

# Anne Shingleton

An exhibition of her recent paintings in Pietrasanta's Sala delle Grasce, Luigi Russo Cultural Center



## A few thoughts to present this body of paintings on the Apuan Alps

These selected paintings represent a body of work which I am extremely proud to exhibit for the first time in Pietrasanta.

There are at least three reasons why I came to live and work in Pietrasanta five years ago, after leaving the UK to study classical art in Florence in 1980.

In reality I have been frequenting the mountains of the Apuan Alps since the early 1980s.

Our maestra of classical drawing and painting, Signorina Nerina Simi, would spend her summer months away from the Florentine city heat, in the cool of the Stazzema studio, built by her artist father Filadelfo Simi. Together with other students we would stay in Stazzema and paint, sometimes taking our work to show her.

The second reason why I decided to live here is because of the world class bronze foundries that are present in this little town. My agricultural upbringing, love, and knowledge of animals has led me to work not only in oil paints but make sculptures in bronze. As soon as I discovered the possibilities of modelling in wax and later clay, I became entranced by the process of bronze casting. For many years I worked first with the Harry Jackson foundry and then subsequently the Mariani Foundry.

The third reason is my desire to be near nature. The Alpi Apuane are on my doorstep. They not only are a protected National Park of wilderness, but also hold a very special history, beginning with the geological history of the formation of the different rocks, to the history of the various excavations of the famous marble, and Michelangelo's story here. The mountains in their silent presence issue a nobility, a wildness and a drama that attracts and awes me, like a child drawn to mystery.

So when I moved from the sweet, cultivated Florentine hills to making my home here in Pietrasanta five years ago, it was not a difficult decision to take.

Over the years of painting *en plein air*, outside in the natural environment I have observed and studied the changing daylight and the changing seasons. This



This photo shows Anne working in pastels in the Trambiserra Quarry, where Michelangelo first extracted marble in this region 500 years ago. He narrowly escaped death there when a worked column fell during transport down from the quarry.

accumulation of knowledge all contributes to helping me make my selection of time and place for each painting. Whatever the subject is, I find that the lighting is of paramount importance for me to grab that moment for when the emotional impact I'm searching for reveals itself.

In my paintings I try to convey how I feel about something. I search for the deep, pure and instinctive, childlike reaction within me, clearing away all other accumulated thoughts. As I paint in front of my subject, whether it be an animal, a marble block, a view of the distant peaks the information I need slowly reveals itself. The act of creation is slow. Often I return to the same spot and gather more specific notes, making accurate drawings and small studies on wooden panels of the colour and values, which I call '*bozzetti*'.

Depending on the weather and how much information I have gathered I may finish the painting in the studio or '*en plein air*'. If the latter, I return to the same spot at the same hour for however many days it takes.

I am constantly aware of a delicate balance working within me of juggling the emotional message with the technique of representing the reality in front of my eyes. If I manage to get it right I hope to arrive at some universal truth that maybe communicates with the childlike emotions in the viewer.

The exhibition dates are 16 December to 7 January (see *Grapevine* calendar for details).

Anne lives in Pietrasanta and welcomes visitors to her studio/gallery by appointment.  
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