



Thursday 10-6-2022

Hindsight is 20/20, or at least I am hoping it is because I am freshly home from International Center for the Arts in Monte Castello di Vibio, Italy and I want to document this fabulous trip in detail. I went there for a class, The Art of Paper, taught by four of the most accomplished artists in the fields of papermaking and bookmaking, Carol Barton (Popular Kinetics), Amanda Degener (Cave Paper), Helen Hiebert (Helen Hiebert Studio), and Denice Carbone (University of the Arts). For anyone interested in this magical place, here is the link to their website: <https://www.icaitaly.com/> David Voros is the director of ICA. David transitioned here from South Carolina where spent many years teaching art at University of South Carolina.



L to R: Denice Carbone, Carol Barton, Helen Hiebert, Amanda Degener
Rockstars of the paper world



David Voros (photo credit Beth Stockdell)

Travel to Monte Castello di Vibio was on September 17th and 18th, but the true adventure began the next day as classes commenced.

Monday 9-19-2022

Each morning began with a chef prepared breakfast buffet complete with pastries, and most importantly, Italian Coffee! There were 10 of us student artists, and we were divided into two groups which made the student teacher ratio quite personal.

My first class was Pop-Up Structures with Carol Barton, author of *The Pocket Paper Engineer*.

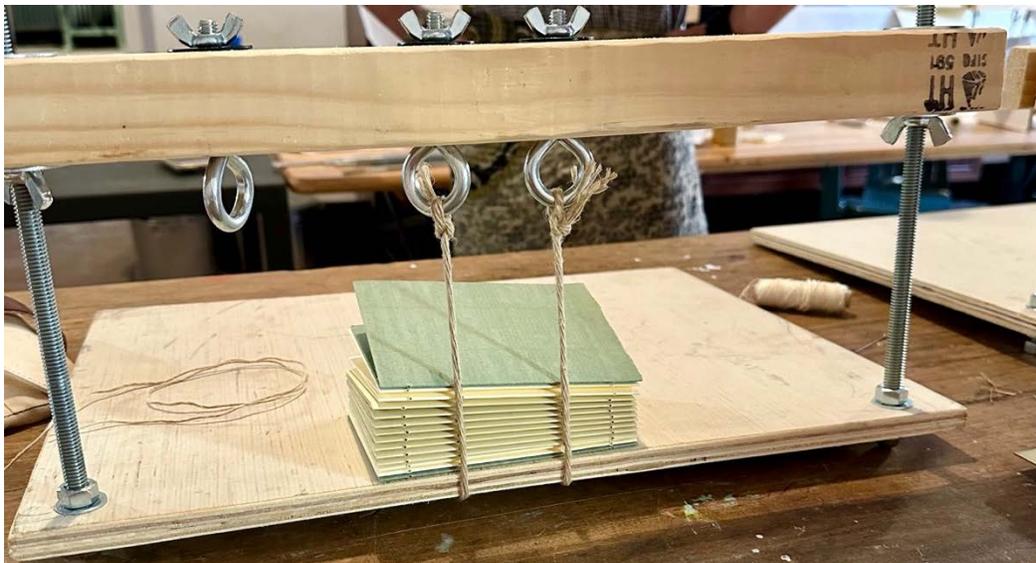
Her website is <https://www.popularkinetics.com/> and she also has a Wikipedia page

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carol_Barton I had taken her course many years ago (2013) in Baltimore at Pyramid Atlantic, but I was overdue for a refresher.



Carol and me back in 2013 at Pyramid Atlantic

After a beautiful four course lunch prepared by chef Katia and her assistant, Federico, I went to my second class, bookbinding, with Denise Carbone. <https://www.uarts.edu/denise-carbone> This is one of the classes I had not experienced before and I learned so much about bookbinding from Denise! The first book we made was from the 14th century, called Italian Limp Leaf Binding with Nap. (A nap is a small flap on the front and back covers to protect the pages inside the book.) To begin, we folded large sheets of cotton paper and cut them into signatures. Then we sewed the signatures together with a decorative kettle stitch pattern. This stitch pattern reminded me of fancy underwear, because once the book was covered no one would see it, but I knew it was there. Secondly, we used sewing frames to attach the book block to cords. That was a lot of work to accomplish in one class, but we did it! Dinner again was a four course treat with which we were thoroughly spoiled most days throughout our stay at ICA. More about the talented Chef Katia soon.



My text block ready for stitching.



Woven paper book cover

Tuesday 9-20-2022

After a good night's sleep I was off to my second day of classes. We used A-day, B-day course scheduling, so I had two new teachers and two new art forms to learn. First class of the day was with Helen and we used paper weaving techniques to make a small book. Helen is another teacher I had previously studied with, but she is so full of enthusiasm and creativity any time spent with her is inspiring. If you don't know Helen Hiebert, check her out at <https://helenhiebertstudio.com/>. She also hosts a very informative podcast, Paper Talk, at: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/paper-talk/id1108636248>.



