

For Dani, the last fifty years speak to me
of you, my fellow in art and life

G. G.

THE PADULA PARK

Marble as the protagonist of contemporary art in Carrara

edited by di Giuliano Gori

Gli
Ori



After the placement in the park in the early 2000s of the works of the greatest contemporary artists, and following the completion of the renovation of Villa Fabbricotti as well as the birth of the Carrara Michelangelo Museum in 2018, we come full circle with the publication of this catalogue.

After more than 20 years of interventions, which have not always been easy, today the Padula is a place that is alive, popular and, let us say loudly, beautiful! These 20 years have served to restore the park and the Villa to their former glory, perhaps even more beautiful than the Fabbricotti family wanted them to be at the end of the 19th century.

What surely takes it to the next level is the presence of great works of art – inside the Villa, thanks to the Carrara Michelangelo Museum, and outside, in the park, with the sculptures that arrived thanks to the genius and the vision of Giuliano Gori.

This green space welcomes citizens and tourists to an evocative setting: at Padula it is possible to enjoy an exceptional view of the city and its mountains whilst strolling through the greenery in the silence of the hillside.

Amid majestic, ancient trees, in a distinctly neo-Renaissance setting, the sculptures by Poirer and Parmiggiani, by Karavan and Morris, by LeWitt, by Mainolfi and Merz almost take visitors by surprise, due to their modernity and the material of which they are made, the white marble of Carrara. This is a perfect synthesis of the beauty and the contrasts that have made our city famous throughout the world, capable of combining tradition and technology, beauty and toil, work and culture.

This is the place whence we want to and must start again: Carrara UNESCO Creative City can and must return to its former glory, just as the Padula Park has done.

Francesco De Pasquale
Mayor of Carrara

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PRESENTATION

The origin of Carrara's Padula Park is due to the fortuitous alignment of the Fabbrocotti family, local entrepreneurs enlightened by the international contacts coming out of the marble business, and various scientific resources – indigenous or transplanted – that were present in Carrara, often brought there by the Academy of Fine Arts itself.

The Fabbrocottis, as well as the Del Medico, Lazzoni, Monzoni, Orsolina and Cucchiari families, to name but a few, made up part of the oligarchy that owed its fortune to the “cultivation” (as the jargon goes) of the marble quarries. It was an economic fortune that opened the door to international cultural exchanges between Carrara and the rest of the world.

Many of these fortunes were dissipated and severely affected by the economic crisis of 1929, as a result of which the Fabbrocotti family's assets were also dispersed. These included the collection of Roman marble from Ancient Luni, which is now preserved in the Civic Museum of Spezia in Castello San Giorgio. The Archaeological Museum of Luni bears witness to the presence of the Romans in the natural harbor of Lunae, from which the marble dug from the quarries of Carrara was transported.

In 1879 Bernardo Fabbrocotti commissioned the architect Vincenzo Micheli, a native of Carrara, but at that point living in Florence, and Director of the local Academy of Fine Arts, to build him three villas on his land: one in Florence, now the headquarters of Toscana Promozione Turistica – the regional government agency responsible for the promotion of tourism, one in Livorno, where the Labronica Library is situated, and one in “his” Carrara, on family farmland bought by his father Domenico Andrea Fabbrocotti in the early decades of the 19th century.

The building sits in the upper part of the park, on the Sorgnano hillside, in a nine-hectare park, in a magisterial position regarding the centre of Carrara.

Micheli's project is characterised by the simplicity of the neo-Renaissance façade, whilst the park, in typical 19th-century style, follows the natural lines of the land, inspired by the example of English gardens well-known to Bernardo, who took care of the family's commercial interests in London.



From the lower part of the hill, towards the centre of Carrara, a second entrance was opened on the Gagnana side, closer to the centre. It is accessed through a neo-medieval style entrance building constructed in 1890 by Leandro Caselli, a Piedmontese engineer who trained in Turin and worked for the municipality of Carrara between 1884 and 1892. In just seven years, Caselli was responsible for the renovation of the pipes for the supply of drinking water; the construction work for the Saffi School, the Dogali Barracks, the Garibaldi Kindergarten and the Politeama Verdi. All these works gave prestige and an innovative character to the urban structure of Carrara. Towards the end of the 1980's, Caselli also drew up a plan to rationalize the road network and create a systematic approach to control the area.

The villa in Carrara, which since 2018 has been the home to the *CARMI Carrara and Michelangelo* Museum, is perfectly planted within Padula Park, a place where the past finds a fortuitous narrative rhythm in the combination of important works of contemporary art, made of marble, specifically for the views where, between 2000 and 2002, they were conceived and placed by the greatest artists of recent years.

The Museum, directed by Professor Marco Ciampolini, was opened after a troubled history of unfinished and restarted restoration work that continued for more than thirty years, and has only recently found peace thanks to the support of the Region of Tuscany.



Building in neo-Gothic style at the park entrance from Gragnana



Today, having got regional recognition, the CARMi museum stands out as the only museum in the province to have this certification, shared with mudaC – the Museum of Art in Carrara, directed by Professor Laura Barreca. It houses a permanent exhibition showcasing Michelangelo's extraordinary relationship with the third dimension, uniting marble sculpture and the city of Carrara, whose artistic fortunes across the centuries up to the era of contemporary art still find inspirations in the teaching of Michelangelo. The exhibition has been curated by Professor Emanuela Ferretti and her colleague Davide Turrini under the direction of the MetaMorfosi company, exclusive guardian of the reproduction of the drawings of Michelangelo preserved at Casa Buonarroti in Florence.

