

Ammophila Arenaria is a bushy plant, with thin, long, gray green, slightly pointed leaves. It is very common in the Mediterranean basin as well as along the Atlantic coast, so much so that it's commonly regarded as an unremarkable plant. Yet its presence fosters the formation of sand dunes, whose sinuous, life-filled shapes help protect coastal areas. But what happens when sand becomes scarce, and *Ammophila* cannot gather enough grains to grow and thrive?

Artist **Laura Pugno** makes this plant the centerpiece of her research, sometimes drawing it in stylized, ideogram-like forms, sometimes using it as a reference point in her photographic works as well as in a sculpture, all of which focus on a single pressing issue: coastal erosion.

In *Persuasioni* (2025), a series of drawings dedicated to coastal plants, the artist uses sand as a painting material and plays with the persuasive power the plant evokes in its relationship with the land. These drawings express the attempt to retain the sand, essential for the life of the very plants they reproduce. At the same time, they clash with the futility of this gesture, which will not prevent the sea from advancing or the coastline from eroding.

The artist draws inspiration from the Venetian coast washed by the Adriatic Sea, specifically Bibione. Here, as in other parts of the Italian coastline reshaped by human activity to accommodate mass tourism, the coast has undergone significant morphological change, which now requires large-scale replenishment efforts to be filled with sand and made habitable again.

La soglia (2025) is the photographic image that introduces this current, fragile, and relentless scenario. It shows a horizon overhung by jagged sand piles, meant to recreate an artificial ecosystem, in an attempt to prevent what the next photo series, *Prove d'Identità* (2025) shows instead.

These images taken at the same location and printed, with strong intention, not surprisingly on sandpaper. They show a symptomatic phenomenon that appears in the winter months when erosion becomes more visible due to heavy swells, so much so that the clay substrate close to the sea emerges. The marks of the tires of the dredgers working on the beach nourishment are imprinted on this rocky but soft and malleable surface.

Captured in this three-image series, these geometric landscapes seem to belong to other planets, or alternate futures, interrupted by an unprinted strip of raw paper showing its sandy composition. Its rough texture absorbs pigments into its sandy matter. Left raw, particularly at the sea's edge, the paper echoes the erosive action of water, creating a sensory short-circuit that ties its physical makeup to the symbolic value of the image.

The same clay that signals the recklessness with which humans are destroying the ecosystem for personal ends is also the material used for the sculpture *Ammophila Arenaria* (2025), the most direct homage to the queen of the sandy shores. Positioned on a wall-mounted shelf, the amphora bears two stylized engravings of the plant on its sides, disrupted by cracks and small fissures like wounds, from which fine streams of sand flow, forming two distinct heaps on the floor. We seem to hear the cry of *Ammophila*, seeking nourishment but unable to fulfill its protective role. Here, the vase functions like an hourglass, ticking off the time left season after season to preserve what has already partially become the subject of ecosystemic devastation.

The emptying of the amphora, driven by gravity, is not just a symbolic gesture marking the disappearance of sand it sets off an entropic process that only refilling can counter, triggering a continuous cycle of emptiness and replenishment.

Joining this evocative lament of *Ammophila* are the voices of *Limonium catanese*, *Psychotria ilocana*, and *Hieracium tolstolii* plants now lost forever, which artist **Lucia Veronesi** has recreated in the form of small, silk-screened collages on which leaves and shrubs from the past surface on patches of color and geometric patterns as if seeking a new breath.

Inspired by a study from the University of Roma Tre that explores the possibility of reviving extinct plants using seeds stored in herbariums, the artist devises a system that combines scientific and artistic approaches. She makes use of categories identifying extinction risk levels. The labels EX (extinct) and EW (extinct in the wild) in the collage titles convey the critical status of these species and prompt reflection on the vast, complex classification system that has defined plant life for centuries.

If seeds of dormant plants still exist, sealed in envelopes inside herbariums, then it becomes necessary to try to awaken them, carrying out all possible experiments so they may germinate again.

Germplasm banks and botanical gardens are not the only custodians of the species. Herbariums collections, too, represent a vast heritage of potential life, deserving greater recognition to support the de-extinction process. This is the awareness the artist calls upon us to cultivate.

In the series of monotypes and embroidery on fabric titled *The plants you kill are doing quite well* (2025), Veronesi performs a kind of psychomagical act, bringing back to life, through a metamorphic language process, those plants science has rediscovered in nature under new taxonomies. Plants once thought extinct but now, perhaps through sheer tenacity or a breath of life, have returned to existence in new environments. These monotypes become a new embroidered vocabulary, a gesture of care for the words that, layered upon one another, generate a new phonetic system. A gesture of gratitude for the plant's germinative power.

