

# Lampedusa. Memorial for the Shipwreck of the 3rd of October, 2013

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*Memorial, Lampedusa, Quarry, Collective, Theatre*

## /Abstract

The report will describe an environmental recovery project carried out in an abandoned quarry in the island of Lampedusa, slightly embedded in the rock and overlooking the sea.

It is a striking witness of the southernmost strip of land in Europe.

This stretch of sea is the tragic "theatre" of people's migrations, of their hopes, anxieties, dramas, joys and sorrows, of humanity seeking for hope. At the same time the place is ideal to host collective events, it is a place of metaphysical suspension, suitable for quiet reflection, it is a witness-place for performances (events) and meetings.

Targeted interventions have been carried out by the inclusion of minimal contemporary "grafts" in order to activate, through their otherness, new relationships between the new and the existing.

The new has a laconic and essential character, therefore timeless, with a dry and minimal design, and evokes images and imaginaries of some important international events that have made the island of Lampedusa similar to a collective "theater".

The key words of the project might be: essential, poetic, laconic, sustainable, accessible.

On 3rd October, 2013 near the coast of Lampedusa there was a shipwreck with a tragic epilogue of 368 dead and 20 missing.

On the wall in contact with the coast, 368 holes were made, they look like air bubbles frozen in the rock which are trying to reach the surface. It is the transposition of a seabed.

The holes will be lit with wax lights at dusk and throughout the night, following a laic ritual. They will become like stars in the constellation. The loss, the absence of the hole in the wall becomes presence, becomes light. Death is transformed into life, hope.

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Vincenzo Latina, was born in 1964. In 1989 he graduated in Architecture at the IUAV in Venice. Since 2015 he has been Associate Professor of Architectural and Urban Design at the University of Catania; he has been a lecturer at the Mendrisio Academy of Architecture (USI). He has presented his works in several national and international publications and is frequently invited to show the design and research activity in many exhibitions, conferences and workshops.

He has received numerous awards and prizes, among which: the "International Mediterranean Prize, City of Dialogue", promoted by the International Mediterranean Foundation (2020); the "Italian Architect Award 2015", awarded by the National Council of Architects, Landscapers, Planners and Conservatories; the "ARCH&STONE'13 Architecture Award in stone of the new millennium. International Award - 2nd edition" (2012); the "Gold Medal for Italian Architecture 2012" of the Milan Triennale; the "International Award to the Client of Architecture Dedalo Minosse" - under 40 (2004); "The Prince and the Architect" (2003) and "International Award for Stone Architecture 2003"

## Photo References

Author drawings: Vincenzo Latina

Author Pictures: PH Lamberto Rubino



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While Ulysses did everything he could  
to return back to Ithaca,  
the new migrants are in search  
for a new life, in the hope of  
finding a place where they can carry on  
living without the nagging worry  
of the imminent end.

One of the greatest challenges to which humanity has been called is the phenomenon of the migration of entire human communities, in vast areas of the globe, due to multiple causes, amongst which a very fast climate change, as long as desertification, wars and conflicts, escaping from discrimination of all kinds and making every effort to improve one's own living conditions are the most important.

While causing great contradictions and social conflicts, the above are reasons for a political, social, economic and security confrontation and debate in large areas affected by migrations phenomena.

Let's hope these issues will be better managed and regulated: human beings cannot become trade commodities, or blackmail or be a threat of radical changes in human communities around the world.

Migratory phenomena are inherent in the human condition as "Homo Errans". The increase in global population and the fast growing environmental and geopolitical upheavals of modernity have hugely amplified these phenomena.

