

# WALDEN

Wilderness / Awareness / Life / Development / Environment / Nature

volume 0



# W L D E N

Wilderness / Awareness / Life / Development / Environment / Nature

volume 0

towards an ecology of mind

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# CONTRIBUTORS



*Davide Sapienza - Writer and geopoet, translator of classics (Jack London, E.A. Poe, Barry Lopez) and author of essays, after 20 years in music writing biographies of rock musicians, as well as for television and radio, in 2004 he published the psychogeographic journal I diari di Rubha Hunish followed by La valle di Ognidove, La strada era l'acqua, La musica della neve, Scrivere la natura and Camminando. In 2012, he founded the "Rights of Nature Italy". In March 2016, he published a collection of poetry for Feltrinelli Zoom Il durante eterno delle cose. His awards include "Le Ghiande" by Cinemambiente. Currently he is working on an in-the-field literary geopoetic project for a national park in the Norwegian Arctic Circle, the first of its kind in the world. He has been living in the Bergamo Alps since 1990.*



*Piergiacomo Pagano - Senior researcher at the ENEA, he began his career at the CNEN in the field of radio toxicology, where rats were used for experimenting. He came to question the legitimacy of such procedures and founded a laboratory of cellular cultures as a result. In the 1990s, in broadening the scope of his interests to the environment in general, he participated in a number of environment ministry projects and devoted himself to study in the field of environmental philosophy. He has written more than one hundred articles and a number of books, including 'Filosofia ambientale', 2002; 'Alla scoperta dell'Uomo', 2005, ranked third in the Premio Majella 2006; 'La Politica Propositiva', 2012; 'Storia del pensiero biologico evolutivo', 2013. In 2014 he was a visiting scholar at North Texas University.*



*Cormac Cullinan - Author and lawyer specialising in environmental law, director of Cullinan & Associates Inc., South Africa's leading law firm specialising in this sector. Former anti-apartheid activist, he has been involved in law and environmental politics since 1992, especially in the interactions between humankind and the environment. He is known to the general public especially for his book, Wild Law, as well as for a number of commissioned works for the FAO of the UN. In 2008, he was featured among the most famous "champions of the environment" in "Planet Savers: 301 extraordinary environmentalists", which lists the people who have contributed the most to promoting sustainable development, alongside the likes of Buddha, Saint Francis of Assisi and Henry Thoreau.*



*Barry Lopez - Considered the number one American author on nature and landscapes (the Guardian defined him "probably the best landscape writer in world literature"), he has received numerous accolades, including the National Book Award for essays with Arctic Dreams. His work includes Una geografia profonda (translated and edited by Davide Sapienza, unpublished in English), Resistance and Of Wolves and Men, a longseller in the United States and finalist for the National Book Award. He collaborates with a number of magazines, including Harper's, Granta, The Georgia Review, Orion, Outside, The Paris Review and Manoa in the US and elsewhere. His work has been translated into numerous languages and features in dozens of anthologies. He lives in the Cascade Mountains, Oregon, with his wife, the author Debra Gwartney.*



*Marco Paci - Full professor in the Department of Agriculture, Food and Forest Management Systems (GESAAF) at the University of Florence, where he teaches Ecology in the Schools of Agriculture and Architecture. His scientific work focuses on a number of aspects of forest ecology and management. A parallel thread is humankind's imaginary relations with the forest. Publications include Ecologia Forestale (Il sole24ore, Edagricole), a number of historical-anthropological essays on the forest in the collective imagination of the West ('L'uomo e la foresta', 'Meltemi', 'Le Foreste della mente', 'Altravista', 'Le radici del pensiero', 'Robin') and two children's books, L'Ecologia siamo noi (Dedalo) and I rifiuti e l'ambiente (Dedalo). Since 2012, he has been a member of the scientific committee for the regional park of Migliarino San Rossore Massaciuccoli.*



*Franco Michieli - born 1962, geographer, many years the editor of Alp and RdM magazines, writer, explorer and International Guarantor of Mountain Wilderness, he is one of Italy's leading experts in the field of long-distance treks on foot. With only one or two companions, he traverses wild country without GPS or radio transmission devices, maps, compasses or watches, in absolute isolation in nature. He has published about his experiences, La vocazione di perdersi, and he holds courses and seminars for professionals and non-professionals. He has written and talked about his experiences in hundreds of articles and conferences, as well as in the film La via invisibile. In 2014, with his book Huascaran 1993. Verso l'alto, verso l'altro he won the prestigious Premio Gambrius "G. Mazzotti" award, one of the most important awards for mountain literature.*

