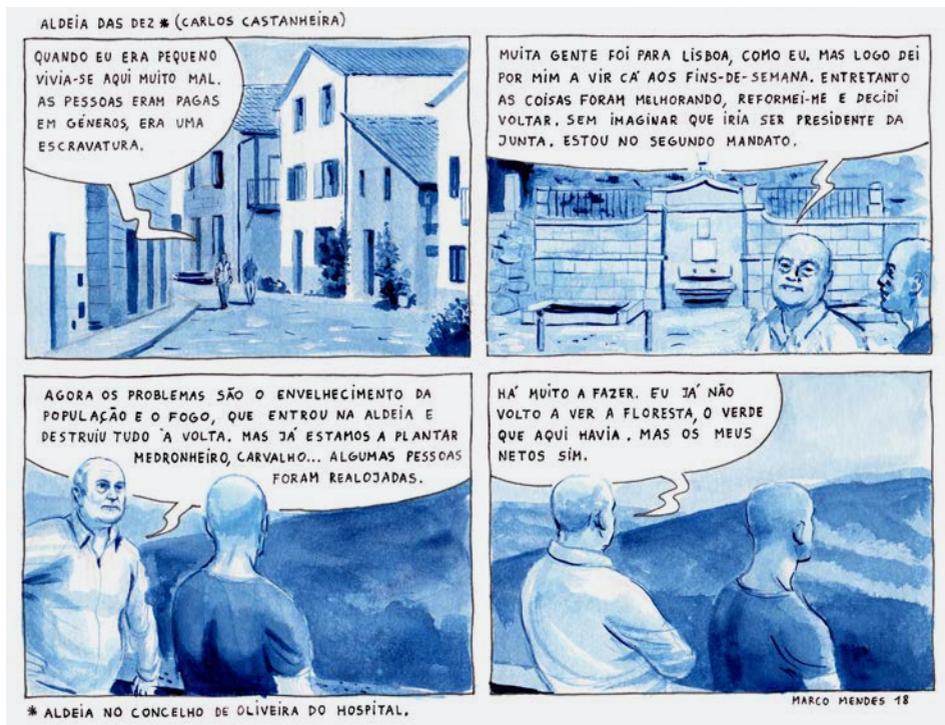
The choice of drawing as medium has as its principle the valorization of the body. Drawing embodies the condition of becoming an agent of feeling and acting. Drawing is therefore an action (*to be drawing*) but images are beyond the degree of *being*. According to Francisco de Holanda's definition<sup>4</sup>, "drawing imagines what it isn't so that it be and it will be".

In our proposal, the transition from *to be* to *being* represents the importance given to the place implied in *being*, in a continuous renewal of the time of *to be*. For Francisco de Holanda, images *are* when they exist materially or in the mind.

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4. Painter, illuminator, architect, designer, essayist, historian, 1517-1585.

Through the experience of drawing, images *happen* and interact with what is external to them; they are engaged with the material place, continually renewing their origin that emanates from the landscape (Fig. 4-5).



**Figure 5.** Marco Mendes, *Aldeia das Dez\** (Carlos Castanheira), *Drawing the Place's Soul Project*, 2018, 297x210mm, pen and ink on paper.

The project has been accepted by the Agency for the Touristic Development of Schist Villages [ADXTUR] as a propaedeutic experiment to get indicators to build a project for all of the 37 Schist Villages. This experiment is part of a design project (under construction) that aims to promote villages through the itinerancy in the territory, disseminating the experience with manual skills.

The main condition for the experience was the ADXTUR's disposal to bring designers to the villages, offering a stimulus for the representation. Images are a result of the empathy, comprehension and generosity of the people. In return it was expected that those images would contribute to the acknowledgment and esteem of the people and of the territory. Beyond this, it was expected that the images would 'migrate' to other media and advertising supports of ADXTUR.

