

What shall I do with this body they gave me

Emma & Conti

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Is there life in a necropolis?

It seems that Emma & Conti are looking for it when they excavate, shape, dissect, collect, mix and archive the different elements found in the surroundings of the Mont'e Prama archaeological site, on the west coast of the Italian island of Sardinia. This place, where elements of giant sculptures have been found, is the starting point and the fulcrum around which *What shall I do with this body they gave me*, is structured.

Mont'e Prama is a vast necropolis and, as such, death infuses the space. At the same time, it is a place that speaks, lives and generates life. Surrounding the 150 burials identified so far, one can observe a life made of plants which is concrete and tactile, but also cultural and intangible. This is where the 38 limestone bodies of the Giants have been found eroded, fragmented and hidden by a 30 cm of soil. The analysis that are being carried out by the Archaeological Conservation Centre in Italy are questioning some established certainties, casting light on a place previously considered peripheral and secondary in the writing of history.

Emma & Conti's research is situated in the space that these questions have created, inspired by archaeologists of the present or futurologists of antiquity, they search for a past that seems to live on even today. Whilst the archaeologists investigate scientifically the organic residues found on the fragments, the artists follow a parallel path by collecting and conversing with the plants grown and rooted on site, playfully observing the soil with new, naive and curious eyes. Their exploration adds another poetic layer to the ongoing research and sparks subtle analogies between the natural and the cultural world, potentially connected by an imaginary root system located only 30 cm underground. Could a dialogue exist between these two worlds? Could the laws of life and death belonging to the natural world also be applied to our cultural constructs, assumptions and history?

Emma & Conti use the necropolis and its silent interweaving of roots, stones and soil as a springboard for their installation. They recreate in the exhibition space a narrative comprising different forms of life and death: the imprint of plants removed from their environment and presented as phytograms fixed in saltwater, reveal hidden worlds unknown to most. Living elements turned into talking corpses. These elements are in dialogue with a video piece where one can follow a conversation with Silvia Vidili, one of the archaeologists who worked with the excavations at the Mont'e Prama site and studied the findings. Given their complex history, perhaps more than others, she knows that it is impossible to find all the answers.

The visitors of the exhibition *What shall I do with this body they gave me* find themselves immersed in a necropolis of memories, where multiple voices suggest unexplored narratives of a past that is yet to unfold.

Francesca Sassu

Francesca Sassu is an independent curator and cultural manager based in Cagliari, Sardinia island (Italy). She is the founder of Nocefresca, a permanent program of artistic residencies in the rural villages of Sardinia.