## CONTRIBUTORS



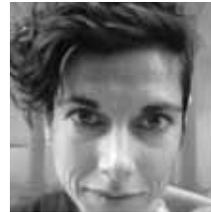
*Sandro Bassi - Born 1961 in Faenza, he is an environmental tour guide for the region of Emilia Romagna. As author and co-author he has edited some 30 works on the territory of Romagna, mostly on naturalistic-geographical themes, from monumental trees to speleology, the flora of the Vena del Gesso regional park and itineraries (on foot, by bike and on the of the ways of the Foreste Sacre, including the "Dino Campana" path) of the Parco Nazionale Foreste Casentinesi. He lives and works in Faenza, the "old town, red-walled and turreted" sung rather than described in 'La Notte', the Foreword to the Canti Orfici by Dino Campana.*



*Sergio Mantovani - Naturalist and geographer, for the past 20 years he has devoted himself to observing and studying fauna and has collaborated with universities and local authorities on wildlife monitoring projects. He has written over 150 articles and reports for major national journals in the sector such Airone, Oasis and Geo. He has written numerous books on naturalistic and geographical themes, and he has won the Premio Mario Pastore Giornalista award for the environmental, young adults category, and twice the Premio Nazionale di Letteratura Naturalistica Parco della Majella. He came third in the Malta Tourism Press Awards 2011 for a geographical reportage on the Maltese islands and second in the 5th International Journalism Award of Valais (Switzerland). He was on the jury at the 21st edition of the Sondrio Festival, an international park documentaries exhibition.*



*Gerardo Mastrullo - He has been working with and among books as a librarian, bookseller and editor for 35 years. After directing the linguistics sections (dictionaries and multimedia products) at Garzanti and Utet, he took on the role of director general at Red Edizioni. Since 2006, he has devoted himself full-time to his own publishing company, La Vita Felice, founded in 1992, where he focuses new translations of talented authors from around the world who have been either forgotten or neglected. He taught editorial design and techniques on EU-funded specialisation courses for many years, and since 2014 he has been a lecturer on the 'Masterbook' professional editing degree course at the IULM University of Milan.*



*Arianna De Micheli - Freelance journalist, she was born in Milan in 1974 and moved with her family Lago Maggiore at three years of age. After a life lived in the woods, she was catapulted into city life at university age, and currently lives between Modena and Verbania. Always on the look out for synonyms and always faithful to subjunctives, she defines herself as "curious about everything but expert in nothing", and busy sniffing people out like a dog (her fetish-animal) and looking at the world through childlike eyes. She considers herself Milton's best friend (that's the name of her Corsican sheepdog), and her own worst enemy. Books for her are like Linus' blanket. She loves spiders and scolopendrae, playing in the mud, chasing worms, conversation with bats. She hopes to be reborn a fish. Alternatively, a migrating bird. Perhaps a wild goose. Or maybe a pied stilt. Or a blue-footed booby.*



*Pier Luigi Luisi - A graduate in Chemistry from the Scuola Normale di Pisa, since 1980 he has been Professor of Macromolecular Chemistry in the department of Material Science at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zürich (ETHZ), where he directed the Biopolymers section. He is interested in the interface between science and humanism, and in 1985 he founded the Cortona Week, an interdisciplinary residential week for doctoral students. Since 1987, he has been a member of the Mind and Life Institute, the dialogue between science and Buddhism founded by Francisco Varela and the Dalai Lama. He recently wrote The Systems View of Life with Fritjof Capra (Cambridge University Press, 2014) and published the second edition of his The Emergence of Life (Cambridge University Press) in the summer of 2016. He has authored over 500 works in international magazines and a dozen books, including novels and books for children.*



*Matteo Meschiari - Born in Modena in 1968, he teaches at the University of Palermo where he is an Associate Professor. He studies landscape in literature, wilderness, walking and space as perceived and lived in various cultures of ethnographic interest. He has published his research with Sellerio, Liguori and Quodlibet. In 1997, he founded the Studio Italiano di Geopoetica, a branch of the Institut International de Géopoétique established by Scottish poet Kenneth White. Since 2000, he has worked on the composition and oral transmission of an epic poem called Terra (later Terra Nova), which tells the geological and biological history of the planet. In 2016, with Maurizio Corrado, he founded Campobase, a Narrative Company. He writes essays, prose and poetry.*

