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TERRARIUM. EARTH DESIGN:
ECOLOGY, ARCHITECTURE
AND LANDSCAPE

A CURA DI
SILVIA MUNDULA,
KEVIN SANTUS,
SARA ANNA SAPONE

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Mimesis



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ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPE
edited by
Silvia Mundula, Kevin Santus, Sara Anna Sapone

Terrarium collects research and reflections on the relationship between space, soil, vegetation and the biotic community, linked through the metaphor of the terrarium. The book is curated by a research group from the Ph.D. program "Architectural Urban Interior Design", coordinated by Alessandro Rocca (Department of Architecture and Urban Studies at Politecnico di Milano), involved in the PRIN Sylva by the IUAV research unit.

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ACQUA VIVA E CORRENTE: INSIGHTS FROM RENAISSANCE FONTANIERI MASTERY

MARIANA PEREIRA
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In a moment when climate, social, and racial activism has entered architectural criticism and theory with full force (see the theme of the 18th International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia: The Laboratory of the Future), to pause and look back at Renaissance Garden villas seems counterintuitive. From today's perspective, the Renaissance brings up ideas of an idealized nature that are too antiquated to look at when analyzing the emerging questions regarding the design profession. Perhaps this is true if considering habits of judgment that rely on notions that oppose human and nonhuman concepts of nature, or ideas of nature vs. technology. However, when we acknowledge the lack of clear boundaries between what we define as landscape and technology, and human and nonhuman (Lee and Helphand 2014), landscape as a field of study emerges as an array of complex systems that can be observed from different lenses.

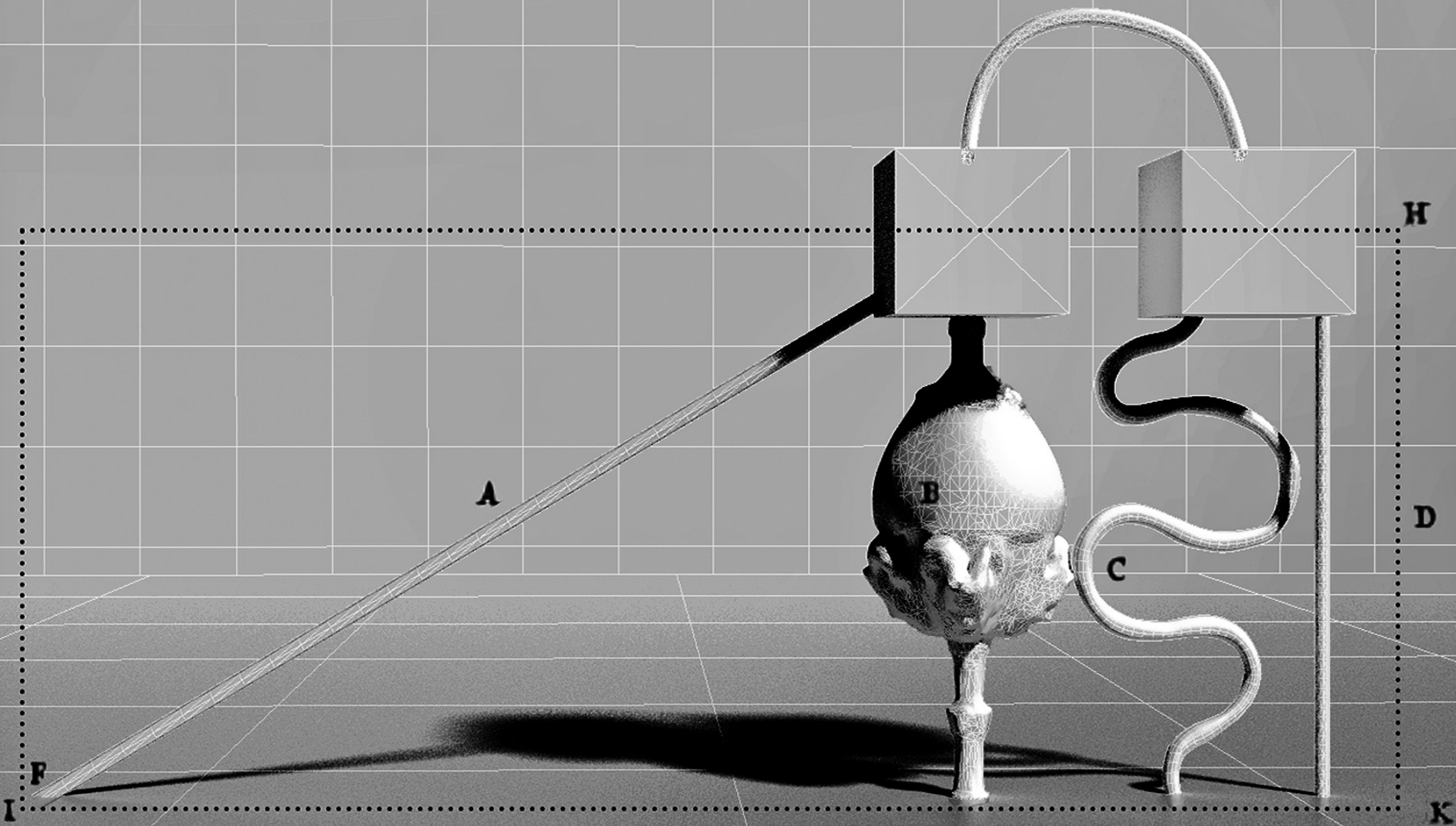
Today, professionals and scholars largely struggle to predict, account for, or respond to climate impacts in contemporary design projects, despite the many computational tools and techniques at their disposal. This shortcoming urgently calls for an experimental approach to both design research and design practice. As such, there is a growing number of scholars interested in defining “Designed Experiments” (Felson and Pickett 2005) and “Research Through Design” (RTD) methods and techniques, given these concepts' potential for innovation in the field and to respond to pressing issues such as climate change. Surprisingly, during the Renaissance, the *fontanieri*, the professionals who oversaw fountains' design and hydraulic marvels, found themselves in a similar position. As Katherine Rinne (2011) and Rafaella Fabiani Gianetto (2008) noted, the *fontanieri* had to rely heavily upon onsite experimentation rather than precise calculations. Rinne points out that although there is a consensus among scholars that theoretical inquiry in classical texts and hydraulic treatises from this period had an impact on fountain and garden design, it is often overlooked the fact that the design practice performed by these architect-engineers also influenced and helped move forward hydraulic science and engineering.