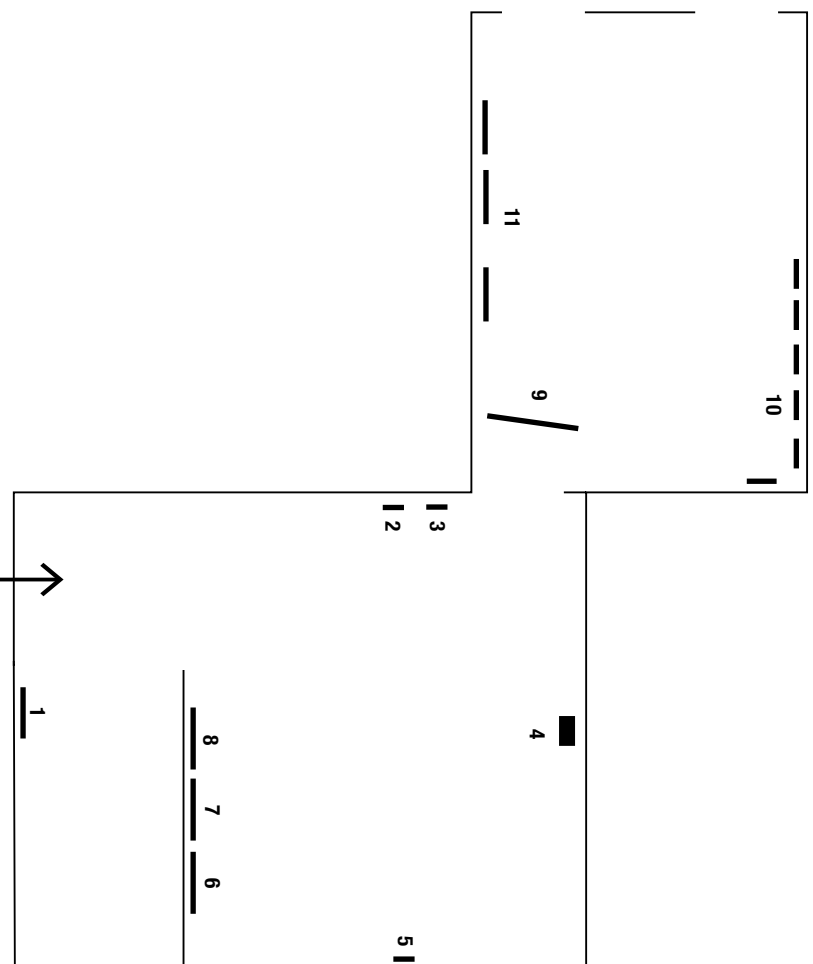
Surviving human interference and environmental destruction is no small feat for seeds that weigh less than a gram in the palm of a hand. Yet Lucia Veronesi's work is a gesture of faith in nature and in what Anna Tsing calls the "resurgence" of organisms.

Reditus naturalis sp. (2025) is the most complex synthesis of this study. It visually represents the functioning of these once-extinct organisms now slowly returning to life. When exposed to the warmth of lamps, the silk-screened ink on cotton fabric reveals the prints beneath, bringing to light what was once an extinct plant, now resuming its cycle.

The research of Laura Pugno and Lucia Veronesi finds its strongest common ground on the earth and its generative power. On the one hand, the land is retreating from the coast, heavily occupied by human presence. On the other, dying plants seek the land to take root again.

Maybe tomorrow is a poetic and courageous attempt to look at an infected earth, to negotiate new alliances and encourage acts of resistance. Organisms are capable of adapting multispecies habitats amid turmoil. Some are endangered, others are reborn, and some are lost forever.

Martina Angelotti



LAURA PUGNO

1. *La soglia*, 2025, photo print on cotton paper, 40x60 cm
4. *Ammophila arenaria*, 2025, ceramic vase and sand, variable size
6. *Persuasione - Euphorbia paludis*, 2025, oil stick and sand on sandpaper, 72x102 cm
7. *Persuasione - Ammophila arenaria*, 2025, oil stick and sand on sandpaper, 72x102 cm
8. *Persuasione - Eryngium Maritimum*, 2025, oil stick and sand on sandpaper, 72x102 cm
11. *Prove d'identità*, 2025, photo print on sandpaper, 80x60 cm

LUCIA VERONESI

2. *EX (Hieracium tolstolii)*, 2025, collage and silkscreen printing on paper, 27,9 x 21 cm
3. *EW (Psychotria ilocana)*, 2025, collage and silkscreen printing on paper, 27,8 x 22 cm
5. *EX (Limonium catanese)*, 2025, collage and silkscreen printing on paper, 26,8 x 22,2 cm
9. *Reditus naturalis sp.*, 2025, digital print on fabric, silkscreen printing, heating lamps and wood, 276x126 cm
10. *The plants you kill are doing quite well*, 2025, oil colour monotype on fabric, embroidery and wood, 71x55 cm

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LAURA PUGNO LUCIA VERONESI

Maybe tomorrow

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