# CONTRIBUTORS



**Emilio Varrà** - In 1996 he founded *Hamelin*, a cultural association in the field of children's literature, to promote reading, organise exhibitions and events on cartoons and animation, including an international cartoon festival which has now reached its 10th edition. Author and co-author of books dedicated to the works of writers such as Twain and Kipling, cartoon writers such as Munoz, Altan and Giardino, the analysis of childhood metaphor, the development of children's literature over the past 20 years in Italy and the language of comic books. He is one of the founders of the magazine *'Hamelin. Storie, figure, pedagogia'*, and a frequent contributor on magazines such as *'Lo straniero'*, *'Gli Asini'*, *'Li.B.e.R.'* and *'Infanzia'*. He teaches cartoon and illustration at the *Accademia di Belle Arti di Bologna*.



**Robert Norris** - Born in 1974 in Modena, Robert is an independent researcher and long-term traveller who since early childhood has been exploring internal and external landscapes as a writer, translator, walker, teacher and practitioner of English language and oriental arts. He holds degrees in Literature and Linguistics from the Universities of Aberdeen and Oxford, and his translations in the fields of Italian Renaissance Aristotelianism, German Enlightenment Literature and Philosophy, mediaeval weapons and Italian gastro-oenology have been published by Brill, SUNY Press, Laguna Edizioni and Gambero Rosso. Author also of environmental essays, creative prose, prose poetry and poetry, his work has appeared on the Permaculture Research Institute website, the *Rebelle Society* online journal and the Bologna-based sustainable living newspaper, *'Vivere Sostenibile'*. He lives with his wife, author and spiritual teacher Shelly Sharon, in Zürich, Switzerland.



**Carlo Ferrari** - Born in Bologna in 1944 he was a Professor of Botany at the Universities of Pavia and Bologna. His scientific work focuses on the analysis of plant biodiversity from the genetic level up to the level of environmental systems. Member of international and national scientific societies, he has been president of the Italian Plant Science Society and director of the Interdepartmental Environmental Sciences Research Centre at the University of Bologna. Alongside his scientific research, he has been actively involved with books and articles in raising awareness about the value of biological conservation as a central theme in environmental management. They include *Biodiversità: dal genoma al paesaggio* (Zanichelli, 2010), and *L'ecologia del paesaggio* (Mulino, 2013).



**Fabio Liverani** - A professional photographer, he has collaborated with some of the most prestigious magazines in the sector, including *National Geographic Italia*, *Geo Magazine*, *Oasis*, *Focus*, *Mondo sommerso*, *Aqua*, *Ocean Realm*, *BBC Wildlife Magazine*, *Arca* and *Segni nel Tempo*. He was editor-in-chief of *Hydra*, an Italian magazine for aquarium lovers, he collaborated with Grazia Neri and reported for the De Agostini iconography centre. He is represented by English agency Nature Picture Library, with which he has published in newspapers and books around Europe and worldwide. He has held seminars and workshops through the *Photofarm* school of photography and the international teaching platform, the *Manfrotto School of Xcellence*. His current research is primarily on the theme of photographic language and the reading of images.



**Luca Raffaelli** - Considered one of Italy's leading experts in the field of cartoons and animation, he is a journalist and essay writer, and since 1994 he has written the *Nuvolette* column in *LancioStory* as well as contributing articles on animation and cartoons to *XL*, the monthly magazine published by *La Repubblica*, *Il Venerdì di Repubblica* and *La Repubblica*, for which he has also edited numerous series on the topic of cartoons. He has also written numerous books and essays, including *Le anime disegnatte*. *Il pensiero nei cartoon da Disney ai giapponesi* a reference manual for anyone interested in animation in Italy, and he has been the artistic director of *Castelli Animati*, the International Animation Cinema Festival in Genzano and *Romics*, the comics and animation festival in Rome. As a scriptwriter, he has collaborated with numerous directors, notably Giulio Cingoli and Dario Fo in 2002.