It is striking to note how little attention the field of garden and landscape history has devoted to the incredible mechanisms and techniques that were employed to move water, even though water was considered the very soul (the *anima*) of these gardens and devices. When perceiving such bodies, the physical properties overshadow the inner works.

Terrariums, for example, present a useful metaphor, because they are, at the same time, ecosystems filled with bloom-

Water storage and movement. Image elaborated by Hermano Luz Rodrigues.
Collage of images found in *Utilissimo trattato dell'acque correnti*, Fontana,
Carlo, Roma, 1696. Source: ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, Rar 1070.

Fig. 1.



ing natural life and man-made inert environments. What attracts many people's attention often relates to their visible physical features: their mesmerizing and diorama-like appearance, a beautiful microcosmos of natural elements. Despite not giving the attention it deserves, the fascinating designs of both the terrarium and the garden villas were anchored by the control of water in a man-made system, the latter usually put underground and out-of-sight. Both are also evocative of the concept of a controlled nature, or a third nature as John Dixon Hunt refers to the garden villas: pleasant aesthetic landscapes (Hunt 2000, p. 34).

The control and transport of water are among the oldest challenges in human history, intrinsic to evolving notions of nature and its representation over centuries (Antoine Picon 2015). Even today, our relationship with water is not optimal, mainly because of the indiscernibility of water in everyday tasks: clean water comes out of the tap, or up in a fountain, after being transported and cleaned and transported again over kilometers of invisible underground pipes (Illich 1986; Graham 2009). Such is the nature of urban infrastructure that is conceived to mingle seamlessly in space to become invisible, as Graham and Thrift argue in "Out of Order: Understanding Repair and Maintenance" (2007). Antoine Picon re-states that the water crisis we find ourselves in today, be it scarcity or excess, is primarily political and technological (Margolis & Chaouin 2015).