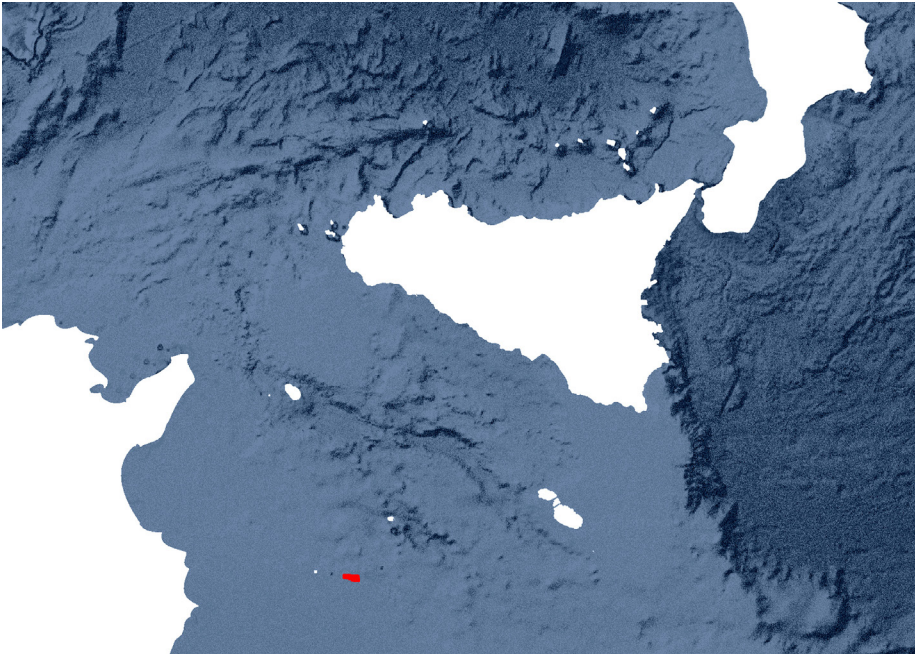
Since ancient times a large number of human events have seen the Mediterranean at the center of trade, navigations, conflicts, migrations and great shipwrecks of all kinds.

The oldest tale featuring shipwrecks is the Odyssey. Homer narrates of Odysseus' journey and the 14 places he has 'visited' in his 10-year wanderings, lost in the Mediterranean.

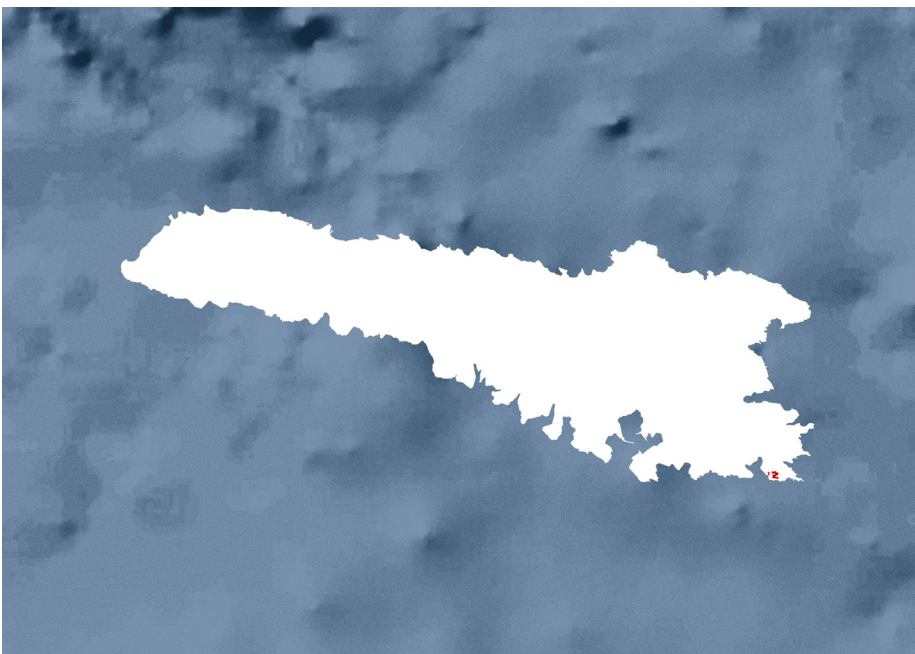
The opening shipwreck is caused by Poseidon, prompted by Apollo, one of Odysseus' fiercest antagonists.

During the third stop, in the country of the Lotophages, corresponding to the current Djerba, the crew fed on lotus flower and lost memory. From that moment on, it became a wandering in the Mediterranean between scary and captivating encounters, monsters and storms of all kinds.