**Martin Vlach** - Martin is a Sociology and Media student from the Czech Republic. He came to fame thanks to a series of surreal photographs he created in 2013. They show solitary figures living in black-and-white sfumato landscapes where the artist uses minimal visual elements to create attractive, dream-like atmospheres. He uses mist to erase circumstantial detail, thus leaving his subjects alone on a uniform grey background. Martin's images transmit a sense of melancholic suspense, but his subjects are not sad. Alone, but not lonely.

## CONTRIBUTORS



*Marcello Rossi - 44 years old, father to Libero, he lives and works in Mantua. An amateur, self-taught photographer, he takes only analogic photographs using 35 mm or medium format lenses, but he also explores Polaroid and the so-called pinhole technique, characterised by a practically unlimited field with results that are extremely difficult to predict, and therefore particularly interesting from an artistic standpoint. He only uses vintage, old and very very old cameras and film which is almost always expired and present clear defects when developed. In an époque dominated by digital and virtual media, he insists with a sort of romantic stubbornness to develop his own black-and-white prints in his own home. His are the images that accompany the Bosco Fontana article in this number.*



*Filippo Macchi - Photographer and traveller, he has made walking is ideal practice for achieving his goals. From the sealed roads of cities to the pathways of mountains, he narrates the landscape and the environment with curiosity and objectivity. His photography narrates the landscape that is. He loves the black and white form as an expression of the purest photography, since 2010 has been working on the ambitious Ma.Ni. Adventure photography project with his wife Lavinia. Currently, he is collaborating with other local professional photographers and he is focusing on two important projects, one 'Far over the misty mountains', focuses on landscape, and another, 'Reading, the art of reading' on street photography.*



*Pietro Bassi - Born in Bologna in 1979, Pietro lives in the plains of Budrio, province of Bologna, but each day he enjoys the view of the Alto Apennino mountains. After studying agricultural sciences at school he took a degree in Modern Literature with a dissertation on trees and people in the works of Mario Rigoni Stern, where he examined people's relationship with trees in the West. Pietro is a mixed pedigree of earth, trees, animals and human stories. He works for the publishing house Zanichelli, where, among many other projects, he has created and edited Scrivere la natura by Davide Sapienza and Franco Michieli, and Scrivere una canzone by Alfredo Rapetti Mogol and Giuseppe Anastasi. With his deep respect for trees and his profession of creating books, he has never published a book of his own.*



*Dimitri Marchant - Alongside his main profession in the fashion industry, he has made a home in photography too. "It is as if I view the world through a camera. The things I shoot are no more than my daily life, but when I observe them and capture them through the lens, they touch me, and this process of observation is a constant source of energy. Even photographing subjects that are apparently obvious or insignificant never fails to stimulate my curiosity. Seeing the sun come up fifty times means to experience fifty different emotions. Ultimately what I am looking to do is to live in intimate relationship with reality."*



*Simona Piccolini - Primarily an illustrator who portrays and narrates the world of animals. "I believe creativity can be a tribute to the creativity of wildlife and whatever elements of wildness exists in us. It is a way of sharing and celebrating our union with all living beings. Maybe art, in a circular fashion, can participate in the process by giving back to the world images of the world, since each image that contributes to our existence and our various forms of culture arises from a series of relations interwoven with all living beings." She does everything entirely by hand, where possible mixing and spreading the colours with her fingers, using as a base anything that is commonly referred to as 'waste' (boxes of various kinds, widths and sizes).*



*Martin Rak - Born in 1984 in Prague, he received his first camera from his grandfather when he was six years old. He loves spending his free time in nature or travelling: "It is a beautiful sensation to find oneself at the top of a cliff in the silence of the morning, when the first light embraces landscape. I try to capture this atmosphere and to share it with people." Recently, he has been particularly attracted by black and white photography, which along with long-exposure photography "allows me to distance myself from the real world to achieve my creative intention." Since 2012, his work has received numerous accolades, including one 1st, two 2nd and four 3rd places at the International Photo Awards IP. This year, he was the winner of the Czech National Prize in the context of Sony World Photography Awards 2016.*

## WHY WALDEN / ANTONIO PORTANOVA

*A safe passage to calmer waters - it is often said in times of instability, confusion and uncertainty such as these - may be found only if we boost consumption and rebuild the economy on free-market principles. In my view, this is a dangerous illusion. Numbed by a flow of information which robs us of our capacity to act, rather than providing us with the tools we need to decipher the world, and blinds us to the contradictions of our times, we insist on pursuing paradigms of thought that are obsolete. 'Produci, consuma, crepa' (produce, consume, die), a song once said: hands up anyone who does not resonate with this image in some way or other.*

