Athens Journal of Architecture 2027, 13:1-39
https://doi.org/10.30958/aja.X-Y-Z

Entropic Landscapes between "Ruins in Reverse", "New Monuments" and the "Extended Field" of Architecture in the Context of the Reclaimed Land of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region, in North-East of Italy

By Michela Lupieri[*] & Adriano Venudo[±]

This article investigates the intricate intertwining of art, architecture and landscape in the specific context of the reclaimed lands of the Friulian and Isonzo lowlands in north-eastern Italy. The research draws upon a range of theoretical concepts: Rosalind Krauss's notion of "expanded field", Robert Smithson's "entropic landscapes", Alain Roger's theory of "artialisation" and Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad. It explores the potential of artistic and architectural interventions to re-semantise territories that have been eroded by cultural and ecological pressures. The methodology employed is founded upon the walking practice and the utilisation of site specific strategies, with the presentation of four project case studies — farmhouses, water drains, embankments and fishing nets— located in the fragile and hybrid landscape of the reclaimed countryside and the Marano lagoon. The objective of each intervention is to activate new narratives by marking, revealing, re-inhabiting or commemorating residual landscapes that are at risk of abandonment and simplification, where the latter means a pronounced homogenization and loss of structural complexity of the landscape. The artistic acts proposed are not intended to be nostalgic or celebratory; rather, they are to be understood as "weak monuments": sensitive and poetic devices in dialogue with place and memory. The research endeavour is to establish a theoretical-operational framework for integrating art and architecture as generative tools in the transformation of marginal rural landscapes, reinterpreting reclamation as a dynamic palimpsest and proposing the archipelago as a territorial figure and design strategy for future resilience.

Introduction

The introduction provides a contextual framework for the "New Friuli Deserts" research unit, delineating the drainage landscape of the Friuli plain (Figure 1), the thematic of desertification, simplification (a pronounced homogenization and loss of structural complexity of the landscape) and loss, and the interplay between art and architecture. This is followed by a literature review which presents interdisciplinary theories of reference that are specific to the research: "expanded field"; "entropic landscapes, new monuments and ruins in reverse"; "artialisation"; "walking" as an artistic practice; and "artscape". This is followed by an investigation of the heritage of reclamation architecture as an example of an "expanded field" for contemporary intervention. In the applied methodology, the stages of research development are

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presented, with a particular focus on the utilisation of walking as both a method and a device/idea. This is followed by four case studies of landscape sites that highlight the crucial role of art in the development of new narratives. The results demonstrate the proposed cases' potential to become general models, or macro "families", for a possible art-architecture-landscape interaction. Finally, in the conclusions, the theme of the landscape of the reclaimed land emerges as an artistic, landscape and architectural palimpsest, bearer of memor and generator of new narratives, where the ruins become activatable devices for a new territorial project.



Figure 1. *Project's research context: the reclaimed land of Friuli Venezia Giulia and the Marano Lagoon in North-Eastern Italy*
Source: Eagle FVG open source GIS Database Friuli Venezia Giulia Region.

Contextualise the "New Friuli Deserts" Research Unit and the Reclamation Landscape of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Plains

The term "Friulian deserts"[1] is employed to denote a contemporary agricultural landscape in the far north-eastern part of Italy, which is the paradoxical result of a century of drainage works and intensive transformation of the Friulian and Isonzo lowlands (Figure 2).

1. A. Venudo, "Tra processo e forma: 'Progettare con la natura'. Latisana e le tre acque," in A. Venudo, L. Del fabbro Machado, and E. Ceschin (eds.) *Laboratorio Paesaggio Latisana* (Trieste: EUT, 2020), 10-31.

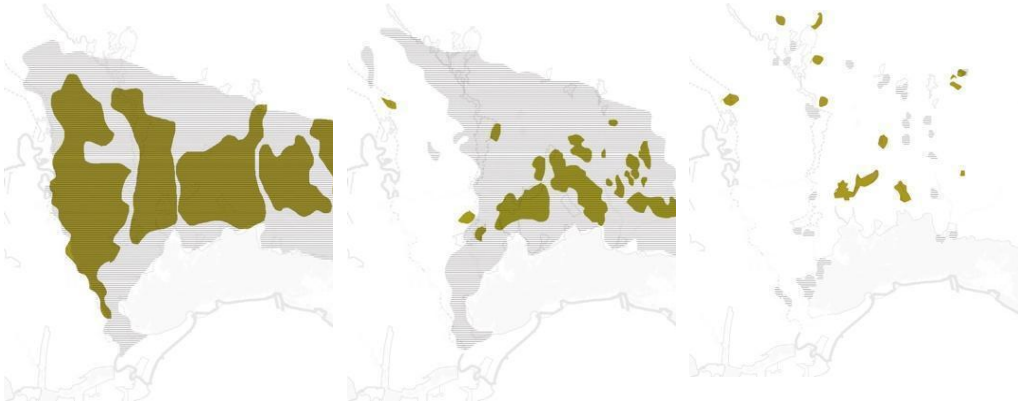


Figure 2. *Diagram of the contraction (1816, 1920, 1962) of the Selva Lupanica, the historic lowland (floodplain) forest of the lower Friulian Plain before the large-scale land eclamation works of the 20th century*
Source: New Friulian Deserts research unit (Rural landscape near Latisana, 2021). Photo by A. Venudo.

These regions are characterised by high levels of productivity, yet they exhibit signs of biological impoverishment, such as landscape simplification (a pronounced homogenization and loss of structural complexity of the landscape), ecological regression, and hydraulic and settlement fragility. The "deserts" (Figure 3) under consideration in this paper and research are not climatic in nature, but rather ecological and cultural spaces that appear cultivated and active (Figure 4). However, in reality, these spaces express a drastic loss of environmental complexity, territorial memory and imaginative potential.[2]

2. Venudo, V. Rodani, and V. Devescovi, "Lagoon scenarios for the Bassa Friulana plain: a flooding archipelago," in L. Bonora, D. Carboni, and M. De Vincenzi (eds.) *Monitoring of Mediterranean Coastal Areas. Problems and Measurement Techniques* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2020), 348-362; Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia, *Piano Paesaggistico Regionale – Ambiti di Paesaggio AP10 e AP12* (Trieste, 2018).



Figure 3. *Example of the Friulian Desert, as a result of drainage works and transformation of the land*
Source: New Friulian Deserts research unit (Rural landscape near Latisana, 2021). Photo by A. Venudo.



Figure 4. *Photograph of the land reclamation landscape: embankments, drainage canals and fields*
Source: New Friulian Deserts research unit (rural landscape near Precenicco, 2023). Photo by A. Venudo.

The genesis of these landscapes can be traced back to the period of integral reclamation that took place in the 20th century, reaching its zenith in the 1920s and 1950s. The extensive marshy regions formerly inhabited by the *Silva Lupanica* — comprising hygrophilous lowland forests, wet meadows and flooded territories— underwent reclamation through the construction of a network of reservoirs, canals, waterworks and embankments (Figure 5). The reclamation of the lowlands resulted

in the creation of a technically agricultural landscape that defined the material and symbolic identity of the Friulian plain for a period of at least fifty years.[3]



Figure 5. *Photograph of a fragment of the lowland forest, the "flooded wood" of carlino, which once spread across the lower friulian plain before large-scale land reclamation*
Source: Feasibility study for an archaeological and fluvial park in Carlino (Flooded Wood of Carlino, Marano Lagunare, 2017). Photo by A. Venudo.

However, this very landscape of quality —reclaimed, inhabited and organic in the sense of a coexistence of ecologies, settlements and memory— is now under threat. The most recent transformations of the agricultural model[4] (mechanisation, pressurised irrigation, extension of plots, canalisation of drainage ditches) and climatic phenomena (drought, subsidence, saline intrusion) have triggered a second desertification: no longer linked to stagnant water, but to the absence of forms, presences, biodiversity, relationships[5] (Figure 6).

In response to this challenge, the "New Friuli Deserts"[6] research unit was established within the Department of Engineering and Architecture at the University

3. Venudo, L. Del fabbro Machado, and E. Ceschin, *Laboratorio Paesaggio Latisana* (Trieste: EUT, 2020); Venudo, Rodani and Devescovi "Lagoon scenarios for the Bassa Friulana plain: a flooding archipelago", in Bonora, L., Carboni, D. and De Vincenzi, M. (eds.) *Monitoring of Mediterranean Coastal Areas. Problems and Measurement Techniques* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2020), 348-362.

4. P. Martorana, "Agricoltura e paesaggio," in A. Venudo, L. Del fabbro Machado, and E. Ceschin, *Laboratorio Paesaggio Latisana* (Trieste: EUT, 2020), 72-73.

5. Venudo, and T. Bisiani, "Trasformazione dei paesaggi della bonifica e nuovi deserti friulani," in *Segnali dal clima in FVG – 2024* (Trieste: Regione FVG / Trieste University, 2024), 105-112.

6. The research unit consists of A. Venudo, T. Bisiani, M. Lupieri, E. Nascig, M. D'Oria. The investigation explores new operational strategies for the regeneration of these territories, where

of Trieste. This initiative aims to adopt an interdisciplinary approach in the analysis and design of the crisis situation.



Figure 6. *Photograph of a Part of Reclaimed Farmland in the Lower Friulian Plain at Ronchis, where All Drainage, Collection and Irrigation Channels —formerly ecological corridors — have been removed and subirrigation (subsurface irrigation) systems installed to optimize cropping patterns. The result is a pronounced homogenization and loss of structural complexity of the landscape.* *Source:* New Friulian Deserts research unit (Rural landscape of Ronchis, 2024). Photo by A. Venudo.