The political roots of the problem have been explored extensively in the works of Matthew Gandy, Eryk Swyngedouw, Maria Kaika, and Bruno Latour (Gandy 2006). Nonetheless, the technological historical thread is also broad: water can be placed in the center of urban technological innovation from the first Roman aqueducts to the 18th-century Industrial Revolution in Europe (Fischer et al. 2016). Until the mid-18th century, engineering was often presented as a discipline mostly focused on hydraulic problems; in fact, it was commonly known as "hydraulic architecture." *Architecture Hydraulique* is also the title of the 18th century's most crucial engineering treatise, by Bélidor, concerned with conveying, distributing, and managing water. In this long historical thread, a forgotten figure, the *fontanieri*, in Italian, or *fontainiers* in French (Santini 2019), central to the creation of the sixteenth-century Italian garden can shed light on current discussions about the idea of nature and technology in design (Gissen 2019).

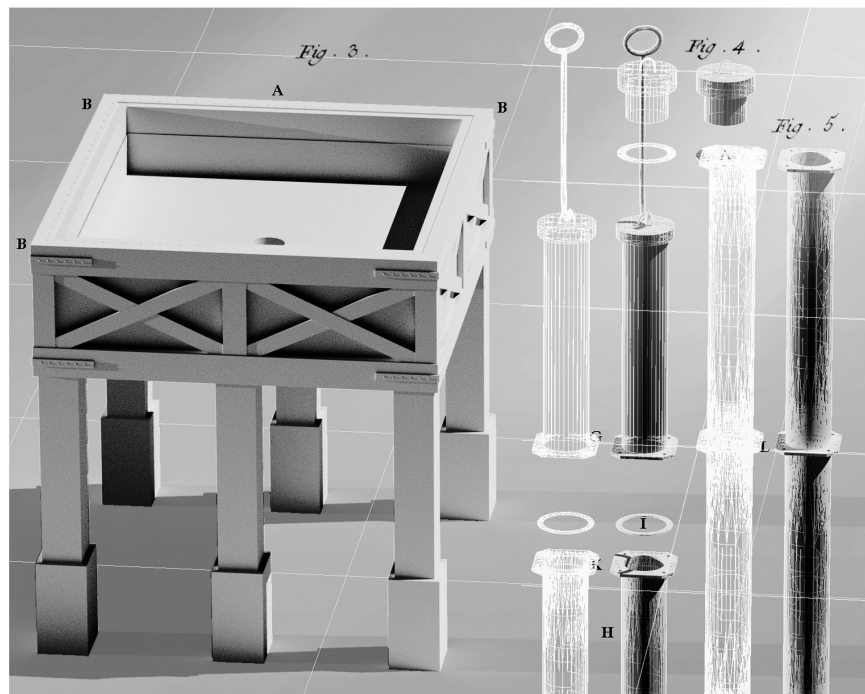
These individuals had several interdisciplinary skills, usually being artisans, plumbers, hydraulic engineers, and architects. Although the first *fontanieri* were not acknowledged, some

Another way to augment the strength of a fountain using solar energy. Image elaborated by Hermanno Luz Rodrigues. Collage of images found in Book One, Problem XV, *Les raisons des forces mouvantes* by Solomon de Caus, Frankfurt 1615. Source: Smithsonian Libraries and Archives, Natural History Building.



Cistern design to store water and provide water pressure to public fountain and details of cistern pillars.

Image elaborated by Hermano Luz Rodrigues. Collage of images found in Etching from *L'Art du plombier et fontainier* attributed to Claude Matthieu Delagardette, Paris 1773. Source: National Library of France, Rare Books Reserve department, V-3974.



achieved recognition such as Curzio Maccarone, known for completing notable masterpieces at Pirro Ligorio's Villa d'Este (1550-1572): the Tivoli Fountain, and the Fountain of Rome, or Rometta (Symmes, Breisch, and Astley 1998, p.139). Luc Le Clerc and Claude Venard were also known specialists in water automata, known for Villa d'Este's Water Organ (Barbieri 2020).