Kozo fiber ready for boiling

Amanda Degener taught my second class of the day, papermaking. Another amazing instructor! More about her can be found through the following links: <https://www.cavepaper.com/> and <http://amandadegener.com/about/about.html> I had made paper before on a small scale with my kitchen blender, but I wanted to know a more professional method using real equipment. This is a little funny because the school did not have a paper beater machine. One of the natural fibers we used was kozo, which we boiled in a large gas-heated kettle and then beat to a pulp using a 2x4 plank, how is that for “real equipment?” Just proves that resourcefulness and determination are major qualities of most artists.



Carol showing examples of commercial pop-ups

Wednesday 9-21-2022

Amanda volunteered to lead a tai-chi group at 7:00 am each day. Almost recovered from jet-lag, my goal was to make it to this group this morning, however I was still too sleep-ee to make it to tai-chi. Spoiler alert – I never made it, not even once during my stay. In Carol’s class today we moved on to V-folds and platforms. In Denise’s class we added covers to complete the books we began making on Monday and put them in the press to dry.



Adding a cover to the Italian Limp Leaf Binding Book Project

Thursday 9-22-2022

People of Monte Castello are so friendly! I look forward to my short walk to school to see their smiles and hear the chorus of “bon journo” along the way. I found the village bakery today and the rest of my trip will be so much sweeter! In Helen’s class today we made two types of hinged lanterns. In Amanda’s class we formed sheets of paper from abaca, pressed them, and hung them to dry. We also coated the marbled and decorated sheets (which we dyed on Tuesday) with gelatin to make them stronger. Paper making is messy, I am glad I had my waterproof shoes, apron, and gloves.



Woven paper lantern



Hinged screen lantern



Hand decorated papers drying in the studio



Friday 9-23-2022

Friday is for field trips! Our first stop of the day was at a small church with a storied past, Santuario Madonna Dei Bagni. As the story goes, a man, whose wife was very ill, went walking through a field and the Virgin Mary appeared to him from a tree. He prayed to the Blessed Virgin for healing of his wife, and when the man returned home his wife was all better. News of this miracle spread, and people from all around started coming to this tree to pray. Eventually a church was built around the tree. Today the remains of the tree can be seen, encased in glass behind the altar. But, the story doesn't end there. People who came here to pray for their friends and family began to place plaques on the walls of the church depicting how their loved ones died. These range from being trampled by a horse, to automobile accidents. The walls of the church are covered in these plaques as seen in the picture on the left.



Plaques depicting how people met their demise

Onward towards Deruta for coffee and pastries before we visited the pottery studio of the Nulli family. We witnessed the skill of the artisans as pots were thrown and painted. A few of us even had the opportunity to try it for ourselves. I could not resist purchasing two beautiful coffee mugs.

<http://www.maiolichenulli.com/enhome.htm>



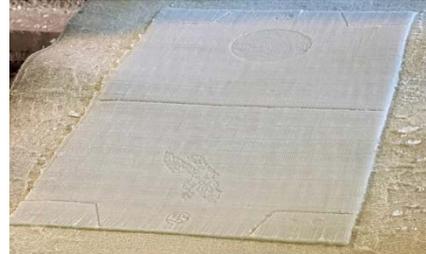
The highlight of today's trip for me was the Fabriano Paper Mill, which dates back to the 13th Century. <https://fabriano.com/en/history/> This is the place where fine papers have been manufactured ever since. In fact, watermark technology was invented here in the 1400's. Fabriano is the paper chosen by many famous historical figures throughout the years, such as Raffaello, Michelangelo, Ludwig Van Beethoven, and Giuseppe Garibaldi to name a few. Today, Fabriano Paper Mill is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We were given a demonstration of how paper is made by hand at Fabriano, and then we toured the museum which documented the evolution of technology in the art of papermaking and watermarking.



An ancient pulp beater



Tools used for weaving watermarks into reed decks.



A brief pictorial history of the evolution of water mark technology.



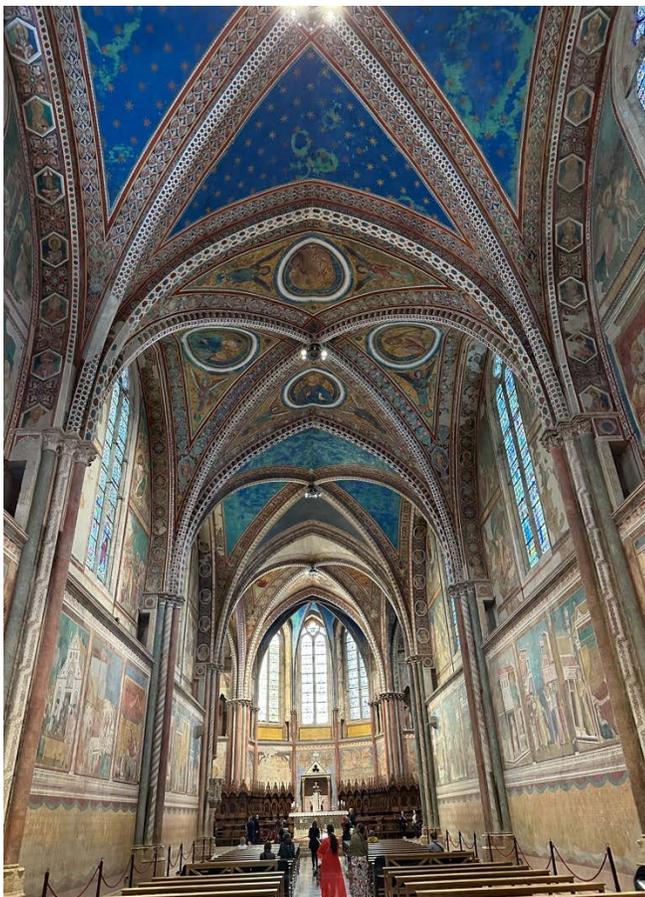
To cap the day we found ourselves in Assisi at the Cathedral of Saint Francis. It was quite a hike from the parking lot to the top of the mountain where the church was located. Some in our group did not make it which made me sad. Had there been forewarning, perhaps a taxi could have transported them to the top. We walked a little over four miles that day on steep inclines. <https://www.cbsfa.org/>



