

RISTRUTTURARE CON PIETRA FERRO LEGNO E COTTO

# CasantaNTiCa

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Borgo a Buggiano (PT)  
LA VALDINIEVOLE  
DI SARA ED EMILIO

Pierantonio (PG)  
L'OMBELICO DEL MONDO



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In provincia di Vicenza  
Abbracciati da Alonte  
Firenze  
ATELIER SUI TETTI

PIERANTONIO (PG). CASA SAN GABRIEL, CHIESA DEL CARMINE VALLEY

# THE NAVEL OF THE WORLD

Wanting to start a family, and looking for the right place to settle, possibly halfway between England and Australia, where Chrissie and David, respectively, were born.  
The charm of Umbria has literally overwhelmed them, thus unbalancing the distances in favor of her.

By triggering a magical mechanism that, after the renovation of the house, “Il Fienile”, “La Stalla” and “La Cantina”, the whole valley reborn, with vineyards and accommodation facilities of the highest level. Of which he is, today, the general manager.

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by Adamo Antonellini – Photo by Max Salani







*The main structure of Casa San Gabriel, where Chrissie and David live today with their daughters, dates back to the 17th Century. Before the restructuring, which started in 2003, it was in an advanced state of decay.*

**D**iscovering hot water is one thing. Let yourself be overwhelmed and enjoy its enveloping seduction, every time as if it were the first, definitely another. Will be

well discounted to talk about Umbria exalting its beauty and quality, its lush forests and the wide pastures of the valleys, the vineyards and olive groves of its rolling hills, the architecture and the monuments of ancient cities and small villages, its gastronomy, handicrafts and popular traditions. Every journey through this

magnificent region - *Heart of Italy*, far beyond the easy slogan - is always a new, beautiful discovery.

It is also typical of Umbria to end up on steep white dirt roads that lead from decent altitudes deep down into the valleys, and that seem never to end, while all around it is only green. Until, at some point, you meet paradise, in the form of ancient and small farmhouse, or even real village, with stables, barns and church



and the dwellings once in use to the farmers, today completely renovated and equipped with every comfort you could imagine - *in addition to those that gives mother nature*. And it's not a mirage.

One of these beautiful realities is located just north of Perugia, going down a path along the road that leads to Umbertide, in the hamlet of Pierantonio - *adjacent to the town of Perugia of Sant'Orfeto and near the Tiber*. twenty years ago was still quite battered and abandoned, like the surrounding countryside.

But when **Chrissie** and **David** found this Paradise, they decided that that would be their home. English from Cambridge, Chrissie, and Australian countryside near Melbourne, David, in 2003 the couple was around the world just looking for a geographical "middle way" between their respective families, where to set up their own : a solution, in the intentions, able to encourage then relatives and friend to come and visit them.

*To restore the stone walls, make the walls and stairs that characterize the paths, part of the necessary material has been taken digging directly near the house..*





*"My wife obviously won", David smiles, referring to the distance from his place of origin. "But I'm far from sorry about that"*

The choice of what will be renamed Casa San Gabriel comes after months of research, browsing the Internet in search of properties with these characteristics.

*"Strangely - continues David - this happened while we were traveling in South America and we were visiting a beautiful and ancient house in central Mexico, called "Hacienda San Gabriel", and here is the reason for the name.*

*"At that time, I was working as an accountant and I was tired of the battles on the boards and office life," adds Chrissie, "One morning, sitting in the middle of the conversation, Chrissie turned to me and said: why don't we look for an old farmhouse to restore in Italy? And here we are!"*

*With the help of a real estate agent, we were able to find something that matched our needs: about a hectare of stain, away from the noise of the street Also, a nearby university town, where I could also find work as a teacher. The first time Chrissie came here, she sat in the rubble, among blackberry bushes, she looked down and said: "This is the best we could have found"*

*Some glimpses of the kitchen of Casa San Gabriel. From floors to the rafters, everything that was possible to recover was reused. For restorations, the materials are all locally sourced.*



*The staircase leading to the sleeping area During the works, in the original beams were found some Baiocchi, coins minted in the 17th Century, as a wish for Good luck*

Then begins the renovation not only of what will become their home, but also of the agricultural outbuildings, next to the main building but separated from it: “Il Fienile”, “La Cantina and “La stalla”. That, except hosting the relatives from time to time as it was in the objectives - rather rarely, it must be said, for obvious logistical issues - are now rented to tourists.

### **THE HOUSE OF THE 17th CENTURY**

Overlooking the valley, surrounded by centuries-old olive trees, vineyards and woods, the house is spread over two main levels. Given the conformation of the hill on which it insists, access is however

possible both on the ground floor - *in what was originally a stable and dove living room, kitchen and other service rooms* - and upstairs, Today the sleeping area, once the living space of the farmers. It is just coming out of the main room that you can still admire the bread oven, perfectly restored for use - *but mainly for pizza today* - and the stone sink where you washed clothes.