The aim was a constraint-free experience and methodologically able to give information for the internal evaluation of the territories and to understand how they might be communicated and disseminated. The experience carried out mainly served to evaluate its continuity within an extended design project that aims to promote the territory of the Schist Villages through the recognition of its inhabitants as a main condition for the 'survival' of the places. Therefore, in this experience, drawing did not serve to document the villages but to reveal the people's self-esteem and to promote their desire of sharing self experience.

The choice of villages was based on the particular circumstance to which they were submitted during the forest fires in 2017: *Ferraria de São João*, where fire circumscribed the village; *Aldeia das Dez*, which burned in its entirety and *Janeiro de Cima*, which wasn't hit by fire. In addition, the choice also refers to the landscape and social diversity of each of the villages.

Six designers (two per village) have in residence with a coordinator who provided logistical control of fieldwork and two persons who took care of the project documentation.



**Figure 6.** Miguel Jacques, *Janeiro de Cima*, *Drawing the Place's Soul Project*, 2018, 210x297mm, 2018, 210x29mm, black ink on paper.



**Figure 7.** Rodrigo Queirós, *Vista Rio1\_ Janeiro de Cima*, Drawing the Place's Soul Project, 2018, 500x620mm, crayon pencil on paper.

The documentation was made by video and photo. This material was later edited and used as documentation and archive for discussing (critical domain) and dissemination of Schist Villages.

Each designer was required to submit 6 print-ready images. The work was individual (however, open to a joint and 'dialogical' development). Designers were able to continue to draw after the village's residence as the final work was not confined to the fieldwork.

The chosen designers all present differentiated expressions because, despite being a common narrative, it was thought that different expressions would be an added value for the appreciation of artifacts, people and territory. It was also crucial for the designers to be close to and *contaminated by* the places and their inhabitants (embodying the relationship between symbolic value and communication). Thus, guidelines were minimized, especially during fieldwork. However, information about the motivation of the experience was provided to the designers as well as information about the different places regard the forest fires (Fig. 6-7).

As study subject, the territory was considered through the following aspects:

- perception as operative program for representation;
- meeting point for phenomena (natural and human) and artifacts;
- closeness to multiple technical fields and aesthetics;
- sources of information (artifacts and people) for past and present knowledge;

- Observation and study of different geographies and environments (particular, natural and anthropic phenomena that contribute to distinctive features of places);
- privilege of the *local*, the *local-global* admitting a part-whole and whole-part relationship;
- adjusting the *visibility* of the artifacts with the *invisibility* of hidden stories (present and absent manifestations and traces).

Briefly, we tried to characterize the experience in the field of representation from the following aspects:

- involvement / identification – involvement of the designers with the territory, seeking the iconographic identity of each of the villages;
- curiosity / perpetuation – recognizing the signs of each village, perpetuating the essence of the humanized nature of the places;
- experience / time – the experimental dimension was the main feature of this stage of the project as a model of representation based on the time of perception and the meaning of the place.

Drawing was to be seen as a perceptive and cognitive subject, an action materialized in images and whose methodology was related to the *fieldwork*<sup>5</sup>, however, not restricted to it.