Monument to Saint Francis



Nuns and Monks of Assisi enjoying a cool afternoon treat.



Interior of the Cathedral of Saint Francis of Assisi

We passed over one hundred little shops on our walk in Assisi today, but time was limited and we only got to explore a few of them. Posters covered the town announcing that the Pope would be visiting tomorrow. I was happy we were here today, because I am uncomfortable in large crowds of people. On the bus returning to Monte Castello we were all exhausted and many of us fell asleep. I called home to talk to my family first, then I had a restful nap as we travelled along the highway.

A Note About the Food

Dinner of course was *deliziosa* as usual. I mentioned Chef Katia earlier, but she deserves special recognition. The food she prepared for us each day was both beautiful and delicious, and there was so much variety! Below are only a few examples of the exquisite dishes she spoiled us with. Combined with regional wine, both red and white, these meals will long be remembered.



Chef Katia and her assistant Federico in the kitchen
(photo credit: Ron Shaull)



Examples of Katia's artistry



Saturday, 9-24-2022

Today we took a trip to Fongoli Winery for a wine-tasting experience. <https://www.fongoli.com/en/>



We were greeted with warm hospitality and welcomed to take a walk through the vineyards and explore the farm. Fongoli is a family business entering its fifth generation of vintners. All in all we tasted about five red wines and three white wines. I still have a lot to learn about wine, but most of them tasted good to me. This farm also produced olives and olive oil. I ended up purchasing eight bottles of this oil as gifts for friends and family. I was planning to ship it back to North Carolina but soon found out shipping charges were near to the cost of the oil itself. Now I had no idea how I was going to transport these glass bottles back home without breaking them. Luckily, I had just had a bit of wine so I didn't worry too much about it in that moment. Così e la vida! After the tasting our group divided. Some wanted to visit a second winery and some chose to return to Monte Castello. I was in the latter group because I was looking forward to doing some reading before dinner. There is so much to see and do here that free time is a rarity.



A selection of wines at Fongoli



Aging barrels in the cellar at Fongoli



Olives hanging from the branches



Older vintages stored in the cellar, tagged and dated

Sunday 9-25-2022

Going to the outdoor market in Perugia today reminded me of going to the flea market on Sunday afternoons with my grandfather when I was a little girl. There were all types of merchandise at the market, old books, linen, costume jewelry, furniture, and pottery were a few. I came upon a large box full of old skeleton keys. My daughter has been collecting keys for years so I offered up 3 Euro in exchange for one of them. After perusing the market I headed down the street further into the center of town. David had told us that Perugia was known for chocolate, so I found the chocolate shops and made a few more purchases. I would put the chocolate with my olive oil, which I still didn't know how to carry home. Next, I made my way to the National Gallery of Umbria located in the Palazzo dei Priori where I found lots of religious art dating back to the 1200's. <https://gallerianazionaledellumbria.it>



Puccio Capanna
Documented from Assisi 1341-1347

Ditych circa 1340-1350

Madonna and Child with Four Angels

Crucifixion with the Virgin and Saint John Grieving

The border is of Saints and Prophets

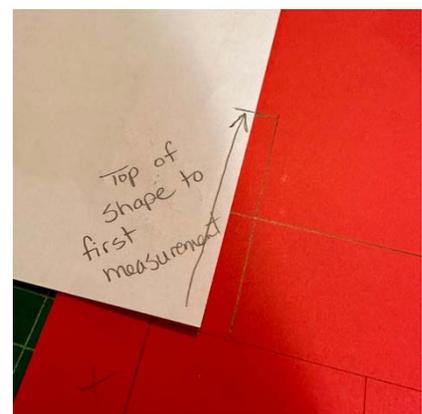
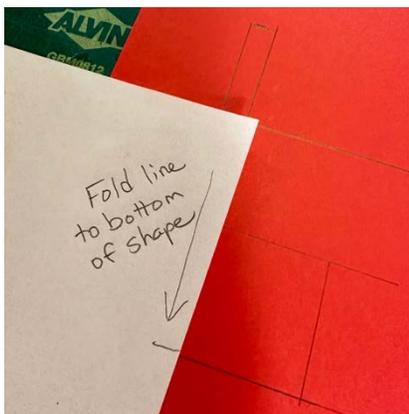
When we met back up to get on the bus we had a mini show-and-tell with the items we had all gathered. June had a lovely book of dress patterns. Amanda had an old book with tons of character. Of course, there were many bags of Baci chocolate, and some had truffle oil. Beth had found a duffel at the market she planned to use to take her new treasures home with her to Arkansas. That's it I thought! I need another suitcase for the olive oil and my problem is solved. What a weekend! But I am missing classes and want to get back to creating.



