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Autor: Bertini, Alessia

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POSTLATOMIA

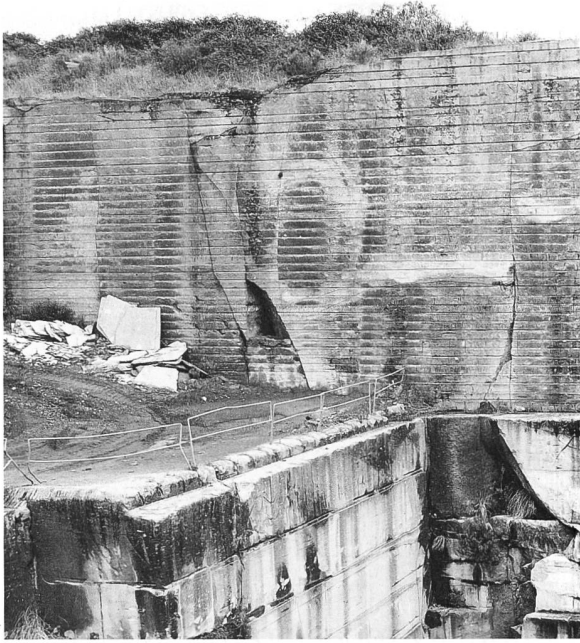
Alessia Bertini

8am, 42.452640, 12.188423, «Strada Ortana», 45 meters below the street level, three workers and two sewing machines. Michele, the director of the two cranes that have been anchored at the east side of the quarry, is controlling the cutting process. Currently there is no material waiting to be lifted and dragged out of the dig. A cemetery of all sorts of monumental discarded blocks encircles the excavation. One month earlier, a load of 3000 tons of material was shipped to China to be further processed for the markets worldwide.

The vastness of the phenomenon and the generic conditions of excavation sites is almost ungraspable for an individual who is unfamiliar to the sector. The practice has always been part of the construction economy and thus belongs to the most primordial state of humankind. Extraction activities are destined to exhaust themselves in the near future as a consequence of the unbridled, scarcely regulated exploitation that has occurred in the past decades.

The extraction process is regulated by territorial laws, the exploitability index of a specific land, the market value and the statics of the rocky landscape. Local realities are entangled with global dynamics, since these laws work on municipal, regional and national levels. They were enacted in different historical moments and are often not updated to the present time and moral. Contrasting the inflexible regulation processes, the demand for material depends on the trends of a wider international market that runs at a different pace. The land's concession depends on local municipalities, and in certain cases obtaining permits can take up to ten years. During this time laws change, and controls and limitations increase under the action of alternating governments. The digging activity outlasts generations of men and women, workers and chiefs. The monumentality of this slowly adapting and changing topography is enormous, the erosion of the «panorama» performs like a gigantic machine. The extraction of the very first stone has to be preceded by projecting and anticipating several decades of activity; the way the essential machineries will be implemented, the exact design of the subtraction pattern, supplemented by the guarantee of reconstructing the conceded plot. An amount of waste material equivalent to the one that has been produced dur-