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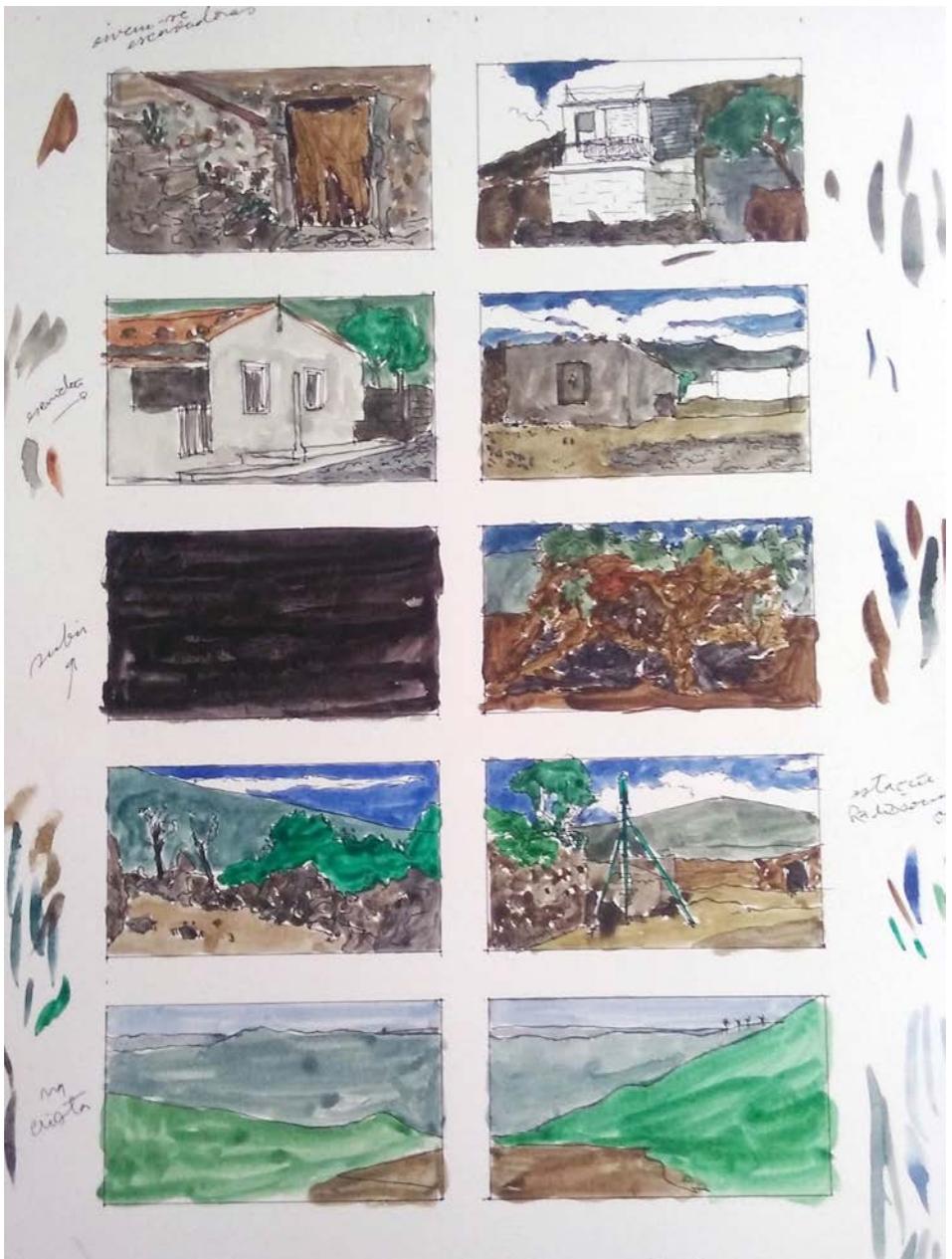
5. The designers had the possibility to continue their drawings, outside the *fieldwork*, in the studio).

*Landscape drawing* as a visual medium was identified as follows:

- favorite space for the representation of stories that reconcile past and present and bring together what would be interrupted or discontinued;
- confrontation ground where new proposals for representation appear.

## **6. Final considerations: notes for a subjectivization of the project**

The experience of representation is founded in the production of village's images while trying to make people feel represented in them. For each of the designers the encounter with the territory of the Schist Villages was a first experience, the strangeness was accepted as a voluntary act. Strangeness provided a sense of referential loss that found balance in representation. The sense of loss summons images that emerge from the confrontation with the territory. To draw an unknown place is also to admit a fictional action. The strangeness in the eye of the designer was revealed in the body of the representation. The perception of distance is simultaneous to the sense of what is adjacent. In this case, the representation mediates between the radical distance and the familiar proximity, uniting projected image and past life, bringing the narration of history closer to that of the ghosts of the past and the dreams of the future (Fig. 8- 9). Thus, representation is capable of evoking loss, placing itself on the edge of the paradoxical by the desire to represent the absent in images – figures in the silence of representation.