A view from Perugia, just before an afternoon rain

Monday 9-26-2022

Hard to believe we have all been here over a full week now. Time is passing too quickly. In Carol's class the day began with a pop! We learned about non-adhesive props, which as the name implies are supports which do not require glue or tape because they are cut from the base layer of paper. I was careful to take good notes because the measurements for this type of pop-up are tricky.



In the afternoon with Denise, we began working on a more modern binding. We started by sewing the text block and attaching the end papers, then we used a guillotine to cut the edges perfectly sharp and square. I would like to add a guillotine cutter to my studio when I return home, I loved the clean edges of this book. Towards the end of the class we chose papers for the spine and covers. I picked out a green color palette using some of the papers I marbled last week.



The guillotine cutter



Detail of my hand marbled paper



Tuesday 9-27-2022

We used Thai Unryu paper today in Helen's class to make bendable papers by embedding copper wire and string between two layers. One of the projects I made using this bendable paper was a window hanging. You can see it above my head in this picture. The sunlight coming through the paper makes the jewel tones vibrant. Our group had so many ideas for bendable paper. There were table runners, lanterns, bowls, etc. Terry had a wonderful idea to embed LED lights between the papers for her table runner. I think I might try that for a special Christmas window hanging when I get back to my studio.

Window hanging made using Thai Unryu paper embedded with string



Two lanterns and a bowl I made with bendable paper

While my group was upstairs in Helen's class, the other group was busy downstairs with Amanda making a giant sheet of handmade paper. David built the custom mold because he wanted this paper for a painting he was planning.



My birds eye view for watching Amanda's team make a giant sheet of paper



Amanda prepares to pour the first bucket of pulp into the mold as David and the others look on waiting to help



Clockwise from top left in the photo is Amanda (dark blue sweater) Ron, David, Carol (taking photos), Suzanne, Terry, and Denise (with the cute hat).

After lunch, when my group went to work with Amanda, we were busy applying dyes and gelatin to the dry papers we had made. We also began planning pages for the sample book containing all the various papers we had made, both Eastern and Western. Denise worked with Amanda to design this project because Denise felt it was important for us to learn this method, another old-world binding technique. A long cover sheet was folded into thirds, the center panel was a common back for both parts of the book, Eastern on one side, Western on the other. Four holes were then stabbed through the cover and pages of the book. Then they were laced with wet goat leather and wrapped. As the leather dried, the binding tightened and made the book strong. The book was flipped, and this process repeated on the other side.

Wednesday 9-28-2022

Today we had our final classes with Carol and Denise. Carol gave us patterns to use for making three-dimensional pop-up structures, a pyramid, a box, a tent, and a cylinder. She showed us examples of commercial pop-ups, then gave us creative time to experiment with the forms we had learned. Then we prepared our work for the community show that would happen tomorrow (Thursday) night. David told us the Monte Castello community was quite supportive of the school, and they were interested in what we had accomplished.



I combined a floating platform with a spiral to make this comic-book like pop

Three of my completed books ready to show

After lunch Denise held a special session to teach us how to make folded paper wallets. We used Tyvek for this because it is more durable than most other papers. There are nine different pockets to hide things in this simple wallet, business cards, credit cards, tickets, ID, or other small paperwork. I will definitely make more of these in my studio to use as gift-card holders at Christmas. When the wallet making session wrapped up we used our class time with Denise to place covers on the more modern binding. I am happy with the way all my books turned out.

Thursday 9-29-2022

Our last day of classes. The schedule is different today to give everyone time to set up their displays for the show tonight. I believe we are all excited, and perhaps a bit nervous. In both Helen and Amanda's classes we put the finishing touches on our work. At 6:00 pm we head over to the school to set up our tables for the showcase. David was right, there was tremendous community support, I was happily surprised to see how many people showed up to view our work. Katia and her crew set up a table of antipasti and sparkling wine for us and our guests. The atmosphere was festive with sounds of laughter. I learned how to say "thank you for coming to the show" in Italian. "Grazie per essere venuto allo spettacolo."



It was heart-warming that so many people turned out to see our showcase.

