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Scuola di Architettura, Urbanistica e Ingegneria delle Costruzioni  
Master of Science in "Architectural design and history"

Thesis project:

*the consistency of patience: a place in the UNESCO heritage  
"Nizza monferrato e le colline della Barbera".*

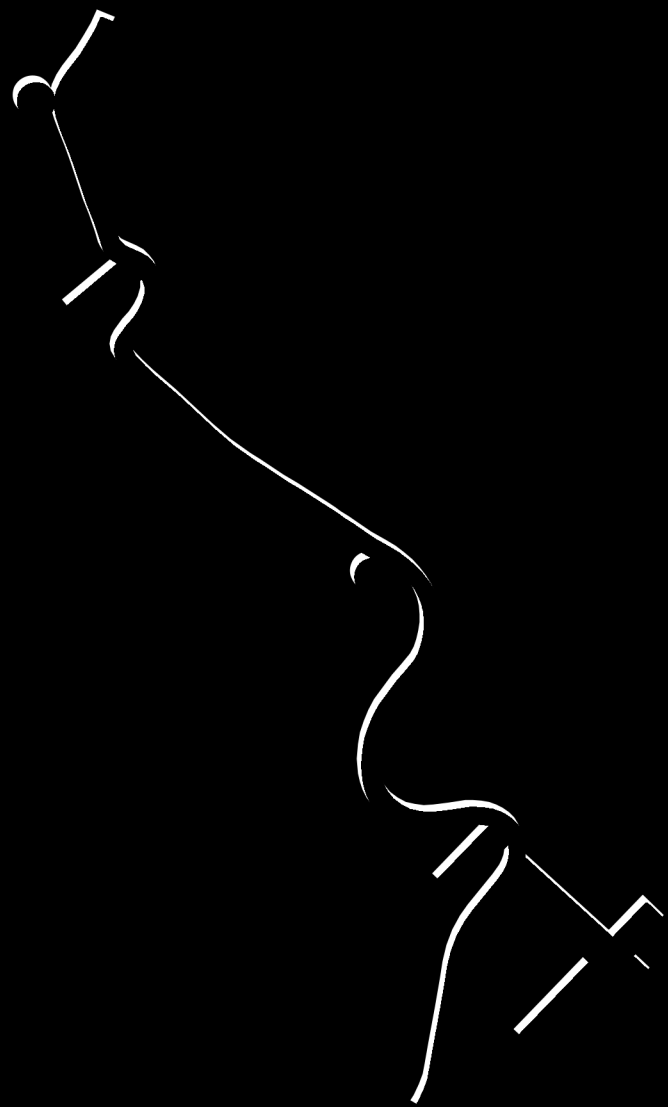
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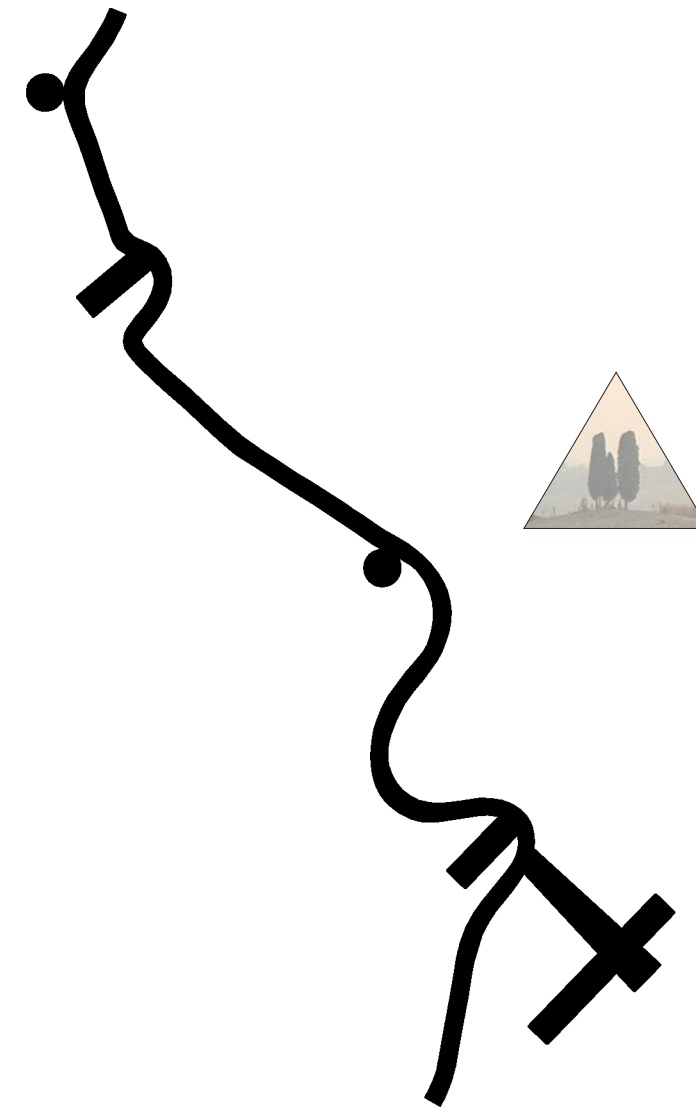
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a.y. 2016/2017