Although more than 3000 years have passed, if we wanted to make a contemporary transposition of Odysseus' wandering, we could replace the ancient hero to contemporary migrations, the exodus from wars, famines and oppressions of all kinds. While Odysseus did everything to return back to Ithaca, the new migrants are searching for a new life, in the hope of finding a place where they can carry on living without the nagging worry of the imminent end. Like Odysseus, the journey is almost never straightforward, it is dotted with unforeseen events, frightening encounters, ancient and contemporary monsters, predators of bodies and souls, exploitation and multiple subjugations of all kinds. The desert crossing is the biggest challenge for many migrants from sub-Saharan Africa - a



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sea of hot sand - with numerous unexpected stops, suffering, and meetings of any type. Those who succeed, face the risk of being trapped in Libyan concentration camps, which can last months, with the aim of finding a way to pay or board a boat to Europe. For those embarking from Libya and Tunisia, the nearest European destination is the island of Lampedusa, the largest of the Pelagie archipelago. Geographically and geologically it is closer to Africa, being part of the extreme edge of the "African Plate".

1 Tunisia, Sicily and, in red Lampedusa

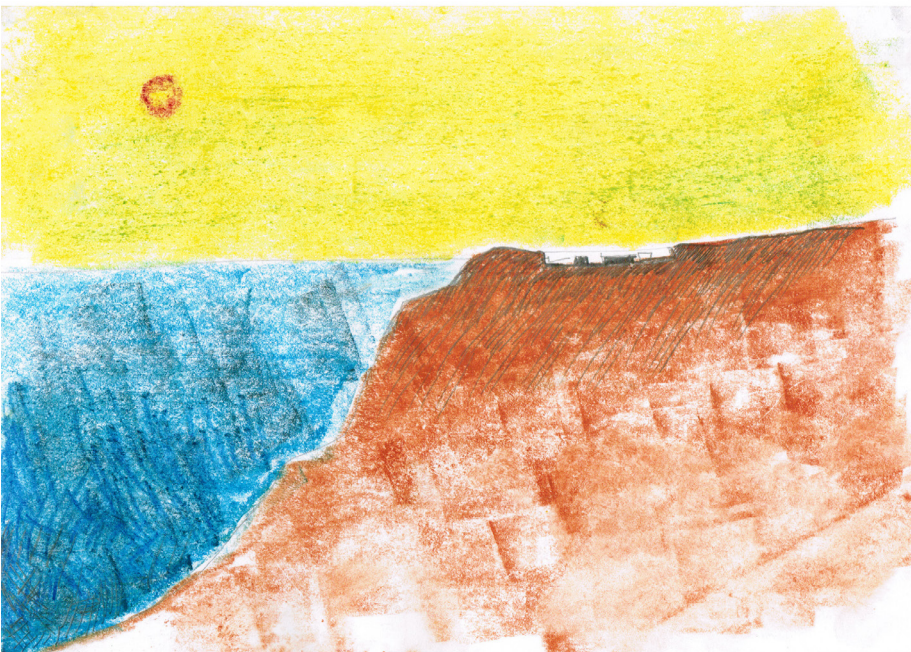
2 The area of the quarry near the airport of Lampedusa

A European can reach in a few hours, say no more than 3, any big city in the EU; An Eritrean fleeing from a dictatorial regime that will chase him for kilometers, can take months walking to the coast, and even years to land in Lampedusa.

While a fictitious person, we call him by a fantasy name Marco, takes two

Fig. 1  
Tunisia, Sicily and, in red  
Lampedusa

Fig. 2  
The area of the quarry near the  
airport of Lampedusa



hours 2 and 45 minutes by plane from Catania to Berlin, Hamid (a young Eritrean migrant) took 1 year and 8 months from Asmara to Berlin and considers himself lucky to have achieved his goal.

Matteo Garrone's film 'Io Capitano', recently nominated for an Oscar as Best Foreign Language Film, 'managed to tell an epic journey without being trapped in rhetoric, mainly thanks to its ability to be inhabited by the stories of others'.... "Films about immigration can be very ugly: paternalistic, lacking in authenticity or didactic. The risk is to get trapped inside some rhetoric or to portray people in a caricaturist way or even to use them as a mirror. Matteo Garrone has not fallen into any of these temptations and has succeeded in making an almost impossible movie: telling a present story - consumed by continuous media representation - and transfiguring it into an archetype."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.internazionale.it/essenziale/notizie/annalisa-camilli/2023/09/06/io-capitano-film-garrone> (last accessed November 2024).

