

Marco Poloni

Displacement Island, 2006

The constellation of photographs *Displacement Island* is an experimental narrative set on the island of Lampedusa, off the coast of Sicily. Famed for the beauty of its beaches, this paradisiacal island is routinely confronted by its crucial geopolitical role. European vacationers seeking a summer refuge here are confronted by migrants fleeing from their countries but denied entry by Schengen. These people are tossed upon Lampedusa's beaches after floating adrift for days in the open sea. The work articulates the gulf between these two figures of the displaced: the tourist and the asylum seeker.

For the tourist, as for the migrant, the beach is a promised land. For the former, it is a site of illusory oblivion, a break from his productive social existence. Attracted by the exceptional transparency of the waters, the tourist produces an alternate economy that supplements the island's modest fishing trade. For the latter, the beach is the final destination of an often deadly journey on a fortune boat from the coast of North Africa to Italy. The migrant's arrival should be the materialisation of a dream: an economically better life within the European Union.

Lampedusa is a kind of heterotopic space. Prior to being deported back to their country of origin, the migrants are jailed behind barbed wire at the end of the airport's single landing strip in the CIE, the "Centro di identificazione ed espulsione" ("Centre for Identification and Expulsion"). As their gazes meet those of tourists landing for a short vacation, two parallel worlds disrupt one another in a visual loophole.

69 pigment prints, dimensions variable

Book: *Displacement Island*, ed. Centre de la photographie, Genève, 23 x 28 cm, 80 pages + 16 pages fold-out poster, 69 colour plates, hardcover with dust jacket, Kodoji Press, Baden 2013









































































