All Along the Watchtower

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Inevitably, buildings, like many things have two options: remain unchanged and become obsolete or adapt. Obsolete buildings, depending on their historic merit, are either demolished, become ruins or are restored to their original image. The reconstruction based on an 'original image' bears problems that are connected to issues of power: essentially who decides how we see the world and therefore how we (re-)build it.

The project Watchtower positions itself at the interface between new media and architectural revitalization in order to challenge the semantic tropes that are produced when dealing with historical artifacts in a monolithic way.

The site, a watchtower erected around the XIII century, is part of the recent public initiative 'Valore Paese - Cammini e Percorsi' by the Italian State property office aimed to revitalize abandoned state-owned properties in the rural landscape.

Instead of molding the project to an outcome based on a single image and outline, the design conflates multiple modes of vision into new articulations of the site. In particular, the computer's naiveté in understanding the existing historical composition of the site is exploited to provoke unexpected outcomes.

The design launches its investigation from a digital survey of the existing site. Photogrammetry, an automated technique commonly deployed in practices engaging with existing conditions, is understood here for its intrinsic ability to measure and map three-dimensionally the existing artifact from multiple point of views.

These points of observation, the partial, reductive views articulated following the algorithmic logic of the digital survey, are then instrumentalized as the projective sites of intervention.

The established, singular profile of the tower is dislodged by an image classification algorithm, whose aim is to identify pixels 'most likely to be' part of the characteristic stone construction of the site in order to assemble them together in a series of figure outlines.

This subversive database becomes the base of a series of automated, tentative projections and solid intersections recasting new figures on the existing tower. Guided by an approximation towards a specific volumetric addition to the existing structure, this streamlined process activates the survey images as loose generators of unexpected compositions. Ultimately, none of the individual 'outcomes' are singularly understood as pre-packaged projects but rather, they part-take in an archive of elements that are utilized to intervene in the site.

All along the Watch-Tower

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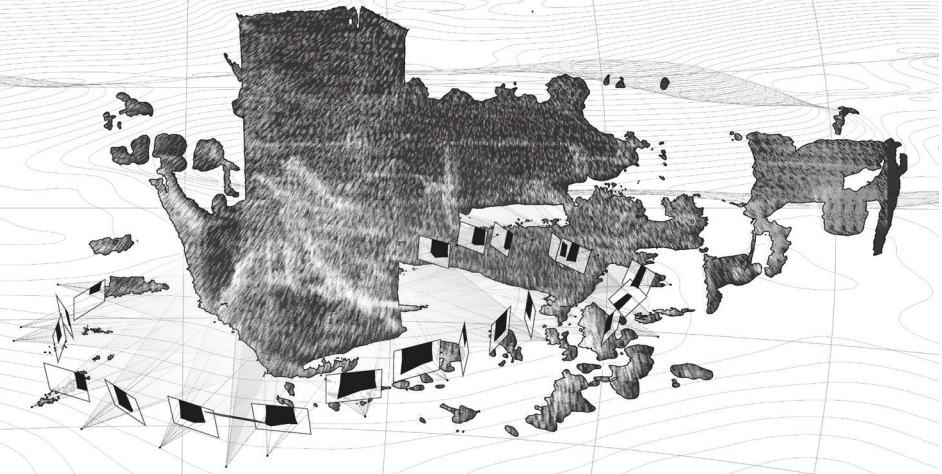

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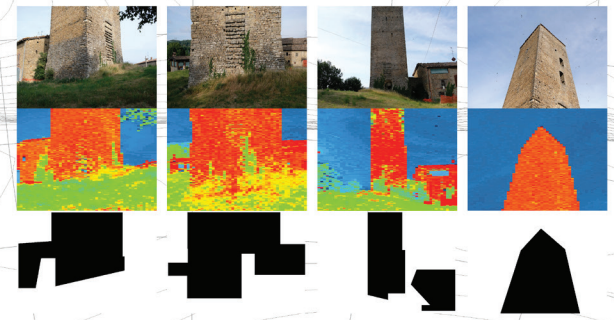
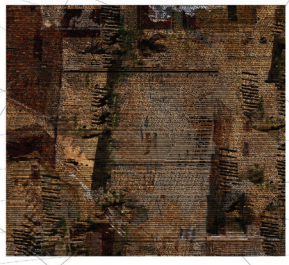


If the survey and its images are instrumentalized to reshuffle the figure of the Watchtower, this projects leverages the pixel as the smallest building brick we operate in.

As such, their displacement, multiplication and mirroring in the digital space defined by the photogrammetry model becomes a methodology for texture compositions suggesting new material associations and qualities.



A note here to the reference of the project title to Bob Dylan's song *'All Along the Watchtower'*: released in 1967, it became famous for provoking speculations on reshuffling timelines and inverting its own narrative.