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MuSaBa - Museo Santa Barbara

The *Santa Barbara Art Foundation* (MuSaBa) is a private institution, a non-profit creative and intellectual foundation, an integration of art, science, architecture, environment, archaeology, history, biological farming and research centre relevant to the Mediterranean artistic-cultural heritage.

Created by artists Nik Spatari and Hiske Maas, the Santa Barbara Art Foundation defines, activates, and realizes its purposes through innovative programmes at MuSaBa.

Calabria

Fantastic legends envelop the history of this remote region in Italy, from the Homeric monsters Scylla and Charybdis to the Norman tales of Fata Morgana. A succession of peoples and civilizations (Villanovans, Ausonians, Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Swabians, Arabs, and Aragonese) fused with the proto-Italic inhabitants and left their imprint upon local customs and traditions as well as upon architectural and artistic styles. The geographic isolation of this region, broken only with the development of modern transportation links in recent years, has preserved a rich cultural and archaeological patrimony from as far back as the Neolithic period.

Archaeological-Environmental Park Santa Barbara

The significant presence of indigenous populations was confirmed in the 1970s by archaeological excavations indicating that the Santa Barbara area contains not only necropolis of the XII-VIII century B.C. period but also a settlement that overlaid it in the VII-IV century B.C. period.

The creation of the archaeological-landscape park Santa Barbara as an integrated cultural structure is based on the convergence of interventions, questions, and actions related to the environmental interpretation of the area around the architectonic structures suggested by the remains of the monastery. The MuSaBa project is establishing an archaeological-landscape park that functions as a scientific and educational facility that support the cultural promotion of the network of archaeological-environmental parks in Calabria.

MuSaBa Location

MuSaBa is located in the heart of Calabria, in Italy's southernmost mainland province, Reggio Calabria. Sited in the Torbido River valley near the village of Mammola, MuSaBa is ten kilometres uphill from the Ionian Sea and can be reached directly by the Ionio-Tirreno highway.

A place of striking and unique character, MuSaBa is situated in a vast open space in an ancient valley between the creeks and folds of the surrounding hills. The promontory Santa Barbara holds the remains of the monastic complex whose origins date back as far as the fourth century. In 1193, the Carthusian monks were replaced by the Cistercians. When the Carthusians returned in 1300, they asked Emperor Charles V to reinstate the abbey's feudal status and remained at Santa Barbara until the abolition of feudalism in 1808.

MuSaBa is an open air museum, characterized by the principle of action and a truly scientific and productive park with a strong interactive programme.

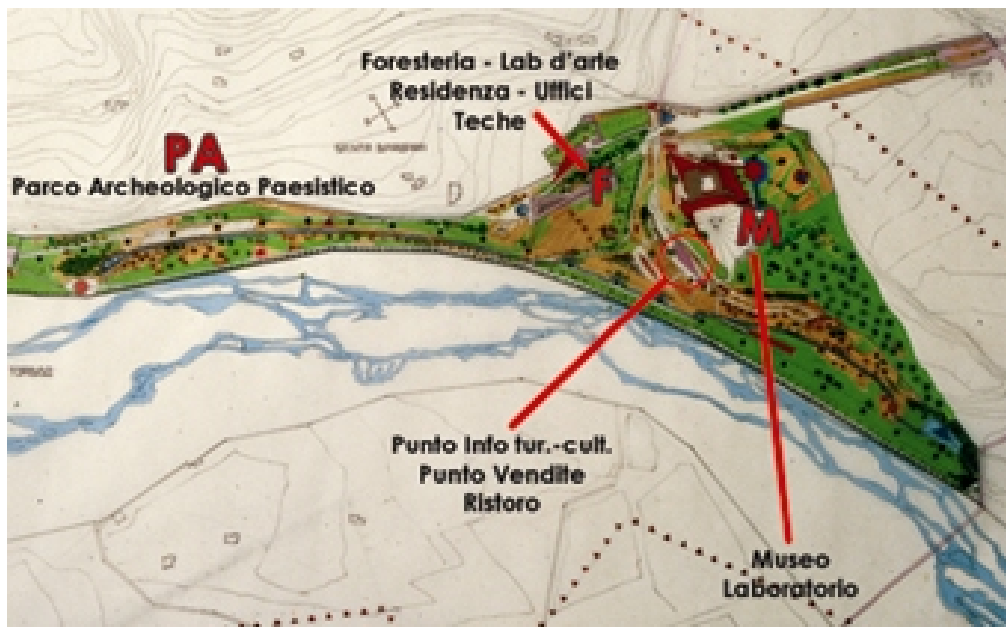


The Santa Barbara Art Foundation - MuSaBa consist of:

- 7 hectares of protected land;
- the partly restored remains of the monastic complex;
- an ancient church (1100);
- a three-dimensional fresco 260 mq by Nik Spatari;
- the inhabitable structure "Chameleon";
- monumental sculptures-structures by international artists;
- a collection of modern and contemporary visual art;
- a media-library-video-photo-archive;
- a visual art collection of Nik Spatari's artistic evolution;
- the old railway station, bought in 1978, converted to a residence/studio;
- the Foresteria/residence (accommodation for 22 persons);
- the Mediterranean Art Gardens that merge sculpture with landscape and horticulture;
- olive orchard and fruit garden;

Under construction and restoration:

- the monastic complex in progress;
- the art Laboratory;
- the new living space-study;
- MEA (Mediterranean Environmental Art) Park MuSaBa;



In addition,

MuSaBa offers:

International education in restoration and applied arts through Apprenticeships, Masters, Stages, Seminars and Courses; Enterprise for the promotion of cultural tourism; Knowledge and conservation of the architectural and environmental heritage;

The reasons for an enterprise

Nik Spatari and Hiske Maas settled in Santa Barbara in 1970, returning to the region of Nik's childhood experience. After having experienced the artistic European environments, they decided to work on a global project involving the production of art in the direct context of its historical points of reference and its natural surroundings. Nik and Hiske responded to the quest for an "integral" place, for a culture immersed and integrated with the environment, for a creativity etched on the earth herself.

The MuSaBa initiative was largely inspired by a sense of rebellion against an environment dominated by cultural backwardness and hostile to any innovation.

That is why the idea of promoting artistic activities in this area goes well beyond its mere cultural meaning.

Nik Spatari is a painter, sculptor, architect, and craftsman: a Renaissance avant-garde artist.

Spatari's passion for great architecture and art took him to Paris in the fifties and sixties, where he associated with Le Corbusier's studio and met Jean Cocteau.

Nik had studied the ingenious creators of Pompeian frescos and Etruscan underground structures, old masters such as Giotto, Masaccio, Leonardo, Michelangelo, and El Greco, and modern artists including Klee, Kandinsky, Nolde, Picasso, Dufy, Gauguin, Modigliani, and Max Ernst.

Spatari's interest in architecture became his primary orientation, and this led him in 1969 to begin with Hiske his ambitious project of creating a laboratory-school-museum in the Calabria region of southernmost Italy.

Hiske Maas is a rather unconventional manager who through collaboration and coordination harnesses Nik's exuberant creativity towards concrete goals and develops seminars, workshops, apprenticeships, and cultural tourism. After attending the Art Academy in Amsterdam, she attended schools in London, Lausanne, Paris, and New York before becoming an art dealer in Milan.

Looking for a new experience as they managed their art gallery "Studio Hiske" in Via Solferino in the heart of Brera, Hiske Maas and Nik Spatari were captured by a stupendous site – today's MuSaBa.

Hiske has navigated the intricacies of Italian bureaucracy not only to incrementally buy the monastery ruins, railway station, and land that now constitute the Mediterranean Art Garden Park but also to currently seek legislation for environmental and archaeological preservation of the site.

Famous Prof. Architect Bruno Zevi, published in his magazine "L'Architettura": "Nik Spatari: an unyielding search for organic forms in the core of Calabria"

"It is the only museum laboratory of its kind in Italy: covered by a glass, copper, and wooden frame, it resembles a moving mountain flying like a bird over the cliffs of the plateau and over the torrent Torbido. Its structure, inspired by the language of local archaeological fragments, plays with the combination of triangles and circles, with total exclusion of squares, which are considered to be artificial, aseptic, and uniform. We are confronted with the dream of an "archaic-future" Calabrian artist. This contemporary art museum, in the heart of Calabria, is the work in progress of one man alone, together with Hiske, of constantly retouching by hand, of never despairing mentally. The well-known artist, Nik, has dedicated himself to this project after architectural experiences at an European level. He returned, with Hiske, to his own country to perform an act of desperate creative will-power. It is a modern exploit also in the use of the remains that form its base; it is grafted into the landscape with anti-mimetic fury but with inner sensitivity. The sense of the future coincides with the ancestral conscience. Mysterious, it seems familiar to the spirit, like every organic creature.