Fig. 3  
View of the quarry

Fig. 4  
Sketch of the section

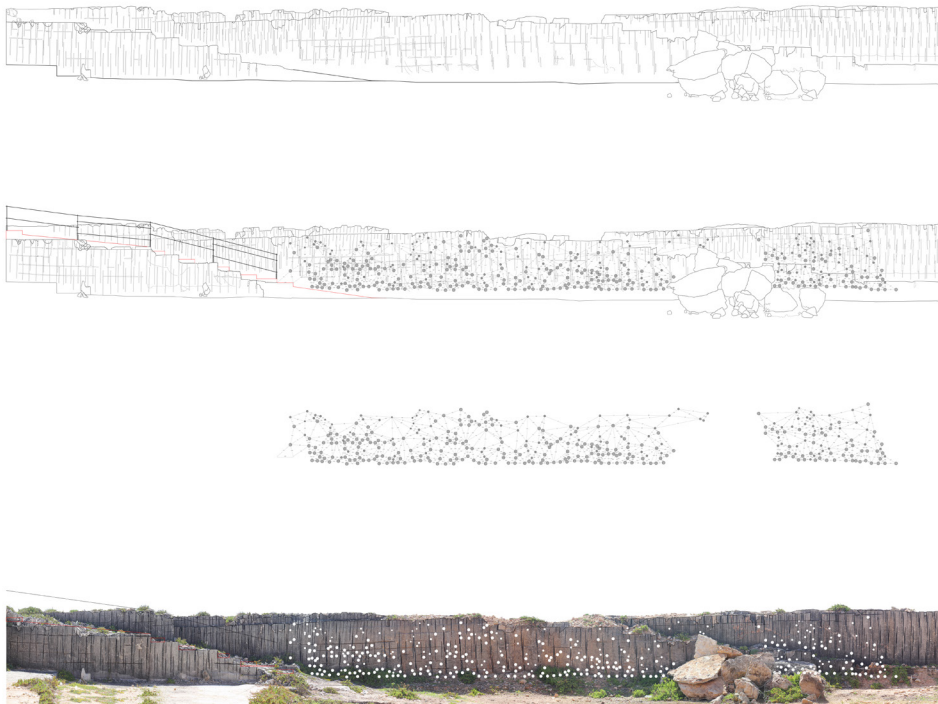
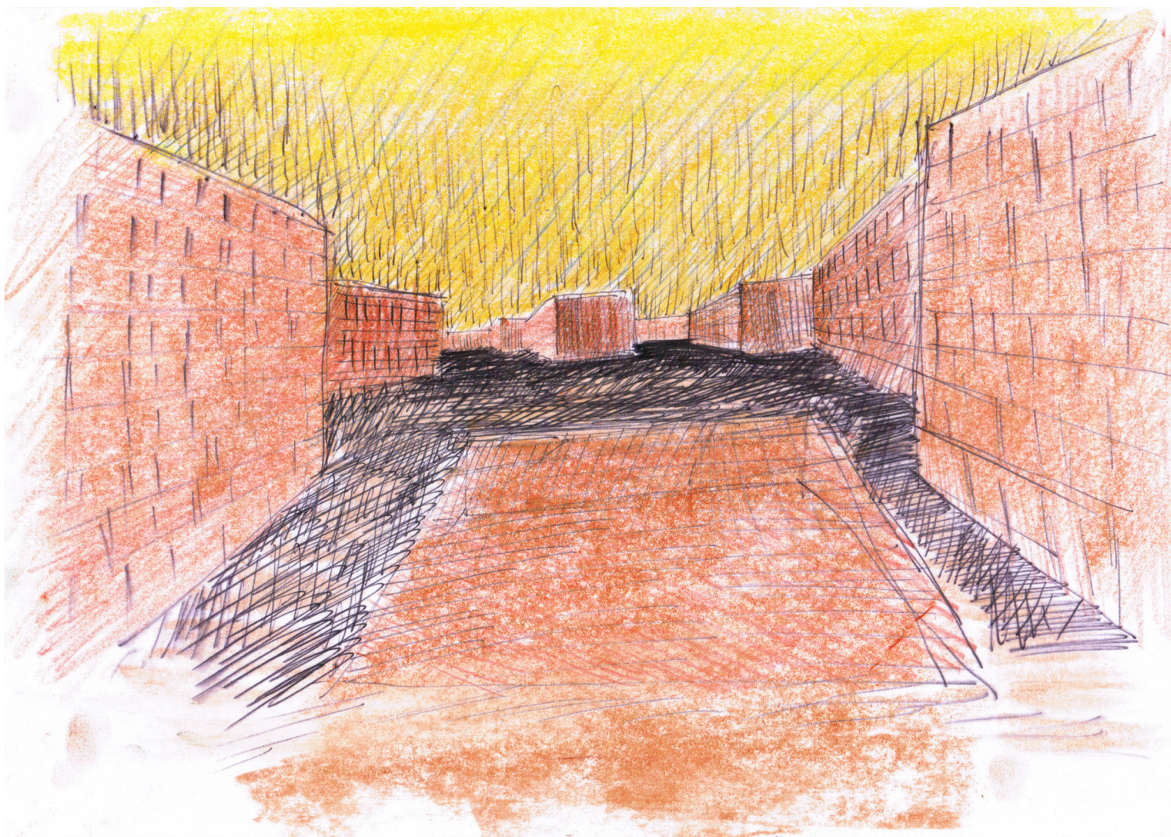


