

# DIGGING UP ATLAS OF THE BLANK HISTORIES

INDAGARE IL SOTTOSUOLO. ATLANTE DELLE STORIE OMESSE

PROGETTO DI LARA FAVARETTO

Winner of the second  
edition of the Italian  
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*Digging Up: Atlas of the Blank Histories*, a project by **Lara Favaretto**, promoted by the **Fondazione Donnaregina per le arti contemporanee / Madre, museum of contemporary art of the Campania Region**, and the **Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo** of Turin, won the **second edition of the Italian Council** in 2017, a competition launched by the **Directorate-General for Contemporary Art and Architecture and Urban Peripheries (DGAAP) of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities**, to promote Italian contemporary art in the world. The project has been put on in collaboration with the **Parco Archeologico di Pompei** and in concert with the **Parco Archeologico di Ercolano**, the **Ente Parco Nazionale del Vesuvio**, the **Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia** and the **Comune di Pompei**, with the **scientific coordination of Anna Cuomo for Madre museum**.

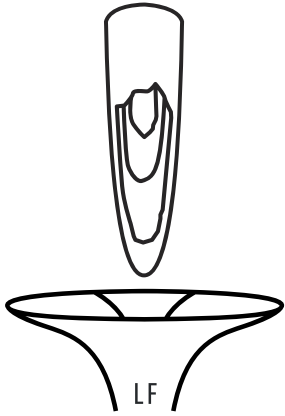
Linking together history and stories, and working across different disciplines, Lara Favaretto creates a rich interweaving of diverse times and spaces, bringing them together to form a spectrum filled with potential, discovery, and extraordinary tales, while critically redefining the concept and the experience of the work of art, exhibition, and museum.

A preview of *Digging Up: Atlas of the Blank Histories* was presented at **Manifesta 12**, the nomadic biennial of contemporary European art that was held in Palermo last June. The research method that underpins the project was illustrated on that occasion, showing the public how the process investigates the history of the land by means of less-known events that have taken place there.

If we plunge into a future like the one imagined by Chris Marker in *La Jetée*, we find the surface of the Earth reduced to a gigantic radioactive wasteland, and human beings forced to live below ground, where the victors in the war perform experiments on the vanquished. Since they cannot use space, the scientists in this underground world attempt to exploit the dimension of time. They use prisoners as guinea pigs to send back into the past in the hope of finding resources they can use to ensure the survival of the human race, as well as to repopulate the surface of the planet by using the present. This is an extended, mobile present, in which the future may already have taken place and the past may still be taking shape.

*Digging Up* is an attempt to make come true what in the film unravels in a succession of images, entrusting the journey into the past to core boring, a mechanical process of extracting portions of the sub soil from various depths, which by its very nature embodies the stratification of time. The cores constitute the DNA of the places they come from and sampling them makes it possible to ensure reproducibility in the future, thus reversing the past into a sort of memory of what is to come, impressed upon the material extracted from the bowels of the Earth.

Shown for the first time in 2012 in Kabul, on the occasion of dOCUMENTA 13, the project was expanded and was shown again in Cappadocia in 2017. For this new chapter of the *Atlas of Blank Histories*, the investigation started out from a series of stories set in Pompeii, both inside and outside the archaeological area, reaching all the way to Vesuvius, in areas such as Castellammare di Stabia, Herculaneum, and Torre del Greco, and as far as a Pozzuoli.



The uniqueness of this land is recounted in stories and documents, and in legends handed down by the locals, pointing the way to the places where the core samples were taken. These range from the discovery in 1936 of an enigmatic magical square on a column in the Large Palaestra in ancient Pompeii, to Lake Avernus, where Virgil places the entrance to Aeneas' world of the hereafter, and which is bound up by spell of the Fata Morgana, all the way to the unauthorised buildings and the concealment of the archaeological site in Pollena Trocchia, and on as far as the Vesuvius Observatory. There are events of all kinds, with stories omitted, sometimes concealed, deposited in the subsoil, only to be brought back to the surface by means of coring.

Once extracted, each individual core will be investigated by geologists who will examine the materials it is made of and thus identify the various periods in time: a horizontal reading that transforms the core into a sort of timeline – a spatial materialisation of the passing of time. This scientific analysis gives concrete form to the possibility of recreating, at some point in the future, the chemical composition of the ground in a particular geographical area and at a particular time, with traces of the stories it has been through contained in its DNA

Each core sample is shown in a standard conservation box and is later archived together with all the others in an iron container that is sealed and buried underground as a time capsule. It will be buried in a particular place on Vesuvius, and marked with a local lava stone bearing the date of the burial and disinterment – the latter being planned for a century later – and the geographic coordinates will be sent to the International Time Capsule Society (ITCS) in Atlanta. A plaque with the extraction data will be set up at each point where a core sample has been taken, creating an open-air museum of the local area, starting from the Archaeological Park of Pompeii all the way to the slopes of Vesuvius.

The material documenting the entire process of implementing the project will be available on the website <http://www.digging-up.net>, which also contains a collection of essays that give original interpretations of the meaning of core drilling.

The core samples were taken in the Archaeological Park of Pompeii from the Large Palaestra, the Tower of Mercury, the Villa of Diomedes, and the Triangular Forum. In external areas administered by the Archaeological Park, digs were carried out at the suburban sanctuary in the Fondo Iozzino (Pompeii), Villa Sora (Torre del Greco), and Villa San Marco (Castellammare di Stabia). In the area administered by the City of Pompeii, in Messigno and close to the chapel of Santa Giuliana. Further operations were carried out at the archaeological park of Herculaneum and at the National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology in the National Park of Vesuvius

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