

La Distanza della Luna is a site-specific performance existing in the collective memory of the people of Fontecchio, a medieval village located in the Province of L'Aquila in the Abruzzo region of Italy. During a new moon night in September, the inhabitants of Fontecchio, nearby villages, and the city of L'Aquila, came together to lift a replica of the moon. On April 6 of 2009, a 6.3-magnitude earthquake hit L'Aquila and the surrounding villages. 309 people died, 70,000 were left homeless, and 56 villages in Italy's mountainous heart were devastated. Twelve years later, hundreds of cranes are still meticulously reconstructing buildings covered by scaffold cladding. Every day, locals see and hear this heavy machinery rigging dreams and lifting nightmares. Similar to a deus ex machina, this moon was a theatrical prop that was suddenly rigged down to provide a contrived solution to an apparently insoluble nostalgia. It was a "moon" lifted by a crane that for two years has been carrying debris and delivering construction materials to the central area of Fontecchio.

On one of my first nights in this comune, I witnessed a full moon rising from a balcony of the Fontecchio International Airport, a residency project by the artist Todd Thomas Brown. From my point of view, the moon aligned with the tallest crane in the village. This was the impetus for me to build a 3-meter diameter geodesic sphere made with almost 800 rolls of paper paneled with cladding used to cover buildings under reconstruction. We lit this structure with LED lights powered by lithium batteries. While designing and engineering the moon, a close friend referred me to Italo Calvino's Cosmicomics, an enchanting series of stories about the evolution of the universe. Upon reading "The Distance from the Moon", I realized that its themes of loss, loneliness, yearning and the conflict between the earth and the moon - or the physical and the metaphysical - connected very much with this remote medieval village and the nature of project. After all, I asked a crane operator to lift a moon replica as an oneiric idea, a brief respite from construction material and terrestrial debris. It was clear to me that I needed to appropriate Calvino's title.

For eons, the moon was our only nighttime source of light. It helped travelers navigate and allowed people to work through the night. Since the invention of candles, gas lamps, and more recently electric lighting, the importance of moonlight for humanity has been diminished. In most cities, the light of the moon has become practically irrelevant while the brightness of LCD screens now guide our attention to algorithm-driven market astrologers.

As vaccinations ramp up and green pass measures allow Italians to gather once more in public spaces, a large group of Fontecchio locals and visitors gathered around the main plaza to witness a new moon ritual. As the procession bearing the moon approached the launching site and people arrived, we were greeted by a gong and the sound atmospheres of Daniela Caloisi, a local sound artist. Once this moon was being lifted by the crane, a regional band called Armonie Sirentine, directed by Giannantonio Coia, played Fred's Buscaglione's *Guarda Che Luna!* For two hours, the LED-powered moon shone while people were singing along and expressing gratitude for this moment. Before midnight, the crane operator brought the moon back to ground level.

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