Fig. 5  
Plan of the quarry

Fig. 6  
Wall of the quarry with  
photomontage of the memorial  
project



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Similarly, the reports, recounts, memories and charges pressed by many relief workers, humanitarian associations and migrants are less well known and striking to the general public.

Two Sinti refugees from Ethiopia, who left Addis Ababa and were housed in a reception center in Rome, came up with the idea of drawing up a decalogue with twenty-eight rules for those who, like them, intend to set out on their journey. The first and last are given here – as a sample - as they can best figure out the dramatic lucidity and cynicism, mixed with luck, that a migration requires:

1. Never travel with brothers, wives, girlfriends, parents.
2. Share only with close friends, one or two people, the intention to leave.
3. On the day of departure do not greet the loved ones so as not to make even harder, if not impossible, the departure.

.....  
.....  
.....

26. To become wisely selfish in order to help oneself, not necessary against others, but to give oneself an extra chance of survival.

27. Adapting one's character and spirit to the situation, knowing how to assert oneself when necessary.

28. Don't look behind

The migrants on the barges, setting sail from the Libyan and Tunisian coasts, see in Lampedusa the first patch of European land, hope, the southernmost outpost of Europe.

Fig. 7  
Sketch of the inside of the quarry

## The project

- 3 View of the quarry
- 4 Sketch of the section
- 5 Plan of the quarry

The redevelopment and restoration project of the ex Quarry, a site between Cala Francese and Punta Sottile, in the extreme south-east of the island, is part of a recovery programme for Lampedusa that involves the complex combination of the redevelopment of some degraded areas and to improve tourism on the island itself.

This programme began with the coastal and environmental recovery of Rabbit Island, which has recently become an exclusive tourist destination for those seeking a wild and little-explored marine environment and has been the scene of tragic events that have accentuated some of the opposition already present among the inhabitants. Sometimes these aspects - the tragic shipwrecks, the migrant landings and its tourist vocation - seem irreconcilable; at other times, they denote the great generosity of the people of Lampedusa towards those who find themselves overboard and in extreme difficulty.

Recently, this stretch of sea has been and still is - and presumably will be for a long time to come - the collective 'theatre' of people's migrations, of their hopes, anxieties, dramas, joys and sorrows of a fleeing humanity. For these features, the area suggests the character of a place of metaphysical suspension, suitable for quiet reflection: it is a witness-place. After hypothesising multiple interventions, the vocation of the place emerged and the creation of a 'Migration Memorial', a 'Natural Theatre' for civic, theatrical, musical and cultural events was imagined.

Among fundamental human rights there must also be the right to culture, such as the opportunity to access culture and the dissemination of different artistic expressions, for the sharing and exchange of ideas, for the protection of the Collective Memory: a space open to people, to host gatherings, music, theatrical performances and cultural events.

- 6 Wall of the quarry with photomontage of the memorial project
- 7 Sketch of the inside of the quarry
- 8 The theater area, view from north

The 'Quarry's Natural Theatre' will therefore be a space for the people of Lampedusa, but also a site of tourist and cultural interest that will increase the island's attractiveness.

