

## Foreign stuff by il mare film

### 1 Ralf – Excursion

The Appian way goes from Rome to Brindisi.

It goes towards the sea at Taranto. Taranto was founded 3,500 years ago by the Greeks, that is to say, the Appian way exists since then.

The strange thing is that wherever you find a road like this in Europe, the cart tracks are always of the same width which means that the carts were all the same size even in those days.

There is also a real cave, like those which served as tombs, but here too we can only make guesses.

Excavating a cave is not like building, more like sculpting if you like. You scrape away for a while, but the stone is hard. The tufa would be easier to carve.

I remember very well, as I told you, in those days everything was more intact, of course here there was deterioration but that was the effect of time. When tufa crumbles it is like sand, the wind blows it into the gorge or the river, the water ends up in the sea carrying sand and pebbles, and the beach stays where it always is.

Here too are the grooves and animals' troughs.

When you are thirsty, too thirsty to go on, you can quench your thirst here.

Ohhah.

### 2 Music

“My friend Mary”

### 3 Sara

It was last October, February, no not February, last October.

No, after seven months it was a bit of a shock, also because it is all changed. It's very different to what it was when I left. It's a wonderful town, I'll always feel attached to it. But then I don't know, perhaps it's too soon to say, I still have to assimilate the fact that I've come back. It is such a big contrast to Amsterdam, a huge contrast.

I work a bit in translation and interpreting and then occasionally in pubs, bars, etc, above all with my friends.

- How can you describe your ties with the Sassi?

Ties with the land, ties in the blood. Apart from my ties with the Sassi, I feel closer to the Gravina, outside the town. It could be a return to my roots since I like the Sassi as I like the Gravina because it is a perfect integration of building onto nature. An extension of nature by man's hand. The modern part of Matera cannot be compared to this gem in any way. There is still a lot of work to be done, a lot to be brought to light and to show in a better light. Still, it is beautiful as it is, I love it here, because nature is still unhindered, it reverts where man has built. So there is always this contrast.... Nature here is very dominant. Man has tried to dominate nature but he hasn't succeeded... here is the proof.

I miss the Sassi as I always miss the Gravina, the sound, the silence, the beauty, the surprise when I see something I think I know which is somehow different again. Seen in a new light, it changes. But why do I feel so close to nature, this is a type of nature a little more than a desert. Therefore it is quite extreme but it gives us so much, when it gives, it gives a great deal.. There are some very rare plants here – you just need to find them – and rare animals too.

It is unique, a special place for me because I feel such strong ties with it.

#### **4 Vito Guida**

I am Vito Guida. My parents lived here and so did I when I was about 13 or 14 years old. Then let's say we went to live in the council flats and that was that.

- What did your parents do?

They were artisans, let's say. They worked in the fields for another employer. They went out to work; they slept in the hay stack or came back to Matera.

I was the youngest, I stayed close to my parents, you see.

That part is for sleeping and here is a table, in the middle, for eating.

- And the kitchen?

At the back.

- This here would have been a...?

Here we kept the crockery, say a cooking pot, a beaker.

- A type of cupboard?

A type of cupboard, yes, a cupboard.

- And the animals, where were the animals?

There weren't any animals here. Inside? Come on, careful of your head. You're too tall, see, you come up to there.

- How did the house function?

Completely open. There was a door but it was always open. There was nothing here, not even bread.

- Was there some form of heating?

Not heating. There was a brazier, a large flat pan on legs, under the table and the women warmed themselves on it; they all put their feet on it, with their chairs close around it and they kept warm. Then they all made sausages of their legs – you know what I mean? – they were all red, say.

- But the climate, was it quite cold?

Yes, damp, say, now it's damp. On the other hand winter is warm and damp. Half and half.

- Was there much disease here?

No, disease, there was malaria in 1940 – 1945.

- Where did you go to play?

Down there outside, running, running down below.

I used to go down to the river, I caught frogs – then I knocked them on the head and threw them away.

## **5 Ralf**

I don't know how you can film this.....  
Maybe from the stairs, on this side...

Let's see, there, there is another window.

The main room. Of course you can come in from here too, so that you can see the entrance, see, here is the entrance again. It is certainly not by chance that there aren't any right angles, to tell you the truth.

This is the tufa from Montescaglioso, from the quarries of Bongermينو, which has closed in the meantime unfortunately. It was the best material I've ever had, the best tufa.

You said that you can't call a stone-cutter an artist, but still. A stone-cutter is an artisan. For example It's sure that the cross and other things like that are not exactly the work of a stone-cutter, but stone-cutters make them too.