The fifteenth-century discovery of ancient texts, mainly Vitruvius' manuscript in 1408, led to a renewal of artistic and technological interest in fountain construction (Coffin 1991, p. 50-53), prompting a new stake in hydraulics. One century later, the restoration of ancient water networks and the new influence of popes and powerful families led to a revival in the construction of water devices, such as in Villa d'Este. Bernardo Buontalenti, well versed in humanistic topics, masterminded new water jets and automata for the Medici Villa (1569-1589) in Pratolino, near Florence, combining knowledge from classical texts and new construction technologies (Fabiani Giannetto 2008). Hydraulic expertise then migrated to France from Italy in 1598, when Tommaso and Alessandro Francini, who had worked with Buontalenti on Pratolino, were summoned by Henri IV and his wife Marie de Medici to design a great Italianate Garden for the Chateau of St. Germain-en-Laye (Coffin 1991, p. 54).

The commission of talented *fontanieri* in foreign territories certainly popularized these new inventions. Still, the primary means of transmitting practical hydraulic information throughout Europe was via published treatises and illustrated books, contributing to the evolution of scientific technology. Buontalenti's Norman apprentice Salomon de Caus (1576-1626) became an internationally renowned pioneer in hydraulics. de Caus published the "Principles of Moving Forces" in 1615, a fundamental text on hydraulic mechanics and garden engineering that influenced future *fontanieri* (Strong 1979, p. 73-79).

The Italian architect and engineer Carlo Fontana (1638-1714), who worked with Bernini redesigning the plaza in front of St. Peter's, and who designed the fountain pool for Rome's Fontanone for the Acqua Paola in 1690, also published an important treatise on hydraulics. Fontana's *Utilissimo trattato dell'acque correnti* (The Most Useful Treatise on Moving Waters), 1696, was based on an ancient text about Roman aqueducts by Frontinus. It also incorporated explanations of the most recent scientific discoveries. Fontana's text on aqueducts underscores that pipes are an essential component of the hardware that makes fountains work.

Likewise, the late eighteenth-century French book, *L'Art du plombier et fontainier* (The Art of Working in Lead and Foun-

tain Making), 1773, attributed to Claude Mathieu Delagardette, is an informative guide to forging lead, as well as to making pipes, joints, drains, gutters, cisterns, reservoirs, and other fountain fixtures. The book also notably covered the installation methods necessary for utilitarian and ornamental fountains.

Drawings that illustrate underground pipes and mechanics, like the ones by de Caus, Fontana, and Delagardette, are rare to find in contemporary landscape design books. Systems such as reservoirs and underground pipes are essential components of these projects, therefore should be presented as notable contributions and brought to the fore. Nowadays, like in the project of the Renaissance Garden villas, teams of hydraulic engineers and experts work together with architects and artists to conceptualize modern fountain waterworks, that are true artworks but later rendered invisible literally and figuratively because these covert infrastructures and their development are never seen or shown to the public. The figures responsible for designing these systems, the architect engineers, and the hydraulic experts behind these projects, remain largely hidden figures. In some ways, they bear similarities with Renaissance *fontanieri*. According to Stephen Graham, quoting Bernward Joerges, to become infrastructure, certain technology must become invisible, or at least culturally invisible in a process called “technology black boxing”. Unboxing these mechanics and knowledge, however, even in experimental ways, may open or illustrate pathways to innovative thinking and further understanding in the contemporary design discipline.

The ‘Starchitect’ figure can be seen as a consequence of this black-boxing system, in which the hierarchies and lack of accreditation in productions end up venerating a single figure or type of profession. This has incited many students and prospective professionals to aspire to be in that specific role. Regarding design itself, in the twentieth century, the field of fountain hydraulics expertise has also incorporated digital and computer processing technologies combined with the traditional methods dating back from de Caus, Bèlidor and Fontana (Symmes, Breisch, and Astley 1998, p. 25) opening possibilities for innovative design conceptualizations but also new opportunities to incorporate fountains in public spaces as big as the 3,450 sqm Bordeaux’s water mirror to Olafur Elyasson’s fog rings.

Digital technology and the creative use of materials and mediums can help envision and make visible the complexities behind such systems and give them new meaning in a time of several environmental crises.