date: 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2018





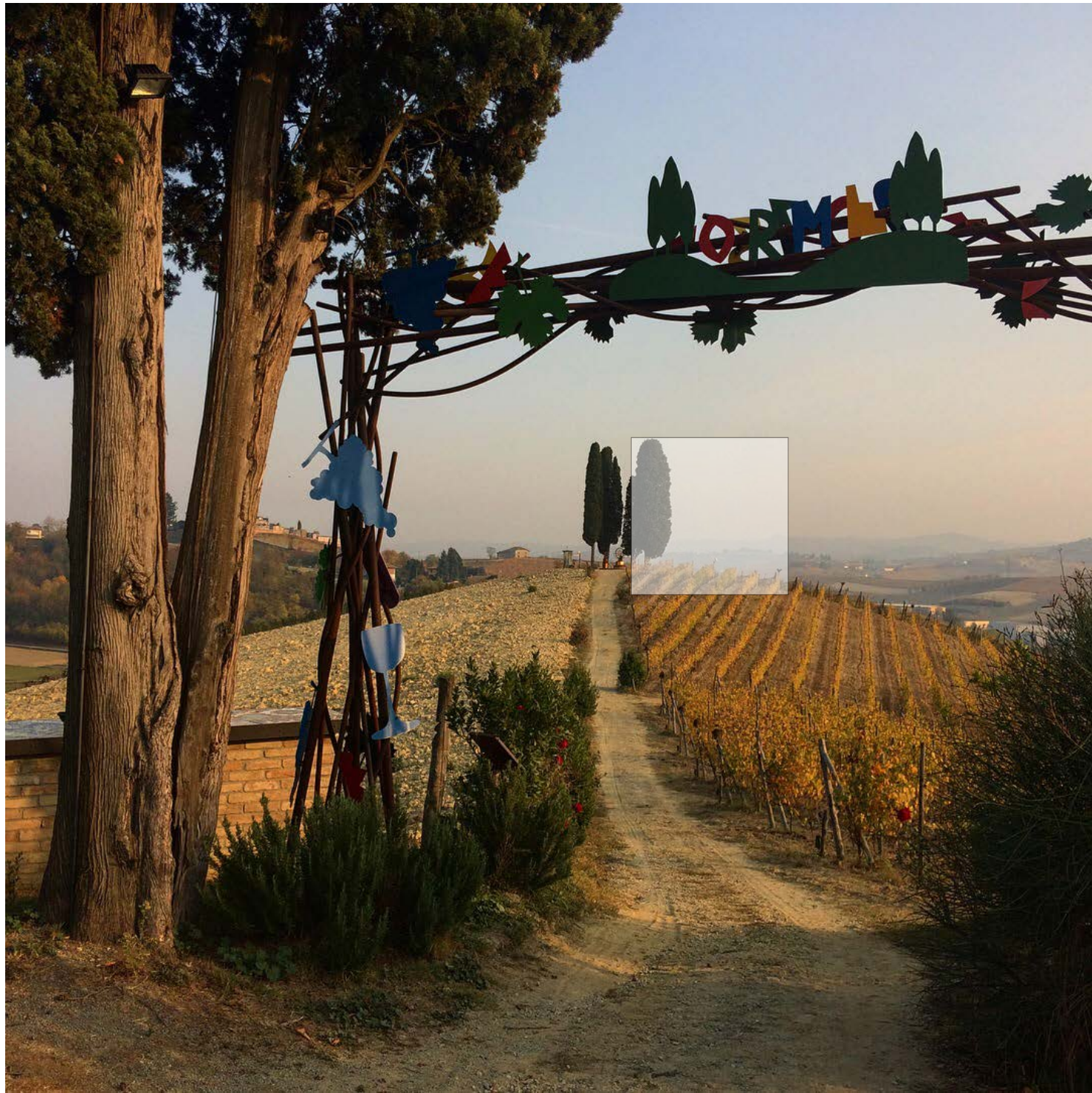


**the consistency of patience:**

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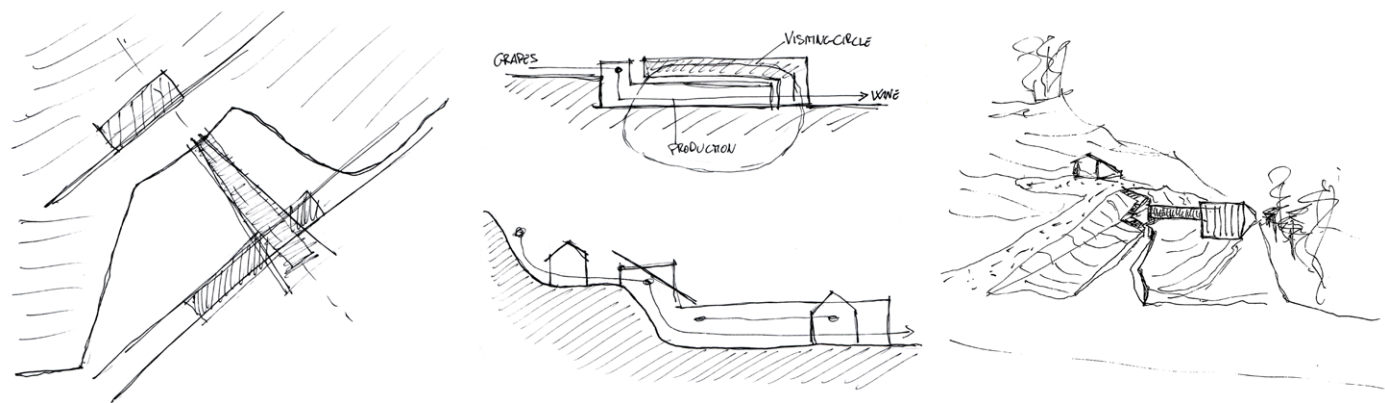






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Initial sketches for the project: site plan with the alignments, section plan with the organization and the perspective vision of the complex.

## Abstract.

This work investigates the consistency of patience related both to nature and architecture. It is a path that connects different aspects of design, nature and social life.

The project is placed in the UNESCO heritage "Nizza Monferrato e le colline della Barbera" (the main site is "The vineyard landscape of Piedmont: Langhe, Roero and Monferrato) in the vineyards owned by Michele Chiarl's winery. Upon these hills an Art Park: "Le orme su La Court" has been developed and this is the starting and the ending point of the whole project.

The physical project is a winery, but a bit more in deep it is meant to be three things: the continuation of the art park "La court", a Museum of the process of wine production and the most important one a winery for Barbera production. Different tools and references were used in the design process: the movement systems composed by paths, the waiting systems regulated by void places, the use of specific vegetation related both to religious and cultural aspects and then matter as a fundamental point. A continuous reference to the sacred is also crucial in the whole complex and is visible in the external trails and the internal suspended walkway that leads the visitors through the winery.

The asymmetrical T shape of the volumes is thought to be functional but also symbolic. The production volume is perpendicular to the vineyard rows and the old farmhouse (La Court). It is composed vertically by a vinification tower and horizontally by the aging,

bottling and storage rooms.

The second volume, disposed parallel to the old farmhouse and with a more archetypical volume, is the visitor-dedicated area, where there is the wine shop and the tasting room on the front part and offices and service rooms in the back.

The organization of the winery is simple and clear: on a lower level the production process and on a higher level the museum of the process itself. In this case the museum is made to admire not the artwork - which would be the wine bottles here - but the process of making it.

The winery, studied to avoid direct contact between workers and visitors (for working and safety reasons), was thought not only to become a kind of research centre to study Barbera grapes and wine or to let the students get in touch with this world but also a rentable space for other wineries which would like to study different processes and tools to improve or change their Barbera.

The project tries to find a way to enhance and recognise the natural process of growth and also the practical process of making. Waiting is a fundamental aspect in both topics and so, the very common keyword could be, in fact, patience.

### Abstract. (Italiano)

Questo lavoro indaga la consistenza della pazienza in relazione alla natura e al costruire. E' un percorso che connette diversi aspetti della progettazione, della natura e della vita sociale.

Il progetto è sito nella zona UNESCO "Nizza Monferrato e le colline della Barbera" (sottozona de "I Paesaggi vitivinicoli del Piemonte: Langhe, Roero e Monferrato") nelle vigne e nei poderi della cantina di Michele Chiarlo. Su queste colline è stato sviluppato un parco artistico: "Le orme su La Court" che è sua il punto di partenza che di fine dell'intero progetto.

Il progetto fisico è una cantina, ma più precisamente, vuole essere tre cose: la continuazione del parco artistico "La Court", un museo del processo di poduzione del vino e, soprattutto, una cantina per la produzione dela Barbera. Diversi aspetti e riferimenti sono stati usati nel processo progettuale: is sistema di movimento composto dai percorsi, quello di sosta regolato dai spazi vuoti, l'uso di specifica vegetazione in relazione ad aspetti culturali e religiosi e la materia come punto fondamentale. Un continuo riferimento al sacro, inoltre, è cruciale nell'intero sistema, visibile anche nei percorsi esterni e nella passerella sospesa che guida i visitatori attraverso la cantina.

La forma dei volumi a T asimmetrica è pensata sia per essere funzionale che simbolica. Il volume produttivo è perpendicolare alle vigne e alla vecchia cascina (La court). E' composto dalla torre di vinificazione verticalmente e orizzontalmente dalla sala per invecchiamento, imbottigliamento e magazzino.

Il secondo volume, disposto parallelamente alla cascina e dal volume più archetipico è l'area dedicata ai visitatori, in cui la parte frontale è il negozio e la sala degustazione, mentre la parte più arretrata è la zona uffici e servizi.

L'organizzazione della cantina è semplice e chiara: ad un livello inferiore è sviluppato il processo produttivo, mentre a quello superiore avviene la musealizzazione del processo stesso. In questo caso il museo, è fatto per ammirare e osservare il processo di produzione stesso, invece del prodotto finale che, in questo caso, è la bottiglia di vino.

La cantina, studiata per evitare un contatto diretto tra lavoratori e visitatori (per ragioni di lavoro e sicurezza), è pensato in modo da essere un centro di ricerca relativo all'uva e al vino Barbera, che sia fruibile sia da studenti di vario genere che da proprietari di altre cantine che posono affittare spazi e attrezzature per poter sviluppare e, eventualmente migliorare, la loro Barbera.

Il progetto infine cerca di trovare un modo per esaltare e riconoscere il processo naturale della crescita e anche il processo pratico del fare. L'attesa è un aspetto fondamentale in entrambi i campi e dunque, la miglio parola in comune può essere, di fatto, pazienza.



## Introduction.

### *Patience:*

noun, the ability to wait, or to continue doing something despite difficulties, or to suffer without complaining or becoming annoyed.

### *Consistency:*

noun, the quality of always behaving or performing in a similar way, or of always happening in a similar way.<sup>1</sup>

In the south west of Piedmont (Italy) there is a landscape, inscribed as the fiftieth UNESCO heritage site in Italy, the first vineyard landscape in Italy, where since ancient times it has been possible to see and feel what I defined - the thesis title - the consistency of patience. In the end making wine is the proof and the physical translation of this assert. Making wine is a sequence of acts which implies an enormous amount of this behaviour. From waiting the grapes grow, to the vinification phase, or aging in the barrels or in the bottles, all of these are actions that could also take years to be completed, and so the farmer is required to wait until the right time. Waiting in this case is not properly just waiting, sitting down on a chair staring at the barrels for the wine to be ready, but rather it is more like the oriental conception of it: a non-action which involves being able to react to nature changes and keep on working for the years to come.

By this point of view, designing (and then building) is a similar thing. Developing a project and following all the phases is something that requires a lot of patience and of consistency. In this project I try to relate this concept to the design process, merging the elements and involving different issues and topics.

The book is divided as follows: in the first chapter I identify the geographical place where the project is set, then I explain the UNESCO motivation of inscription, finally I explain why this place is important to me and therefore why I chose it.

The second chapter is dedicated to the Art Park La court with a brief explanation of how it is organized.

In the third and last chapter I will explain the project for the Art Park, the winery and the approach, the studio and the reasons behind some design choices. From my point of view this last point is the most meaningful one because it explains and traces a line to understand better what could have been my approach and, partially, my philosophy.

The conclusions are in the fourth chapter where some final considerations are explained about the project itself together with the path done to reach this point.

In the end this book is intended to be supported by the ten exam panels, the models (maquettes) and the mood board of materials which fully explains the project.



Photo of La Court hills

## 1. The project area - UNESCO heritage.

The place chosen for the thesis is in Castelnuovo Calcea, Asti, it is a beautiful vineyard landscape belonged to Michele Chiarlo's winery and is part of the fiftieth Italian UNESCO heritage site which is "The Vineyard Landscape of Piedmont: Langhe, Roero and Monferrato, most precisely the zone "Nizza Monferrato e le colline della Barbera" (Nizza Monferrato and the Barbera hills).