*So we ask: are we absolutely sure that the model we have pursued to date is the right model for tackling today's challenges? Do we truly believe that we can replicate it indefinitely and continue to ignore the world's gaping inequalities, the wholesale devastation of natural habitats? We are caught in the rat-race, overexposed, hyper-connected and constantly pestered with updates; we invent more and more ways of communicating, but we are losing the capacity to dialogue. Perhaps it is time to stop and reflect on the world we have built, our relationships with others, and the impact we are having on the environment.*

*An old saying goes, "one step in the right direction is better than ten in the wrong one." In times such as these, I believe this should become our mantra. What is to be our path, then? A complex question that merits close attention. So let's indulge ourselves and slow down. We need to recover our sense of the splendour, wonder and enchantment of the world. We need to rediscover our humanity.*

*A discussion about alternative models of development and an exchange of ideas on future perspectives and scenarios must not become a sterile intellectual exercise. It is not "only" a question of protecting the environment and saving ourselves in the face of changing climactic conditions. What is at stake, so to say, is our very soul. I am convinced that we urgently need an open and uncompromising reassessment of everything we have hitherto taken for granted that will allow us to reclaim what a misconceived notion of progress has taken from us and Nature.*

*Hence Walden. Our intention has been to create a magazine dedicated to ecological themes, sustainable development and environmental thought. It was conceived and designed with the explicit intent to allow readers to stop, reflect, ask questions, inquire into things and raise doubts.*

*Our approach has been to seek out languages that are both transversal and universal, and a range*

*of topics that at first blush may seem unrelated, from ecology and philosophy to literature, cinema, economics, and many more.*

*We have done our best, and we hope you will find these pages both stimulating and interesting. We believe that a unitary view is needed, a different and more conscious way of looking at the world's complexities that will allow us to keep on being "capable of future". In its own small way, Walden aspires to generate reflection and open up lines of inquiry. It therefore speaks to the curious reader who is stimulated by different points of view and is willing to enter the fray.*

*Ultimately, Walden was designed to communicate in a different and, we hope, original way the beauty and complexity of the world, to speak to the "soul" (beyond any personal religious beliefs), and to touch their innermost chords. It aims to be a place of exchange, a virtual agorā where to discuss, exchange ideas and seek to understand. We think of it as a magazine for contemplation, like an aged whisky that invites us to have a seat, and to reflect on life for a while.*