A Note About the People

The setting for this experience was beautiful and inspirational, but what made this time in Monte Castello most memorable was the people. I always feel like I am with my tribe when I'm with paper and book enthusiasts, but this group was extra special. They were cheerleaders for one another, they made careful observations and thoughtful suggestions. They took time to listen before responding. They had an intrinsic caring nature which was so refreshing to be a part of. I am going to miss the camaraderie of this outstanding group. I was in Group A



Ron Shaull, Group A



Beth Stockdell, Group A



Terry Engelhart, Group A



Amanda Martin, Group A. (photo credit: Beth Stockdell)



Lore Spivey, Group A (me)



Susan Maki, Group B



Daria Wilber, Group B



June Burden, Group B



Judy Bennett, Group B



Suzanne Solis, Group B



The Art of Paper Students and Instructors, September 19 – October 3, 2022, International Center for the Arts, Monte Castello di Vibio
 BACK ROW L to R Judy Bennett, Susan Maki, Suzanne Solis, June Burden, Daria Wilber, Ron Shaull, Lore Spivey, Amanda Martin, Terry Engelhart, Kyle Carbone (Denise’s son) FRONT ROW L to R Beth Stockdell, Amanda Degener, Carol Barton, Helen Hiebert, Denise Carbone
 (Photo Credit: Beth Stockdell)



Our interpreter, Victoria and our tech support, Gabrielle

Friday 9-30-2022



Today began with an early morning bus trip to Florence! Many of my friends were planning to go to the Uffizi gallery <https://www.uffizi.it/en.the-uffizi> to see Botticelli's Birth of Venus, or to the Accademia Gallery <https://www.accademia.org> to see Michelangelo's David, but I was going to Agostino Dessi's Mask Studio!



Door to Agostino Dessi's shop, Alice Masks

I come from a theatre background. I majored in theatre at University of North Carolina, Asheville, and received my masters at University of North Carolina, Greensboro. I taught theatre and communications for 17 years, and each year I would make masks with my students. The masks began as simple paper creations, and transformed into papier mache, and eventually plaster casts of the students' actual faces. Agostino makes his masks from a variety of materials including leather, metal, and of course paper. If you have seen the 2006 film V for Vendetta, Agostino made those masks!

<https://www.warnerbros.com/movie/v-vendetta>

I was allowed to take pictures, but as good as these photos are they don't convey the otherworldly atmosphere of the space. Surrounded by characters like Pinocchio, nature fairies, and even steampunk rabbits, it is easy to get lost in imagination.

We got off the bus beside the Arno River where other tour busses were dropping people off. It was raining, so I took out my umbrella and realized it was broken. It mostly still covered me but one side of it was flopping down making it hard to see. I was careful to go to Google Maps on my phone and drop a pin so I could find my way back to the bus when the day was done. I joined Carol, Helen, and Susan and we walked to the Basilica of Santa Croce together. The rain stopped as we approached the church. Inside I saw the tombs of Galileo and Michelangelo most notably, but many famous people were buried there. After visiting Santa Croce I set out on my own towards Alice Masks. I had found this magical little place back in 2008 when I was last in Florence. I have never been anywhere else like it in the world, and I was thrilled to have the opportunity to visit again. I had emailed Agostino's daughter, Alice a few weeks back to check store hours and let her know I was planning to drop by.



Agostino and Alice in their shop/studio

Thousands of these masks line the walls of the small shop. If you ever have the chance to go to this place, I highly recommend it. There is so much to look at it is almost overwhelming. I was in the shop for a long while just taking it all in. I bought a mask for my daughter, Morgan and one for myself. Agostino kindly signed both. This was the highlight of my day!

Leaving Alice Masks, I stopped in a little shop to get a new umbrella and dispose of my broken one. Then, I headed to the Florentine Market. David, and his son, Eli had told our group this was the best place in Florence to purchase fresh foods, or to have a meal. The market had many unusual fruits and vegetables not easily found elsewhere, especially in the US. I bought some truffles, truffle oil, and balsamic vinegar. My mouth watered as I thought about a freshly baked loaf of bread dipped in the olive oil from Fangoli, and this balsamic vinegar. After the market, I found a pizzeria and had lunch. Just as I went inside the rain started again, and it was heavier than before. I was happy I had a new umbrella because it didn't stop raining for hours.

After lunch I went in several bookstores, paper stores, and leather goods stores. I bought a red rolling suitcase to carry my olive oil and chocolates back home. The rest of the afternoon I wandered the ancient streets of the city, until an hour before it was time to meet back at the bus. I took out my phone and pulled up the pin I had dropped when I got off the bus this morning. It said I was 45 minutes away. I didn't think I had walked that far, but the pin was beside the river so I thought maybe I had just lost track of my distance. I began walking toward the pin following the directions Google Maps was giving me. I walked, and walked, and walked, and nothing looked familiar. I was getting outside of the city. I sensed something was wrong, but this pin was all I had to go on to find my way back. When I finally arrived at the place where this pin was, I found myself under a large graffiti covered bridge.