The Research Question

The research of this article is situated within the triangulation of art, landscape and architecture, and considers these categories as interconnected parts in dialogue. The research aims to highlight their interrelations, contaminations, and permeabilities by combining the perspectives of art theorists (Rosalind Krauss), philosophers (Henri Lefebvre and Alain Roger), architects (Luca Galofaro and Francesco Careri), and artists (Robert Smithson). Their diverse yet relevant theories enable the development of a dual, interconnected narrative linking past and contemporary experiences.

Therefore, the issues underlying the research are manifold and all relate to the open and permeable relationship between art and architecture, and the way they interact with a certain type of landscape. The research, in fact, demonstrates how a specific investigation into the Friuli reclamation landscapes can provide a general model for intervention in other territories, as discussed in the methodology and in the conclusions sections. The central question, "How can the relationship between

reclamations are read not only as hydraulic infrastructures, but as landscape and architectural palimpsests, bearers of memory and generators of new forms of habitability, ecology and meaning.

art and architecture breathe new life into rural landscapes threatened by simplification? How is the landscape transformed?" opens up a broader discussion which prompt a crucial issue such as how to encourage new forms of habitability and occupation of the space in territories which have already been inhabit. Indeed, the respective projects proposed through the case studies can be interpreted as general intervention models, applicable also to other contexts, each with its own specific characteristics. The originality of the research is evidenced by its design dimension, in which the method of "walking" is utilised as the primary tool for exploring space, grasping its specificities, and activating it through artistic-architectural devices in dialogue with the landscape.

The first operational outcome of this research is the rediscovery of the ordinary, made up of fragile, forgotten or degraded places, with the aim of enhancing them: in some cases protecting them, in others transforming them, to revitalize them through "light-touch artistic" practices and restore a meaning that can make them attractive again. The goal is to build a "network of dispersed focal points" to transform the reclaimed plain of the Lower Friuli into a "great park of art", where people can return to live in new ways that envisage an artistic role, the *artialization* for the rural landscape.

The Concept of Space according to Henri Lefebvre

In relation to the above issues, Henri Lefebvre —one of the most influential thinkers in urban and social theory— developed the important concept of the "production of space". In this research, we adopt this concept as an analytical and investigative category concerning space as a human habitat.

Lefebvre's key message is that space is not natural or inherent, but socially produced. According to Lefebvre, the production of space is actually a complex process involving political, economic, and social aspects. Space is not just a passive object, but is actively created by social practices and power relations. These ideas are set out in one of his most famous texts, *La production de l'espace*[7] in which he distinguishes *three* aspects of the conception of space: 1. "Perceived space": that which we can see, touch and experience in our daily lives, understood as the physical space in which social practices take place; 2. "Conceived space": represented by ideas, theoretical models, urban plans and images created by institutions and professionals; 3. "Lived space": that of everyday experiences, social practices, behaviours and emotions experienced in a space. His thought emphasises how power and culture profoundly influence the configuration of space as man's environment, and how this, in turn, shapes and is shaped by social and political dynamics.

Literature Review

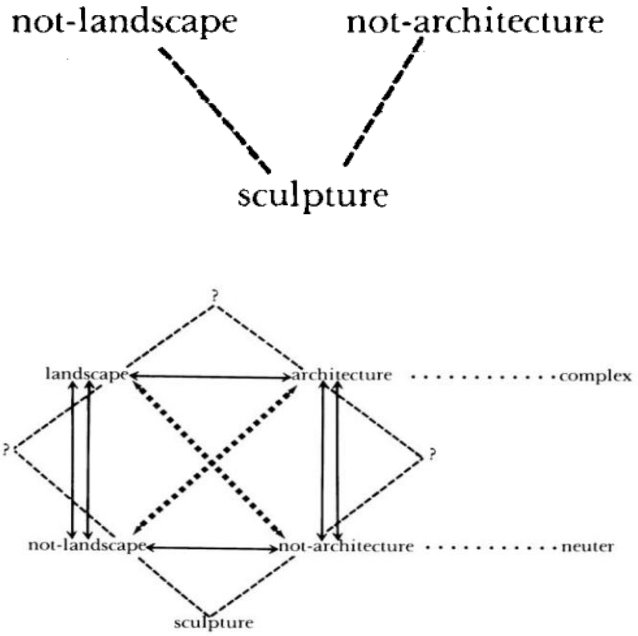
Sculpture in the Expanded Field – Rosalind Krauss, the Idea of "Pure Negativity" (1979)

In 1979, Rosalind Krauss, an eminent American art theorist and professor at Columbia University, utilised the medium of drawing to analyse the relationships

7. H. Lefebvre, *La produzione dello spazio* (Milano: Pgreco, 1974).

between art, architecture and landscape. Krauss's primary objective was to understand the directions of sculpture in the practices of artists of that period. Indeed, many interventions by artists such as Mary Miss, Robert Smithson and Gordon Matta Clark had begun to question the definition of sculpture, which had traditionally been understood as an object-monument placed on a pedestal with precise theoretical, formal and conceptual characteristics. As early as the 1950s, there was a progressive acting of sculpture beyond its dimensional limits, which was becoming increasingly difficult to define.

Therefore, as illustrated by Klein's diagram (Figure 7), to which Krauss refers, a mathematical expansion pattern articulated in configurations of increasing complexity visualises the relationship of sculpture to other fields. On the one hand, sculpture is pure negativity, understood as empty rather than full space, a negation of the object in space created through holes or removals of matter. On the other hand, sculpture is that which dialogues with, and intervenes in, architecture and landscape by expanding its field of action. In recognising the action intervention of sculpture in these two areas, Krauss expands the forms of this language into the three categories of *marked sites* (combination of landscape/non-landscape), *site-construction* (combination of landscape/architecture) and *axiomatic structures* (combination of architecture/non-architecture), which are suitable for cataloguing the artistic operations at work.



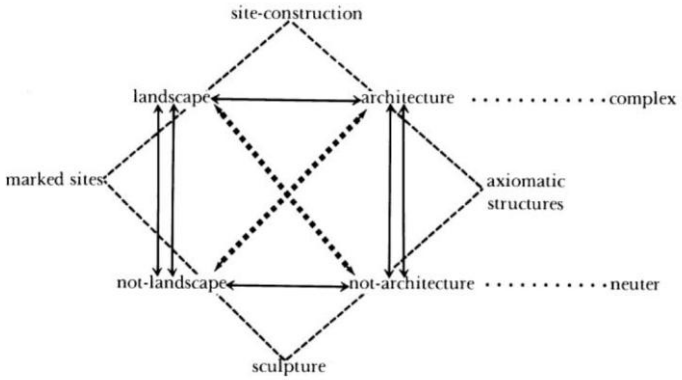


Figure 7. *Diagrams of the Klein group, referred to sculpture in relation to architecture and landscape*
Source: Sculpture in the Expanded Field.

Without delving into the intricacies of these three branches, it is imperative to underscore the temporal dimension. Krauss' thought did not anticipate these new practices; rather, she framed contemporary trends within a precise theoretical framework. Consequently, her essay, entitled *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*, theorises a new *modus operandi* of artistic practices that are no longer self-referential but in dialogue with the context. This theory, formulated in 1979, was published in the form of an essay in issue 8 of October magazine,[8] a seminal publication which marked a fundamental and pivotal shift in the study of the art-object in its relationship to architecture and landscape.

In 2007,[9] the School of Architecture at Princeton University, in collaboration with the Department of Art and Archaeology, organised the symposium *Retracing the Expanded Field A conference on art and architecture* which was designed to underline the importance of Krauss's thought and the new paradigm that the theory of the "expanded field" proposes. It brought together art historians, architects and international scholars to analyse, in a series of trans-disciplinary round tables, the legacy of Krauss's thought and to update it in the light of contemporary design experiences. The volume[10] comprises a collection of contributions that have emerged, and is presented as a significant document insofar as it re-contextualises, re-temporalises, and re-signifies Krauss's theory. Furthermore, it analyses the synergies between artists and architects, their respective shifts of position, and those "symmetrical displacement"[11] as described by the curators in the volume's introduction.

8. It is interesting to note that the editorial office of *October*, a journal of contemporary art theory founded by Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson in 1976, shared its office with the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York. It was in this location that transdisciplinary debates on the relationship between architecture and the visual arts originated.

9. The events took place on 20 and 21 April 2007.

10. S. Papapetros and J. Rose (Eds.) *Retracing the Expanded Field* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014).

11. Ibid, XII.

Entropic Landscapes – Robert Smithson, "Entropy and the New Monuments" (1966), "Tour of the Monuments of Passaic" (1967), 'Ruins in Reverse' and Landscape as Process

In relation to these themes, the figure of Robert Smithson is emblematic because his artistic practice expanded the idea of what art could be and, above all, where it could be found.

The artist has consistently engaged in interventions within locations characterised by distinct qualities, often remote and peripheral, which he theorised within the paradigm of "entropic landscapes",[12] conceptualised as territories in continuous transformation. According to Smithson, suburban regions function as a site for intervention, wherein he can engage in observation and analysis of the elements that constitute the landscape and contribute to its distinctive character from both natural and architectural perspectives. For this reason, in a broad sense, landscape has a multiple semantic connotation for Simthson. It is process, in that it accommodates projects in fieri; it is medium, therefore a place on which to act; it is method, because it involves a certain type of study and, therefore, artistic intervention.

