

The Association Fiorentini del Mondo celebrates a top member of theirs: Michelangelo at the Italian Institute of Culture, London, on Sept 27

Actually, for Michelangelo, at that time there was nothing to celebrate: 500 years ago he was compelled by Pope Leo X to leave his beloved Carrara and find new quarries in the impervious surroundings of Pietrasanta and Seravezza, to extract marble for the San Lorenzo façade in Florence. Michelangelo was a stubborn man and strenuously opposed the papal decision, not seeing the point in changing marble supply. Giovanni de' Medici (Leo X) was more stubborn and the point was that the Carrara marbles had a charge, while the Capitanato of Pietrasanta was under Florence influence, so the marbles from that Apuan districts came for free. But at a high price for the Artist who, already a sculptor, a painter, an architect, now had to improvise himself as quarryman and road builder. If marble was to be found in the mighty Mount Altissimo overlooking Seravezza, it was not easy to get it.

Begrudging every minute he had to stay in those towns to organize and supervise work and workers, Michelangelo spit sweat and blood to climb, explore, subdue those steep, fierce, impenetrable, pristine sides of the mountain with lazy and incompetent workers and stonecutters. Cursing and swearing, he spent 3 years of hard work declaring "I am the most unhappy man in the world", displeased and frustrated because of the clumsy, incompetent, unskilled local workers: "It looks like having to resurrect the dead when I try to tame these mountains or to instill skills in this country" He declared in one of the many letters to his brother, among the ones requesting funds from Cardinal Giuliano de Medici.

Complaining for lack of help, money and even health, nevertheless Michelangelo carried on: he found splendid "marmo statuario" on Monte Altissimo and built a road to the sea for shipping it to Florence...only to be discharged of his commitment in 1520. LeoX had second thoughts and other priorities than the façade, which is still rough. Michelangelo badly suffered this dismissal: so much time, fatigue, worries, money wasted. With his broken dream and broken heart, the great artist was obliged to turn page and "spread a veil of mercy" on the matter.

Years later It turned out that it was not fruitless: Grand Duke Cosimo I guessed the potentiality of that area, built a beautiful Villa in Seravezza, completed the Michelangelo road from Monte Altissimo to Forte dei Marmi and paved the way for the marble industry in Versilia.

500 years on, the 4 historical towns of Versilia , Pietrasanta-Seravezza-Stazzema-Forte dei Marmi, with the Foundation “TerreMedicee” have planned many celebrative events echoing the presence of Michelangelo in their territory. “Fiorentini nel Mondo” took the opportunity to echo it in London too and “Michelangelo:the hard times on the Apuan Alps” is the talk by Dr Margherita Calderoni, journalist and historian, given at the Italian Institute of Culture in Belgrave Sq on Sept 27, with the contribution of 2 special guests from Italy.

Prof Arch Massimo Ruffilli is a Florentine expert on “ Michelangelo Architect” and has thoroughly studied the topic of the façade of San Lorenzo Church, being also responsible for the recent projection of the Michelangelo project on the same façade, a suggestive visual experiment to promote the actual making of it with the Apuan marble. Arch Nicolas Bertoux is a French artist with a soft spot for sculpture who moved in the steps of Michelangelo, now resident in Seravezza where his ARKAD Foundation promotes sculptors from all over the world and the marble quarries of Alta Versilia. Accomplished sculptor himself, he owns a historical marble laboratory next the Medicean Villa of Seravezza and will talk about the contemporary sculptors,sculptures and technologies.

The commemorative evening is under the patronage of the Italian Consulate, the Municipalities of Pietrasanta, Seravezza, Forte dei Marmi, Stazzema, and is sponsored by Fiorentini nel Mondo Association, MITAL , Antica Fornace Terrecotte Artistiche in Impruneta, and Florencetown Tour Operator, which provides the renowned IGT “Diadema” for the following “cheese and wine” reception.

Averse as Michelangelo was to Versilia, this celebrated part of Tuscany owes much of today fame to him and we hope that he will be in the mood of smiling upon the initiatives to remember it

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