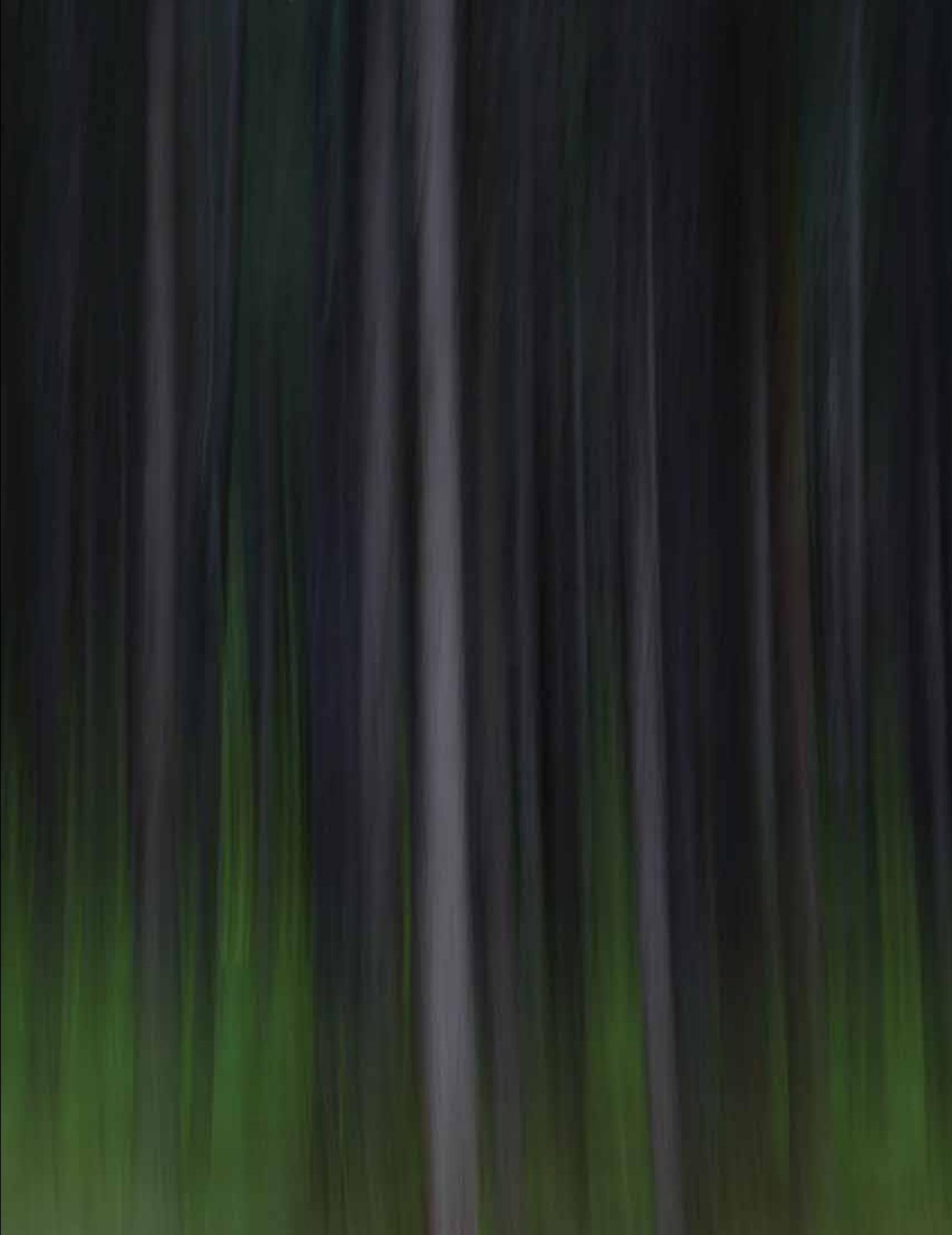
*The ultimate, admittedly ambitious aim is to contribute to a full-scale gestalt-change that will redefine how we look at the world and relate to it.*

*We do not need more goods, but we do need a new vision of what is good, however. The pursuit of ever greater well-being is no longer realistic, but reclaiming the true meaning of 'well-being' is. This is the ambitious mandate Walden has chosen for itself in full awareness that this is no messianic task and that alone a small magazine will not change the world. But many small changes within each individual are without doubt the starting point for creating a new kind of world. One that is more just and, hopefully, even more beautiful.*

Antonio Portanova was born in Venice 1971 and has lived in Modena since 1986. He graduated in Natural Sciences with a dissertation on experimental ecology, much of the research for which was carried out at the University of East Anglia, Norwich (UK), and in 1999 he was awarded a doctorate in Geobotany at the University of Pavia. Since 2000, he has worked as a freelance environmental and communications consultant. His particular areas of expertise are biodiversity and nature conservation.

# MAN AND THE FOREST

MARCO PACI



# IMAGINED FORESTS

**T**he respective histories of humankind and the forests have been closely intertwined since the dawn of civilisation. Human beings have always carved spaces for cultivation, pasture and settlements from the forests. First villages and then cities were founded which grew largely by claiming space that had once belonged to the forests: the foundations of civilisation were laid at the expense of forests.

The relationship between humankind and the forest has always been ambivalent. From a utilitarian standpoint, over the centuries the forest has always been a source of sustenance, shelter, safety and medicine. On the opposite extreme, however, it has inspired in humans throughout the ages and in every place powerful emotion, awe, culture and spirituality. Yesterday like today, in archaic society as much as in more civilised societies, forests have been a harbour of dreams where human beings project their imagination. In our times – an era that needs bringing to a swift close – the forests remind us, with the noble idleness of the vegetable kingdom, how to step out of human time. The forests have almost always been “another place” compare to civilisation, the antibody to offi-

cial culture. They are the “shadows of civilisation”, as Robert Pogue Harrison wrote in a celebrated essay in 1992. It is in the forests that the individual is divested of social and cultural superstructures and allows the deeper realities, uncontaminated by social norms and human laws, to emerge. It is an otherness that has developed and ripened throughout the centuries.

