



Josephine, Corin and Megan agreed to make a last-minute stop before dropping me at Fiumicino airport—a symbolic gesture for leaving Italy. A twenty-minute drive outside Rome and we're in Lido di Ostia, speeding down a narrow road running parallel to the beach—the edges overgrown with plants, the few buildings dilapidated in their Italian way.



Eventually we came upon a mechanic's garage on the right—the only way to find it. Nothing encourages you to notice that small field on the other side, behind a chain-link fence with padlocked gate. This “security” is just a performance—a trick to keep out people who don't know any better. The chain has an open link that can be unhooked—which we did, and walked inside.



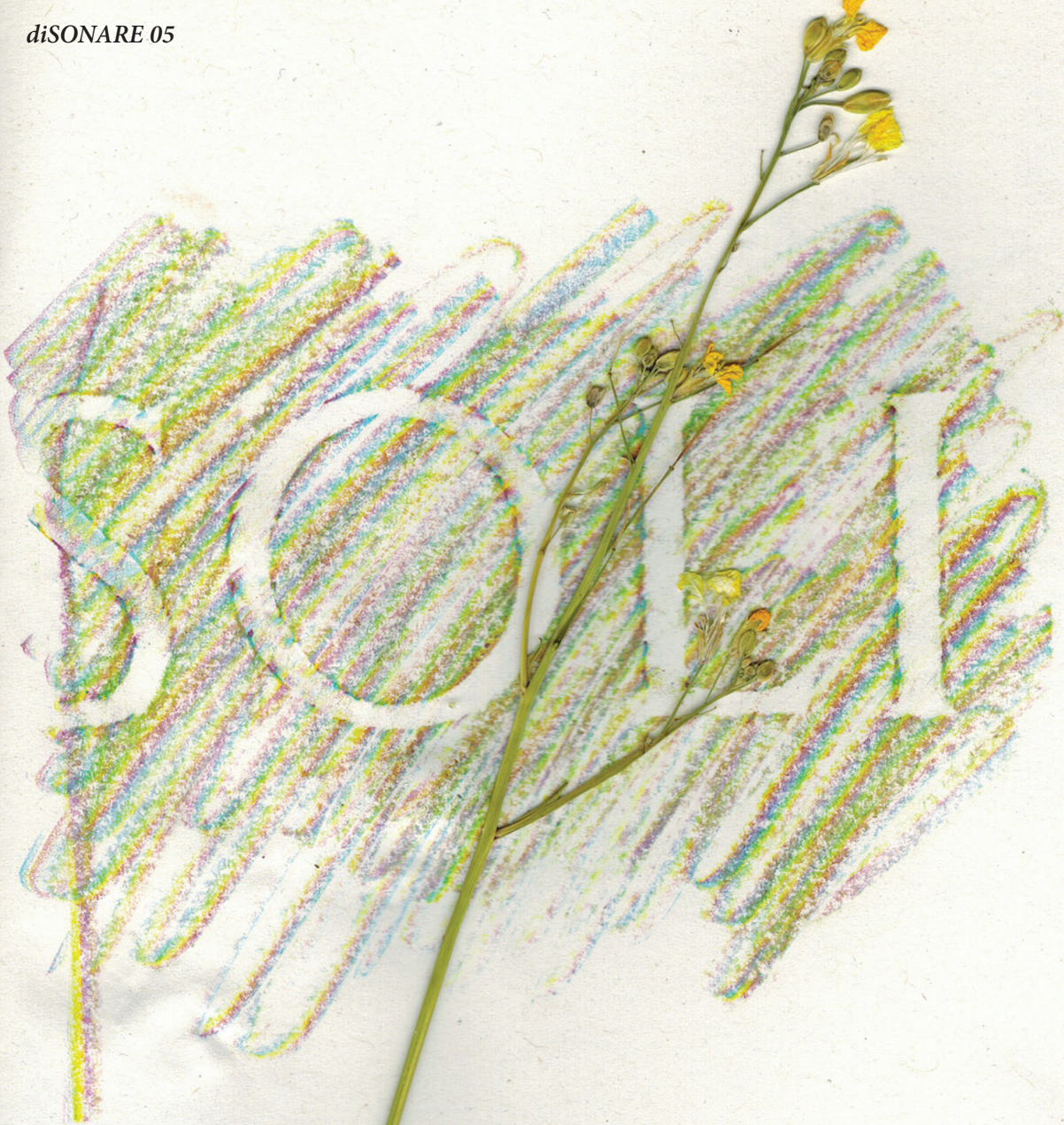
The sun-bleached clearing was sparsely carpeted by curling plants and wildflowers. An overgrown screen of seagrass hides the beach from view, though you can hear it softly lapping and taste the breeze. Knee-high stones engraved with poetry line the snaking path to a white marble monument—a swooping abstraction of a bird, with this inscription:



...passivo come un uccello che vede
tutto, volando, e si porta in cuore
nel volo in cielo la coscienza
che non perdona

...passive as a bird that flying
sees all and carries in its heart,
in its flight in the sky, a conscience
that does not forgive

A
PIER PAOLO PASOLINI



In the bright morning sun I try envisioning what happened at this exact spot around midnight on November 2nd 1975: here Pier Paolo Pasolini was beaten and run-over by his own car—face flattened into blood-soaked sand. The couple who found his body the next morning said at first they were angry someone had dumped garbage, before realizing it was the great man's corpse.



Pier Paolo Pasolini was exactly the kind of person we need in the world; a fearless, blinding light that so many powerful forces conspire to put out. I made rubbings in my notebook from the monument, pressing wildflowers between the pages. The gesture and book constitute a spell and prayer: to be relentless, courageous, loving, and real; to try, always, to understand.

La morte non e
nel non poter comunicare
ma nel non poter piu essere compresi

Death lies not
in not being able to communicate
but in no longer being understood.