Available on the UNESCO website is possible to find the reasons and the criteria used to inscribe this place into the heritage list:

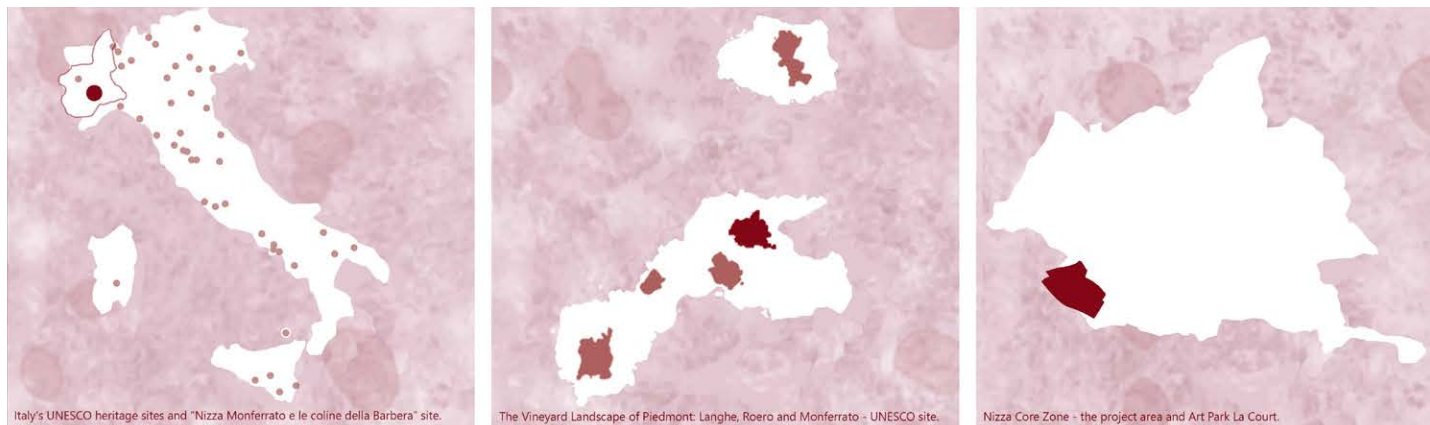
*"This landscape covers five distinct wine-growing areas with outstanding landscapes and the Castle of Cavour, an emblematic name both in the development of vineyards and in Italian history. It is located in the southern part of Piedmont, between the Po River and the Ligurian Apennines, and encompasses the whole range of technical and economic processes relating to the winegrowing and winemaking that has characterized the region for centuries. Vine pollen has been found in the area dating from the 5th century BC, when Piedmont was a place of contact and trade between the Etruscans and the Celts; Etruscan and Celtic words, particularly wine-related ones, are still found in the local dialect. During the Roman Empire, Pliny the Elder mentions the Piedmont region as being one of the most favourable for growing vines in ancient Italy; Strabo mentions its barrels.*

*Brief synthesis:*

*The vineyard landscapes of Langhe-Roero and Monferrato in Piedmont consist of a selection of five distinct winegrowing areas and a castle, whose names evoke profound and ancient expertise in the relationship between man and his environment. They reflect a slowly developed association between a diverse range of soils, grape varieties that are often native, and suitable winemaking processes. They offer panoramas of carefully cultivated hillsides, following ancient land divisions punctuated with buildings that lend structure to the visual space: hilltop villages, castles, Romanesque churches, farms, ciabots, cellars and storehouses for cellaring and for the commercial distribution of the wine in the small towns and larger towns on the margins of the vineyards. The serial property is outstanding for its harmony, and the balance between the aesthetic qualities of its landscapes, the architectural and historical diversity of the built elements associated with the wine production activities and an authentic and ancient art of winemaking.*

*Criterion (iii): The cultural landscapes of the Piedmont vineyards provide outstanding living testimony to winegrowing and winemaking traditions that stem from a long history, and that have been continuously improved and adapted up to the present day. They bear witness to an extremely comprehensive social, rural and urban realm, and to sustainable economic structures.*

*They bear witness to an extremely comprehensive social, rural and urban realm, and to sustainable economic structures. They include a multitude of harmonious built elements that bear witness to its*







Overview and introduction - Aerial view of the site.

history and its professional practices.

*Criterion (v): The vineyards of Langhe-Roero and Monferrato constitute an outstanding example of man's interaction with his natural environment. Following a long and slow evolution of winegrowing expertise, the best possible adaptation of grape varieties to land with specific soil and climatic components has been carried out, which in itself is related to winemaking expertise, thereby becoming an international benchmark. The winegrowing landscape also expresses great aesthetic qualities, making it into an archetype of European vineyards.*

#### *Integrity*

*The integrity of the serial property is satisfactory, as it contains all the elements required for full expression of its values. Considered as a whole, its five components fully express the cultural, residential, architectural, environmental and productive complexity of this winegrowing and winemaking region. It bears witness to an ensemble of centuries-old traditions that have gradually been built up. The integrity of the nominated serial property is fully justified, and all the technical and social processes associated with grape production and winemaking, with a high degree of expertise, are properly illustrated.*

#### *Authenticity*

*The authenticity of the landscape elements and the many cultural elements of the serial property has been justified. The use of the soils, the built structures and the social organisation of all the stages of the winemaking process,*

*from tending and harvesting the grapes to vinification, are an expression of continuity of ancient practices and expertise to form authentic ensembles in each component of the serial property. The Piedmont vineyard landscape is undoubtedly one of the most harmonious and most consistent with the ideal of a "scenic" rural and vineyard landscape, accentuated by the gently rolling hills that provide many vistas and panoramas with subtle nuances."*<sup>11</sup>





*Barbera*

Barbera grape representation by  
Giorgio Gallezio.



Barbera La court Label, made by  
Gian Carlo Ferraris.

## 1.1 Why this place and why Barbera.

After this more analytical preface which is the reason why those places have been selected to become a UNESCO site, it is time to explain the personal reason which pushed me to choose this specific and incredible place and why focusing on Barbera grapes.

Apart from the fact that this is my birth place, I came to a conclusion due to some trips and some years of studies: it is not so easy and obvious living in or just near a place so powerful and with this high cultural value. I discovered a strong love for these places just going away and then coming back. My goal now is to try to focus on this environment and finding a way to increase or to start increasing the value of what characterises and shapes it. From here and from the passion and interest in wine, I realized how important the legacy we have had, so I strongly wanted to give my contribution, just ideally so far, through architecture.

The choice of the Barbera grape, then, came consequentially: Barbera is (together with Nebbiolo, Grignolino, Dolcetto, Cortese, Moscato and others) the indigenous vineyard of Piedmont and here it probably finds its best *terroir*<sup>1</sup>.

I would like to see this wine - that if produced in this area since 2014 had to be called Nizza DOCG<sup>2</sup> - to be recognised at the levels of the top wines and grapes around the world.

The thesis project is thought to be this: a kind of new place in the UNESCO heritage site that could create an intense congregation of cultural activities, sacred spaces and free-time.

Should be always kept in mind that making wine is the main activity

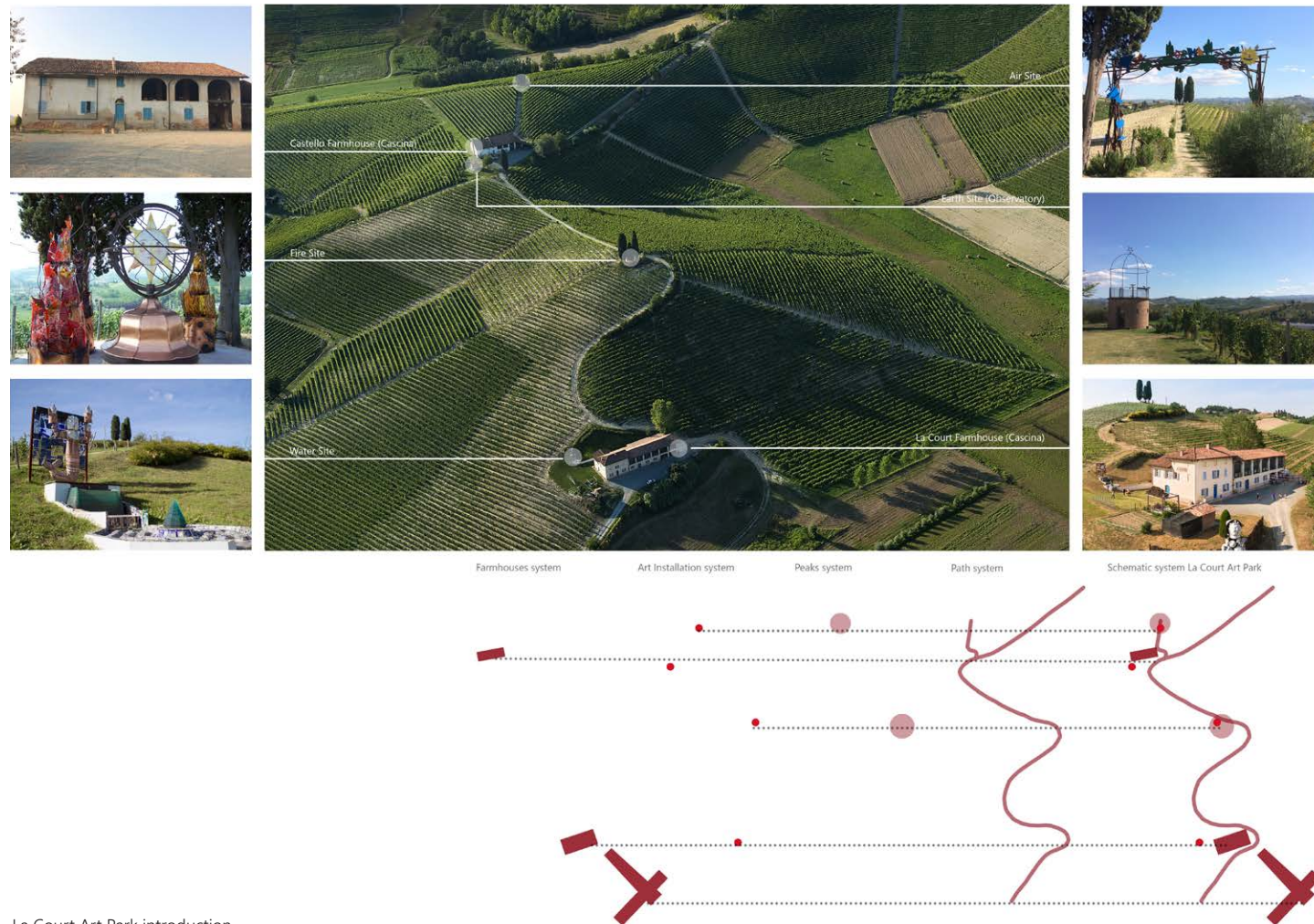
since hundreds of years<sup>3</sup> and still nowadays and that is the reason why the site became so important.

