



Dives Marmoribus Tellus

Photographs by Alessandro Gandolfi

parallelozero



Carrara (Italy), a sculptor at work in the historic Nicoli workshops in the city center, which have been in operation for more than 150 years.



Carrara (Italy), view of the western Apuan Alps with, in the foreground, the Ravaccione quarry.

“Rich land of marbles”, *dives marmoribus tellus*. Fifteen centuries ago the poet Namazianus thus described the Apuan Alps, the heart of the world's best marble. It is the white gold carved by Michelangelo and Canova, the shining stone on which the Romans built their empire. **Because Carrara marble is the purest, whitest and most valuable of all:** the spearhead of the world stone market worth 25 billion euros. Carrara is a unique cultural heritage, a treasure chest of knowledge and tradition that technology in the last century has radically altered.

Today just over six hundred quarrymen (at one time there were twenty thousand) extract five million tons of marble a year from a hundred quarries, part of which is turned into powder and sold as calcium carbonate **to make toothpaste, paint, fertilizer, paper and more**. Critics such as the Italian association Legambiente point out that more marble has been extracted in the last 30 years than in the last 2,000, and that "the protection of the Apuan Alps is seriously threatened by anthropogenic pressure."

Wealthy entrepreneurs ensure that they **operate with sustainability** in mind and invest in social projects linked to the local area. Carrara needs this: the marble capital of the world is (paradoxically) an increasingly poor, empty and unemployed city.



Florence (Italy), Academy Gallery, tourists look at Michelangelo Buonarroti's David. A symbol of the Renaissance, standing 5.2 meters tall and made between 1501 and 1504, the statue was carved from a large block of marble that had been lying abandoned for years by the Duomo courtyard.



Calagio (Carrara, Italy), a moment from the Vox Marmoris event, a summer evening of performance art and house and disco music concerts organized among the Corsi family's white marble blocks.



Fossacava (Carrara, Italy), in the ancient Roman quarry, which can be visited today, a German man photographs the landscape using a tourist telescope.



Bridges of Vara (Carrara, Italy), a quarryman tattooed on his arm the white marble quarries and the moment of the ancient "lizzatura," the sliding of the very heavy marble blocks from the quarries by hand only, through the use of cables, ropes and lumber.



Calagio (Carrara, Italy), a white marble quarry owned by the company Successori Adolfo Corsi.



Calagio (Carrara, Italy), marble quarry owner Alessandro Corsi (right) toasts a Happy Easter together with his son Giulio (center) and some employees of the family business, the company Successori Adolfo Corsi.



Carrara (Italy), a truck carries a block of white marble along the "Marble Road" between quarries in the Apuan Alps. The six-kilometer road, inaugurated in 2012, has taken heavy traffic out of the city of Carrara but has sparked controversy because of its high cost (120 million euros) partly borne by citizens.



Carrara (Italy), at the Academy of Fine Arts sculpture students work on clay models.



Carrara (Italy), at Granulati Carrara work tools are often covered in white calcium carbonate powder. A good portion of the marble extracted from quarries today is turned into powder, which is used in many industrial, agricultural and food areas around the world.



Anarchists demonstrate in Carrara, Italy during the May Day, Labor Day celebration. The white marble monument is dedicated to Alberto Meschi (1879-1958), an anarchist and trade unionist. Carrara has a long association with anarchist movements, popular as early as the late 19th century among quarrymen.



Corrado Iacopi of Acquabianca Marmi (behind) checks with a quarryman the quality of a block of white marble in the Carcarai Quarry (Lucca, Italy).



The long road carved into the mountain leading to the Ravaccione white marble quarry (Carrara, Italy).



Carrara (Italy), Bernarda Franchi waits for some customers in the atelier of her family business, Franchi Umberto Marmi, which - founded by her father Umberto - has been selling marble all over the world since 1971 and is now led by Bernarda and her brother Alberto.



Calagio (Carrara, Italy), a moment from the Vox Marmoris event, a summer evening of performance art and house and disco music concerts organized among the Corsi family's white marble blocks.



At work in the Cervaiolo marble quarry in the mountains of Seravezza, Lucca (Italy).



Bridges of Vara (Carrara, Italy), a moment of "historical lizzatura," the reconstruction of how the very heavy marble blocks were slid from the quarries by hand, only through the use of cables, ropes and lumber.



Carrara (Italy), view of the western Apuan Alps with, in the foreground, the Lorano II quarry.



Pisa (Italy), tourists take photos in front of the famous leaning tower, built between 1173 and 1370 also using white Carrara marble.



Querceta (Lucca, Italy), in the laboratories of the Henraux company two technicians observe the final result of a white Carrara marble capital made by a robot sculptor.



The bar of the Errico Malatesta circle in Gragnana (Carrara, Italy), founded nearly 150 years ago and now the oldest anarchist bar in Europe. The province of Carrara has a long association with anarchist movements, popular as early as the late 19th century among quarrymen.



On Labor Day, anarchist songs are played and sung at the Errico Malatesta club in Gragnana (Carrara, Italy), founded nearly 150 years ago and now the oldest anarchist bar in Europe. The province of Carrara has a long association with anarchist movements, which were widespread among quarrymen as early as the late 19th century.



Carrara (Italy), view of the western Apuan Alps with, in the foreground, the Ravaccione quarry.



Carrara (Italy), a view of the port of Marina di Carrara. The natural heir to the ancient Roman port of Luni, the port of Carrara is now the world's most important port for handling marble and stone products.



Calagio (Carrara, Italy), a moment from the Vox Marmoris event, a summer evening of performance art and house and disco music concerts organized among the Corsi family's white marble blocks.



Carrara (Italy), at the Academy of Fine Arts, sculpture student Matilde Calamogna poses for a portrait.



Bridges of Vara (Carrara, Italy), participants of the "historic lizzatura" embrace before the start. "Historic lizzatura" is the reconstruction of how the very heavy marble blocks were slid from the quarries by hand, only through the use of cables, ropes and lumber.



A diamond wire cuts marble in the Cervaiolo quarry in Seravezza, Lucca (Italy).



Carrara (Italy), a truck carries a block of white marble along the "Marble Road." The six-kilometer road, which opened in 2012, has taken heavy traffic out of the city of Carrara but has sparked controversy because of its high cost (120 million euros) partly borne by citizens.



Carrara (Italy), Francesco Marri of Granulati Carrara monitors the quality of calcium carbonate powder, which is used in many industrial, agricultural and food sectors around the world. A good portion of the marble extracted from quarries today is turned into powder.



Florence (Italy), Academy Gallery, tourists take photos in front of Michelangelo Buonarroti's David. A symbol of the Renaissance, standing 5.2 meters tall and made between 1501 and 1504, the statue was carved from a large block of marble that had been lying abandoned for years by the Duomo courtyard.



Calagio (Carrara, Italy), a white marble quarry owned by the company Successori Adolfo Corsi.

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