Indeed, on 30 September 1967, the artist undertook a journey across an entropic landscape, initially by bus and then on foot, from New York to Passaic, his place of origin. The account of the experience, described in *A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic*[13] published in the magazine Artforum, combines text and photographs taken by the artist with his Kodak Instamatic. The primary subject of these photographs is the "new monuments" encountered while traversing the suburbs, "ruins in reverse" of a transforming industrial landscape. The artist employs two precise definitions, those of "new monuments" and "ruins in reverse", which invert the concept of ruin and monument as traditionally understood and also the categories of art and architecture, placing the respective object-sculptures in a new territory with uncertain boundaries. These "new monuments" can be defined as waste-architectures, remnants and traces of the city's industrial past, of an entropic landscape crystallised in the present in the form of a ruin, such as a wooden and steel bridge over a river; a pontoon bridge with a drilling tower; drainpipes and a sandbox in a playground. The focus on these architectures renders Smithson's work pivotal in multiple senses: it evinces the existence of an unseen landscape, it proffers a novel perspective, it discloses its aesthetic values and leads to the development of the discipline "site selection study". The seminal essay on the theoretical-conceptual aspect, entitled *Entropy and the New Monuments*,[14] was published just one year earlier, where the author provides an interpretation and contextualisation of the "architectures of entropy" found in landscapes such as Passaic.

12. The concept of entropy, otherwise known as energy dispersion, is derived from the fields of thermodynamics and quantum mechanics. It is a measure of the degree of disorder in a system and the energy that is dispersed when one state transforms into another.

13. R. Smithson, "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey," in J. Flan (ed.) *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967/1996).

14. Smithson, "Entropy and the New Monuments," *Artforum* (1966).

Alain Roger's - *Court traité du paysage* (1997), Artialisation and Landscape Theory

In the *Court traité du paysage*,[15] the author introduces the notion of *artialisation*, a pivotal concept for understanding the cultural construction of the landscape and its transformation from a simple physical reality to an aesthetic fact, perceived, represented and interpreted. According to Roger, landscape does not exist in nature as an objective entity; rather, it is a cultural effect, the result of two simultaneous and interdependent operations: the "artialisation in situ", which can be defined as the aesthetic enhancement of the landscape through arrangement, composition and design, and the "artialisation in visu", which concerns the gaze, the framing, the visual encoding that transforms a place into an image.

This dual cultural dynamic is fundamental for understanding the landscapes of the Friuli reclamation because the profound interventions of agricultural and hydraulic transformation have generated geometric and symbolic spatial forms that today, with the advance of desertification, risk losing legibility and meaning. It is at this juncture that Roger's theory is operationalised: if the landscape is considered a cultural construction, then it can be reactivated through artistic and design practices that act on both the "in situ" (spatial devices, installations) and the "in visu" (reformulation of the gaze, narratives, "poetic underlining").

The application of artialisation to the Friulian deserts is not merely an aestheticisation of the void; rather, it is a critical strategy that aims to reanimate the sense of place through the implementation of punctual, site specific interventions that have the capacity to establish a connection between hydraulic and rural history and the development of new forms of habitability and imagination. Indeed, abandoned water drains, former rural settlements, and cancelled ditches have the potential to evolve into aesthetic and perceptive "thresholds", supported by a model that bears a strong resemblance to that of the "weak monuments" or the "environmental sculpture" derived from Rosalind Krauss' "expanded field" theory.

Francesco Careri - *Walkscapes* (2006), Walking as Artistic Practice and Dérive Methodologies

What do we really see when we walk in an "empty" area? What kind of relationship can be activated between body and landscape in marginal, agricultural, reclaimed places? Is it possible to make walking a design act, capable of transforming the space we cross? It is from this questions that our approach to the landscapes of the Friuli reclamation area is articulated, interpreted in the light of Francesco Careri's theories and the so-called "science of walking".

In *Walkscapes. Camminare come pratica estetica*,[16] the author proposes an interpretation of walking as an aesthetic and critical gesture, a tool that allows us to explore, map and re-signify residual territories, often excluded from urban or rural narratives. Walking thus becomes a means of listening to traces, recognising

15. A. Roger, *Court traité du paysage* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997).
16. F. Careri, *Walkscapes. Camminare come pratica estetica* (Torino: Einaudi, 2006).

submerged forms, perceiving the spatiality of the margins, and focusing on the horizontality of landscapes, on "horizontal landscapes",[17] and on horizons. As Farinelli asserts, the horizon is traditionally regarded as the geographical boundary of the Earth, the Earth ends beyond the horizon.[18]

In the context of the "Friulian deserts", this practice assumes a central role: it is through walking that the spatial grammar of the reclaimed territories can be reconstructed, because this act questions aspects that cannot be contained by cartographic representations can be posed: why is this trace interrupted? Why does the water no longer flow here? What remains of the landscape of the reclaimed land? Our focus on walking is grafted onto the tradition of "strollology", or "the science of walking", whose roots go back to *Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England*[19]: walking as a way of getting to know the environment, mapping it with the body, perceiving it with attention (Figure 8).



17. Venudo, "Paesaggi orizzontali," in A. Venudo, et al., *Pedibus. Camminare nella città* (Gorizia: GoToEco, 2011).

18. F. Farinelli, *L'invenzione della terra* (Milano: Sellerio, 2016).

19. F. L. Olmsted, *Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England* (New York: G. P. Putnam & Son, 1872).



Figure 8. *These photographs were captured during two distinct investigations within the designated project area, focusing on two distinct types of paths that were examined through the utilisation of the "walking method". The photograph on the left depicts an interrupted path on a little island in the Marano Lagoon, which forms a natural border between the lagoon and the sea, thus delineating the extreme border of the project area. The image on the right presents a vista of a protracted pathway extending into the area of reclaimed land, in close proximity to a drainage canal*
Source: New Friulian Deserts research unit (Marano Lagoon and rural landscape of Palazzolo dello Stella, 2025). Photo by M. Lupieri.

Walking is not merely a physical activity, but rather a conduit for the conceptualisation of a project, whilst concurrently fostering a heightened awareness of cultivation. This cultivation of awareness is not merely cultural in nature; rather, it is characterised by an "atmospheric attention", which is further enhanced by imagination and environmental invention. In dialogue with the theory of *artialisation* by Alain Roger, walking is configured as a transformative act because through a slow crossing, the reclaimed landscape is not "decorated", but awakened, brought back to visibility (Figure 9).

What, then, is the role of the body? The body is measure. It is probe. It is threshold. Through walking, the body becomes a tool for reading space and a design device. Each step involves a re-evaluation of the topography, the reclamation, and the embankments, as well as an assessment of its resistance and an estimation of its drift. Consequently, the technical landscape is transformed into a relational one.

Today, the experience of traversing the "Friulian deserts" entails more than mere physical movement; it involves a re-evaluation of the relationship between humanity and its environment, gives rise to the articulation of new perspectives on geographical spaces and the conceptualisation of future geographies. From this standpoint, walking emerges as an embodied geography. The human body, in motion, assumes the roles of both archive and device. It serves to restore meaning to places through direct experience, thereby establishing connections between form, climate, memory and habitability.



Figure 9. *Photograph showing contrasting dominant landscape features of the land-reclamation countryside: waterways and land paths along the reclamation canals. This is one of the 'complex' infrastructures resulting from land reclamation. Cross-section reveals a central irrigation channel surrounded by two rural paths and two additional collection and drainage channels. These hydraulic and agricultural infrastructures have always been the main support for the vegetation corridors of the reclaimed countryside, but have now been replaced by underground hydraulic systems*
Source: Research for Latisana Green Plan (scientific supervisor A. Venudo, 2019-2021).

Luca Galofaro's *Artscape. L'arte come approccio al paesaggio contemporaneo* (2007)

Today, the boundaries between various disciplines are becoming increasingly indistinct, a consequence of the convergence of methodologies employed by artists and architects in the realm of landscape design and their respective reading-action approaches. In the volume *Artscape*[20] the author conducts an investigation into the relationships between art and architecture, analysing the ways in which each provides the other with a set of possibilities, understood as shared planning and practices. Galofaro considers the exit of artists from the studios that took place with the Land Art to be one of the most significant turning points of the last century, as the landscape became an integral part of the artistic process, on a par with what was already happening with architecture. In light of these analogies, the author employs the term "artscape" to "summarise the idea of an intervention in the landscape mediated by an artistic approach".[21] Indeed, even contemporary artists and architects, heirs to the designs of the 1960s, have elevated the landscape to a design subject, where hybrid artistic-architectural forms merge these approaches. As Galofaro writes:

20. L. Galofaro, *Artscape. L'arte come approccio al paesaggio contemporaneo* (Milano: Postmedia Books, 2007).
21. Ibid, 7.

> The gaze of the artist and that of the architect overlap in the space between things, in the fluid dynamics of the city and the surrounding nature-landscape: the control - not the form - of empty space becomes the theme of the project. This control generates a reaction that triggers a non-formal dynamic in the landscape and reveals the reality of open space.[22]

Space is open by definition, because it is expanded, enlarged, made up of built and unbuilt areas, full and empty, uncultivated and architectural waste, nature and industrial areas, thus the perfect setting for experimentation that challenges the dogmas and limits of the disciplines themselves.

The definition of these spaces is precisely that of "entropic landscapes"[23] theorised by Smithson and explored by walking in the *Tour of the Monuments of Passaic*. Therefore today, as demonstrated by this research-applied to the landscapes of the Friuli reclamation area, intervening in the landscape means forming "spaces of architecture through art".[24]

In this sense, starting from the theory of the "expanded field" formulated by Krauss, Galofaro formulates the concept of "artscape" to circumscribe a new category where architecture dialogues with art, art dialogues with the landscape and, in this dialogue, the landscape itself is transformed, it becomes a landscape of art, a sounding board for an expanded and expanded design.