The winery is the main vehicle and in some way the starting point of the whole project. An evolution of the first idea is making of this place a building which could be also a research centre to improve Barbera wine. Talking about this aspect would be very articulated and quite vast. Making wine is really a matter which involves technique, philosophy, agriculture, passion, knowledge of nature and many other aspects. Although in general farmers know exactly that the most important step in the wine production is taking care of the vineyard, I have had to focus more on the built environment and on the organization of the program.

For this objective the canteen has been designed in order to be integrated with the art park, but also to reach and host studying places and laboratories for institutions like for example the Oenological University of Alba (but it is also available for whoever is interested in) and for the local schools to bring the students closer to a typical reality of this land. Reality that, in the end, represents the whole country in its physical and time dimension from the Romans to nowadays.

I would like to see this project not just as a building placed on a site, but as a kind of simple Manifesto which wants to bring back people to their origins: the earth intended both as soil, land and mother.





La Court Art Park introduction.

## 2. The art park "La Court".

As previously said the Tenuta La Court, is developed on Michele Chiarlo's vineyard in the UNESCO heritage "Nizza Monferrato e le Colline della Barbera."

At Castelnuovo Calcea, on the hills of the La Court estate, heart of the cru from which the greatest Barbera wines were born, the Art Park La Court rises. Twenty hectares of vineyards, three farmhouses and two hills: the largest open-air museum in a vineyard, a monument continually updated where art, landscape and wine communicate without interruption, offering visitors one land art experience of the oenological panorama.

The landscaped scenery was designed by the great Emanuele Luzzati who, left a legacy of his sculptures here, arranged along a fairytale itinerary dedicated to the elements: Earth, Water, Air, Fire.

Together with the sculptures by Luzzati, the park is punctuated by artists of international fame, among whom the works of Ugo Nespolo, Giancarlo Ferraris and Chris Bangle stand out. Imaginative and iconic pieces that immerse the passerby in archaic and fantastic atmospheres, reasoning on the relationship and harmony between man and nature, creating meditative spaces and observation points. In the exhibition of the park different artists are involved such as: Emanuele Luzzati, Ugo Nespolo, Chris Bangle, Balthasar Brennenstuhl, Dedo Roggero Fossati, Peppino Campanella, Giancarlo Ferraris, Fabio Albino Cavanna, Marcello Mannuzza and Mark Cooper.

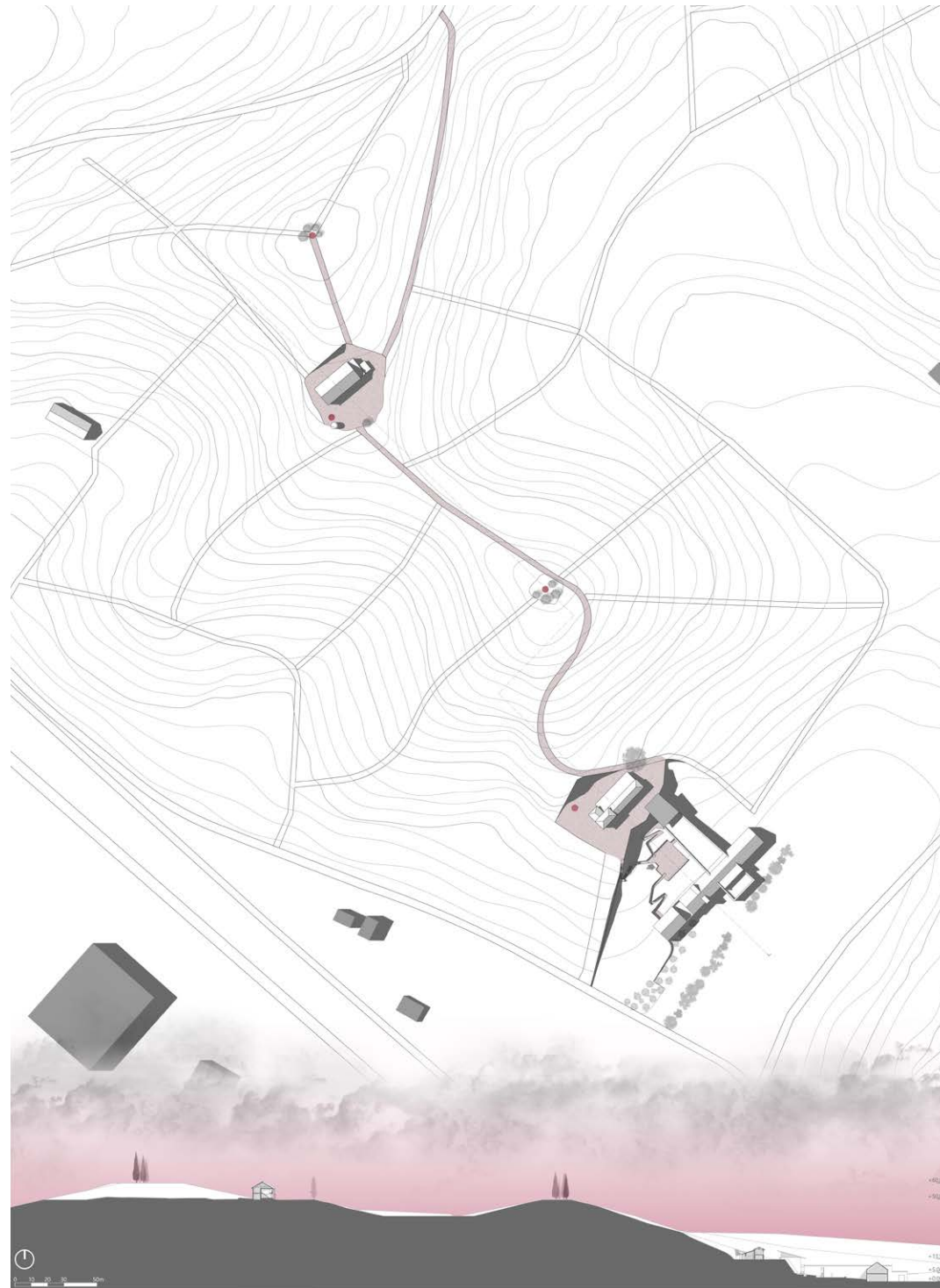
From the point of view of the physical landscape and spatial organization, it is quite interesting how this place has been integrated

with an Art Park and how the topography influences it and then how it influences the choice of the thesis working area.

The park has two entrances. The first one leads to the Big Bench and to Cascina Castello, and is placed on the top of the hills about 70 meters high above the second one which, instead, is placed at the Cascina La Court and gives access to the park.

The peculiar aspect of this park is that it is completely surrounded by what is the work of these farmers, so in some parts it is also totally true, almost rude and difficult to walk on. It is developed completely on the crest of the hills, while the artworks are spread around in strategic points which allow the visitor to have different experiences. The area where Cascina Castello (Castello farmhouse) stands seems to be the place where, the Conti (Earls of) di Loreto in 1142 built the first castle of Castelnuovo.<sup>1</sup>

It is therefore a place full of history that now communicates a strong culture related to agriculture but also to art.



Site plan and section.

