

Angelo Bucci

*The desert and the sea*

*The archaeological sea of Atacama: the geology of a desert and the genealogy of a look*

Two thousand feet below and twenty million years ago, the Atacama was the bottom of the sea. Then it began to distance itself from the water moving toward the sky to be the driest desert in the world. Mobile landscape for geology, fixed landscape for our ordinary eyes; Erieta Attali's eyes are different, though.

Half desert and half sea, so was the world that her eyes saw first. The Mediterranean Sea and the Negev desert in Israel were her first landscape. Then, a narrow sea between two worlds, the Bosphorus, and a city which serves as bridge between East and West, compressed between two seas, the Marmara and Black. Istanbul was the childhood of her eyes, since they emerged from Greece, where they learned how to see.

Still, there is Athens, the place where her eyes reached youth, when a very special way of seeing was consolidated. There, the Greek land was so scattered amid the sea that it is possible to imagine that one can spend the life as a newly landed: the ground moves in waves beneath the feet.

In that condition, maybe the most reliable fixed point is the eye itself leveled by its own orbit. Everything outside is in motion. What the eye sees moves in space, or displaces; also moves in time, or changes. But mainly moves through images imprinted on the back of the eye, or expand one's symbolic repertoire. In that context, the line which defines the boundary between architecture and landscape begins to blur. As if the mountain were the temple's eye or as if the temple in ruins were stones decomposing back to its origin. Or vice versa.