

# MonteCeceri

## The Park of Monte Ceceri in Pills

Grafica e fotografie: Arts & Altro PROJECT di Fabrizio Darmanin



### How old is this mountain?

The first scientists studying the sedimentary sequences of the Northern Apennines in the 1950s recognised in these outcrops the results of ancient underwater currents. The sedimentary properties of these formations and a study of the microfossils present dates them from the lower myocene, or Aquitaine age (about 20 million years ago).

### When did they start to extract the stone?

By the Etruscan era there was already a dry stone wall, some funerary slabs carved with scenes of daily life, and the majestic Roman theatre act as a permanent reminder of the excavation of the hill.

### How was the stone extracted

Vitruvio in "De Architectura" details the professional technique in a kind of manual; Leon Battista Alberti, in his treatise "De Re Architectura", illustrates techniques, machines for lifting and fixing blocks, measurements, and procedures. In the Renaissance the most famous artists Brunelleschi, Michelangelo and Vasari commissioned quarries of Serene stone, characteristic of the new Florentine architectural style.

### The craft of the stonecutter

It is ancient technique and, in the Florentine Renaissance, nobody thought to document the techniques of scavengers, sculptors and stonecutters because they now belonged to Florentine culture. The techniques were passed on via the yard and the workshop, their products clearly visible to all: the streets, the churches, the grand mansions. The sophistication and ornate quality of the work reached new heights not seen before... The craft developed through: quarrymen, masons, refiners, stonecutters, sculptors and artists.

### The stonecutter family

The women left mid-morning with the lunch parcel to take to the men in the quarry. Most of them were from Borgunto, the medieval centre attached to the Etruscan walls, where people still live traditionally. On the way were the Pelaghi, public baths, protected by canopies, built on a spring where the women would always meet. In the accounts of stonecutter life, there were always the quarry boys: employed to carry out small services and jobs and so begin their apprenticeship. Work was distributed solely within family networks, which is why even today the quarries are referred to by family names.



### The profession and health

Giovanni Targioni Tozzetti, a natural historian and scholarly physician of the seventeenth century, whose work will be intimately linked to the scientific and economic development of Tuscany, states: "When the stonecutters need to break the boulders using chisels and the wedges, they warn to always pour water in the fissure where they force the wedges: some believe that this helps the operation; but others say it's necessary to use this precaution because otherwise they would create a very fine dust that would irritate their lungs". Hundreds of stone workers died of silicosis (a form of occupational lung disease).

### An interesting anecdote about Resistance

The stone-masters (many of whom became Communists) were opposed to Fascism and expressed this in many ways, one more original form of protest was their almost complete withdrawal from society to live in the quarry throughout the day avoiding any direct contact with the center of the village, filled with black shirts.

### The tools of the stonecutters

The required knowledge involved both the types of tools used and how to treat them in the forge and as elementary geological notions expressed in the traditional language of the trade: chocks, lifts, bush hammers, rollers, thread, straw, grooved chisels, sledge hammer, Bigia stone, Dead stone Serena stone, piles, punches, mallets, chisels, lathe chisels, ulivella (a type of container), rasps and files. In Florentine culture, essentially closed and conservative, the craft was passed on through the generations even past the advent of advanced industrialism, not for extraction but at least in terms of processing (a rare case a technology surviving industrialisation)

### Is this stone all the same?

Durable Stone, Sereno ordinario, Sereno gentile, Moatstone or Column Stone, Bigia Stone, Bandite Stone, Dead Stone, Granite, Cicerchina, Tramezzuolo, Mortar, Verga, Cerro Stone and Sassocorno; these are the common names of the various types of stone. They were used for different things depending on their specific characteristics: building and architecture (monoliths, columns architraves, capitals - column heads, jambs, trabeations), civil and sacred furnishings (fonts, pulpits, parapets, altars, frames, friezes, coats-of-arms), urban furnishings (slabs, culverts, benches, cornice tops, fountains), embellished frames, window ledges, capitals and various compositions.

Inside of the quarry: in the ceiling and in the footings supporting the ceiling, the signs of the blocks progressively extracted from the bank of Macigno are clearly visible.

Tagliata: an open-cast quarry. The geological shape of the mountain and the quality and quantity of the stone layers remain visible in vertical cross-section. (eg cave Fratelli Sarti)

Construction used above all as a deposit for tools.

Latomia, clearly showing the rock strata with the powerful bank of Macigno.