Just as the practice of the Land-artists could no longer be described with the traditional category of sculpture, so Galofaro sees in the practice of many contemporary architects an expansion of their field of action, in continuity with the landscape, through the operational methods of art.

How, then, to define this landscape that art and architecture have elevated to a field of action? Certainly, it is not to be regarded as a static background, but rather as a dynamic medium with which to interact, a surface that can be interpreted as both a "visual texture and a mutable topography with varying thickness".[25] Contemporary "artscapes" are hybrid-object-forms, often site specific installations, born from a trans-disciplinary approach that shapes the surface of the landscape, using it as a tool, a "dynamic surface, a system"[26] of relationships, as Alex Wall Wrote. In this sense, the landscape is no longer considered a cultural construct or a set of views, but rather a structure, a field of energy.

Architectural Heritage & Rural Colonies in Italy

Brief survey of reclamation architecture and hydraulic artefacts (1930s–1960s), how these strands frame an "extended field" for contemporary interventions. The process of land reclamation in Italy is extensive and has gone through important historical phases, especially during the 20th century.[27] Large-scale land reclamation

22. Ibid, 12-13. Translated by the authors.

23. Smithson, "Entropy and the New Monuments," 1966.

24. Galofaro, *Artscape. L'arte come approccio al paesaggio contemporaneo,* 2007, 31.

25. Ibid, 95.

26. Wall, "Programming the Urban Surface", in J. Corner, *Recovering Landscape: Essay in Contemporary Landscape* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), 251.

27. E. Sereni, *Storia del paesaggio agrario italiano* (Bari: Laterza, 1961), 423-436.

projects have impacted regions like Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Latium, Campania, Apulia and, most significantly, Veneto and Friuli Venezia Giulia (Figures 10-11).

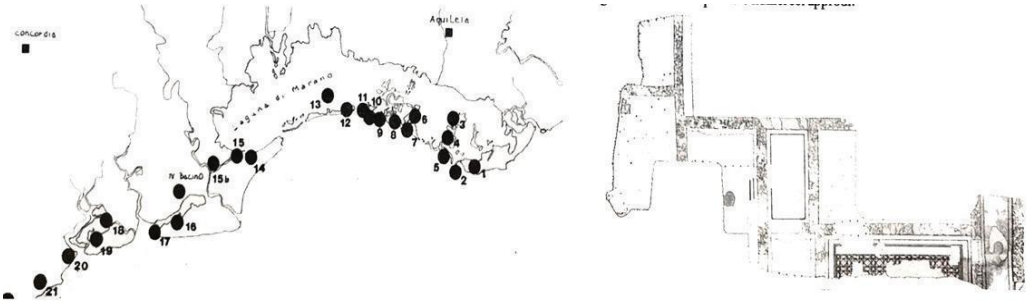


Figure 10. *Map of historic Roman settlements along the former land in - water margin. The distribution shows that the area has long functioned as a leisure retreat, prized for its landscape qualities*
Source: Research for Latisana Green Plan (scientific supervisor A. Venudo, 2019-2021).



Figure 11. *Historical map of the reclaimed lowlands of Lower Friuli and the Grado - Marano lagoon (Kriegskarte mosaic, 1798-1805)*
Source: Research for Latisana Green Plan (scientific supervisor A. Venudo, 2019-2021)

Sereni says that the biggest land reclamation projects in the modern age started in Emilia Romagna, in the Ferrara area, at the end of the 19th century.[28] But the most important period for land reclamation was between the 1920s and 1950s. During this time, they used a mix of natural and mechanical drainage systems, as well as water pumps to keep the land above sea level.

Although the techniques used to reclaim land were planned nationally, the local environment determined the specifics of the land and buildings, as well as the water management and farming.

A distinctive trait was the attention paid to the construction quality of technical artefacts, including water pumps, canals, farmhouses, bridges, locks, regimentation and hydraulic regulation artefacts. In contrast to contemporary standardised and prefabricated warehouse designs, these structures embodied a material culture that embraced even the functional infrastructure as a medium for architectural and landscape expression. Today these artefacts persist as fragile "weak monuments" of a technical yet inhabited landscape. The resulting ecological, cultural and imaginative "desertification" is a phenomenon that this research seeks to counteract.

Methodology

Articulated in six phases, the research combines a theoretical framework and field investigations, based on the "walking practice". The objective of the project, in fact, is to design a "great park of art" in which site specific installations, hybrid forms between art and architecture, can serve as strategic devices to connect the different parts of the land reclamation campaign and the Marano Lagoon. These artistic devices will also be used as tools for viewing and interpreting the territory under investigation.

Phase 1 – Definition of the method: a bibliographic study is combined with *Walking as Research Practice*[29] in order to establish walking as a tool for reading, exploration and project pre-figuration. This guarantees a trans-disciplinary perspective that relates art, architecture and landscape.

Phase 2 – On-site research: systematic surveys (Figure 12 a-c - the three above, d-f - the three below) in order to collect heterogeneous data (photographs, videos, aerial footage, cadastral documents, interviews with residents, technicians and reclamation consortia). The material is then incorporated into an "Archive of the Land Reclamation & Lagoon", which serves as a foundation for analytical phases and the development of cartographic elaborations of an artistic-conceptual nature, wherein objective data and subjective interpretations coexist.

28. Ibid, 423.

29. A. Twemlow and T. A. Cardoso (Eds.), *Walking as research practice* (Amsterdam: Soapbox Journal, 2024).

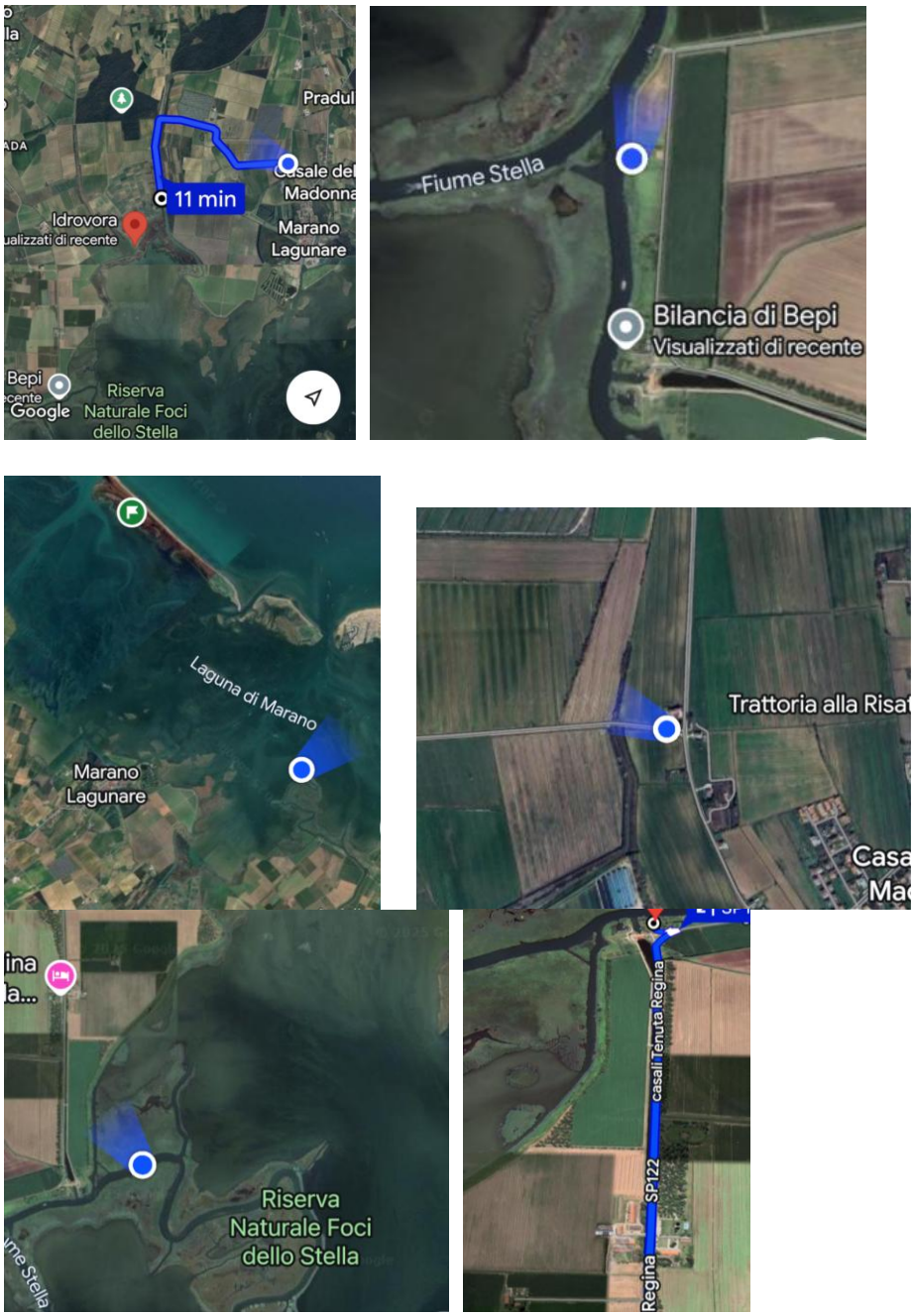


Figure a-f. *Systematic survey montage. Atlas of space exploration which is undergoing constant development and expansion. Evidence of a journey undertaken both by walking and by boat, in different contexts, between the reclaimed countryside and the Marano lagoon. From above, the landscape's different textures are highlighted, both grid-like and fluid, of the space under investigation. The site visits, whose route and movement were mapped with GPS, are the starting point for identifying the sites for the installation of the artworks, near water pumps (a), embankments (b) along the Stella river (e), in the water basin (c) and into the reclaimed lands (d, f), as also highlighted in the "Case studies and project proposals" delineated in the next chapter*
Source: New Friulian Desert research unit (May 2025). Survey and photo by M. Lupieri.