### 3 The Project.

The thesis goal is to create an experimental winery which could not only function as a factory of course, but also as a museum and as a place in the existing art park. The design process then involves also the art park itself and takes into consideration the history of the place, the main activity of wine production, the art idea behind the site, the materials and also a sensitive reference to the sacred.

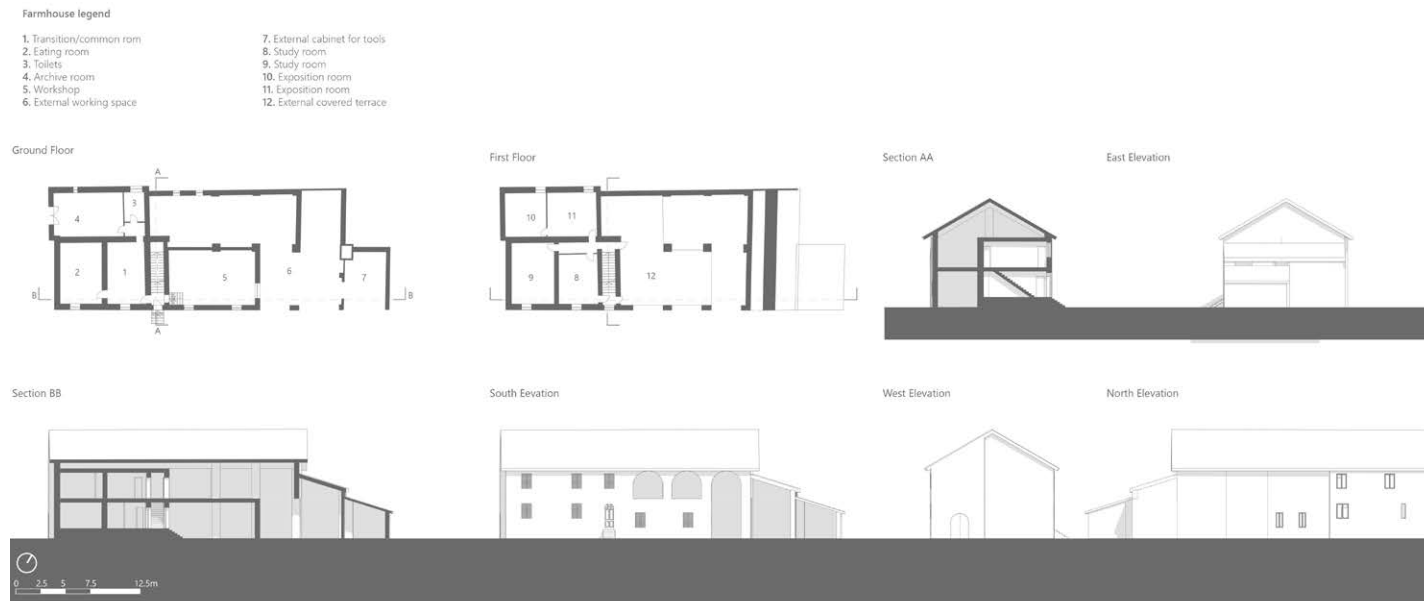
The decision of not operating directly into the park is related to the intention of not damaging or complicating the work place. Currently the installations are thought to be outside of the vineyards working area or are used as furniture of it.

For what the winery is concerned, it is settled on the lower level for different reasons: the production aspect, the visual impact and the pure practical side of the whole. Three different themes were carried on designing: one about the social issues and it involves the project for the art park, one about the culture, transforming the winery into an open museum always accessible even in the most dense and intense period of work and the last one is about wine production of course. The design keeps into consideration these three aspects which are related to themselves too.

Many other questions raised during the project, as for examples materiality and immateriality, paths and places to stay, production and free-time spaces, natural and built environment. All of them became then part of the design and were object of investigation and study.

The final result is a place that tries to give more than a simple physical built environment. It tries to improve the social net in relation to the other sites of the UNESCO area and in relation to the surrounding villages. It tries to consciously build a place with ecological materials that recall ancient traditions, the natural environment and to take advantage in the production process of the height difference to create a gravity-production winery. It tries to create a new place where people and the community could recognise themselves but which is flexible at the same time and capable of changing. In conclusion, a place that tries to create identity.





Cascina Castello plans, section and views.

### 3.1 The project for the art park.

An art park already developed did not need anything special to work better and to improve, but besides that, a development, has to be done in order not to damage the working activities carried out here almost every day.

In this place the heritage is not given only by the vineyards and the landscape but also by the almost two hundred year old farmhouses placed on the site. The one on the highest peak is Bric Castello and the lower one is La Court (that gives the name to the park). Those are beautiful examples of typical rural buildings and are made up of solid bricks for the bearing walls and timber structures for the roof.

Cascina La Court is the more efficient one, nowadays used as the guardian house but also for summer activities and wine tastings in the old haystack space.

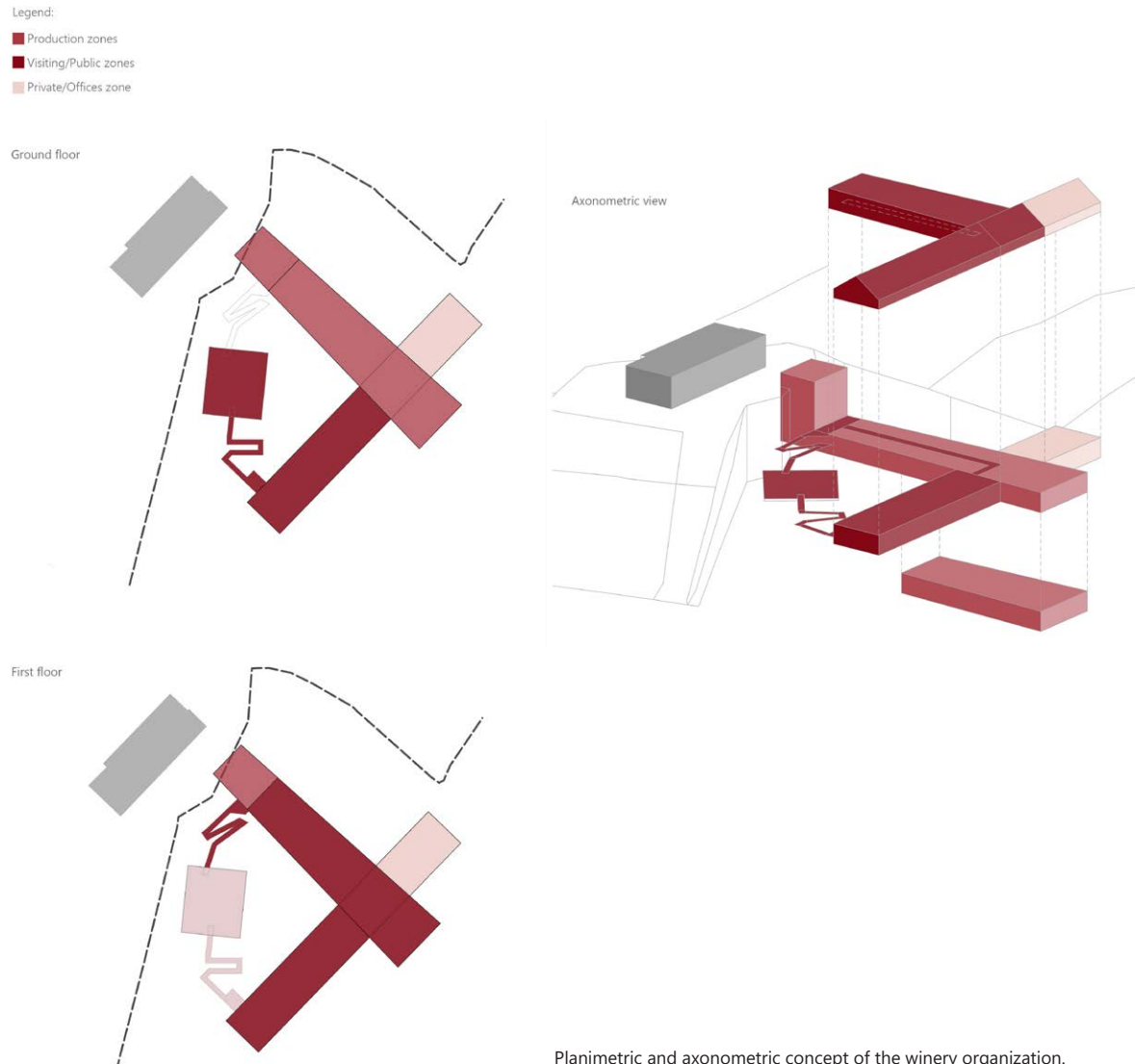
Bric Castello is quite damaged and used just as a storage house, as an archive on Piedmont figures and in summertime as an open-air cinema projecting on the facade instead.

This last place, which is the object of the main intervention in the Art Park, is also probably the most ancient and important place of the whole village Castelnuovo Calcea. In fact, this hill that dominates the valley was the site of the first castle of Castelnuovo born around 1142 ac built from the Conti (Earls of) di Loreto.