In ancient Greece, religion was the steward that reasserted and regulated the bond between humankind and the forest. The Dryads, for instance, were nymphs who were thought to be the spirits of trees, intimately tied to the plants that hosted them, and the cutting of a tree could not take place if the priest had not first established that the divinity no longer resided within it. And every type of tree, from Zeus’ oak to Apollo’s laurel was held to be sacred to a god.

The history of Rome, too, is closely bound to that of the forest. It is a she-wolf, a sylvan creature, who rears and nurtures Romulus and Remus. When Romulus then went on to found Rome on the Palatine, he entrusted the guardianship of the sacred woods beyond the city walls to a college of priests

# THE SYSTEMS VIEW OF LIFE

PIER LUIGI LUISI



# THE NEW PARADIGM OF THE SYSTEMS VIEW

The way of science, till the first part of last century, has been prevalently conducted with a mechanistic/reductionist approach. Accordingly, a complex system was first subdivided in a number of parts, each part studied separately, with the idea then to put all information together to arrive at the understanding of the entire system. Thus, in biology an organism was studied in terms of its organs, each organ studied in terms of its cells, each cell in terms of its metabolic components and their mutual relations. The same for a physical system, up to the entire cosmology. This kind of Descartes/Newtonian approach undoubtedly has been very successful, bringing us to an era of technology with important branching in medicine and computer science. The reductionist approach has been, and still is, very important from the pragmatic point of view. It is still present in some main stream of science, particularly in molecular biology: here we are, as indicated by Fox-Keller, in the “century of the gene”- and we are witnessing a kind of genetic determinism, with a strong emphasis on DNA, RNA, the gene in general, as the central elements of life in all its aspects.

The main problem with this approach, is that it cannot really give a comprehension of the properties of the entire system. Analysing the tissue or molecular properties of the wing of the butterfly may give you a lot of useful local information, but it will never give you the key to “why the flying?”; and studying the metabolic pathways of a cell and all its DNA can never give you an answer to the question: what is life? More in general, the important features of the entire

system cannot be obtained by the study of the single parts. This became clear in the middle of last century and there was indeed a flowering of new investigations with new keywords, such as self-organization, emergent properties, systemic view, autopoiesis, order from chaos, homeostasis, order in systems far from equilibrium, fractals...., thanks to authors such as Norbert Wiener, Paul Weiss, Ilya Prigogine, von Bartanalaffy, Humberto Maturana, Gregory Bateson, Piaget, and a few others---and a kind of new paradigm for the study of science was born- although of course not in an unique, homogeneous, linear way, but having as common denominator the rejection of reductionism in favour of a systems view.

The basis of the system thinking moves from the consideration that most of the complex systems around us --be living entities, social systems, cities, insect colonies...-are constituted as an ensemble of many parts, or components, and that the properties of the system are due to the web of interaction of all the parts-to their interdependence.