Acknowledging the unsung heroes and the necessity of their work can mitigate such pervasive issues in contemporary architecture and design culture and promote a more balanced professional ecosystem.

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RECLAIMED LANDSCAPES. THE PONTINE MARSHES AS A DESIGN PROTOTYPE FOR A NEW ALLIANCE ALESSANDRO RAFFA, INA MACAIONE

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GREEN-COVERED: THE SINT-PIETERSBERG AS A TERRARIUM OF CULTURES KEVIN AMENDT, CHIARA CARAVELLO, RITA OCCHIUTO

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Hassan (Beybe) Ahmed is a Maldivian environmentalist and coral scientist. In 2007, he founded the NGO "Save the Beach Maldives". Since then, he is fighting for an ecologically sustainable development of the country, involving local communities and schools. In 2014 he started his first coral restoration project. He led projects on different islands and organised the very first coral relocation in the Maldives (2016). He believes that only through information and knowledge the community will be able to protect and preserve its natural heritage. His aim is to grow back entire reefs and restore their ecological role lost due to climate change and coastal development.

KEVIN AMENDT

Kevin Amendt is an independent researcher engaged in the study of underground quarries, their role in today's landscape and their preservation. Member of the "Studiegroep Onderaardse Kalksteengroeven", "vzw Hulpdienst Groeven" and founder of "Onderzoeksbureau MGL", he advises public and other organisations in the border region Liège (BE) - Limburg (NL/BE).

MARGHERITA AUTORINO

Born in Rome in 1997, curious explorer and patient creative, third of four children. After classical high school, she enriched her university course with two years abroad, practicing drawing at FAUP in Porto and ecology at ENSP in Versailles-Marseille, and on-site internships with Wagon-Landscaping and the Botanical Garden of Rome. In 2023, she graduated with honors in Architecture - Urban Design at Roma Tre, guided by A. Metta, presenting with C. Condemi Maglia Boscata, a landscape architecture thesis on the material and immaterial, microscopic and cosmic geographies of the Magliana Stream.

ANNALISA AZZOLA

Annalisa Azzola is a marine ecologist and research fellow at University of Genoa. She finished her PhD in Marine Science and Technologies in 2023. Her research topics include characterization, monitoring, and assessment of the ecological status and change over time of coastal ecosystems. Part of her research also focuses on assessing local and global anthropogenic impacts. Her studies are based on scientific diving techniques, including visual field surveys and photographic sampling.

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Beatrice Azzola is an architect and academic researcher. She worked in several architecture firms in Italy, Portugal and Switzerland. In 2021 she started her PhD on Italian highway architecture and landscape. She also works on the disciplinary interferences between architecture and ecology.

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Architect, in 2020 founded in Bergamo with Serena Comi, Vacuum Atelier, an architecture and design studio, winner of architecture awards for young architects and architecture competitions. He holds a doctorate in architectural composition (PoliMi - AUID) (2019 -). Participates in academic conferences in Italy and abroad such as CA2RE Milan and Ljubljana (2020-21) and Conceptual Design of Structures in Zurich (2021), Workshop Urban regeneration and Industrial heritage EPFL - Lausanne (2023)

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Nadia Bertolino, PhD, is an architect, writer and educator concerned with ethical design practices in response to socio-spatial inequalities and environmental emergency. She is Assistant Professor in Architectural and Urban Design at the University of Pavia. Formerly, Nadia coordinated the Master's Degree in Architectural Design at Sheffield School of Architecture and she was Senior Lecturer in Architectural Theory and Department Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at Northumbria University, Newcastle.

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Thomas Cabai is an Italian architect and Ph.D. candidate at the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DASTU) at Politecnico di Milano, where he is also a teaching assistant in the Landscape and Infrastructure Design Studio. His main research interest lies within the relationship between ecology and built environment in anthropic territories. He is part of the National Biodiversity Future Center and is currently working on several projects of Restoration Ecology and Phytoremediation in the Metropolitan City of Milan, Tuscany and Friuli Venezia Giulia.

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Chiara Caravello is a PhD candidate in architecture in a double programme between the University of Liège (BE) and Politecnico di Milano (IT). Awarded with a FNRS fellowship, she is carrying out her research on underground quarries in the cross-border area of the 'Three Countries Park' in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine (BE-NL-DE).