The stone of the walls and stairs, the terracotta floors, the wood of the beams and the tiles of the sofa: everything that was possible to recover has been reused and where restoration and reconstruction have taken place





*La stalla is one of the three outbuildings adjacent to the house, renovated since 2003 for accommodation purposes. As well as "Il Fienile" and "La Cantina" of Casa San Gabriel,*

*enjoys a spectacular view of the valley where, at the lowest point, there are Chiesa del Carmine and Vineria. These are the structures that another English couple bought*

*in 2005, along with the surrounding land, to start the restructuring, understanding the value and attractiveness of tourism, in addition to the enormous*

*potential in terms of production - viticulture, olive growing. Today the Church is an extraluxury holiday home and the Vineria has been created in the old farmhouse.*



the materials were all found nearby: even digging in the immediate vicinity, to get some of the necessary stone - *closer than that!*

*"It has been a very demanding job, for which we have been able to make use of the fundamental contribution of the local workers",* David tells us. *"Among the major difficulties, the bureaucratic aspects, already complex in themselves, to respect all the sacrosanct constraints, but even more with foreigners like us".* A situation far from rare, however, in these parts, where, as is well known, especially since the eighties of the last century countless acquisitions and recoveries of historic buildings and land, even of entire valleys - *as in this case, but we shall see more about it later* - British, American, Russian and other investors were involved. Just as from every corner of the world they began to arrive, thousands, the ecstatic visitors who can now stay in these structures: to enjoy the uniqueness of the places, surrounded by nature, but also as a base for exploring the nearby cities of art.

### **IL FIENILE, LA CANTINA, LA STALLA**

The origin of the main structure can be traced back to the seventeenth century. A riprova di ciò, al di là dei

To prove this, beyond the documents, here are the "Baiocchi", the ancient coins then in use, which during the work were found applied to the beams. It was a custom in vogue at the time with the purpose of superstition, as it happens in other areas of the national territory for the horseshoe or several other objects, according to local traditions. A wish for good luck that has evidently been successful. Just more recent are the agricultural outbuildings in which the apartments have been created, three independent houses of different sizes, each of which has a terrace with pergola from which to admire the enchanting views.

Distributed on two levels, Il Fienile closely resembles a typical English cottage and is characterized by a wise use of space: on the ground floor, in addition to the living room with kitchen and services, there is a room with a particular bunk bed - *double on the lower level, single at the top*

- while a first floor with a comfortable "modular" sleeping area - *double bed that, if necessary, can become twin with single beds* - has been obtained with a loft solution. Outside, the garden, in the shade of the centuries-old oak, is an oasis of relaxation and well-being. Also the cellar is on two levels, to comfortably accommodate up to four people. Perfect for a couple, however, La Stalla, with the large panoramic terrace that surrounds it





*Distributed on two levels, Il Fienile is characterized by a wise use of space. On the ground floor, in addition to the living room with kitchen and bathroom, there is a room with a special bunk bed..*

in its entirety. For everyone, the underground pool that dominates the entire complex from the highest point of the property, surrounded by the herb garden.

### **FROM THE HOUSE TO THE VALLEY**

There is another story, incredibly similar to the one told so far, that is intertwined with that of Chrissie and David. And that will mark a decisive turning point in the life of David. The protagonists are Jacqueline and Jeremy, from England, who in 2005 visited Italy for the first time to see for themselves if what they heard about was true. La

The divine beauty of art, the genuineness of food and wine, the spectacular landscape of the countryside: they will fall madly in love too with the enchanting charm of the Umbrian hills and the greenery that cloaks them as far as the eye can see, and, in particular, the valley of Chiesa del Carmine, that strip of land that is located lower than Casa San Gabriel. Managing to look over the years of neglect, through the acres of tangled barbed wire and concrete poles, imagine the perfect place that nature has created, here, for viticulture, olive growing, and truffle.



They will buy it, to start both the renovation of the dilapidated buildings - *a church of the twelfth century, which will become an extra-luxury holiday home, and the farmhouse, which will become the magnificent winery of which we speak in the following pages* - both the agricultural activities, planting olive trees and, above all, new vineyards..

Since their arrival in Umbria, David works alongside the owners with the intent to bring the valley of the Church of the Carmine to its ancient rural splendor. Goal fully centered, and in a short time, with results of the highest level, from the quality of wines - *attested by important awards-*

to the excellence of hospitality, as part of an exemplary process of environmental restoration.

Since then, David has been managing the estate, as well as managing its own business. It is a role that seemed tailor-made for him, for the strategic position in which he lives, fundamental for the control of the development of crops, as well as for his recognized skills and his background in financial and tourism.

But also because - *in case you forgot* - he was born and raised on a farm, where already as a boy he participated

*The mezzanine has a double bedroom "modular": if necessary, it can become a twin bed.*



*David comes from an area of rural Australia, has worked in the finance, and taught business English - also in Italy - before devoting himself to the management of the estate "Chiesa del Carmine" that covers the entire valley and includes a winery that produces wines*

*that have received awards and awards (we talk about it in the following pages). Chrissie is from Cambridge, in England, and before moving to Italy, worked as an accountant in Europe, Asia and Australia We can see them, in this image, before the renovations.*

in the harvests in the nearby cellars "Otway Estate" and "Red Rock" - *"this has quickly helped to ignite my love for wine"*, confides us - and, last but not least, grande passionate and now authoritative expert of Umbrian food and wine. More precisely, of this part of Italy that has long chosen to call "home", where Elisabetta and Lucia, today adolescents, were born in the meantime. *"It is a fantastic place, where for girls, as well as for us, the path of growth has been characterized by the added value given by the opportunity to meet many interesting people, from all over the world"*, David tells us before accompanying us along the path that leads to the winery. *"The most beautiful moments are those of the summer evenings, when we meet all together on the terrace, in the cool, to tell us the experiences of our days. And it's great to be able to share all this with guests, helping to make their holidays even more special"*.



# STONEART

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