

# Medineo *The Series*



INSPIRED BY TRUE EVENTS, WOLFGANG LEHRNER, 2021

# Medineo

## *The Series*

*Medineo* is a fictional city and yet real. This city on the Mediterranean Sea has no defined place and cannot be found on any map. *Medineo*, which pretends to be new rather than old, could exist almost anywhere on the Mediterranean coast. The individual port may have lost its importance, but the common cultural history still connects all the port cities and guarantees endless change. A universal place for departure and arrival, conflict and cooperation, contrasts and similarities, vision and reality – ready to define the new flexible Mediterranean state of mind.

The Mediterranean has always been a place of exchange, of people, goods and ideas. Its port cities have been important centres in the history of mankind and for European civilisation. The Library of Alexandria was a centre of science, Athens the cradle of democracy and Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire. City states such as Venice were not only born in the Mediterranean, they also dominated global economic networks and enjoyed breathtaking cultural wealth. The Mediterranean was also a spiritual centre and intellectual bridge between the Orient and Occident: Rome and Constantinople (Istanbul) as the home of the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church, and Cairo and Damascus as the centres of Islamic teachings.

The history of the Mediterranean is at the same time a history of constant conflicts around the religious and political shifts of power. The freedom of thought and movement was the key to the development and rise of the Mediterranean

cities. The independence from the mainland and the lively trade and exchange between them created a climate in which something new could take place in art, culture and science and in which economy and industry could develop. The cities were real havens and new homelands for people of various social, ethnic or religious origins. So far, the Mediterranean cities seem to have more in common with each other than with their respective nations. The multi-faceted maritime network of cooperation and interdependence created an invisible inseparable bond beyond the pure economy.

The Mediterranean region has also always provided scope for great utopias. The greatest idea dates back to the 1920s: Atlantropa, the monumental dam project in the Strait of Gibraltar around architect Herman Sörgel. The name of the project also stands for the visionary goal of the project, to form a continuous continent from today's Europe and Africa, connected by a Mediterranean Sea lowered to 200 meters. Atlantropa should solve several problems at the same time. It should gain valuable new ground for the growing cities, create living space and jobs and supply electrical energy for the whole of Europe. Many renowned architects and industrialists were part of the Atlantropa movement, which ended with the death of Sörgel in 1952.

*Medineo* combines and exchanges elements of the idea of Atlantropa with the everyday reality of the up-and-coming Mediterranean metropolises, which are growing more and more into a single megalopolis.

Taking the ever-growing archives as a point of departure, Wolfgang Lehrner's *Medineo – The Series* combines more than twenty Mediterranean cities into a real-fictional narrative that explores various key aspects of the subject: a true mosaic of ideas.

# The Past Is a Foreign Country

SEASON 01, EPISODE 01 / 05:06 MIN.

MEDINEO - THE SERIES  
SEASON 01, EPISODE 01 - 09

01 THE PAST IS A FOREIGN COUNTRY  
02 THE ABSENCE OF COLOR  
03 DIVIDED BY THE SEA, CONNECTED BY THE OCEAN  
04 HERE, THERE AND NO WHERE  
05 COASTLINE TO SKYLINE  
06 NOT LAND, NOT SEA  
07 LOSING GROUND  
08 ONTO THE OTHER SIDE  
09 ROOM WITH A VIEW



Disappearance is unforgiving, as well as a sure destiny. It even becomes a threat that drives our survival instinct. Everything is prone to disappear, just as time itself. We traverse in a continuous fluctuation between the fragile and “illusory” preservation of a past and a present that emerges as an untenable event that disappears at the very moment of its utterance.

*“Ut nihil non iisdem verbis redderetur auditum.”<sup>1</sup>*

We are an incarnate accumulation of records of age, wear, injuries, and the impression of its actions, the somatics of space and time.

TEXTS

Lorena Moreno Vera

(1) “NOTHING THAT HAS BEEN HEARD CAN BE REPEATED WITH THE SAME WORDS.” JORGE LUIS BORGES, “FUNES, HIS MEMORY,” COLLECTED FICTIONS, TRANS. ANDREW HURLEY (NEW YORK: PENGUIN BOOKS, 1999), 134.

# The Absence of Color

SEASON 01, EPISODE 02 / 04:10 MIN.



The relationship we hold with an everyday object like the window is curious. When I lived in the north, I always looked for large windows because every ray of light that filtered into my house was precious to me. People rarely closed their curtains, for this longing was shared. Likewise, the private always seeps into the public through the diaphanous glass.

Now that I have returned to the south, I am struck by how, for the most part, we keep the blinds closed as if shutting out the view. The private is kept in the enclosure, and the public ends at the window ledge.

# Divided by the Sea, Connected by the Ocean

SEASON 01, EPISODE 03 / 07:10 MIN.



*Comme d'habitude*, I wake up at dawn, leave my house and walk to my usual spot.

Like every morning, I buy a tea with Amadou on the way. We exchange the same conversation, *comme d'habitude*. I greet the same guys who meet every day, *comme d'habitude*, near a place by the beach where the shade keeps the temperature nice and the light welcomes reading.

*Comme d'habitude*, we take our newspapers. We turn the pages in an almost synchronized rhythm. It's almost a sort of choreography that we have somehow learned. We have assimilated it,

practiced it, and mastered it.

*La pratique rend parfait!*

*Comme d'habitude*, someone walks along the beach playing an instrument in return for small change. The choreography is then musicalized. *Comme d'habitude*, the fishermen resume their activity, collect their things, and walk jollily by with the catch of the day. At this moment, *comme d'habitude*, I feel the sweet salty smell of the air on my face, mixing grains of sand and soil from the Sahara to the Amazon.