**Figure 9.** Sofia Neto, *Ferraria S. João*, *Drawing the Place's Soul Project*, digital drawing

In this case, the reality of the image will never be reducible to the story that was told. On the contrary, the image shows what is being lost in the subject of representation. It's about the magnificent encounter between what lasts in memory and what can be found in representation, making drawing a *'present-image'*, figuring the absent as the essence of representation.

*Drawing the Place's Soul* was thus an experience that conjugates the verb *to draw*, as considered by Buci-Glucksmann as an action that refers to an ancestral ritualization practice that constitutes the passage from nature to culture through the testifying images. Ritualization inherent to the act of creation, as opposed to dogma, whose poetics disclose content through shape.

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V

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**Miguel Georgieff**

Member of Coloco, an independent collective born in 1999. Since 2006 it formally constitutes a landscape firm that brings together landscape architects, urban planners, botanists, gardeners, artists who collaborate with a vast network of experts, from botanical activism to ecological engineering. Over time, the experience has led to discussions with professionals, local authorities, associations or singular personalities with the aim of creating and supporting integrated projects, bringing together public services, associations, activists and volunteers to explore new relationships in reflection and collective construction. Coloco also plays an important role in broadcasting and teaching in the form of seminars,

or both academic and informal public conferences. Exploration, strategy, activation, construction, transmission are the phases of Coloco's projects in order to support the relationship between people and the places where they live, all unique and all together. Situations and requests vary indefinitely, but commitment is the same: creating places whose quality is measured by their ability to accommodate the enormous diversity of life.

<https://www.coloco.org/>

### **Tommaso Listo**

Master degree in Philosophical Sciences at the University of Milan. Specialized in Digital Humanities at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. Research fellow in Design at Iuav University of Venice. From 2019/2020 PhD in Architecture, History and Project at Polytechnic of Turin.

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### **Michele Loiacono**

Scuola del Terzo Luogo was born and developed during several editions of Incontri del Terzo Luogo, moments of research on the "undecided" spaces of the city, spaces in which not everything is totally chaotic and wild, but where not everything is already planned. Starting in the fall of 2012, an informal group of people started a journey within these spaces that has facilitated comparison, actions on public space, experimentation, relations with the context and various forms of life with special regard to the topic of the garden. The reference place that gave life to this path, supporting it with its own resources, is Manifatture Knos, an undecided space in the city of Lecce, that has been recovered after a long period of abandonment and returned to the city as an independent cultural center. Scuola del Terzo Luogo wants to deal with new forms of pedagogy by challenging conventional teaching models, where giving political dignity to indecision becomes the modality of intervention on the common good, or the practice through which we take care of places.

[www.manifattureknos.org](http://www.manifattureknos.org)

### **Miriam Mariani**

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### **Martina Marolda**

She is currently working on the correspondence and on the publication of the sculptor Vico Consorti (1902-1979) at the University of Siena, following the assignment for the research project *Siena anni Trenta: ipotesi per una mostra* (2017). In 2016 she joined the national project *Diffondere la cultura visiva: l'arte contemporanea tra riviste, archivi e illustrazioni* (Progetto Nazionale FIRB 2012). In March 2016 she received her PhD at the University of Florence with a thesis titled *Le immagini al potere, le immagini del potere. La rappresentazione fotografica dell'architettura contemporanea nelle riviste italiane di settore (1928-1943)*. Graduated in Contemporary Art History at the University of Siena in 2011 with the thesis *Adrian Paci. Da Albanian Stories (1997) a The Encounter (2011)*, she is also specialized in video art. She is interested in the architecture of the Sixties in Italy and Europe, a theme that she has treated in her research *L'architettura pneumatica. Ricerche negli anni Sessanta tra avanguardia e utopia* (2007). Her recent research interests include new media in relation to visual arts, with special reference to architectural communication in Italian, French and German magazines in the Twenties and Thirties and in relation to power and totalitarianism.