Phase 3 – Typological analysis: selection of key elements on which to experiment, including abandoned farmhouses, disused water pipes, light micro-architectures (e.g., jetties, nets) and riverbank stretches. The typological classification is instrumental in directing the selection of *artialisation* strategies.

Phase 4 – Installation of the interventions: temporary or permanent artistic-architectural devices are realised in dialogue with the identified sites, activating processes of spatial and perceptive re-signification.

Phase 5 – Evaluation of the impacts: the works are measured with respect to spatial legibility and formal quality; perceptive change in the local community; landscape resilience (ability to adapt to environmental dynamics); dialogue between installations and context, read as a form of *artialisation* (Roger) and as an expansion of art towards architecture and landscape (Krauss).

Phase 6 – Project output: the results are to be compiled into a card-book consisting of texts, images and maps. The non-hierarchical, modular configuration of the card format reflects the fluid and borderless nature of the reclamation landscape, facilitating cross-reading and future updates.

The six-stage method combines analytical rigour and creative experimentation, offering a replicable model for reading and transforming the "entropic landscapes" of the Friuli reclamation area.

The employment of this working method has facilitated the development of a series of drawings for the design of the "great park of art", the general plan of which is shown here (Figure 13).

The drawing is intended to highlight the area of intervention, i.e., the four selected sites (each identified with a colour – orange, red, green, yellow) where the installations will be placed, as outlined in the "Case Studies & Project Proposals" section of this article. Furthermore, six additional artistic interventions have been proposed (each marked with a green X), which will implemented the project. The drawing under consideration highlights the concept of the park as an integrated system (blue lines), i.e., the relationship between the works, their definition as devices for reading the space, connecting and encouraging exploration of the site through slow movement, on foot or by boat, in synergy with the characteristics of the landscape itself, which is vast, fragmented but connected by the element of water: the main connector.



Figure 13. *General plan of the "great park of art" outlining the area of intervention, the sites selected for the installation of the artworks (marked in orange, red, green, yellow) and further additions of artworks (green crosses). This drawing highlights the concept of the park as an integrated system (blue lines), i.e. the relationship between the works, their definition as devices for reading the space, connecting and encouraging exploration of the site through slow movement, on foot or by boat, in synergy with the characteristics of the landscape itself*
Source: New Friulian Deserts research unit. Drawing by M. Lupieri

Case Studies & Project Proposals

The following four case studies present a range of architectural-landscape sites on which the artistic element is to be integrated, along with the corresponding design proposals.

1. Site: Rural Colony (Figure 14)



Figure 14 Rural colony.
Source: Le vie dell'acqua. Architetture idrauliche nella bassa friulana - fra acqua e terra.

Typology: Rural Colony

The farmhouses are dispersed over the land reclamation area, extending from east to west across the Friulian and Isonzo lowlands, from the Tagliamento to the Isonzo, and from north to south, from the *Strada Alta* to the Lagunare eaves. The arrangement of these elements is deeply rooted in hydraulic principles, with the objective of establishing a comprehensive drainage system.

Description: Among the artefacts that mark the landscape of land reclamation in Friuli Venezia Giulia, the farmhouse represents not only a building type, but the visible fulcrum of a complex agrarian, hydraulic and social design. Developed between the 1920s and 1940s, it was part of a rational network of settlements designed to inhabit, cultivate and order the lowlands.

The farmhouse was a simple, long, narrow, two-storey building with a double-pitched roof. The ground floor contained the living quarters, whilst the first floor was designated for sleeping, often connected by an external staircase. It housed large families, sometimes extended or multiple, with a population of up to fifty people. Frequently present was the *fogar*, the fireplace room, the symbolic and functional centre of domestic life.

The location of the houses followed the hydraulic drainage network (drainage basins), which in turn structured the agrarian design: each house was the centre of a farm, comprising a vegetable garden, orchard, manoeuvring area and cultivated fields. This resulted in the creation of a rational and human landscape, characterised by the integration of technology, water, soil, labour and community in a visible order. The settlers —true pioneers of rural modernity— inhabited these spaces as vital cells of a planned agricultural society. Even today, the colonial houses of the land reclamation punctuate the Friulian plain as resistant signs of a designed landscape, imbued with rules and geometric principles that not only bear witness to a specific historical epoch, but also to the profound relationship that exists between land, architecture, landscape, agriculture, hydraulics and, above all, society. Farmhouses, in these territories, can be considered as a fundamental element of the local cultural identity, akin to a genetic code.

Artistic strategy: Reflective threshold marker

Type of work and description: Reference Alberto Garutti, *Soglia Nord*, Ca' Corniani (site-specific installation 2018) (Figures 15a, b).

The intervention takes place on an existing architecture and involves replacing the roof, a characteristic element, with a golden metal sheet. With a simple operation, the new element creates a different visual texture in the landscape. The work, in fact, shines in the sunlight of the countryside. The roof, in fact, is characterised by a modular design of small pyramids with a square base that reflect light in different ways depending on the intensity and the different vantage points. The operation of grafting the architecture of the landscape of the reclaimed land is of particular significance in this context, as it serves to emphasise the centuries-old relationship that binds people to these places. The site is imbued with renewed significance, as it is bestowed upon the community, serving as a conduit between the past and the present.



Figure 15a. *Alberto Garutti, Soglia Nord, Ca' Corniani, site specific installation, Caorle (Venezia, It.), 2017-2019.*
Source: Agostino Osio / AltoPiano.

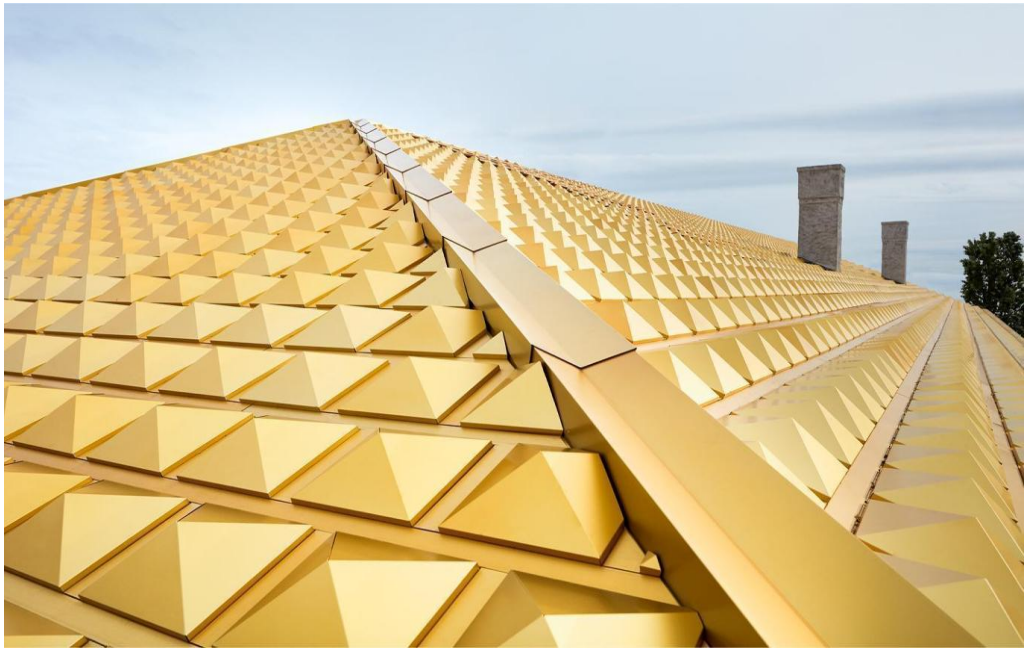


Figure 15b. *Detail of Alberto Garutti's site specific installation at Ca' Corniani: a large golden roof that adds value to the old farmhouse. As the artist wrote, the installation is dedicated to the farmhouse's history and to passers-by who imagine its empty rooms filling with life (2017–19). Caorle.*
Source: Photo: A. Osio.

Expected landscape effect: Redevelop the existing building; Give new value to a significant architectural element of the landscape; Give to the existing building a new aura.

2. Site Water Pumps (Figure 16)



Figure 16. *Water pumps.*
Source: New Friulian Deserts research unit. Photos by. M. d'Oria (left), M. Lupieri (right).

Typology: Hidraulic station

The water pumps are placed along a single line, i.e., on the embankment of the lagoon eaves, between land and water, along the entire stretch from the Isonzo to the Tagliamento, with a regular pitch, defined by the extension of the hydraulic drainage basin that they serve and keep dry and balanced.

Description: The water pumps represent one of the most emblematic and strategic elements of the Friuli and Isonzo drainage landscape. They are true machine-architectures, buildings designed to house the hydraulic devices necessary to maintain the hydraulic balance of the low-lying land system, between the countryside, the lagoon and the sea. Their function is fundamental: they pump excess water from the reclaimed agricultural areas towards the lagoon, guaranteeing the permanence of dryness and making life and cultivation possible on land that would otherwise be submerged or marshy. Every reclamation campaign depends on the proper functioning of these "water machines", which operate silently in a continuous and invisible regime.