The environmental redevelopment project involves the recovery of the main quarry both for recreational and tourist purposes, and to commemorate the memory of some tragic events that occurred in the sea nearby the island. It is part of a widespread practice that combines various types of action: environmental recovery, territorial redevelopment and socio-cultural and economic enhancement.



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Fig. 8 The theater area, view from north.

Fig. 9  
The theater area, view from east.

Fig. 10  
Concert in the quarry by the pianist Takahiro Yoshikawa, titled Lampedusa un mare di Pace, organized by Rotary Valle Sabbia, Brescia and supported by the Japanese Embassy in Italy, the Province of Brescia and the municipality of Lampedusa and Linosa, 8 October 2022.





The area is imagined as a two-faced herma, as a place that interprets the main 'vocations' of the island in recent years: that of the first reception of migrants who set sail from the coasts of north-west Africa; and that of the hospitality and tourist-vacation. At the same time, its shape inspires the installation of devices and symbols of the island's 'memory'.

The project is informed by some suggestions: travel, fire, memory, the obstacle as a catalyst of escape. In addition to the journey, the collective "theater" - the Memorial - is one of the founding themes of the project; it is not an object, a sculpture, a memento-warning monument. Far from it, it aims to renew the shared memory enacted by the ritual of light, of fire.

It is supposed that for 125 thousand years humans have started to regularly use fire which is a strange predator. The hypnotic power of fire must be in our DNA. When we light a fire to make embers or to heat the country house, we city humans, who live without a fireplace, stay there and never move from it – think about it. Fire is hypnotic, it reduces anxiety, it encourages social relations, parties, meetings, community ceremonies, sometimes it triggers tribal rituals: fire is contagious.

Fire requires apollinean skill to master it and arouses dionysian feelings too, at the same time it is an antimony, an unsolvable contradiction which comes out when two opposite opposing statements (thesis and antithesis) can be equally proved.

Some fire's antinomies are: life–destruction    terror - salvation    sacred - profane    eros-thanatos.

Among the antinomies of fire: setting fire, the firefight, which are some of the conflictual actions of the war; gathering around the fire is among the most ancient rituals of reconciliation, encounter and peace.

Fig. 11

Commemoration of the shipwreck of 3 October 2013. The light ritual consisted of the lighting of the 368 openings in the wall of the memorial, 8 October 2022



FREUD resorts to polarities: that is, he believes that in every man operate essentially 2 types of drives:

- “life drive” (“Eros”), including libido and self-preservation drive;
- “death drive” (“Thanatos”), which manifests itself in self destructive and hetero destructive tendencies.

The project involves the setting up of actions that are respectful of the environmental peculiarities of the site and its natural orographic and topographic conformation: a quarry slightly set in the rock overlooking the sea. The quarry was active until the 70s of the last century, after which it was abandoned and used as an illegal ‘open-air’ dump.

A recent reclamation programme cleared the area of spoil, waste, rubbish and special waste accumulated over time, returning the quarry floor to the cultivation site.

The first survey of the area was characterized by a multitude of intense suggestions. The quarry, is slightly embedded in the rock, it displays the traces of excavation and extraction of limestone blocks used until the 1970s to build part of the island’s inhabited centre. It was similar to an archaeological site of an ancient human settlement. The different extraction planes, at different heights, seem to be the bases or remains of the foundations of archaic temples or ancient buildings, a site that has been abandoned for thousands of years, one of the imaginary stops of the Odyssey.

The harshness of the site perceived by the ‘client’ as ‘decay’ to be remedied - proposing to create a garden - it was, in reverse, interpreted as an opportunity: the different plans of excavation “... which shuts from view so large a part”<sup>2</sup>, the proximity to the sea, the roar of the waves, the salinity of the air and the extraordinary beauty of the place have become tools of the project.

2 “che da tanta parte dell’ultimo orizzonte il guardo esclude” from the poem “L’infinito”, from the english translation by Frederick Townsend – 1887 NY

Fig. 12 -13  
The shade structures for the summer season



A wall bordering the coast became a 'memorial' thanks to the re-reading of one of Giacomo Leopardi's most intense poems, 'The Infinite'. One cannot look beyond the wall from inside the quarry. The elements of nature, though, may be sensed. The sound, the smell, the salty taste and the spray of the sea reaching the inside of the quarry when it lashes the coastline nearby make up for it, a multitude of sensations and emotions leading to bewilderment.