I carve statue too and a little of everything so I'm more of a sculptor. I mean to say I'm a sort of carpenter, also a joiner at times, depending on what I'm doing I don't make restrictions. I know I can work in many different ways that I have learnt during twenty years. But there is always someone who knows the job thoroughly and so he is better than I am. Perhaps the only thing I am better at is to work with different materials at the same time. Sometimes, in short, I define myself saying : - My hands are everything to me, I do everything with my hands -.

This is the curve, let's see.

Yes.

From behind you can see the same curve, the same curvature: planed and arched deliberately so that when you place the Christ here...

The Christ goes on this side so that the wood bends under the weight of the Christ.

My way of making contact with people I don't know, in a country I don't know, is to work together.

In short for me and for my teacher it is fundamental to pass on the hand-craft techniques. We are not jealous of our unique knowledge of doing certain things; for us it is important that others can learn too. If they want to, they can come to have a look and try it out.

This means conserving hand-craft techniques by disseminating them, not keeping them hidden and thereby leaving them to disappear.

- So your workshop, or the workshop that you and your master want to set up, will be the first “masters’ workshop” in the Sassi?

That could be called almost a stupid question, because it isn’t a matter of being the first or the best or compete with anyone, but of accomplishing what you believe in.

One of my principal activities is spreading ideas basically. You can easily see here, for example, since I’ve been working tufa here in Matera, that...

Then, actually, working with tufa is appropriate to the people, because they have lived with the tufa for hundreds of years but working with it has been lost, cement has taken the place of tufa stone, and when I arrived here, the German, I started to work with tufa, three or four workshops opened which do the same, while I work very little with tufa.

## **6 Vito – excursion**

Are you ready Peter?

Look there is a banister. Careful, it’s slippery here.

## **7 Exhibition – preparation 1**

**Francesco :**

Also because the light on the writing of the gospel would be interesting in the evening.

Aren’t you afraid someone might destroy it?

I hope they do.

**Gessica :**

What most impressed me, for example, in the scenes of the crucifixion was that you could clearly see Matera in the background, various panoramic areas were used and you could see them in the background.

- Scene of Pasolini’s film –

But when Pasolini made a reconnaissance of Palestine, of Israel, he realised that the scenery that he was looking for was changed somehow, that is, industrialised, he found it modified, and he was struck by the South of Italy because he found the countryside unchanged by time. So the film was historically reconstructed, because there aren’t the original locations, by analogically, in an analogical way.

Obviously he realised that what he needed was here, coming here personally, that he didn’t need to look further abroad. And then he was also fascinated by the aspect of the people here. He wanted very expressive faces, marked by sorrow somehow, and in the faces of the common people of the South, he found it.

It is an exhibition that makes you reflect on the ties between cinema and the territory. We wondered why Pasolini came all this way to make his film. And it's an exhibition that aims to remember his presence here.

## **8 Vito**

I like the Sassi. Even during the night I come here about one or two o'clock.

### **Vito – place.**

Why did you make a grasshopper?

Just a liking – I saw a grasshopper and I made one.

How long have you been doing this work?

A dozen years.

How did you start?

In my spare time, see, my spare time. When I had a day off, I came here.

And how long will you keep it up?

Until I'm old.

Why doesn't your wife come here?

She doesn't like it.

Why not?

Because she doesn't like the Sassi. Let's say she lived here and so she doesn't like it here.

And the people who lived in the Sassi before, why don't they move back?

It's damp and nasty, there's always dampness. No bathroom, no electric light, no nothing.

And now, who lives in the Sassi?

Foreigners, foreign stuff. They're not Materans, there are very few Materans.

No, I mean to say, does it make you feel sad that it will become a museum?

Oh, for me it's the same thing, if they make it a museum or not, I don't mind.

But, perhaps, let's say the Sassi become abandoned because there aren't enough people. The hotels and restaurants empty.

But do you think other people will come to live here?

No because they can't have running water and sewers, someone, say, prepares the house and then can't have what is necessary. I'm ok, let's say. I'll go up there and sing a song.

## **9 Sara**

- How do you see the future of the Sassi?

I'd like to be optimistic, I'd very much like to be optimistic, but unfortunately I know how things go here. I don't know but I think it will end up in a monopoly. I have hope in the young people, I truly hope that the young people will reclaim it for themselves. It could be a place of creativity of cultural exchange, a fulcrum of stimulation and ideas, natural and artistic reflections. I don't want it to become too refined, too far removed from what it was originally, because people live there. There were about 10,000 living there at one point.