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### **Matilde Marzotto**

She is an art historian. In 2007 she published "Arte Open Air. A Guide to Contemporary Art Parks in Italy". She curated lectures and workshops focusing on the relationship between aesthetics, art and landscape, in collaboration with FAI Fondo Ambiente Italiano, Fondazione La Raia and Orticola di Lombardia. In 2014 she founded 'lookaroundart', an entrepreneurial initiative aimed at bringing a wider audience closer to contemporary art. Currently, together with the management of the 'lookaroundart' project, she continues her teaching activity in public and private institutions such as IED-Istituto Europeo del Design and Politecnico di Milan.

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Artist and assistant professor of the University of Aveiro (UA). She teaches Drawing in the Design degree and Graphic and Plastic Expression in the master course in Contemporary Art Creation. Currently she is director of the master course in the same university. She got a Ph.D. thesis in Design from the same UA. She is also integrated member of the ID+ Research Institute for Design, Media and Culture, UA and collaborative researcher of i2ADS Research Institute in Art, Design and Society, University of Oporto. She usually participates in national and international congress and projects, academic publications about drawing and image and commissions and boards. As part of your academic background she got several scholarships from Portuguese institutions (Portugal Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation) and also foreign institutions (Monbusho - Ministry of Education of Japan). She worked as artist in Portugal and other countries. She lives in Portugal since 1993.

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**Sergio Sanna**

Member of Ground Action, a collective of experts in the field of architecture, landscape and art, which is inspired by all those collective, active and participatory practices of space making such as, for example, the international experiences of the operational workshops. Its activity is configured as an on-site and open air research atelier, aimed at triggering or accelerating the re-evaluation processes for peculiar places, claiming the performative value of the action in the public space and in the landscape. It promotes sustainable design by using recycled materials and the direct and concrete realization of the installations using impromptu ways and forms. According to its method, Ground Action helps to create the opportunity for a dialogue with administrations, other local institutions and all those subjects active in the area capable of providing specific support and knowledge.

<https://www.groundaction.eu/>

**Raffaella Trocchianesi**

Architect and Associate Professor at Department of Design, Politecnico di Milano, she teaches Interior Design Studio at the School of Design and Design Research Context and Resources at the PhD Programme in Design. Director of the specialization Master IDEA\_Exhibition Design, she mainly deals with Design for Cultural Heritage in terms of museography and exhibition design, communication and enhancement of local areas, new models and narratives of cultural experiences, the relationship between design, humanities and arts.

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*Progetto grafico* is an international graphic design magazine founded in 2003 and published by Aiap, the Italian association of visual communication design. A point of reference for such design in Italy from its start, it has also been fully translated into English since 2012. • In December 2017, Jonathan Pierini and Gianluca Camillini became the current editors. • The new *Progetto grafico* offers a critical look at graphics and visuals through a narrative broken up into fragments. Its aim is to offer articles connected in different ways so as to foster a series of transdisciplinary, historical and contemporary considerations. This multiple viewpoint, ranging from very distant to very close, seeks to look at the real both in the broadest terms as well as in a more specialist context. Our belief is that observation, whether of artifacts or representations, as well as production of visuals or graphics can add to today's cultural debate. • Contributions can include visual material, essays and interviews. Each issue intends to explore the storytelling opportunities of the journal.



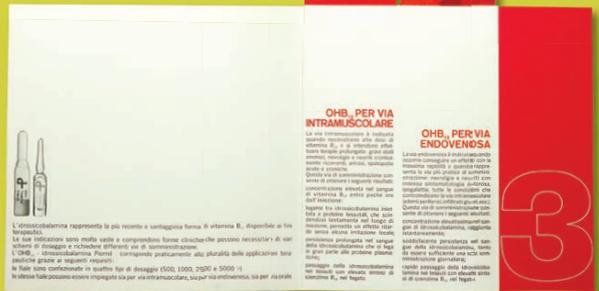
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