Constructed between the 1920s and 1940s, many of the hydroelectric power stations bear stylistic traces of the architecture of the Ventennio, including exposed brickwork, string-course cornices and forometries emphasised by stone erections, well-defined artificial stone plinths, pitched roofs, large windows and decorative cornices. The interior of the structure comprises expansive double or triple-height classrooms, within which are situated substantial cast-iron pumps, driven by diesel engines.

Artistic strategy: Re-activate memory of hidraulic station

Type of work and description: Reference Clarissa Baldassarri, *Riflesso silenzioso di una sonora immagine*, Castellaro Lagusello (site specific installation 2020) (Figure 17).

This installation investigates the perception of a suspended time, the relationships and distances between the natural, aquatic landscape and the architecture that inhabits it.

Using different artistic languages, the work decontextualises, and makes visual, the reflection of the water and the echo of its sounds. A phonometer near the water's edge recorded its sounds for 24 hours. In the work, however, the sound movement is only visible. By engraving the 4320 sound data along the path and projecting their frequencies in real time on the facade of the water machine, the invisible flow of water is translated into a continuous visual sign that animates the building and connects lagoon, sea and countryside. The principle of the work is to highlight the discordance between what can be seen and what can be heard, leaving room for imagination and listening.

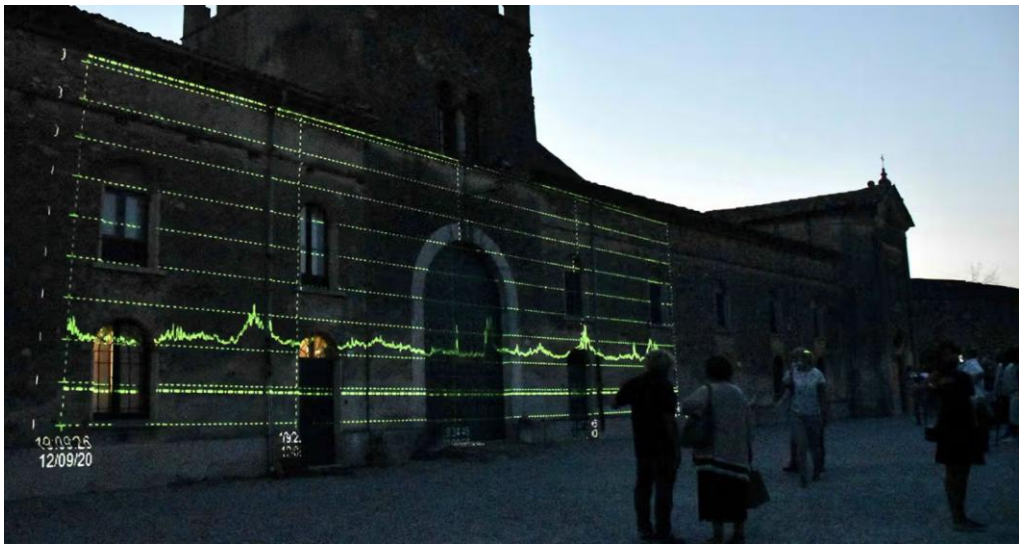


Figure 17. *Clarissa Baldassarri, Riflesso silenzioso di una sonora immagine, site specific installation, Castellaro Lagusello (Monzambaro, It), 2020.*
Source: S. Frigo.

Expected landscape effect: Revealing the hidden water infrastructure; Making the intangibility of water traceable.

3. Site Fishing Nets in the Water (Figure 18a, b)





Figures 18a, b. *Fishing nets in the water.*
Source: New Friulian Deserts research unit. Photo by M. Lupieri.

Typology: Weak Architectures

The fishing nets are located in the area in front of the reclaimed land, within the Grado and Marano lagoon. The water is drawn by these fish according to a productive logic, between canals, mud flats and salt marshes, forming the so-called "fishing valleys".

Description: From the edge of the reclaimed land, looking towards the lagoon, another type of cultivated landscape can be glimpsed: that drawn by the fishing nets of Grado and Marano fishermen. Placed in shallow waters, along lagoon channels, salt marshes and mudflats, these nets are not only catching instruments but also spatial devices. Fixed with chestnut wood stakes driven into the lagoon mud, they form complex geometries that subdivide the water into functional portions "fishing valleys", true "water fields".

The nets —once woven in hemp, today in nylon— make up the warp; they look like lace floating on the liquid surface, but respond to precise logics of currents, tides and fish reproductive cycles. They are low-tech but highly ingenious systems, the result of centuries-old knowledge passed down orally. Their arrangement is not random: it follows the course of the tides and exploits the natural flow of the water to channel the fish towards traps and pockets. For those who know how to read these signs, the nets reveal an invisible cartography, an agronomy of water that reflects the profound relationship between nature, technology and culture. Ornament and function merge in a horizontal design, transforming the lagoon into a worked and poetically inhabited landscape.

Artistic strategy: Visually connecting different elements of the landscape; Highlighthing horizontal spatial devices

Type of work and description: Reference Paolo Brambilla, *Oracolo*, Orta San Giulio (site-specific installation 2020) (Figures 19a, b).

In the ancient world, the term "Oracle" denoted both a sacred place and a figure of prophecy. Pilgrims would go there with generic questions about unknown things and await an answer from the deity. The installation consisting of two visual elements located at disparate points that connect two spaces that are characteristic of lacustrine landscape, namely water and a jetty. The result is a place-other that serves to merge reality with an imaginative dimension. From the horizontal surface of the water, a white portal adorned with stars emerges, offering a subject for contemplation and enquiry from the shore or a jetty. The setting up of the work is planned for a location proximate to the fishing nets, situated in the central area of the lagoon. In dialogue with this structure, a specific jetty is decorated with small, white, hand-painted festive flags, banners of interrupted spells, magical figures, and traces of timeless oracles. The designs draw inspiration from the identity of the locale, its associated myths and legends, as well as the narratives of the fishermen and sailors who traverse these waters on a daily basis.





Figures 19a, b. *Paolo Brambilla, Oracolo, site specific installation, Orta San Giulio (Monzambaro, It) 2020.*
Source: A. Bedini.

Expected landscape effect: Drawing perspectives to orientate the gaze; Framing portions of the landscape; Activating poetic narratives.

4. Site River Bank (Figures 20a-d)



Figure 20a. *River bank from a frontal view.*
Source: New Friulian Deserts research unit. Photo by M. Lupieri.



Figure 20b. *River bank from a right view.*
Source: New Friulian Deserts research unit. Drawing by A. Venudo.



Figure 20c. *River bank from a left view.*
Source: New Friulian Deserts research unit. Drawing by A. Venudo.

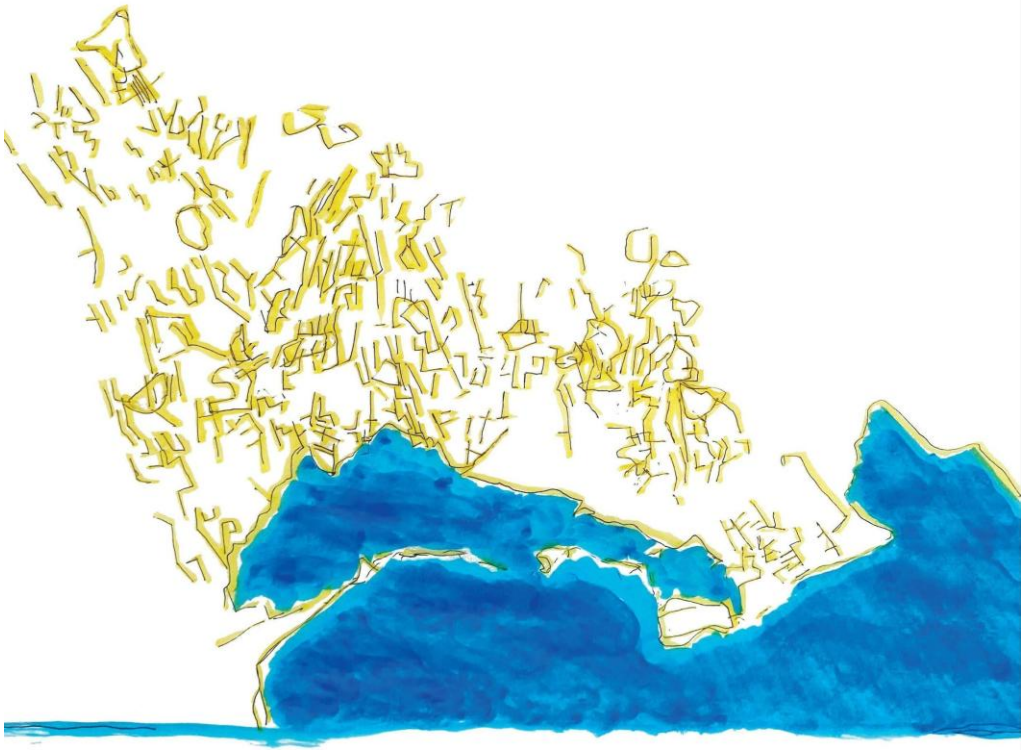


Figure 20d. *Plan of the reclaimed lowlands of the Bassa Friulana showing the full embankment system (highlighted in yellow): together the embankments form a landscape matrix, define the soil's character, and act as territorial architecture.*
Source: New Friulian Deserts research unit. Drawing by A. Venudo.