GIULIA CAZZANIGA

Architect and researcher, Giulia Cazzaniga holds a PhD in Landscape and Environment from Sapienza Università di Roma. Her research focuses on the impact of representation on the perception of landscape and its influence on the design of future transformations. Recently, she has applied this reflection to the River Po basin. She is part of the research team financed by Enel Green Power focusing on the decommissioning of solar power plants and she is currently a research fellow at the Politecnico di Milano where she teaches Landscape Architecture design.

AMINA CHOUAIRI

Amina Chouairi is a PhD student in Urbanism at Università Iuav di Venezia and holds a Master of Science in Landscape Architecture from Delft University of Technology. Since 2019, she has been researching and working on the Venetian Lagoon complex transitional territory, exploring the debated relations among its cultures and natures. Crucial for her is the understanding of the agency of the bare landscape - the brackish marshes, i.e. the ignition point from which to rethink the Venice-in-a-lagoon system.

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Felice Cimatti teaches "Semiotica e teoria dei linguaggi" at the 'Università della Calabria.

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Pietro Consolandi is a researcher and artist based in Venice, where he co-founded the Barena Bianca collective in 2018. He is a research fellow at THE NEW INSTITUTE Centre for Environmental Humanities (NICHE), Ca' Foscari University, inquiring about the possibility to implement the Rights of Nature in the Venetian Lagoon from a cultural point of view. He also collaborates with art and ecology foundation TBA21-Academy since 2020, where he develops various collaborative didactic initiatives as OCEAN / UNI Research Lead.

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Cassandra Cozza, architect, PhD, is Lecturer and Assistant Professor in Architectural and Urban Design at the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies, Politecnico di Milano. Her research topics focus on contemporary paradigms of architectural and urban design studying changes with a design approach aimed at enhancing both spatial relationships and contexts. She is a member of the scientific editorial board of the magazines Territorio (Franco Angeli) and Ardeth (Rosenberg & Sellier).

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Saskia de Wit is landscape architect and assistant professor at the Section of Landscape Architecture, Delft University of Technology. She designs gardens and landscapes at her office Saskia de Wit tuin en landschap. Her research focuses on the garden as a core concept of the field of landscape architecture: the concept of the garden is used as a lens for further research into site-specificity, the sensory perception of place, urban landscapes, leftover spaces and urban forestry.

DAMIANO DI MELE

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MARCO FERRARI

Marco Ferrari is a researcher at the University of Trento, DICAM and adjunct Professor of Architectural Design Theory at the University of Ferrara. He is project leader of PaesaggiForti project and partner and co-founder of the artistic duo AIDEL. He is particularly interested in contemporary architectural and landscape theory and in revealing the relationship between bodies, ecologies and space, questioning concepts of domesticity and intimacy in both living environments and landscape.

ANDREA FOPPIANI

Andrea Foppiani is a PhD candidate in Architectural, Urban, and Interior Design from the DASTU department at Politecnico di Milano, where he graduated with honors in Sustainable Architecture and Landscape Design. His research focuses on post-logistics landscapes in the Po Valley, working through more-than-human ecologies to explore future hybrid scenarios. He is an academic tutor in design studios and is part of the Landscape Off[f] Limits International Workshop's organization team.

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INA MACAIONE

Ina Macaione, associate professor at DiCEM_Unibas, coordinates the Phenomenology of Architecture Design course. She is scientific coordinator of the NatureCityLAB. Her research is on the issues of urban regeneration, starting with the transformations of architecture, city and landscape in the process of ecological transition and Climate Change.

VALERIO MASSARO

Valerio Massaro is an architect and academic and a PhD candidate at the AA School of Architecture. He holds a degree in architecture from the University of Florence and an MPhil from the AA School (Projective Cities). He taught Design and History and Theory in several institutions, including London South Bank University, the Royal College of Art and the University of Greenwich.

