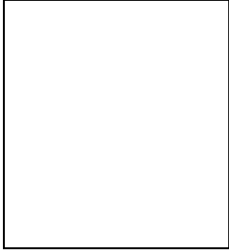


**Villa Ficana, recent history of an ancient earthen quarter.
*From recognition of earthen architecture's value to restoration.***



Anna Paola Conti, Architect
Via Roma 388 62100 Macerata
phone-fax +39 0733 36124
E-mail: suricina@tiscali.it

Abstract

Villa Ficana is an earthen quarter in the town of Macerata, it's a rare example of an earthen quarter in the central part of Italy.

The district originates from about the middle of XIX century and now consists of about sixty buildings built in parallel clusters.

Earthen houses are still quite widespread in the Marche, they are usually rural buildings or semi-detached houses forming small clusters.

In times past they were popular because they were cheap, but also because of their capacity to satisfy the main living needs of supplying a comfortable shelter.

According to where these are found they are identified using particular names: in the Macerata area they are known as *atterrati*.

The most common local building technique is cob, in a local variant building called *massone*.

This consists in the mixing of the earth and straw until lumps are formed which are then piled up and pressed together to build the walls.

At present such a building technique is neglected; from the second post-war it went out of use completely, because the improved conditions of life made the use of other building materials much easier, and, above all, because of the prejudice that identifies the earthen houses with situations of misery and backwardness.

Villa Ficana too was abandoned and risked to be destroyed to regain a valuable urban area.

Thanks to a new sensibility, a long work developed with schools and cultural organisations, and the diffusion of scientific knowledge, raw earth houses begin nowadays to be esteemed.

This new cultural climate was the cause of the official interest too, Ficana district is now recognised as a site of relevant historical value, and therefore is put under the direct protection of the Italian State. Because of this now they have to respect the tutorship laws, which are usually applied to buildings and artistic works.

Recently a new urban plan concerning the district was adopted by Macerata municipality.

The Municipal Administration is trying now to obtain European funds for realizing the restoration of Ficana's houses.

The work regards about 25 units, one half of the quarter; the buildings will be employed for cultural use. I am carrying out a part of this restoration work.

So, for all of these reasons, I believe it is very important to let the international scientific community know what we are doing, in order to generate a useful exchange of ideas and authoritative contributions.