Typology: Natural Element

The river banks are developed on the "perimeters" of the study area, in particular the large embankment of the lagoon's eaves, the *contermina*, follows longitudinally the development of the reclaimed land and separates it from the lagoon from east to west. The river bank that crosses the reclaimed land and enters the lagoon is bordered by smaller embankments that deeply mark the landscape, marking the north-south course of the "interspaces" between one river and another.

Description: In the flat, horizontal landscape of the Friuli reclamation area, the river bank is one of the rare elements with a perceptible third dimension, so much so that it can be defined as a true artefact or architecture, even though it is made of earth. If the water pumps are the machines of water, the river banks are its enclosure: they serve to keep out the brackish waters of the lagoon, guaranteeing the hydraulic balance of the reclaimed land.

They are infrastructures of separation, defence and control, born as artificial and ingenious works, but over time they have "naturalised", becoming a domestic and even poetic part of the rural landscape. Their technical character, however, remains, and is revealed in their perceptive ambiguity: each embankment is a line of land combining two radically different scales.

In section, the embankment measures a few metres but in length it stretches for kilometres. It is a horizontal architecture that holds metre and kilometre together, a condition typical of infrastructures (such as roads or railways) but alien to traditional architecture, which works within a single order of magnitude. In order to comprehend, design or simply observe them, it is necessary to utilise at least two units of measurement and two instruments of perception: the step and the map.

Robert Smithson called roads "spatial sculptures" at a scale of 1:20,000 for precisely this reason. Some embankments follow the edge of the lagoon, others creep into the plain to "tame" the rivers, creating a design that is as rational as it is unpredictable. The resulting landscape appears natural, but is in fact entirely constructed. This contradiction —between artifice and the appearance of nature— makes the embankments true "poetic machines", infrastructures of earth that tell of a fragile balance, continually maintained and threatened.

Artistic strategy: Marking a horizontal threshold; Walking as a tool for measuring and perceiving space.

Type of work and description Reference: Michele Spanghero, *Wave*, Isonzo Park (site specific installation 2017) (Figure 21).

The installation comprises 20 vertical iron plates of different heights, and is a plastic representation of a sound wave thus, visually, suggests the oscillating pattern of sea waves. The point of origin was the sound recording of the waves, analysed and graphically reinterpreted in 20 vertical lines that define the final shape of the sculpture. Placed along the embankment separating the lagoon from the reclaimed land, the work becomes a threshold, a border and a glue between two different and distant spaces, but connected by the element of water. However, the material that constitutes it recalls the dark colours of the earth and it is from its surface that the work emerges. Moreover, the modular unit of the rectangle could potentially be installed infinitely. In doing so, not only does the horizontal development mark the

longitudinal nature of the embankment where the work is located, but it also presupposes walking as the main tool of perception and measurement of space.



Figure 21. *Michele Spanghero, Wave, site specific installation, Isonzo Park (Turriaco, It) 2017*
Source: M. Spanghero.

Expected landscape effect: Reactivating the memory of the embankment; Marking the threshold between land and water; Drawing the landscape.

Results

The four case studies, accompanied by their respective design proposals for artistic intervention, illustrate the methodological approach and operational strategy employed in this research. Furthermore, these are practical applications of the theories analysed throughout this article, in particular Roger's "*artialisation*" principle, Krauss's "expanded field" theory, Smithson's "new monuments and ruins in reverse" theory, and Galofaro's "artscape" concept. Therefore, at a general level, these punctual examples turn into possible macro "families" of the art-architecture-landscape triangulation which, understood as thematic categories, are recognised by us as the following: "marking", "revealing", "re-inhabiting", "commemorating". This is followed by a specification of them, aimed at making their meaning explicit both in relation to this study and place and, also, in a broader perspective:

"**To mark**", derived from the Latin *signum* (sign), denotes the practice of indicating, marking, tracing or placing reference signs. For instance, the strategy of inserting a gilded roof into a farmhouse in place of the pre-existing one functions on multiple semantic levels, both technical-formal and imaginative. It is evident that the gilded surface serves to draw attention to the existing building, thereby highlighting its social characteristics and referencing the imagery associated with the functionality of the site and the role of the farmhouse within these territories. However, concurrently, this intervention deviates from the aforementioned reading,

manifesting instead as a poetic device, of invention and for the development of new narratives. The gold surface by Alberto Garutti is a cover but, in its new form, it transcends this function, metamorphosing into a poetic device,

"**To reveal**", derived from the Latin *revelare* (to remove the veil), means to make known unknown, secret, and mysterious things; to unveil, to make something emerge in a more or less evident way; to make observable an element that is not perceptible to the senses. Thus, the walking practice, the device and method of general knowledge of this research, is functional in revealing what exists, in that it allows us to identify the traces, material and immaterial, visible and less visible, of the analysed landscape. In this sense, the body is a device for reading, for detecting data, a design tool, a measure for reading the landscape. By walking, it is possible to read and then translate the geometries of the land and, in walking in the landscape, naturally this is transformed into an active, vibrant and relational space, in synergy with the environment, human and non-human, that constitutes it. Therefore, the strategy of placing an installation in the water in dialogue with flags placed on a pier on land is intended to highlight the connection between the two spaces, thus two natural elements, to direct the gaze, as well as to emerge that immaterial memory, made up of stories, rituals and traditions.

"**Re-inhabiting**", derived from the Latin *habitare* means having one's own dwelling but also an intense relationship of enjoyment with an environment, with nature. It follows, therefore, that this research's purpose is to demonstrate how it is possible to encourage a new way of inhabiting the reclaimed land landscape, despite deserted spaces, abandoned farmhouses or elements of industrial archaeology. What does it mean to inhabit a place and, specifically, these spaces? From our point of view, it means looking at it through new lenses which, in the case of this research, are those of art. Therefore, as demonstrated by the various case studies proposed, the art object is not to be understood as the aestheticisation or museification of a space. Rather, in its installation in synergy and dialogue with landscape and architecture, it becomes a device for the production of knowledge in the broadest sense.

"**Commemorating**" derived from the Latin *commemorare*, means to remember, to celebrate someone or something. In this research, it means, at first, dealing with memory, history, traditions and culture in the broadest sense. It means revealing and, therefore, remembering, through a series of criteria, such as that of *artialisation*, something that is recognised as valuable, with a gaze turned to the past but leaning towards the future. The landscape that characterises Friuli's reclamation deserts, in fact, is today of invention, artificial, where uncultivated and spontaneous nature have been transformed over time by the invasive and evident interventions of man. What emerges to the eye, in fact, are wide ploughed lands furrowed by vertical lines, precise and symmetrical geometries, grids almost reminiscent of the Land artists' interventions in American deserts. In addition to this, there are devices to control the movement of water, i.e., technical filtering systems, pumps, drains; real infrastructures that demonstrate how, over the centuries, man has acted in the landscape with real design and construction operations.

In light of the aforementioned points, it can be posited that the distinctive feature of this research lies precisely in its research-applied nature. Therefore, the purpose

of this article is also to demonstrate the feasibility of the operation and the potential practical implications of its implementation. Thanks to regional funding lines, in fact, it is possible to design and develop projects like this one, site and context specific, malleable, conceived for the place for which they were imagined but also applicable to similar contexts. It follows, therefore, that from a study of existing architecture and the dialogue established with the landscape, it is possible to design an artistic insertion aimed at creating new narratives.

Conclusions

The results obtained thus far demonstrate how the concept of the "expanded field" theorised by Krauss, when reinterpreted in the context of Smithson's "entropic landscapes", facilitates the transcendence of conventional dichotomies between art and architecture, landscape and project, and permanence and ruin. The landscape of the Friulian and Isonzo reclamation area, which is undergoing cultural and cultural desertification and landscape simplification (a pronounced homogenization and loss of structural complexity of the landscape), as well as "abandonment", can be read as one of these "entropic landscapes", where artistic and architectural action can become both a critical and operative device.

The proposed installations and devices —walking, reflective thresholds, elements for observing the landscape— are not sculpture-objects, monuments in the traditional sense of the term, rather they are "weak monuments", light devices sensitive to the context, "texts in the landscape",[30] what Turri called "topophilia". In this sense, the operations of reactivation of hydraulic ruins and agricultural architectures such as abandoned farmhouses are in continuity with the practices of exploration of entropic places initiated by Smithson, or Garutti's site specific approaches, but also with Careri's theories on living presence in the landscape through walking, starting from Lefebvre's lesson on lived space. The insertion of artistic micro-interventions such as traces, fragments, thresholds, suggests a new form of landscape care, neither completely transformative (tabula rasa) nor nostalgic.

The landscape, understood as an entropic palimpsest, which is resemantised and activated through strategies that transform the existing into a narrative and operational resource. In this sense, the Ca' Corniani operation can be regarded as an exemplar. The replacement of the roof of the house with a sheet of gold does not belong to a historiographic or philological approach; rather, it sees in the artistic element a seed for a new production of meaning. Therefore, the strength of the research lies in recognising the importance of the artistic object, in the form of imperceptible and delicate interventions, as a founding and characterising feature.

The leading questions "How can artistic intervention breathe new life into rural landscapes threatened by a pronounced homogenization and loss of structural complexity? How is the landscape transformed by architectural and artistic intervention?" linking to a more general and open topic "When does art become architecture? When does architecture become art?" that, as in a loop, brings the

30. E. Turri, *Semiologia del paesaggio italiano* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2014), 73.

reader to uncertain ground that leads to multiple interpretations.[31] However, as demonstrated, these questions are addressed in the praxis and theory of the "expanded field", understood as a model of reading space that leads the project to lose its self-referentiality, thus expanding and engaging in dialogue with the site, memory and landscape; in the concept of "artscape" as an operational strategy and in "walking" as a real action of measuring and exploring the landscape. Consequently, the reflection deviates from the conventional, frequently intricate and often equivocal relationship between art, architecture and landscape. In contrast, these three categories are situated on a shared horizontal plane. As vertices of a single triangle, they are co-present in the rural, entropic and fragile context of the Friulian reclamation landscape.