*Tous les jours comme d'habitude.*

# Here, There and No Where

SEASON 01, EPISODE 04 / 05:04 MIN.



The work of explorers and cartographers is remarkable, yet dubious: in the midst of the unknown, they somehow resolved to create a compendium of interpretive and organizational models that would try to embrace “reality” and give it a shape, a logic, and a name

that would fit into their own terms. Nowadays, thanks to satellites and new technologies, it remains almost no doubt of how the Earth looks from afar, how every piece of territory is defined and delineated. Maybe they were nicer, those days of uncertainty.

# Coastline to Skyline

SEASON 01, EPISODE 05 / 06:03 MIN.



“Life emerged from the water to take over the land. The sedentary and definitive settlement of terrestrial beings coincided with the radical transformation of air space.”<sup>1</sup> Through this colonization of the dry land, the population of these beings is some areas grew and extended into pillars stretching towards the sky, with the capacity to host thousands in constructions that multiply in height and depth. “One solution consumes the sky, the other the ground. It is strange

that those with the least money inhabit the most expensive commodity—earth; those who pay, what is free—air.”<sup>2</sup>

Verticality also creates some sort of anonymity. One gets to know the neighbors through their sounds but rarely through their faces. We create optic illusions on glass and mirror-covered surfaces, to separate the inside from the outside through the simulacrum of reflection.

(1) EMANUELE COCCIA, “EN PLENO AIRE: ONTOLOGÍA DE LA ATMÓSFERA,” LA VIDA DE LAS PLANTAS: UNA METAFÍSICA DE LA MIXTURA, TRANS. FABIÁN LUDUEÑA ROMANDINI (BUENOS AIRES: MIÑO Y DÁVILA, 2017), 46.

(2) REM KOOLHAAS, “THE GENERIC CITY,” S, M, L, XL (NEW YORK: MONACELLI PRESS, 1986), 1253.

# Not Land, Not Sea

SEASON 01, EPISODE 06 / 05:56 MIN.



As an irremediably terrestrial creature, human beings have endeavored to create prosthetic devices that allow them to reach the sky and dive into the oceans, despite their aerobic constraints. However, these prostheses are far from the sensation and mastery that a bird or a fish can have in those environments.

We are left with the equally irremediable condition of observers and speculators, who lie down on the sand and turn their face just to go back to the exercise where sight no longer distinguishes between the land, the sea, and the own body since they all merge into one infinite horizon.

# Losing Ground

SEASON 01, EPISODE 07 / 06:31 MIN.



– We know how to narrate “nature,” but it is not everybody’s story. We think about the idea we have created of Nature, a Nature that responds to our needs and categorizations. But, what does it mean to be human at all?

– I don’t know what “human nature” is. Maybe human nature means leaving descriptions of all the things we wipe out.<sup>1</sup>

(1) URSULA K. LE GUIN, THE WORD FOR WORLD IS FOREST (LONDON: GOLLANCZ, 2015), 83.

# Onto the Other Side

SEASON 01, EPISODE 08 / 05:06 MIN.



Call me old-fashioned, but I swear I have my reasons.

I've been living on this side of the Mediterranean for several years now, so many that I need several fingers on my hand to count them [the man smiles]. I heard the story of a woman who, after crossing the Strait of Gibraltar, ventured to swim the English Channel. She talked about the exhausting months of training leading up to her attempt. Once the day arrived, she set sail from Dover at midnight in a boat with her family.

When the moment came just before diving into the water for an adventure that would take at least fourteen hours, she realized the vastness of the sea.

That feeling of enormity and uncertainty that only the sea can give. During the journey, she fought against the cold of the water, the darkness, the scourge of jellyfish, the fear of everything that the eye cannot see, and the exhaustion of her own body.

*A cada brazada, el azul interminable.*

Humans have always sought to "run that extra mile," either by testing ourselves physically or trying to conquer our environment. Undoubtedly, a woman at 50 years of age managing to cross 56 kilometers in 52,600 strokes is a more amazing feat than transforming the horizon into a veritable armada of modes of transportation.

# Room with a View

SEASON 01, EPISODE 09 / 04:48 MIN.



After having visited so many places, after having lived in various places, today I find myself sitting on a balcony in this small town near M. with a half-open window through which the sea breeze, the murmurs of the street, and a rather hot wind blow through.

Given these architectural tendencies that agglutinate people in infinite grids of living spaces, we constantly find ourselves face to face with that stranger across the other side of the tower. We exchange

glances, move heads in a friendly but automatic gesture, so both can finally try to enjoy that balcony in the heights, trying to annul that other's glance.

There are times when I simply can't resist the urge to stare at them, to conjecture, even to invent dialogues with characters and everything. Sometimes I feel like Calvino's Palomar, pursuing a futile task of observation, trying to understand existence as sometimes distressing, sometimes wonderful.

The observation and visualization of local determined characteristics of cities, the spaces between them, and the resulting global transformability run through Wolfgang Lehrner's works.

Cosmopolitan in his investigations, the artist responds to the change and the importance of seemingly insignificant similarities, as well as the opposition of urban areas, cities and their networking in the cultural, socio-economic, historical and metaphysical sense.

In his way of working Lehrner consciously uses coincidence to determine the direction of aimless drifting, headed by the respective routes, squares, streets and places. The resulting cinematic portraits of everyday urban life are essentially results of the search for the particular.



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Museum of Contemporary Art of RS,  
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TEXTS

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