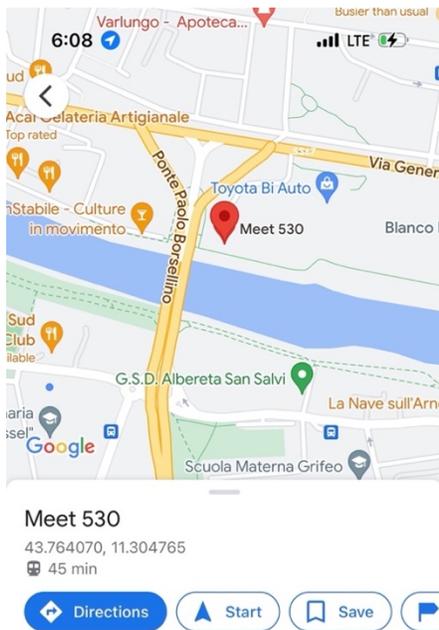
Remember, as I walked all this distance I was holding my umbrella and pulling my new red suitcase along with me – and the rain did not stop. I was a pitiful sight I'm sure. I walked underneath the bridge and around an industrial looking building to see if maybe I was just on the wrong side of the river? But I didn't remember ever crossing the river in the first place. It is now 5:20 and I am supposed to be back at the bus by 5:30. I searched Google Maps for the Duomo because I remembered it was near the bus lot. The search told me that I was 4.2 miles away from where I was supposed to be! So, there I stood, soaking wet, lost, and thousands of miles and an ocean away from home. Don't panic, I told myself- but I was starting to panic. It was now 5:28 pm. I knew I was supposed to be at the bus in two minutes, but I didn't know where I was.



Galileo's Tomb inside the Church of Santa Croce



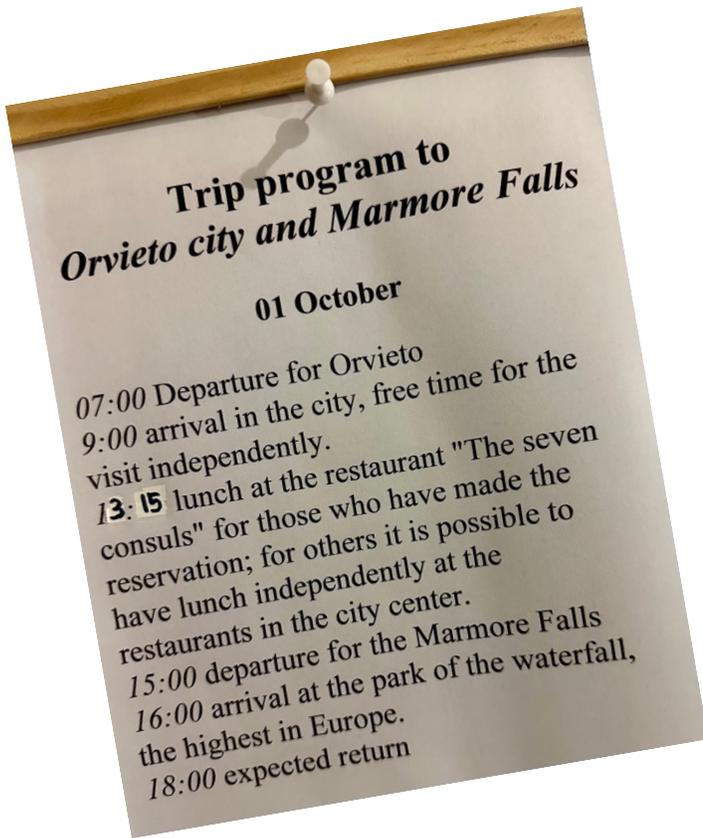
Duomo, Florence Italy



NOT where I was supposed to be at 5:30 pm

I only knew I had been walking for over an hour in the rain, and that I couldn't trust Google Maps. Technology was my usual friend, that friend I can never rely on. Oh, the battery on my phone was going dead too. I realized that if my battery died I wouldn't even be able to call for help. Then it occurred to me I did not have a number for anyone in my group anyway. I was truly alone. I didn't even speak the language of this foreign country. There was no sign of the rain stopping. It didn't really matter because I was drenched anyway. I wondered if the bus would leave me? I had money so I could get a taxi to the train station and return to Monte Castello that way. I wondered if my friends would be upset with me for making us all late to our dinner reservation? I wondered how I was going to get myself out of this mess? Call a cab? Keep walking? Then I spotted a restaurant with a glowing green sign. I had an idea. It was a long shot, but I thought I would give it a try. I ran towards the restaurant juggling my umbrella, my suitcase, and my cell phone. At 10% cell battery I frantically typed into the translation app: "I need help. I am lost. I need to get to the place where the busses drop off the tourists." Just then a lady and her daughter came out of the restaurant. I showed them the translation on my screen, and they showed me mercy. The daughter began typing something on her cell phone. She held up the