The project consists of keeping La Court as it is and simply transforming Bric Castello into a workshop house for the artists that are going to work in the art park, or for other different activities concerning schools or private courses or also event s organized

by the owners or by different associations. The building is also provided of a cooking place, an archive where currently books and materials about famous piedmont people are stored, and different working rooms. The outside covered space is thought to be used as an exposition space but also as a workshop, as well as the covered terrace on the first floor. The interventions are directed, as already said, in order to preserve the building and turning it in a white box which can be changed according to the needs. The outside space in front of the Cascina will be left empty and ready to be used both as working place and exhibition or event space.

The aim is to maintain the old idea and aspect of the farmhouse as much as possible, preserving the structures and the formal aspects - just strengthening it and turning it safe - in order to transform it in a house that can be used but also as a rural archaeology that always reminds the past but hosts activities looking forward the shape of things to come.



### 3.2 The winery.

On the lower level of the landscape finds its strategic position the winery. This building is intended to host both the wine production of Nizza DOCG and to be a museum for the visitors of the park. In fact it is accessible both from the street side and from the hills. It is configured to be the second head of the park where the first one is Bric Castello.

The building, which has two stories for the main volumes and three stories for the vinification tower, is a T shaped building settled and carved into the hill.

In the space between the visitors welcome area and the entrance of the museum path is placed a platform that represents the core all the roads lead to. In fact, this platform is the end of the art park path, and the connection of the different levels of the winery, it looks 360 degrees at the surroundings and is also connected with a sort of reverse balcony into the winery aging room.

The two buildings are related and connected asymmetrically in correspondence of the bottling and delivery area.

This connection allows to create a double relationship: the more practical one regarding the transport of the products from the factory to the shop and so the easy connection of the workers through the whole complex, and the second one is to end the visiting path with (on the first floor) a multifunctional room, the connection to the terraces, the tasting rooms and the stairs to go back to the shop on the ground level.

Arriving from the main street the parking plot is treated in

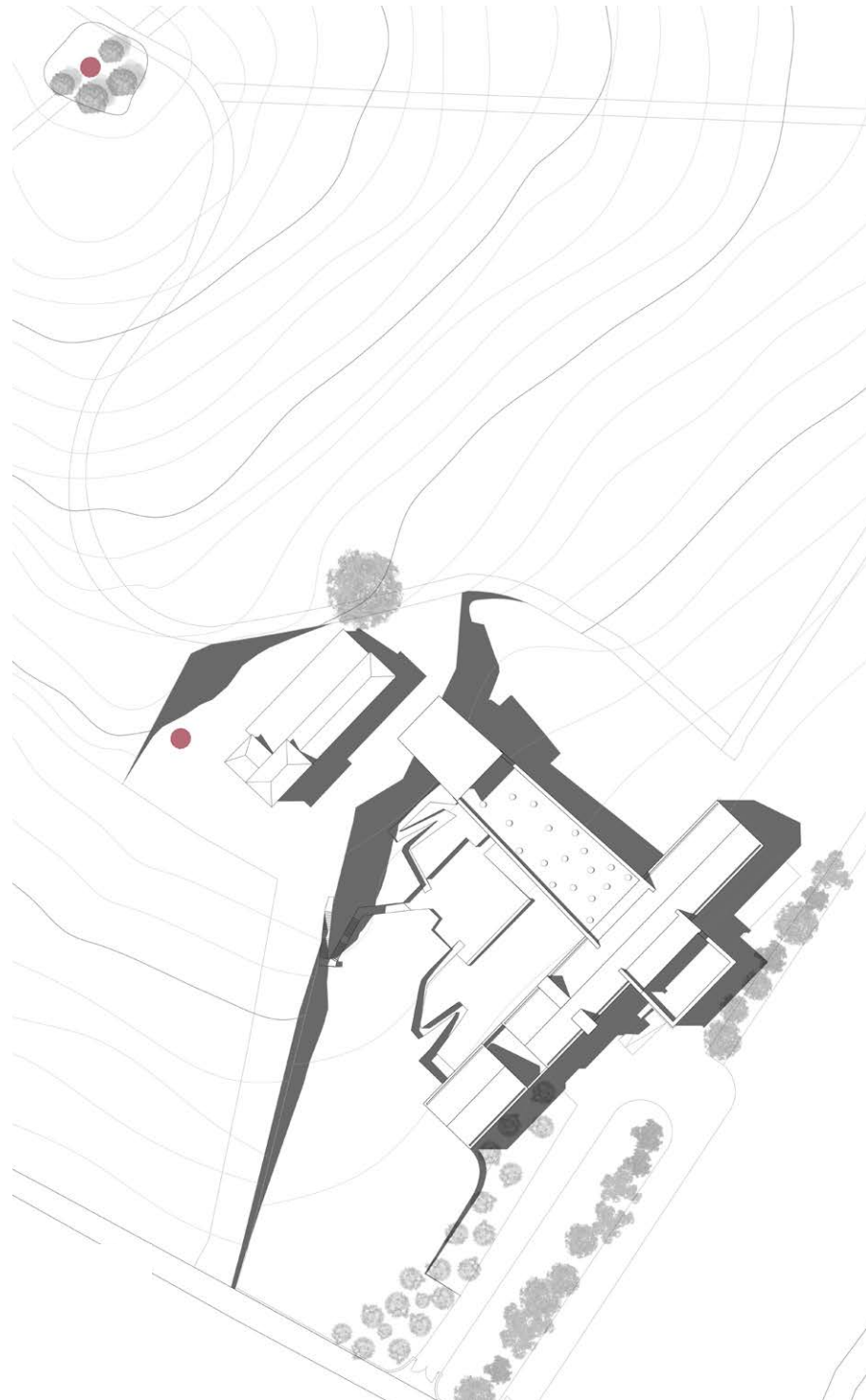
an extensive way, in order to have parking but not to make it look like an industrial or shopping area; in fact, it has trees and pavements that are thought both to keep the ground permeable and to slow down the vehicles.

The back part consists of the office block. This side is thought to be used exclusively by the workers who have separated entrances to enter the production wing and the offices. Basically half of the ground floor hosts the laboratories for the winery and the computer room, while the other half has services like the canteen. On the first floor the open space offices are disposed behind the director room and are directly connected to the multifunctional room on the first floor of the production (which is the one belonging and closing the visiting path).

The bottle storage room is on the floor underground, below the bottling room and covering the same area of it. This place, which is used just as a box/packaging storage and as a bottle storage and aging room, needs a constant temperature and little light.

Visitors, therefore, have a clear and dedicated path. In this way people flow can go on without interfere with the production process, but still participating to it. The intention of the pedestrian articulation is proceed from outside to inside both physically and with the view; doing this people are always focused on the aspects that characterize the area: the vineyard and the wine making. At the end of the path, as previously said, it is possible to find a multifunctional room used in different ways depending on necessities: as a museum of the winery,





Site plan of the winery.

as a meeting room or a big wine tasting room, which is opened on a terrace that looks the hills around. The end of the visiting path then is the tasting room which is also open to a terrace where it is possible to have sheltered events too. From this point where it is possible to observe almost the whole complex, visitors can reach the ground floor using big stairs that arrive in the middle of the wine shop.

Workers who have a different vertical connection system that is in the north side of the tower, can work without worries and independently. The production which takes advantage of the gravity process for two steps, is organized as follows:

- grapes collection takes place on the higher level (at the farmhouse quote) at +13.50 meters;
- from here, thanks to the gravity effect, the grapes fall into the destemmer and then into the vinification tank;
- after the vinification period, again with the help of gravity, wine is poured into wood barrels (at ground level: +0.00 meters) where it will remain for different periods depending on specific regulations. In case of Barbera Superiore the time is from six months to one year minimum in barrels and then other six months in bottle;
- when the wine is ready, depending on the impurities (and philosophy) is filtered and poured into a steel tank to be bottled.
- once bottled it remains in the storage room and then labelled when it is time to sell it.

This is the basic procedure used to produce Barbera. Of course in this list something could be different depending on the philosophy of the farmer, but also the needs.

Structurally the winery is composed by two materials: the vertical elements are in concrete, while the horizontal ones are in laminated timber. The tower has a huge central wall that supports the roof while the lower levels are supported by rectangular pillars.

The aging, bottling and storage area is a simple frame structure with a suspended walkway hanged from the timber beams. The pitch roof is supported by concrete pillars and timber trusses. The material used for the wall, which will be explained later, are earth prefabricated blocks for the production wing, while for the shop-office wing the walls are made by timber with a copper covering layer.

