

Beyond the Whiteness: Environmental Concerns in the Photo-Cine Aesthetics of Carrara Marble Quarries

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This project investigates the photo-cine aesthetics of Carrara marble quarries, mainly focusing on visual works that maintain environmental concerns at their core. Marble extraction in the Italian Apuan Alps has been known since Roman times, and its historical importance is determined by masterpieces of Western art history, such as sculptures of Donatello, Michelangelo, Bernini, and Canova, among others. However, the Carrara marble industry has recently received harsh critiques for operating in the protected area of the Apuan Alps Regional Park, recognized by Unesco since 2012. Environmental and social concerns about mining arose from the extreme acceleration of all the productive phases of the extractive industry. From the mid-twentieth century, the exploitation of a geological deposit of millions of years has grown exponentially thanks to powerful extraction technologies and a global export economy that creates only relatively few occupations in Carrara.

Within this context, photographic and cinematographic projects have increasingly focused on the environmental risks created by the marble mining industry. This research shows how visual representations of Carrara have changed in the last years, analyzing three case studies: the internationally acclaimed documentary *Anthropocene: The Human Epoch* (2019), the climbing project and Italian short film *Carie* (Caries 2019), and Lorenzo Shoubridge's naturalistic photographs in *Apuane: Terre Selvagge* (Apuan Wildlands 2018).

These types of narration add an innovative perspective to the landscapes of marble extraction, which have been previously represented following other visual trends: the technological sublime found in the geometric shapes of the white quarries, the working conditions of the marble laborers, and the myth of purity of marble for artistic sculptures. On the contrary, the three photo-cine examples analyzed in this project attempt to go "beyond the whiteness" by focusing on the scale of the territorial destruction (*Anthropocene: The Human Epoch*), the more-than-human perspective (*Apuane Terre Selvagge*), and the social struggle for preserving a mountain region through creative solutions (*Carie*). In other words, new aesthetic and ethical sensibilities in depicting the Carrara marble quarries are challenging the twentieth-century established narrations with a new element, the environment.