The wall of the quarry, in the same way as the "hedge", amplifies the imagination of feeling shipwrecked in the sea of emotions. The interventions reuse the "debris", the remains of blocks and embankments already present both outside and inside the quarry to create a large access ramp to the area and to create a large 'maritime theatre' on the already naturally existing slopes to accommodate the audience, having the sea the stage and the backdrop. The large terrace (steps) can accommodate events, commemorations, parties, theater performances and concerts up to 500 people. It consists of a theory of gentle steps that structure a peculiar cordon set into the existing quarry floor, which is partly outcropping. Such a location greatly reduces the need to fill the concrete with aggregates and pigments from the quarry itself. At the side of the steps, in correspondence with the axis of the scene, a large seat has been placed, apparently placed on a podium; this composition multiplies the points of view and in the specific case structures the relationship of the fragments existing in the area, as if they were archaeological outcrops.

Suggesting a further step towards the sea, the visitor is offered the prow of a boat, salvaged from the wreckage of migrants who recently landed on the island and laid there after having undergone a fire treatment, an ancient traditional technique for preserving wood<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> SHOU SUGI BAN "burn the cedar planks"

Fig. 14  
views and overall view of the  
wall of the memorial



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Its presence has lent it abstractness and timelessness, so that it has become an eerie, mute testimony of the peoples who have sailed and been shipwrecked in the Mediterranean over the millennia.

The fire has changed its identity, transforming it into a relic without age, a fossil belonging to distant, present and future memories, driven by the waves of the sea and temporarily lying in the quarry.

9 The theater area, view from east

10 concert in the quarry by the pianist Takahiro Yoshikawa, titled Lampedusa un mare di Pace, organized by Rotary Valle Sabbia, Brescia and supported by the Japanese Embassy in Italy, the Province of Brescia and the municipality of Lampedusa and Linosa, 8 October 2022

11 Commemoration of the shipwreck of 3 October 2013. The light ritual con-

Fig. 15 Partial views of the wall of the memorial

Fig. 16 Detail of the commemorative candles placed in the 368 openings of the wall of the memorial



sisted of the lighting of the 368 openings in the wall of the memorial, 8 October 2022.

Between the boat and the sea is the rock wall, the heart of the memorial, the last stage of the route. The wall was pierced following the plot of a constellation. There are 368 holes in a wall in touch with the sea, they look like air bubbles aiming to reach the sky, as many as the number of people who drowned near the island in the shipwreck on 3 October 2013.

In renewing the memory of the shipwreck, a secular rite of light has been imagined: at dusk, throughout the night, the holes will be lit up, like stars, forming a constellation. The loss, the absence that the hole in the wall represents, becomes presence, becomes light. Death is transformed into a symbol of new life and hope. The act of lighting and placing the fire inside the hole that lights up with vibrant light is an intimate tactile and gestural emotion. The fire becomes a visual metaphor for light in darkness through a secular, multi-faith ritual that predisposes to recollection and community.

Inside the quarry, two steel frames with an essential design, similar to trilithic structures are set in opposition to the massiveness and minerality of the site. These structures, with their metaphysical features, do not exceed the height of the ground level above the quarry and are incorporated into the area.

At the same time, for their essentiality and compositional dryness, they become the ordering elements of the site, underneath which large, bare seats are arranged; in the summer, shade cloths are to be installed to make the daytime stop less 'hot'.

Fig. 17  
The theater area, view from south



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The perimeter fence, in appearance shaky and temporary, consists of a wire mesh spaced from the ground that allows small fauna to pass through without difficulty. The gate at the entrance to the area, unlike the fence, is a gap marking the boundary between the inside and the outside of the quarry.

Targeted interventions involving the insertion of minimal contemporary 'grafts' that activate, through their weighed alterity up, new relationships between the new and the existing are at an advanced stage of realization and nearly completed. The intention is to 'equip' and endow the area, which is already extraordinarily full of charm and tension, with those essential devices and 'services' necessary for an effective, evocative, easy and safe use.