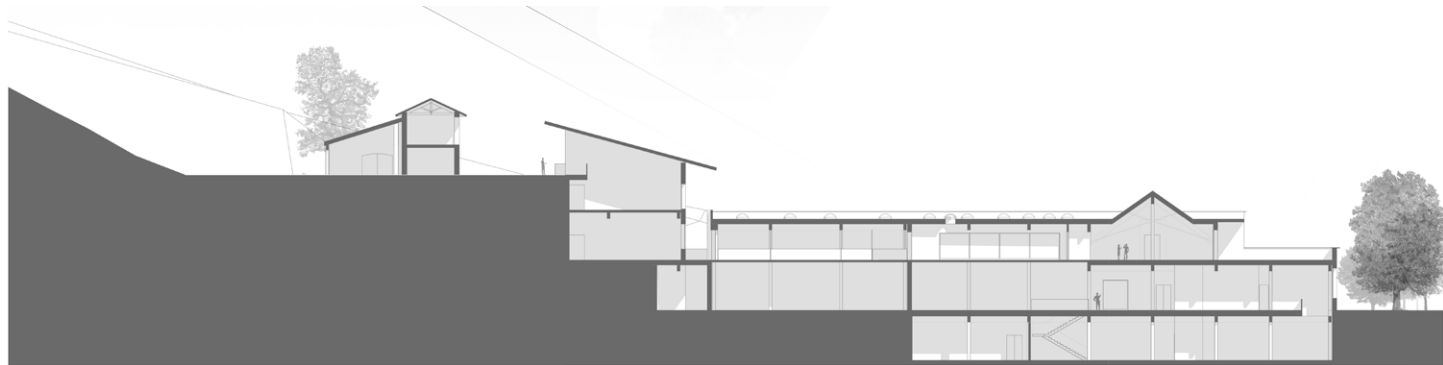
The relationship between the new winery and the farmhouse is intended to be ambiguous: it is made to be functional for the wine process which is the main reason why the whole place exists, but is not attached to the old building in a sort of "almost there" that creates a kind of strong relationship between the volumes in such a way that gives the impression of being in a smaller Italian village instead of in an open and vast rural area. At the same time this feeling is ephemeral because walking a bit and turning around it is possible to go back again to the vineyard landscape. The single-pitch roof inclines towards the new building but it opens to the old one with the grape collection area. A gesture, born to be functional of course and proposing a continuation between two aspects of these lands: the old, historical and highly value cultural one and the new challenging needs of a contemporary activity and world.



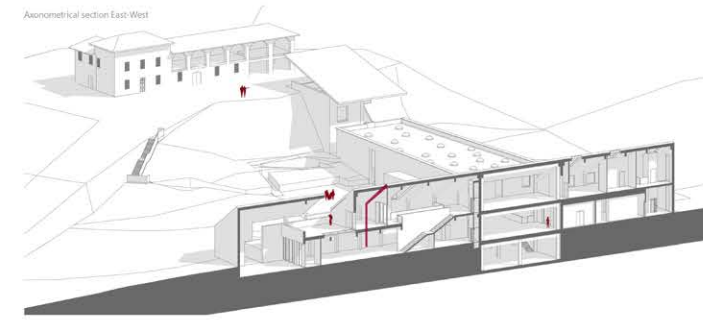
Ground floor and section of the winery.



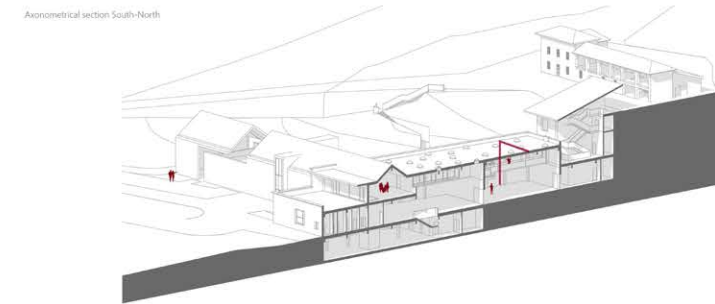
First floor and section of the winery.



Section north-south of the winery.



Axonometrical section East-West



Axonometrical section South-North

Axonometric sections of the winery.



Bukichi Inoue, My sky hole, Fattoria di Celle

### 3.3 Materiality and Immateriality.

The aim of this chapter is to expose the mental and cultural processes which lead me to develop this project, but it is even something more; is an introspective travel in order to collect ideas and feelings and to try to translate them into a physical project.

The winery has been conceived to be on the lower level of the landscape and to close an artistic path starting from the highest level of the vineyards. Actually the path has not a clear entrance or starting point, and in its complex is thought and developed to be a kind of travel. Exactly as in every travel the starting point is not always very clear but usually the end is what gives sense to the whole path. In this case what is important is the path itself which is developed in order to create a sequence of feelings and of standing-going points.

This theme is faced many times in the project, in the art park with its trail, on the path that leads the visitors from the wine shop to the winery visitor entrance and then in the suspended walkway into the building that brings the visitor back to the wine shop. Paths have been treated as a support to the architectural composition but also to the experience of the visitor and as a reference to a more sacred aspect.

The clear reference is to what can be considered sacred in different religions: the theme of walking on a path and taking time to think, reflect and be spiritually ready to face the world around.

An example could be the *Sacri Monti*<sup>1</sup> between Piedmont and Lombardia, which consists in a series of chapels along a sloped path leading to a main church; each chapel has a different meaning and it is a way to set the time of the walking and to remind the sacred.

A more contemporary instance could be the project "My sky hole"<sup>2</sup> by Bukichi Inoue where the underground path with waiting points is a recall to this sacred paths. The process which leads a believer to go deep into the dark and to find the light thanks to faith and patience.

Patience is the leading word of the thesis and the red line which connects the whole; patience is what most of the time occidental but also oriental religions try to teach and to reach. It is also a crucial issue related to the natural world. Since the ancient times, having the ability to wait in order to get what nature is giving us has been the fundamental aspect of humans and more recently for those who are more directly connected to the farm job. Making wine is for sure an incredible act of patience - if done properly - which starts from the tree, to the collection, the fermentation, the aging and the more complex evolution in the bottle. Some of those passages could last two or even ten years or more. Making wine passes through all these processes that are all translated into the single bottle of wine.

Into a bottle there is always not just the wine, but the patience, the ability to work, the passion and the philosophy of the person who is making it. For example a very important figure in the history of Barbera, Giorgio Rivetti, said that 90% of a wine is made in the vineyard.<sup>3</sup>

The consistency of patience is what very often makes the difference in each aspect of life. Buildings are one of those issues. Talking about buildings means different things: it could be the physical relation solid-void, the materiality, the light and the more general time of use.





Pisè technique, earth walls.



Copper partially oxidated.



Oxidated copper.

For example time related to the materiality is about seeing what time passing can makes to the material used to build.

This thesis project wants to use materials that recall in some way the colours and the materials of the landscape around. Beside the fact that could be very useful just for production economy, the earth walls are also a way to refer to one of the materials which have always given life to us: earth in fact.

Earth so, seen as mother, arrives from the Greek and a root of it: *metér* gives origin to the name of Demetra the Greek God of soil fertility who, according to the legend, gives origin to the seasons.<sup>4</sup>

A different approach has been used for the copper volume: in this case I have tried to give more importance to the colour of the material and the chemical composition which initially is one and gives a bright light brown colour and with time passing, climate changes and oxidation turns into a green-blue colour which reminds the green of the summer trees but also the blue of the chemical composition given to the vineyard as anti-fungal.

Those material aspects are related to a precise intention of creating two different volumes: a "heavier" one, more static and defined which is made by earth and is aimed to the production process, and a "lighter" one, more conceptual which is made by wood (wall layers) and copper which host the wine shop, tasting rooms and the offices. The volumes then want to make this relation stronger. While the production wing is carving the ground until the old farmhouse in a gesture like going towards the vineyards with a certain dimension close to the farmhouse (which is respectful of both the landscape

and the production needs) and a different one in the farthest point, the visitor wing is placed parallel to the farmhouse in order to honour the old building tradition in openings and orientation and preserve its volumetrical characteristic for the whole length.

For this material studio the words of Fernando Espuelas were very inspirational; he talks about Herzog & De Meuron and explains how they investigate the material to be detached from "the repetition of formal elements. Their style, or better their language, is the one of the matter of their buildings. The process each project is composed of, starts with an accurate studio and ends up with the tribute and celebration of a real material, and so it is a clear point of view about the possibilities of the material to be expressive vehicle of architecture. They understood deeply the role of matter in architecture, its essential interim role of negotiation between utilitarian needs and Culture."<sup>5</sup>

The contrasts of the matters with each other and with the environment could enhance the meanings and harmonize the composition, keeping the focus on what is really important in that context: the vineyard and the wine.

Mutation is another very strong characteristic which can be found both in nature and in the evolution of matter. This last one is a concept belonging more to the oriental philosophy which defines life as mutation. In our society, actually, people have always faced mutation and changes, and a person working close to nature is totally aware about this aspect: they perfectly know that each year

the environment is different and so the product they make. Philosopher Alain explains that "What's still deceive us because we trust on it and the habit overcome it and it is taken for the truth. On the opposite, the idea alive, the right idea is that there's a truth of change, [...] nothing is done: everything does and undoes itself." <sup>6</sup>

In architecture one among others, Walter Gropius, said: "It doesn't exist a final point in architecture; there's only one unbroken movement"<sup>7</sup> and more related to the functionalism of a building, but could also be intended in general, Paul Nelson asserts that the fixity of utilitarianism is against the movement of life and overlooks its changing needs.<sup>8</sup>

Developing a thesis in my opinion is always thinking about the future changes, not in order to prevent them - because it would be twice wrong - but instead, in order to take the best possible choices and working for an architecture capable of lasting in time.