screen for me and written in English it read: "We are going that direction. We can give you a ride to a point but you will still have to walk a short distance." Should I get into a car with a stranger? I have been taught all my life never to do that, but these women seemed kind. Besides, I didn't have time to worry about all the things that might happen to me, I could only wonder what would happen if I missed the bus- which I was now five minutes late for. Doing something at this point was definitely better than doing nothing. I said "grazie" and the daughter helped me load my suitcase and umbrella into the back of the car. The car was black and smelled of leather. As I seated myself in the back I felt some of the tension ease. However, there are two bus stations in Florence, the main public transport depot and the tourist bus hub which some of the local busses also serviced. The daughter tried to explain this to me, and asked me which one I needed to go to. My stomach tightened. Then I remembered that Santa Croce was a short distance from the drop off point, the first place I had visited earlier in the day. "I should have stayed with Carol and Helen" I thought to myself. I took my Santa Croce entry ticket from my purse and handed it to the younger woman. There was conversation in Italian, and the older woman kept driving. She seemed to realize where it was I needed to be. We were in the wrong lane to make a necessary turn, so she beeped the horn and someone let her over. About a minute later, I SAW THE BUS! Just then my phone rang, it was David trying to find me. Everyone else was on the bus. I took out 20 euro and tried to give it to the women but they would not take it. "It is not necessary" they told me. "My bus! That is my bus!" I said. "Thank you, thank you, grazie, grazie, you saved me!" Then the tears began. I was so relieved. I looked at my watch and it was 5:45. I was only 15 minutes late, which considering my conundrum, I thought was pretty good. The daughter helped me gather my belongings. As I walked towards the bus, the black car pulled away. I don't even know their names. I do, however, believe in angels. Visibly emotional, I stepped on to the bus. "How did you get a ride?" someone asked. "Where did you get your suitcase?" someone else asked. I quickly apologized to the group and took my seat, unable to say anything else in that moment. Then someone said, "Don't worry, Amanda just got here too. We weren't going to leave you." I slowly calmed down enough to tell everyone what had happened and why I was late.



Saturday 10- 1- 2022

Our final field trip and the day before departure. Bittersweet. The destination: Orvieto. Getting off the bus, I was damn determined not to get lost today! I DID NOT drop a pin on Google Maps, but I DID take pictures of my surroundings for a few blocks. I saw the office of the Carabinieri (police) as we walked by and made a mental note of it. We were free to explore the city until 5:00 pm. I planned to be back at the meeting point by 4:30 this time.