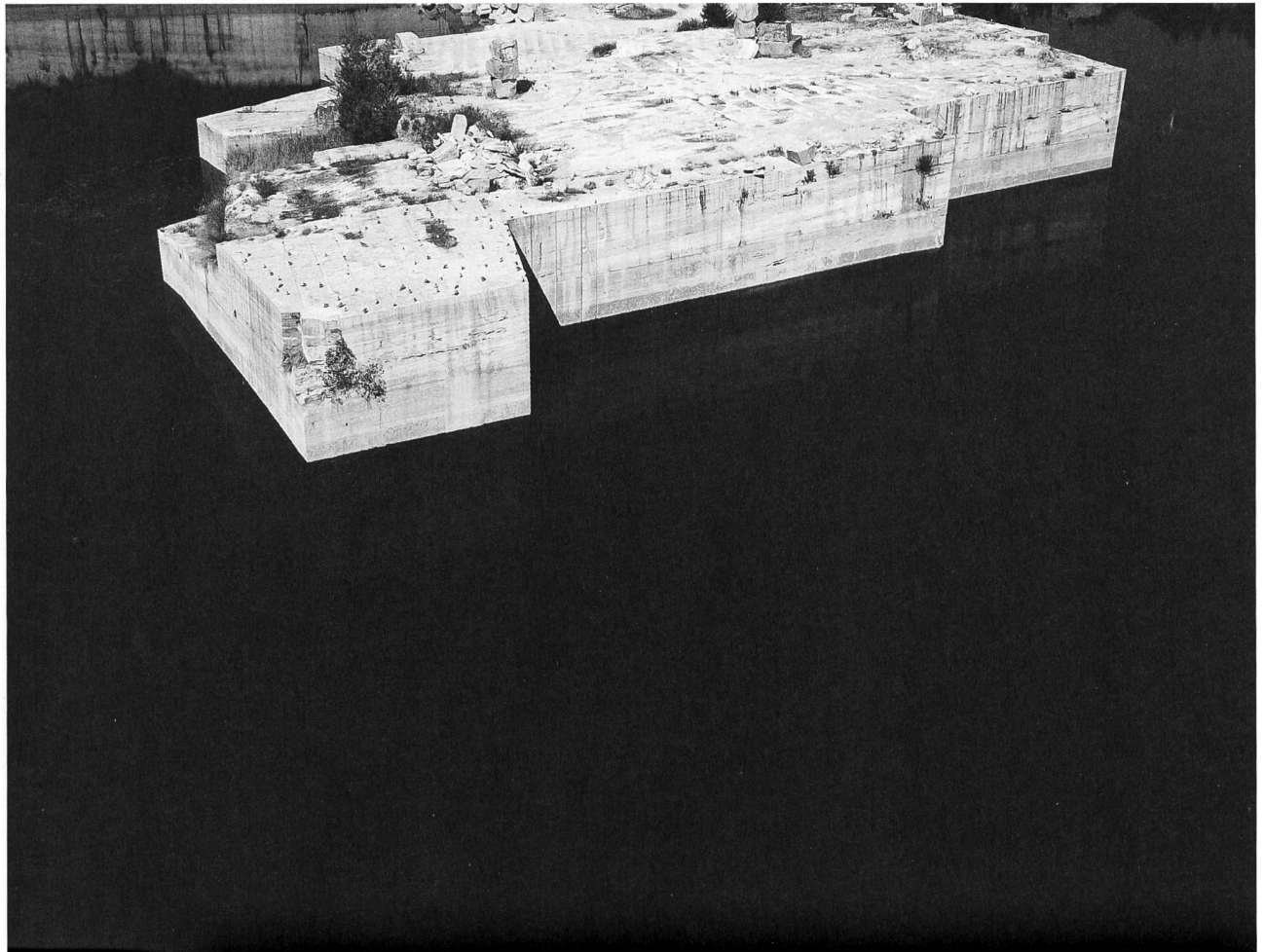
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ing the productive period should be reintroduced in the crater. A procedure that often implies the purchase of masses from other territories in order to return the landscape to its original form. This expensive reconstitution uses a lot of energy and makes the process extremely problematic. Finding alternative solutions is oftentimes more adverse for the land and local communities than the exploitation itself.

This anthropocenic gesture generates a new topography through «materia» consumption. Before the exploitation, the land is charged with an economic, aesthetic and legacy value. After the subtraction those values are transferred into the ultimate product, stone. The negative of the commercial ware, the exhausted mine, results in a sublime undefined artifact. An artifact that is sculpted by work, technique and profit, composed by the criteria that prices the material itself and completed by the imposing inhuman tools whose functioning describes the erosion of the unveiled, discovered surfaces. After decades or centuries, the ceased activity claims its past existence as an empty wound, as a negative monument continually recalling the time in the course of which the evolution and scale of human action has surmounted geology. The transformation of territory is slow, controlled and of immeasurable violence, as ancient as humankind. Once the subtraction act is accomplished, the stone takes over its fundamental meaning of timelessness while the extraction process is concluded. The quarry remains as a left over abused space, deprived of its essential function but still charged with the intensity of its plastic presence.