- There are those who went north to study – what now?

Do they come back? Yes, it isn't a problem of whether or not their inhabitants, the problem is with the local government and others which may seem to facilitate matters on one side and to obstruct them on the other. There is always a quite tenuous level of corruption here. It's like, for those with money, fine, for those without rather less. Then, unfortunately, there is also some religious interference.

A large part of the property in the Sassi belongs to the "Public property", that is the church. Therefore it means that a lot of it will not be rebuilt, precisely for that reason.

Even so, it must not become a place destined only and simply to accommodate tourists. It must be somewhere that people live in, otherwise it will become an oasis for the few. On the contrary, the greatest irony is that it was never an oasis. It was the pure necessity of survival for a large number of people that became a disgrace because in those days the local government gave no support to the poor.

It was rather medieval in structure so it came to be a disgrace that struck in the mind of the older generation who still see the Sassi as they left them in the 1950s.

They will never come back. They'll never come back. They still feel too strongly those years of poverty, absolute, total poverty, because there was nothing. Here they worked like mules, their mules were better off than they were. People died like flies here, so there are too many painful memories for that generation. I can't think of another way to honour those people, because during their lives they had no possibility of having such a tribute. So it is very important that we do it in their memory. But also for ourselves, it is part of our history.

## **10 Ralf**

Here, too, up to this height, it is stone, you can see even from outside, just by observing the difference in respect of the window. There is a base of stone and the house on the base.

- Would you say that the house has been built organically?

It's the same material, in effect, that is, you find it here and you build here. There is a good anecdote about the bathroom which was the last part of the house to be constructed. The last-before-one owner wanted a stall and he applied to a mason. He asked the mason how much material he needed and the mason said 'I just need 400 blocks of tufa...'

His field were behind the quarry. Every morning he went with his donkey to work in the fields. Every evening he loaded the donkey with a block of tufa and he carried another one on his shoulders.

When he finally accumulated 400 blocks he went to the mason and said : ' Here are the 400 blocks, now you can start work.' And the mason replied : 'Good, now you can bring me another 400 blocks...'

At that, naturally, the other said : 'Why didn't you say 800 to start with?'. 'If I had asked for 800 you surely wouldn't have done it. Anyway a bathroom needs 800 blocks of tufa.'

It is well-known that tufa attracts a lot of water. It must be aired constantly and the whole house must be aired against the damp. It is no use fitting double-glazed windows and a machine that absorbs the damp, it won't go away like that. A window must be left open all the time instead as in this house, then there won't be any damp.

It is possible to arrange things the way they were originally, that is as it should be. Unfortunately almost nobody takes such care, most of those who are given a house in the Sassi organize it like a modern apartment, that is what they are used to and they have no idea of where they're living.

I have to admit that, if I had had the money when I was given this house, I would probably have ruined it too.

For example, Pasolini made his film "The gospel according to St. Matthew" here. At that time there was an earthquake and the cameraman filmed a house collapsing and the house next door crumbling. You can see quite well how these houses oscillate, they tremble like reeds in a wind but they don't break down. Precisely because they are flexible, thanks to hollow-cased walls, fixed by double wedges.

## **11 preparations for the exhibition.**

A little higher, higher, a little higher.....

Just a tiny centimetre more, stop!

Bring into focus, bring into focus, focus....go.

### **Rico :**

When Mel Gibson came to Matera he chose various locations, he had probably been influenced by the vision of Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'The Gospel according to St. Matthew'. In fact not only Golgotha, but also the site of the crucifixion, a large part of the via Crucis and the gate into Jerusalem are exactly the same as the locations chosen by Pasolini. Also because it was an important film anyway – powerful.

- **Scenes from the film** –

## **12 Mr. Joseph Misuriello**

- Who are those, like you, who every so often come, having a small location...?

Yes, it is not very big, I just do it, but I don't intend to live here.

- Are there some more bottles?

Yes.

They are empty.

Ehhh.

They are all empty.

- Red wine, isn't it?

There, no, nothing. It's only where I used to make wine.

Look here....

And when I came here more often it was cleaner here.

### **13 Sara**

The reason for moving to Amsterdam is the cultural void that is here.

I have to learn elsewhere and maybe bring my experience here; who knows, it would be lovely to be of help, give something back. Still, apart from my experience, next time, I'd like to bring some money. Because I want to be self sufficient.