Amid Giacomo Manzù, Robert Venturi, Mark Rothko, Aurelio Amendola and Robert Mapplethorpe, the project of the Memorial dedicated to Michelangelo by the architect Giovanni Michelucci emerges. Conceived for the scenic point of Foce di Pianza in Carrara, but never coming to life, it is part of the recovery programme that we have put together through a memorandum of understanding with the Carrara Academy of Fine Arts, the Michelucci Foundation and the University of Florence.

On the ground floor, there are exhibition rooms dedicated to temporary exhibitions of modern art, with the aim of enhancing and disseminating important local public and

Villa Fabbrocetti, nowadays home to the CARMi museum



private collections by putting them into a dialogue with loans of heterogeneous origin. The exhibits that have been on show are, starting in 2018, “The Lazzerini Collection. The historical plaster casts of Tacca. From the School to the Museum,” curated by Luisa Passeggia and “1800-1850 Student Masters on their way to Rome, the treasures of the Gipsoteca of Fine Arts of Carrara.” In 2019, “Canova. The journey to Carrara”, curated by Mario Guderzo, and now, “Goya, Boucher, Ricci and Batoni: the masters of the 18th century on show in Carrara”, curated by Marco Ciampolini, the exhibition with which the museum has reopened after the long months of the pandemic.

In the basement, on display are original costumes and photographs from the “The Sin”, Russian director Andrej Končalovskij’s film about Michelangelo, together with a projection of the film, shot in the Apuan Alps. A section of this floor is dedicated to the film “Michelangelo Infinito”, by Emanuele Imbucci, while another wing has been created for educational purposes, and hosts a series of comic strips created by the artist Natalia Caprili that tell the story of Michelangelo in Carrara. These comics were inspired by the texts of the historian Emanuela Rapetti, the author of a book collecting together research and documentation on Michelangelo in Carrara. The tour ends where it began, in the park, with an interview with Giuliano Gori, who tells the visitor of the genesis of the environmental art collection.

In Padula Park, the stage set by the vegetation is augmented by the particular nature of the hillside, in that a great variety of elements may be found, including the marshland that lent its name (Padule) to the area, and the rocky ridges that mark its northern boundary.

Cloister of the mudaC museum in downtown Carrara



Abandoned by the Fabbricotti family in the 1930s, the complex remained in a state of neglect and decay for several decades.

As a result of the 2000 Biennale, curated by Antonio Paolucci, at that time President of our Academy, *the Stanza Bianca del Silenzio* (White Room of Silence) by Anne and Patrick Poirer entered the park.

It was on the occasion of the 11th Sculpture Biennale in 2002 that critical help was requested from the enlightened and pioneering patron Giuliano Gori who, starting in 1982, had created a park of contemporary works of art made specifically for the site, thus creating a permanent installation on his estate in Celle. Claudio Parmiggiani, Dani Karavan, Robert Morris, Sol LeWitt, Luigi Mainolfi, and Mario Merz began to work with

View of the park. Above, Finlay’s art work in the foreground with Sol LeWitt’s piece behind; below, in the foreground the work by Mario Merz with Sol Lewitt’s art work behind



marble, inspired by the park. The result is a perfect symbiosis between the sculpted stone and the stone to be sculpted – the marble quarries – an equilibrium between nature and concept, between poetry and mimesis.

In 2017 the park and the villa were partially restored, but what was still missing was a completed museum project, as well as the restoration of the works, which had been vandalized during the years of neglect.

It was only in 2018 that the villa was brought up to standard so it could host the CARMI – Carrara and Michelangelo Museum, and the restored pieces. Today the Padula Park is a place visited by tourists and citizens of all ages, as well as the students of the sculpture department of our Academy, which has its headquarters in one of the buildings in the park. And, very soon, the Villino Vittoria will open as a children's centre.

Twenty years after the birth of the environmental art collection, this book crowns the achievement of an epoch-making creation, and the redemption of a work that is the fruit of a life spent in contact with art and artists, that of Giuliano Gori.

Giuliano is one of the most famous Italian patrons in the world, known for having opened his villa and his park to contemporary environmental art (*site specific*) since 1982. Gori was a pioneer not only because he understood the importance of fostering a dia-

View of the park with Mainolfi's art work



logue between the work and the site, but also because he understood the need to make the collection inalienable. The only limit he set for creativity was the respect of Nature and context, which these days is a very topical issue.

Finally, what strikes us again is the relationship that Giuliano has always established with artists and how they, side by side with him, have begun new experiments: this is the case regarding the four-handed work by Robert Morris and Claudio Parmiggiani that was born during a joint stay in Celle, and it is the case of marble as an expressive material.

It was Giuliano Gori who asked the artists to work with stone, artists who had never used marble before. Six monumental and poetic, sometimes unexpected projects were born.

It is an honour and a privilege for me to present the first publication of the catalogue of the Park and its collection, almost twenty years after its creation.

Federica Forti
Councillor for Culture and Tourism
for the Municipality of Carrara

One of the park buildings used by the Fine Arts Academy of Carrara