The new elements have a laconic and essential character, and therefore timeless, with a dry and minimal design, so as to interpret the area, effectively enhancing it in order for it to become a peculiar "place" on the island that evokes images and imagery of some important international events that have seen the island of Lampedusa resemble a "Collective Theatre".

12 -13 The shade structures for the summer season

14 views and overall view of the wall of the memorial

15 Partial views of the wall of the memorial

16 Detail of the commemorative candles placed in the 368 openings of the wall of the memorial

17 The theater area, view from south

On 3 October 2013, 368 people, mainly Eritreans, lost their lives in a tragedy off the coast of Lampedusa, nearby the Quarry. There were over 500 people on

Fig. 18

Detail of the commemorative candles placed in the 368 openings of the wall of the memorial. Lampedusa. Ph. Vincenzo Latina

board, and they were close enough to see the lights of the coast. The boat cap-sized and only 155 of them survived.

It is imagined that every year, on October the 3<sup>rd</sup>, within a ceremony, at dusk and throughout the night, the same holes can be lit by wax candles, so as to become like celestial constellations.

On 8 October 2022, the quarry hosted a piano recital by the internationally renowned maestro Takahiro Yoshikawa, Milanese by adoption, who divides his concert activities between Italy and his native Japan.

The event entitled 'Lampedusa: a sea of peace' was promoted by the Rotary Club Valle Sabbia Centenario, District 2050, under the patronage of the Province of Brescia and the Embassy of Japan. More than fifty Rotary guests arrived on the island; the event was attended by some schools and the population of Lampedusa too. After the concert, at dusk, with the favour of the full moon, the Migration Memorial was re-enacted, with a secular rite of light that involved the participants, who took an active part in composing a sort of luminous constellation on a wall of the quarry, by lighting 368 small wax candles, one for each hole, commemorating the shipwrecked people who died on 3 October 2013. The holes arranged like air bubbles in the water aim to reach the surface, the sky.

It was an exceptional occasion of great collective emotion, a preview of future activities in the area.

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## L'INFINITO

Giacomo Leopardi

Sempre caro mi fu quest'ermo colle,  
e questa siepe, che da tanta parte  
dell'ultimo orizzonte il guardo esclude.  
Ma sedendo e mirando, interminati  
spazi di là da quella, e sovrumani  
silenzi, e profondissima quiete  
io nel pensier mi fingo, ove per poco  
il cor non si spaura. E come il vento  
odo stormir tra queste piante, io quello  
infinito silenzio a questa voce  
vo comparando: e mi sovvien l'eterno,  
e le morte stagioni, e la presente  
e viva, e il suon di lei. Così tra questa  
immensità s'annega il pensier mio:  
e il naufragar m'è dolce in questo mare.<sup>1</sup>

## THE INFINITE

(Translated by – Frederick Townsend)

This lonely hill to me was ever dear,  
This hedge, which shuts from view so large a part  
Of the remote horizon. As I sit  
And gaze, absorbed, I in my thought conceive  
The boundless spaces that beyond it range,  
The silence supernatural, and rest  
Profound; and for a moment I am calm.  
And as I listen to the wind, that through  
These trees is murmuring, its plaintive voice  
I with that infinite compare;  
And things eternal I recall, and all  
The seasons dead, and this, that round me lives,  
And utters its complaint. Thus wandering  
My thought in this immensity is drowned;  
And sweet to me is shipwreck on this sea.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Poem "L'infinito", Giacomo Leopardi.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.lieder.net/lieder/get\\_text.html?TextId=971895](https://www.lieder.net/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=971895) (last accessed November 2024).

## **Project data**

Name of the project: **Environmental Recovery and renovation of the ex Quarry between Punta Sottile and Cala Francese - Lampedusa e Linosa - Agrigento.**

Client: **Comune di Lampedusa e Linosa, Agrigento**

Architecture: **Vincenzo Latina**

Collaborators: **Shai Cristallo, Roberto Germanò**

Consultant: **Geologo Giuseppe Sorrentino, Agronomo Carlo Di Leo**

Building Company: **ATI D.L. Costruzioni srl, Impresa Costruzioni Eredi Marotta Salvatore**

Use: **Parco costiero**

Year: **2017-2023**

Location: **isola di Lampedusa**

Dimension: **5000 mq circa**