The objective of this research-application is to reconstruct a "new memory" of the landscape, achieved by starting from the constituent fragments of the landscape itself, including architectural remains, shreds of land and lacustrine basins. It can thus be concluded that the concept of "archipelago" (Figure 22) is a founding motif, a simultaneously territorial figure and a design tool, where walking is both tool and method, an "idea-instrument" as defined by Franco Purini in *Composing Architecture*.[32]

As demonstrated by the study sources, literature review, intervention methodology adopted, drawings and photographs, the importance of safeguarding and reinterpreting a specific regional heritage is emphasised in this research. In the case of this project, the specific regional heritage in question is that of the land reclamation campaign adjacent to the Grado and Marano lagoon and defined by specific territorial characteristics.

The research, which is ongoing, demonstrates the necessity to protect a distinctive, developing landscape heritage, whose history is evident in the phenomenon of desertification, in the traces on the trampled soil, and in the architectural remains on the landscape. This heritage has been developing and transforming for decades as a result of human action and intervention. The objective of this research article is to establish new narratives for interpreting the specified territory. These new interpretations are intended to disseminate knowledge to future generations and, most importantly, to provide the present-day community, that is to say, the inhabitants, researchers and administrators, with a guide. This is intended to serve as a tool for interpreting, exploring, observing and intervening in the territory itself.

The distinguishing and unique feature of this research project is its operation within a subtle "middle ground", both conceptually and disciplinarily, where the fields of art and architecture are intertwined and in dialogue. However, as demonstrated by the case studies, the project's originality does not lie in the construction of new buildings or the implementation of infrastructure enhancements. Nor does it lie in the insertion of monumental and representative works of art that impose themselves strongly on the landscape. Instead, the focus is on a delicate approach, entailing the observation of the prevailing landscape, its micro-architectures and natural specificities, and the comprehensive system of a pre-existing territory.

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31. U. Eco, *Opera aperta. Forma e indeterminazione nelle poetiche contemporanee* (Milano: Bompiani, 1966).

32. F. Purini, *Comporre l'architettura* (Bari-Roma: Laterza, 2000), 143.

Instead, the approach is a delicate one, entailing the observation of the landscape, its micro-architectures and natural specificities, and the comprehensive system at the base on a pre-existing territory, characterised by its expansive nature, fragmentation; inhabited, as well as cultivated and thus utilised, in order to bring different fragments and their respective functions into dialogue and blend them together.

The decision to systematise a substantial area of an entire region and thus transform the low-lying Friuli plain into a "great park of art" not only protects but also enhances and highlights the landscape itself, as well as the various architectural and environmental issues that underlie it and are discussed in this article.

The objective, therefore, is not so much to provide specific regulations or guidelines for intervention, but rather "principles for observing the landscape", with respect for the common good, in order to understand how to observe a place, what inhabits and defines it, intervene and thus enhance what can be seen. Consequently, elements such as rural colonies, water pumps, and weak architectures such as piers and fishing nets are imperative to this project, as they are not only unique to this locale, but also serve as a medium for its historical narrative. These structures, in essence, function as a testament to the region's past and a catalyst for the reinterpretation of its historical narrative.

The underlying principle of this operation is the idea of the "great art park" as an integrated system that imbues the existing space and quotidian objects with significance. The method of walking, and consequently a direct, personal and subjective experience, is employed as a means to discern the ordinary that which is forsaken yet retains its importance. From this vantage point, the principle of artialisation is applied to convene and thereby engender a dialogue between dispersed points within a vast and inherently fragmented territory.

This strategy, which involves the setting-up of networked artistic installations, shapes and provides "principles of landscape observation". Whitin this research, this method is of course specific to the north-eastern territory of Friuli Venezia Giulia, but it can become a general model applicable to any landscape context thanks to the principle of "walking" as a design idea-tool for studying territories. This practice establishes a direct connection between the observer and the traversed space, highlighting its architectural and spatial characteristics.



Figure 22. *Visualization of the Friuli reclamation area and the Marano lagoon as a system-archipelago*
Source: New Friulian Deserts research unit. Drawing by A. Venudo.

As Robert Venturi argues in *Complexity and Contradiction of architecture*[33] we proceed through an operational use of history, which is why the fragment, ecological but also cultural, is a key element. Walking in the landscape, in fact, has brought to light its fragmented character: expanded, lacking in boundaries, flat and open towards the horizon, where the grid-like mesh of the countryside is clearly distinguished from the fluid one of the lagoon. The issue, therefore, is to define and focus on the memory of the territory itself. Which is the one to refer to? Which one to tell? We know that memory is a segment of history; however, our modus operandi does not align with that of historians, rather we subscribe to the perspective propounded by Tafuri, who posited that history is a recurrent and cyclical phenomenon. This necessitates the formulation of novel narratives, predicated on a judicious selection of memories, which, from our perspective, are of a creative-design nature. Indeed, our perspective concurs with the "semiotic" vision posited by Turri in *Semiologia del paesaggio italiano*[34] which asserts that, commencing with experience and subsequently with narrative, it is the very act of narrating that gives rise to a novel and distinct landscape. In this sense, from an ecological standpoint,

33. R. Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966).

34. Turri, *Semiologia del paesaggio italiano*, 2014.

it is possible to establish a semiological dimension of the landscape itself.

In conclusion, the primary contribution of the research will consist in the elaboration of an "operational framework" that integrates art and architecture as ideas-tool for the regeneration of reclaimed landscapes. The development of hybrid settlement typologies (for example, lagoon shelters, stilt countryhouses, and proposals for lagoon or countryside shelters)[35] and their integration with ecological networks and regional agri-landscape corridors are of particular concern.

However, we would like to conclude by returning to a more poetic dimension, emphasising the importance of direct experience in the landscape. We explore the geographical dimension by walking and, in doing so, we assemble the fragments we perceive in it through the technique of montage (Figure 23). It is, therefore, a double vision, operational and subjective at the same time, but which, in the end, is "our vision of the world". This is also taught by the painter Giuseppe Zigaina, in his paintings *Verso la laguna* (Towards the Lagoon), montages of subjective views captured while walking in the landscape, and architect Costantino Dardi, whose excerpt from one of his texts we quote and with which we end this article:[36]

> When I fly out of this land in the morning, the newly rising sun illuminates the vast plain of rivers reaching to the sea: the first experience of open landscape after the shadows of the Alpine valleys and the long winter night, the mystery of the closed communities dissolves in the large drawing, in the majestic orchestration, the orderly countryside, the villages, the basilica of Popone and the Roman port of Aquileia, the lagoon of Grado, the fishing valleys, the small islands, the sandy shores, a serene and rational "geographical" relationship with the world.[37]

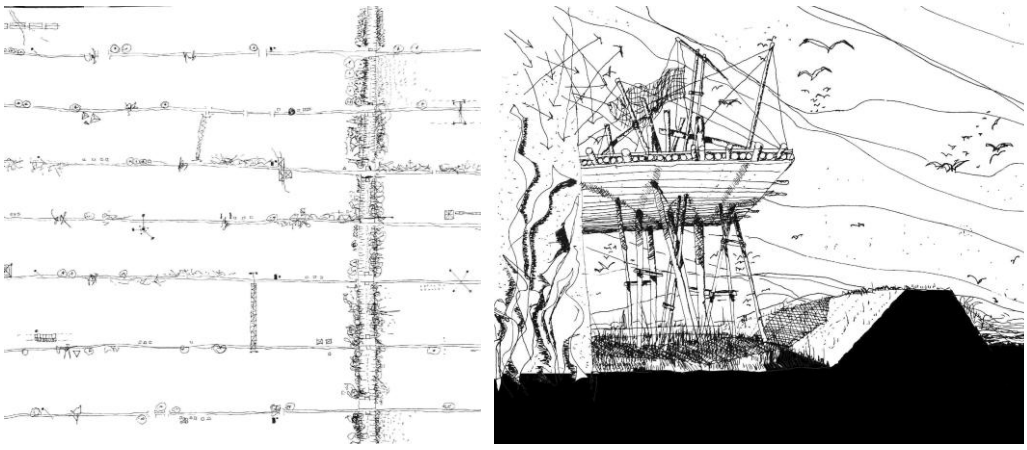


Figure 23. *Interpretive drawing of the "landscape frameworks" of the reclamation countryside: traces, "architectures without architects", and objects designed to evoke a poetic response, towards reinventing the rural landscape.*
Source: New Friulian Deserts research unit. Drawing by A. Venudo.

Acknowledgments

35. V. Devescovi, *Sistema paesaggistico-ambiente della bonifica in relazione alla tipologia di scolo* (Trieste: Master degree thesis, 2021).

36. G. Zigaina, *Verso la laguna* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1995).

37. C. Dardi, "La casa del padre e del figlio," in M. Costanzo, *Costantino Dardi. Architetture in forme di parole* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2009), 79-82. Translated by the authors.

We would like to thank our colleagues in the research group: Thomas Bisiani, Giulia Casolino, Mariacristina D'Oria, Elisabetta Nascig, Vittora Umani and Camilla Venturini for the shared moments, ongoing comparisons and field activities.

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