Trees also belong and share the previous topics. They are probably the most evident example of mutation. Moreover they possess architectural issues and can be used to compose not only the built environment but also remind and connect ideally different meanings, from the sacred one like the olive tree which is a symbol in different religions, to the cultural one like the Castanus which was very often planted close to vineyards in the past and whose wood was used to build the vineyards rows.<sup>9</sup>

Trees can also be used to manage the solid-void relation attracting the attention of the observer and giving the scale to the surroundings and the building.

In other cases voids are defined according to what they need to be, and like a music sheet can be used to define rhythm, therefore the places where to stand and preparing to another action: they allow you to identify and define the sequence of spaces or places and to give them different strength and character.

For Carlos Martì Aris the void role is to maintain separated the elements highlighting the field of relationships<sup>10</sup> while in his book, Fernando Espuelas explains how void can be related to different adjectives, such as penetrability, possibility, flexibility, clarity, order, magnetism etc.<sup>11</sup>

The sheltered void before the entrance of the wine shop is a flexible space which attracts people to investigate and once inside it takes their look to the outside throughout the cuts. Continuing the external trail visitors arrive on an external squared platform with an olive tree on one side. On this platform, which is in the core of the built area, collecting the various roads from the hill and from the building, people can rest and wait, look at the surroundings from a different perspective and also inside the building thanks to the only void of the earth wall and the reverse balcony.

The squared platform is conceived as silent space that contrasts the landscape with its clarity and gives order to the path that leads to the guest entrance of the winery. Here the visitor path is a suspended bridge on a void which is both useful for technical and architectural reasons. The bridge ends up into a room which is in continuity with and external terrace that looks at the village upon the opposite hill (Castelnuovo Calcea).

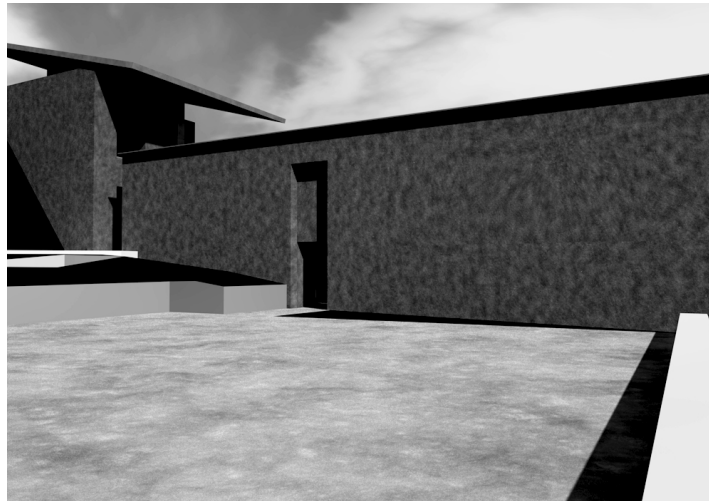


Image of the project: external platform and earth wall detail.

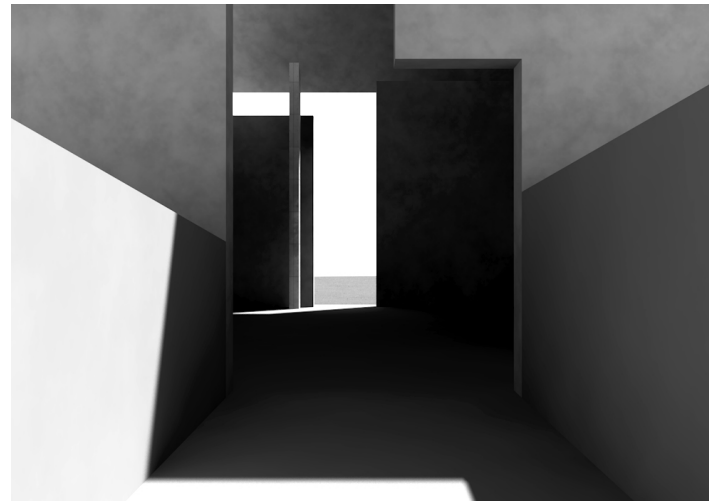


Image of the projec: entrance void.

For the complete development of this project the recall to the landscape in which it is inserted is clear. This is due to a kind of tribute to the genius loci - in fact this is also the reason why now this place is a UNESCO heritage site - which according to Norberg-Schulz "respecting the genius loci it doesn't mean to copy the ancient models, but to highlight the identity of the place and reinterpreting in a new way. Just in this case we can talk about an alive tradition that justifies changes referring them to a series of local parameters."<sup>12</sup>

The different topics are meant to explain and sum up the creative process both in the possible positive or negative way. They are expressions, in some way of a why and so give meaning to the whole. Materiality and immateriality are two main categories of things and thoughts that influence each other and that increase, in my opinion, the value of a project. From those reflections regarding many different elements, the project was shaped. From the sacred to the use of voids, from the mutation of nature to the built environment, each of these themes contains a piece of the other one and all of them are connected with this thin line: patience, and consequentially, the consistency of patience.

#### 4. Conclusions.

This thesis project has been conceived due to my willing of work in my home land. The intention was trying to reevaluate Barbera wine using architecture, not as a marketing matter but rather as a starting point, a home where this wine and grape could improve, a place capable to collect producers and personalities who want to study and experiment and find new ways of making wine.

The site then has also been chosen for this reason. La Court art park in Michele Chiarlo's vineyards is an example of the history, beauty and culture of these hills. A rural area where wine has been made since centuries that finds here its identity and pride.

With this project, thanks to the guide of my supervisor, professor David Palterer, I have tried to push my knowledge as far as possible and to set the whole work not as a final exam, but rather as the first professional work. The process that led me to design this building passed thorough different experiences and studies, analysis and choices.

I have tried to face different and various aspects of a design phase. First of all, the use of a particular material like the earth prefabricated blocks which actually have always been a construction material; in this area and in Piedmont in general was used the material called "Mon crù" which is the adobe but also the same technique used for this project: the *pisè*. This is a clear reference not only to the sustainability and ethic of construction, but also to the culture of the place.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly carving the building and the paths into the hills is another aspect used to preserve the soil and cover less surface.

Lastly the art park has been developed in order to improve its effect in a bigger scale. With this I mean that it can be considered a starting point to create a connection between the hills and the UNESCO sites in this region and give it back to people - I mean each user: visitors, locals, tourists etc. - their own land gives them one more reason to investigate, be curious and know the place; spend their time, bring their family or their guests, valorise what they already have.

So the project takes into consideration also the social aspect, and is perfectly conscious that to improve we have to be united by similar purposes and goals. The health of a community is made creating connections and involving all the members.

It takes into consideration the philosophy of the winery itself, which right now tries to involve the arts to make those links stronger and let the people recognise themselves in those actions.

This thesis, eventually, wants to be a self-challenge to manage the complexity of design. Manage the solid-void relationship, the sacred aspect, the musealization of a working place, the ability to build two buildings that host different functions and have to "talk with each other" and create relations with the surroundings and its history.

According to what Carlos Martí Aris said when talking about the figures who try to find a solution to a language and those who leave this problem behind or facing it with no worries or exasperation, for the first ones the work born as an expression of individual personality, making an impact and having an innovative shape.



## Credits | Acknowledgments.

While “For the second ones, facing the language question first is to get away from the objectives. Those are not willing to use the work of art to express their emotions or fantasies, but only to make their world able to reveal dimensions and aspects of reality which belong to everyone.”<sup>2</sup> In this way things can gain relevance and character, making possible to see new aspects and give us the chance to go over the language itself.

Therefore a big effort has been done to involve all these aspects. Crucial was the support of my professor and the guide of mentors I could just have read about. Everything, then, is related to the idea of patience. Patience could be seen also as the ability to wait, to cultivate ideas, opinions, increase the experience and evolve. The consistency of this behaviour, which is typical in the natural environment, is so powerful and gives access to many possibilities; it helps to create better connections between people and with the environment itself.

“Dreams which walk with human actions ought to be fed by the places where people live.”<sup>3</sup>

Every person I met helped me to arrive at this point. The positive figures which supported me and the negative ones that inspired me too, but for the opposite reason: they made me figure out what I do not want to become.

Thanks to, David Palterer, my professor, supervisor and mentor.

Thanks to my family, Ester and my friends.

One last thanks to Michele Chiarlo’s winery that allowed me to use his land and vineyards to develop my thesis project.

Thank you.

## Notes.

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- pg. 00: Sketches from the exam panel n. 4;
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Politecnico di Milano- Polo territoriale di Mantova  
Scuola di Architettura Urbanistica e Ingegneria delle costruzioni  
Master of Science in "Architectural design and history"

Thesis project:

*the consistency of patience: a place in the UNESCO heritage*

*"Nizza monferrato e le colline della Barbera"*

Student: Mario Briola | 858917

Previsor: David Palterer

a.y. 2016/2017

date: 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2018