### **14 Ralf**

During the trip I drew more or less 40 postcards. I made one almost every day and I sent it, then when I came back

(here you can't see the date clearly, this is dated 12.01.1980).

In Puglia, near Molfetta, a sunset with my girlfriend in the foreground....

Here is Molfetta again, 30.1.1980, here it is 12.2. and we are already in Matera, so 12.02, so this must be one of the first drawings I did of Matera. Naturally free-hand, with no regard for the real structures, some elements are missing like these stepped gables, for example, that weren't there then, or I didn't notice them. It was one of my first impressions of Matera.

There are 13 of us, 13 houses, therefore 13 families?

- And how long have you occupied the houses?

Since the middle of the 1970s, some even before that. The co-operative exists since 1977, it's quite a long time now....

Sure, there have been some proceedings, one or two have been sentenced and ended up in prison, and then released at the next circuit. Let's say that, in that case at least, the courts understood the sense of our actions. They saw that these houses, that the state had abandoned in the meantime, had been fixed up by us and in the same way we had preserved them. In those days, the people of Matera never went near the Sassi because they could still hear the echo of "national disgrace" in their ears. There were people perhaps thirty years old who had never set foot in the Sassi. And they were half-scared just to hear the Sassi mentioned.



- If you think about the future, in fifteen or twenty years' time, say, what do you think will happen to the Sassi?

It upsets me, the prospect upsets me very much; you can see it already, it has already become simply business, in fifteen twenty years' time it will be worse. Where money is most important reason counts for little and that is a worrying thought.

- But do you feel that you all here, can't you protect them a little at least?

Well, we live in one of the loveliest neighbourhoods of the Sassi, also for the wide open position, right above the gorge, it will be quite difficult to maintain it like this. But let's say it will take a long time.

## **15 The opening of the exhibition**

**Rico :**

We are pleased because we've worked very hard, as you have see, you followed the preparations step by step. Although I have to admit that no-one outside the association gave us a hand, we couldn't have reached this standard. That is, without false modesty, I like it.

## **16 Massimo**

So the theatre of the Sassi was founded in 1992. In 1995, after a drama school, a company was appointed, composed of very young people. Since then it produces shows for children and modern theatricals and for adults in the evenings.

- ....Another thing, do you live in the Sassi?

Do I live in the Sassi?

Yes.

No, I don't live in the Sassi, I'm about to move to the Sassi.

Aah.

Yes.

Why?

Why? I'm a Neapolitan, and my wife, who is the commander, is from Matera. When I moved here, when I saw the Sassi, I realised that it was the place for me, I didn't know why, we found ourselves in a place where there was nothing, where we couldn't work for two years because it was a condemned building.

- Down below?

Yes, down there.

There is nothing down there. There should be instead, a bakery, a chemist's, a greengrocer, why not?

- We want to know why, too, because we too have noticed those things, no trades.

- How can it be, how, if you show it to the mayor , I say?

The choice that they made was to repopulate the Sassi with tourists. I can't explain why the tourists, instead of going to the old bars on a Saturday, since the bars are open in the Sassi, they go to the Sassi, they are the ones. Meanwhile there is a nucleus of original inhabitants of the Sassi that have lived there for an unsuspected time, in the 1970s. Those who were considered squatters may be so even today, I think about a year ago they were put right, more or less. So on one side there are those who love the Sassi and they came back the first time and then stayed, then there are those who love the Sassi because it is clearly a picturesque place and when they open a restaurant or a pizzeria they make a load of money.

- How do you think the Sassi will be in 10,15,20 years' time?

Horrible, horrible, full of restaurants and pubs, let's hope without a Valtur. There was a time when they were thinking of setting a Valtur up there.

- How would you like to see the Sassi?

As a place where you can make, practice and learn to practice culture, locations to visit and live with art, where the inhabitants can live as they are living now, only more so, recuperating those links they had in the neighbourhoods when these existed and were populated, but, above all, a place where you go on foot, and see and you can see, do, stay in the culture and thus in utopia, a new way of life, a different quality of life.

## **17 Ralf**

Yes, at the moment I use it as a workshop. Of course I have to tidy it up, do some restoration work, but I should manage it within a year.

All this stuff has been here for an eternity but there are always new problems to complete, and I'm stuck like this.

I can't do any work because there is stone everywhere. It's always little things that don't work, like the timing with customers for example.

Well now we have to say goodbye, we're going tomorrow.

Ah, you are going tomorrow.....

## **18 End of the film**

## **19 End**

Red Hawks (grasshopper hawks)