Getting off the bus in Orvieto

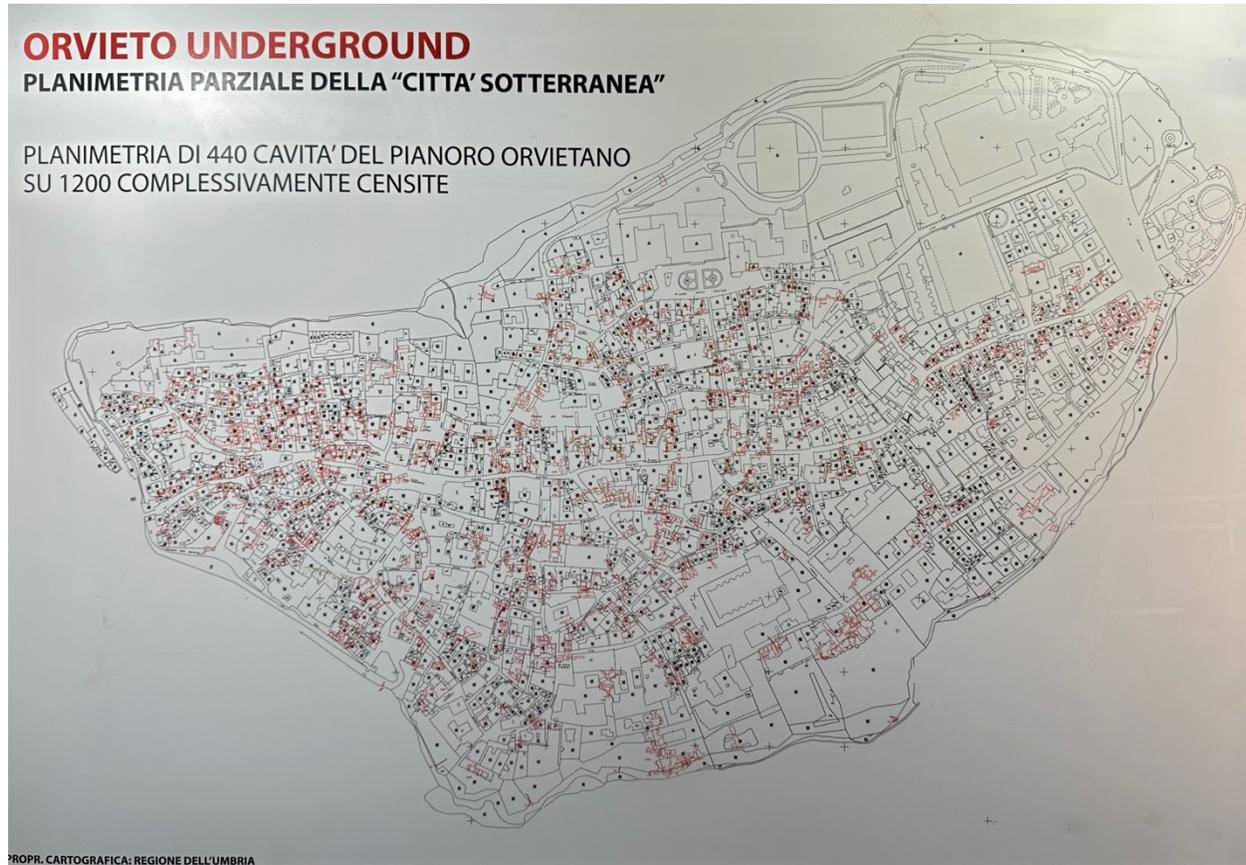


Terry, Kyle, and Daria in front of the Carabinieri building



Our designated meeting point in Orvieto

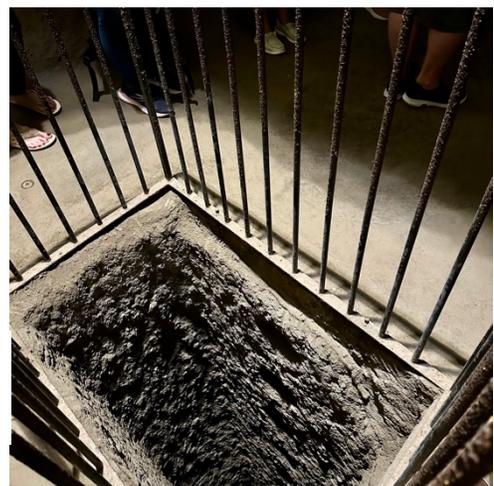
David had told us that Orvieto had been built on top of a defunct volcano, and the qualities of the soil had allowed ancient Etruscan civilizations to dig caves beneath the city. Since I had shopped plenty yesterday, I wanted to see the caves. I was lucky to walk up to the ticket vendor at 11:28 am just two minutes before an 11:30 cave tour was to begin. Everything in black on this map picture is above ground. Everything in red on this map picture is below ground. There is a maze of over 800 caves beneath Orvieto. <https://www.orvietoviva.com/en/orvieto-underground/>



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These presses were used to produce olive oil in the caves



An Etruscan well over 80 meters deep

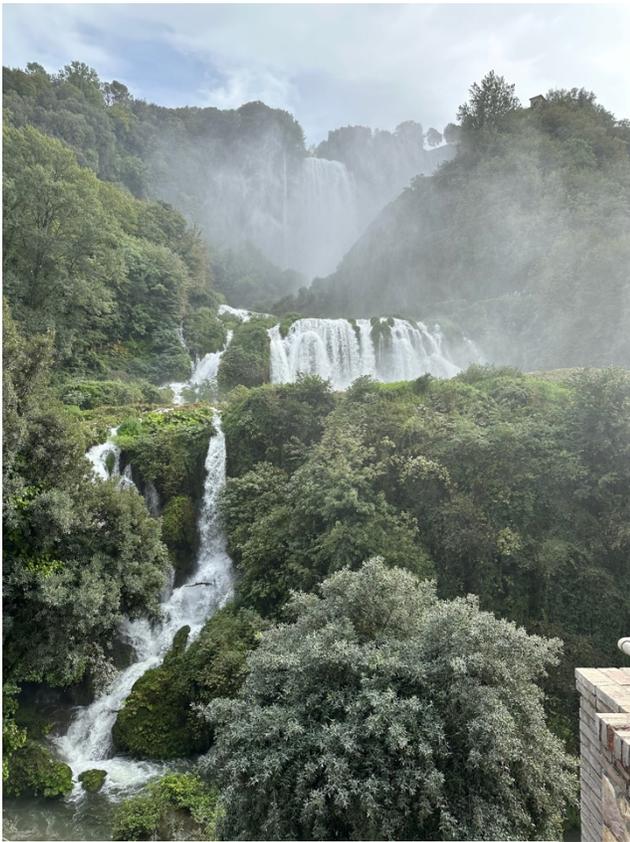


Archaeologists believe these small cavities in the walls were used to breed pigeons as a source of food for people living in the caves.



Entrances to some of the caves have to be blocked because they lead directly under and into basements of above ground homes of the city residents.

I did not get lost this time, and I made it back to our meeting point in plenty of time. We left Orvieto and went to Marmore Falls, the highest waterfall in Europe. I took some of my best pictures at this place, it was so beautiful.



Marmore Falls, or Cascata delle Marmore



View of a rainbow from top of Marmore Falls

Katia prepared us a very special dinner on our final night together. It was Daria's birthday, and Katia even made a cake for her.

The memories of this trip, the friendships I've made, and the lessons I've learned will be forever in my heart. I do hope we stay in touch, and maybe even meet again in the future. Tomorrow will be an early start as we need to be on the bus by 5:30 am to make the two-hour drive into Rome. My flight leaves at 12:50 pm, so I will have a little time to hang out at the airport. I am a little homesick and miss my family dearly. I will miss the spectacular views, the friendly people, the narrow streets, of course the bakery, and even my little apartment in the village. I will miss the camaraderie, the stories, the adventures, the creative time, and the inspiration given to us by our teachers, our friends, and our surroundings.

Sunday 10-2-2022

My flight went smoothly, and I arrived home at 5:50 pm local North Carolina Time. My family met me with flowers and hugs. There was a lot of catching up to do and many stories to be told from all of us.



The delicious cake Katia made for Daria's birthday



Time to go home to North Carolina



A final view from Monte Castello di Vibio as our bus leaves for Rome