

The history as environment for a project of a didactic farm: the “Iron Door” at Rifreddo of Mondovì, Italy

by: Prato Marta and Tortalla Chiara

Tutor: Lorenzo Mamino

Co-tutor: Giancarlo Comino

The farm the “Iron Door” is located at the periphery of the town deep in the green and far away from the noise of city traffic.

One can define its position “strategic” because from the farm one can see the hills of Mondovì, and noticeably among them the hill of Piazza with the Belvedere tower and the nearby villages of San Quintino, Roccacigliè and Bastia.

The farm is composed of:

- A tower (dated back to 1300)
- Two houses of different heights connected to the tower which were built during later years, both with respect to each other than to the tower
- Facing this complex there is a cottage which in the old times was used as stable and living quarter. (Nowadays this space is used as a tools deposit and barn)



The farm layout is with a court that creates a kind of space used only by the complex giving it a further uniqueness and antique flavour. The tower adds originality and it is the most remarkable element of the “Iron Door” (It is in fact the door that gives the name to the farm). This door is nowadays still original and made of iron. The farm has maintained its magnificence and singularity and has compelled us to study its history and undertake this project.



Having been fascinated by the stories of the village seniors who were mentioning a link between the farms in the area and the Cistercian monks we started to study the ownerships of the Rifreddo monks with a view to confirm this important link. Investigating the matter we confirmed the presence of the Vico's Cistercian monks, both in the farm the "Iron Door" and in the older farms (Fonda e Vivalda). Fascinated by the link with an external reality that here the rural entrepreneurship was in charge, we deepened our research in history and we discovered a link among the various farms. Mentioned in the Napoleon cadastre of 1810, we found this connection between the farms on the northern side of the highlands facing the Branzola stream. In some places it is well readable but in other is camouflaged with the nearby fields.

Analyzing the historical farms and the roads linking them one can tell that the history of this environment is not fully lost but largely forgotten.

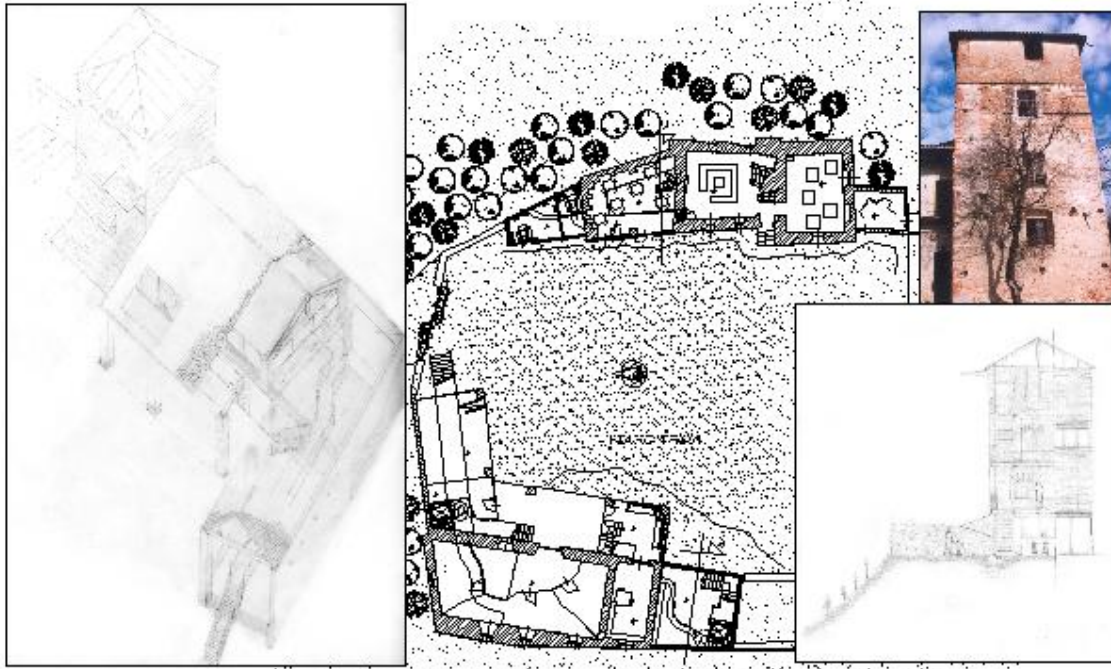
According to an ISTAT survey, the 21st Century children (grown up in the ages of computers and internet) do not know anymore what is a plough or a goat.

Starting from this point, we found it interesting to revalue the situation of these often deserted country places trying to make them known and appreciated by the young generations.

Therefore we thought that the didactic farms (there are already examples in Italy) can be a matching point between agriculture and school for a children's education containing both environmental and alimentary elements.

In this way children will spend a Sunday or a week-day at the "Iron door" farm leaving behind the virtual world of television, plunging into the nature's language close to animals and country products.

On the other hand, making the re-qualification of the path more concrete our reference point has been our historical research with strong points that could directly interest the children. Living it as into a fairy-tale, children will meet the monks (chalk figures) along the path.



Looking for records of these farms, both in Italy and abroad, we tried to adapt the "Iron Door" to a didactic farm by creating an opposite tower to the existing one. Since the medieval tower was made of brick masonry and the bricks are laid down horizontally, we chose a different material (wood) for the new tower though using the same pattern.

This building is a kind of greenhouse whose external part is made of small wooden bars mounted on metal posts that can be open in many ways. This particular movement makes it appear like a fairy-tale manor. This system of adjustable sticks masks the building modifying continuously the view of the façade according to the position of the observer stressing the brightness of the mutable light changing.

For further information: marta_BC@libero.it
chiara.cris@tiscali.it