

Reframing forms and measures of the landscape. A case study in the southern Apuan Alps

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Keywords

Architecture, Landscape, Forms, Measures, Design studio, Camaiore

Pier Paolo Pasolini opened his short film “La forma della città” with a shot that zoomed out from what he called a “foreign body”: a modern building that disrupted the silhouette of the hill town of Orte against its tuffa cliff. His discomfort came not from the building itself but from its failure to accord with its surroundings: a failure of ‘fit’.

This article aims to present the work of a design research studio conducted at the University of Florence in the hilly territory of Camaiore, on the southern slopes of the Apuan Alps, where a network of ancient trails still connects fourteen small villages.

Here the built fabric is losing its character, the trails are becoming difficult to follow, and the boundary between settlement and surrounding landscape is left unattended.

Through field research, these fragments were reinterpreted as a system of latent relationships with significant potential. Drawings, maps, and atlases functioned as tools to condense forces into a legible field, devices through which the project becomes thinkable.

From this ground, a series of architectural proposals were developed. Abandoned stone ruins along the paths are transformed into shelters for temporary dwelling; at the same time, the edges of three villages are reconfigured through small additions accommodating collective functions. In both cases, form emerges as a response to a specific condition of the place, and architecture is called upon to give measure to what is dispersed, suspended, or weakened, yet may still, in some way, find new life.

The projects try to demonstrate that fitting can be achieved through the ability to reveal, gather, and intensify existing relationships and that architecture, in this sense, does not have to impose itself on the landscape, but to work with it, to become it, to make it perceptible once again, and thus habitable.