

LATITUDINE 43° 13' 37.2"N  
LONGITUDINE 5° 26' 10.5"E

*To give something back to stone, which has provided sculptors with the material for their work since the beginning of time, is the main objective pursued by the creator of the Latitudine Longitudine project. It started in Prato, Tuscany in 2001 and has now arrived in Marseille for its sixth instalment. Aiming for a feeling of "cosmic brotherhood", Esposito fits local boulders with a convex steel disk that reflects the sky's mutations.*

This project is made up of many elements. The fragments will combine to form a unit I am sowing in order to reap the fruit of my labours later.

I am gradually building up a project that will be seen in a complete and definitive version in satellite photos of the two hemispheres. The photographs will reveal its design, its body. It all began in 2001, with the first piece that I showed at the Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci in Prato. By an incredible coincidence, the local rock that started my *Latitudine Longitudine* project happened to be the green type of Prato stone with which Florence Cathedral was built. And it was not an easy stone to procure, because at the moment only one quarry is open and is used solely for restoration work on said cathedral. I was granted a special permit to access the quarry because the work I was doing would be situated in the Pecci museum, where it was transported with a large crane called Michelangelo, another unexpected and curious aspect of the project.

The stones that I chose for this project are as natural as possible. The rocks that interest me are already detached from the mountainside or quarry. My work consists in inserting a convex and reflecting element of stainless steel by carving a superficial hollow in the rock. This "eye" captures all the movements that occur between sky and earth; it receives and transmits all the sky's pulsations, which vary continuously throughout the day and with each new season.

In a sense, it reattaches the umbilical cord that once joined these two elements. The eye recomposes the unity of the house that was made of heaven and earth. To me it represents a sign of fraternity among different peoples, which is why I would like to install one in every nation. After Prato came Shanghai, in the Oriental Land Park to be precise, in 2007.

In that large park I found a Zhejiang rock that proved perfect. In 2010, I placed a white stone from the Argentine Andes in the gardens of the Caraffa Fine Arts Museum in Cordoba, Argentina, a beautiful museum designed by young local architects. For the Ccori Wasi Cultural Centre in Lima, Peru, I chose a superb yellow Andes stone that I had found in 2011 in an enormous quarry, full of scattered rocks like islands in an ocean; and this beautiful boulder had been there 30 years, just waiting for me. In Japan, right outside the garden of the Muryokoin temple in Koyasan, a sacred mountain of esoteric Buddhism covered by an amazing forest, I came across a very interesting stone, which on my initiative was moved this year into that same garden of stones. The emotional experience was crowned by an inauguration ceremony at which the grand master reverend Habukawa Shodo caressed the eye. The most recent port of call in this project is Marseilles. Six

months ago I was in a very ancient Roman quarry in Provence, owned by a collector who has five or six of France's biggest quarries - he exports all over the world. This extraordinary, very sensitive man personally took charge of transporting to Marseilles, 100 kilometres from the quarry, the rock that I had chosen. At this time of deep financial crisis, when public authorities cannot afford to support art by themselves, it is truly remarkable to find such a highly sensitive private entrepreneur. Among the places proposed by the Marseilles city council for the installation of the rock, I opted for the University. I taught for 40 years, so I have always been in touch with young art students, and I liked the idea of situating my work on the splendid campus together with other sculptures. I was also intrigued by the relationship that would be created with Mont Puget, the mountain named after Pierre Puget, a great architect and sculptor from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. The surroundings reminded me of Paul Cezanne, who was a great favourite of mine when I was a boy. The next stopping-places on this journey should be Vietnam, in Ho Chi Minh City, formerly Saigon, then Sao Paulo, Brazil and Russia. The point of departure for all this work are my old memories of the Carrara marble quarries, which are excavated mountainsides, despoiled actually. There is also the enchantment linked to the dawn of human life, when the cave was our first home, when we scoured the skies for help, feeling like abandoned children as we took our first steps on this Earth. I have always felt the need to render unto stone what belongs to stone, because we have wounded it to create our works. Without stone, humanity could not have realised all its great works. You need only think of the Doric column, which for me is absolutely one of the most beautiful sculptures. I am convinced that we can approach it, take it by the arm and embark on a voyage together, as a poet, a musician or a composer would do when inspired by light, by a coloured sea. Stone ought to be a resonant, musical element. I remember when, years ago, some musician friends of mine had got lost in a forest in India and stumbled upon a stone temple. They were gazing at it in amazement when a boy appeared, a native, and began playing music by tapping his knuckles on the columns. The temple was resonant. A musician in the group struck up too, and an extraordinary experience was enacted. Likewise perhaps, we too ought to be humbler, less vain and competitive, and not let ourselves be swayed by argument but only by the heart and its resonances.

**Diego Esposito**