Splendid figurative freedom, but complete structural control. It is one of the extremely rare occasions where an outsider has poured the salt of an architecture into the earth".



Synthesis of the MuSaBa Project

The purpose of the MuSaBa project is the innovative restoration and experimental new art forms and techniques to produce examples of a high level of workmanship to reinterpret ancient ways on stone work and carving and help in the restoration of stone building. The finality of the MuSaBa School is the experimentation in the architectural new constructive solutions in line with the environmental surroundings.

The project consists of the restoration and functional adaptation of the ancient monastery Santa Barbara into a fully equipped museum-school-laboratory of contemporary arts that promotes cultural activities through the development and use of art laboratories, museum spaces, visitors' info centre, editorial services, and the multimedia databases.

Interpretation of the environment

MuSaBa, as an integrated cultural structure, is based on the convergence of interventions, questions, and actions related to environmental interpretation of the area around the architectonic structures suggested by the remains of the monastery. The restoration, consolidation, and adaptation of these architectural remains will continue to be carried out by using experimental technology that has the least possible effect on the environment because of the use of natural material from the area. Stone and wood will be used for the reintegration of the walls as well as for the completion of the floors and roofs, without the use of any inappropriate materials.

While respecting the criteria and purpose of integrated conservation, we want to regain the functionality of the historic structures for museum-laboratory, communication and cultural services, reception, and refreshment purposes.

The entire complex requires the interaction of all these different activities.



Residential area - Art laboratory- Offices- Multimedia database

At the foot of the Santa Barbara plateau, where the museum laboratory is situated, is the residential area, offices, and a multimedia database.

The disused railway station was bought in 1978 and transformed into living quarters by Spatari and Maas.

The recently completed **Foresteria-residential quarters** is a true work of art. Its purpose is to house international artists, students, professors and adults (22 persons).

In progress a monumental mosaic that will be a tribute to the history of art in the world and throughout all times. All outside walls (1000 square meters) will be covered with a historical depiction of art, beginning in the year 4000 B.C. and wrapping around to the current modern art period. All of this will be done using primary and complementary colours and ceramic coloured tiles. The entire roof has been decorated with brilliant alternating colours.



ARTISTS

The wonders of MuSaBa

MuSaBa's relationship with such an historically rich and varied natural environment that is still scarcely populated has become, at a time of heightened environmental consciousness, an important instrument for the integration of nature and culture.

Contemporary art merges with the environment, as landscape becomes sculpture and sculptures become element of landscape.

Artists from all over the world are invited to contribute to the ongoing nature of the MuSaBa project, to participate in the design and orchestration of the unique installations, creating large-scale outdoor art installations (sculptures, structural works, and murals) which then become a permanent part of the foundation's Mediterranean Art Park.

MuSaBa International Experimental Centre

Open to international students, college students, recent graduates and graduate students in architecture, restoration, sculpture & mosaics from all over the world (age 20 – 50+). Motivated adults are specially encouraged to apply. Participants play an important role in virtually all facets of the Santa Barbara Art Foundation during the 3-6 week MuSaBa program. The apprenticeship is an experiential learning process designed around Nik Spatari's unique conceptual framework of art, architecture, and the environment. The rewards are many: the least of which is being able to see the tangible results from your physical efforts. The project was strongly desired by both Spatari and Maas, drawing its inspiration from the Renaissance workshops where the master sought to create his works with the help of his collaborators who, therefore, learned their art in a practical way.



The techniques of restoring the ancient walls and constructing with natural stone comprise the primary aspect of the artistic and sculptural side of the architectural work. Sculptors are encouraged to reinterpret the ancient Mediterranean style of architecture as they use ancient techniques and methods to reshape stones to fit walls, reconstruct and integrate missing parts of architecture, arches, columns, etc., as is deemed appropriate.

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