DAVIDE MONTANARI

Davide Montanari graduated with honors in Sustainable Architecture and Landscape Design from Politecnico di Milano where he is currently doing a PhD in Architectural, Urban, and Interior Design. His research focuses on the practices of appropriation of water within the Po River Basin to unveil protocols of exploitation and investigate future visions through the image of cyborg landscapes. He works as tutor in design studios and is member of the Landscape Offfj Limits International Workshop's organization team.

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Laura Mucciolo, architect, is Ph.D. st. in Architecture. Theories and Design, Sapienza University of Rome. In 2022, she exhibits the ephemeral design With Mies van der Rohe into a New World (Neue Nationalgalerie) during the Hypercomfort SS by S. Bru (BRUTHER). In the year, she was guest curator with Michelangelo Pivetta and Giacomo Razzolini of the touring exhibition Isolario Venezia Sylva (curated by Sara Marini) at Dept. of Architecture in Florence. She publishes Terzo Paradiso (Libria, 2023).

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Silvia Mundula is a PhD candidate at the Politecnico di Milano and a garden designer. After completing her Master's degree in Architecture in Milan, she gained a Master's degree in History and Critical Thinking at the Architectural Association in London, where she developed her interest in the theory of gardens. Her research investigates the cultural principles and the design outcomes of contemporary wild oriented planting design in Europe.

VALENTINA NOCE

Valentina Noce is an architect and researcher based in Milan (Italy). She is the founder of architectural office Sabotage Practice. She is completing a PhD in Architecture Interior and Urban Design at Politecnico di Milano, where she's also collaborating in teaching activities. Bridging the realms of architectural practice and academic research, her work delves into the intersections between space and technology.

RITA OCCHIUTO

Rita Occhiuto is Professor Director of the "Lab. Ville-Territoire-Paysage" within the Research Unit in Architecture at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Liège (BE). She is member of the "PhD School in Architecture and urban planning" and of the Lepur "Research Center in Sciences of City, Territory and Rural Environment" (University of Liège), and Founder Member of "UNISCAPE - European Network of Universities for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention".

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Andrea Oldani is an assistant professor of Landscape Architecture at the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies at Politecnico di Milano, where he is faculty member of the School of Architecture, Planning and Construction Engineering. He earned a Ph.D. in Architectural and Urban Design from the Department of Architecture and Planning. His researches on the landscape of contemporary infrastructure, are documented by a consistent number of scientific publications. Oldani curated seminars, exhibitions and editorial works.

IRENE PANCRAZI

Irene Pancrazi is a marine biologist specialising in tropical environments and their restoration. In 2016 she started to work for the NGO "Save the Beach Maldives", after witnessing a bleaching event in the Maldives and feeling the urge to take action. Since then, she was in charge of the set-up and the research protocol of various coral restoration projects. She collaborates with various Italian universities, tutoring students and supporting scientific research. Today she is one of the project managers at the NGO and shares the same dream as its founder: to grow back the whole reef and see it thrive.

MARIANA PEREIRA GUIMARÃES

Mariana Pereira Guimarães is an architect-engineer from Brazil and PhD Candidate in Politecnico di Milano's Architecture, Urban and Interior Design program. Mariana was a Marie-Curie EID-ITN research fellow within the SOLOCLIM programme (ID 861119) studying innovative outdoor water-cooling solutions such as fountains and water mists that can respond to extreme urban heat. She received a Master's in Urban Planning and Public Health from Harvard University focused on Human Health and Sustainability.

MICHELANGELO PIVETTA

Michelangelo Pivetta, graduated from IUAV University of Venice, PhD and Associate Professor in Architectural Design in the Department of Architecture of University of Florence. The field of application of the theoretical research is the project and its manifestation through the ephemeral balance between technique, construction and form. He writes essays and books addressing in parallel the didactic and professional activities as experimental opportunities for perennial and necessary verification.

MICHELE PORCELLUZZI

Michele Porcelluzzi is an architect and PhD candidate in Architectural, Urban and Interior Design at DASTU, Politecnico di Milano, in collaboration with the National Biodiversity Future Center. His research interest is focused on the concept of collectiveness in architectural and urban design. He is a founding member of the research project Assume There's a Landscape. His research activity has been published in journals including OASE (2022) and Die Architekt (2023) and exhibited at IABR 2022 in Rotterdam.

CHIARA PRADEL

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