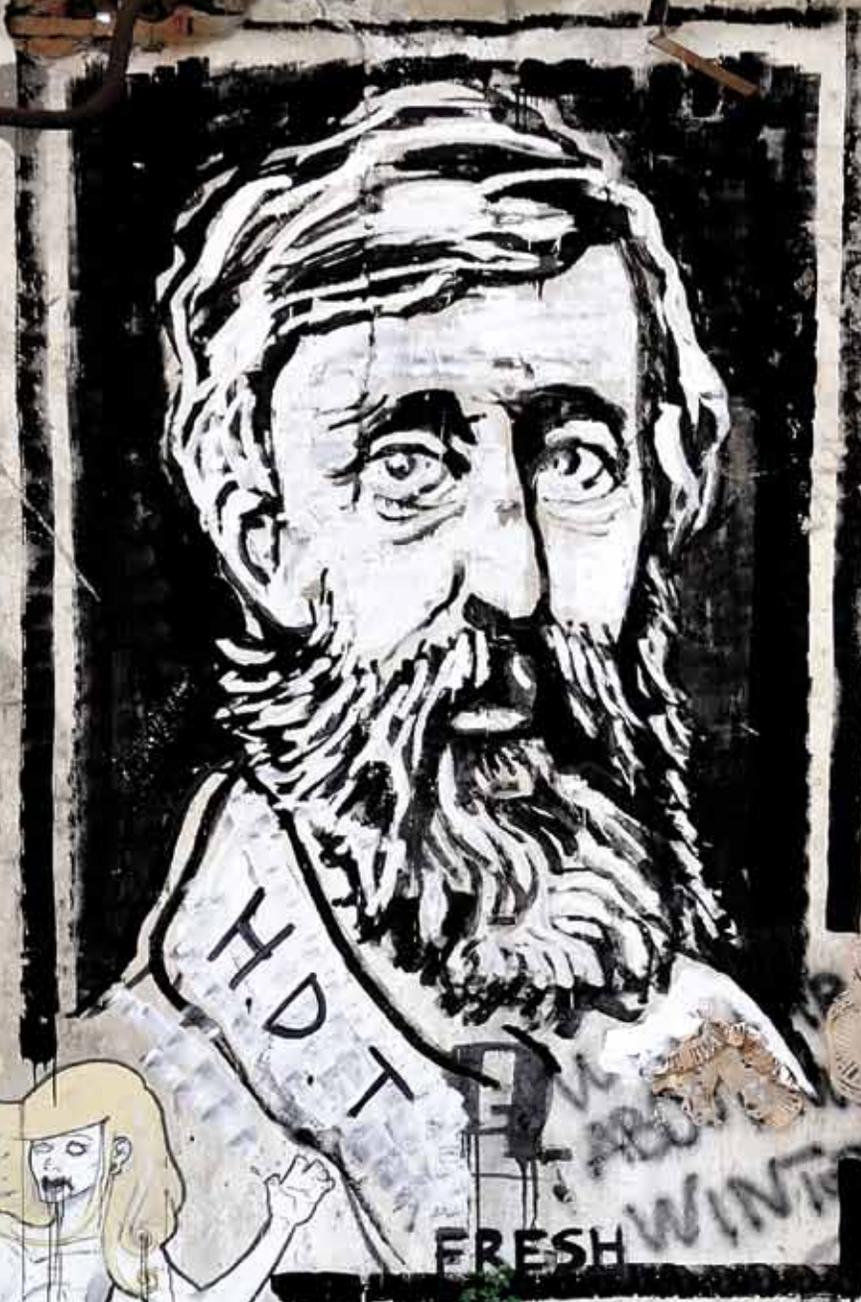
Thus, whereas Galileo, Newton and Descartes, although in different ways, were conveying the idea that by knowing the fundamental building blocks of reality and their properties, one would understand the world, the system thinking says the opposite: that you cannot understand reality by looking at the single components, you can understand reality only by taking into account the whole with the mutual interaction of all components. The emphasis is now on the network of interactions, on what keeps the parts together, more than on the single parts. The de-

## WALKING IS A MILL / DAVIDE SAPIENZA

Not only is *Walking*, Henry David Thoreau's walkers' manifesto published in Italy under the title *Camminare (To Walk)*, not a book, it is not even called *Camminare*. It is not a book, because it is a collection of public lectures delivered by Thoreau between 1851 and 1860, and its real title is actually *Camminando (Walking)*. Intentions should never be translated lightly. Thoreau viewed these seminal writings (which he sometimes alternated with a text called *The Wild*, hence using 'Walking; or the Wild' as a title for his talks) in the framework of what he intended to write at a future time but never did (he died in 1862 when he was only 44 years old). The sense of all this is that, in my view, passing *Walking* off as *Camminare* in fact leads the reader astray at the very threshold of a text which we lovers of the wild, both inner and beyond, hold sacred. Aside from questions about the art of translation (I raised similar objections with regard to 'To build a Fire' by London, which appeared in 2007 as '*Preparare un Fuoco*'), I am sufficiently familiar with the arts of walking and writing to want to pay my respects by using *Camminando* as a title for one of my own books. I wanted to pay homage to Thoreau for having had the best and most dazzling of insights: we are constantly changing, and when we express our thoughts

in walking, what we are really doing is transforming energy. Anyone who is not put off by contact with those vast tracts where the psyche seeks to inform the body and the mind with the exact coordinates of becoming will know what this is about. The lesson contained in the gerund, about 'becoming', came to me recently while walking in my own mountains, the Orobic, as I observed an old watermill standing next to an abandoned homestead. That day, as I pondered the verb 'to mill', I realised that walking was like a mill. A natural element (water, wind) is transformed into energy, and what nature gives to us is given back to the world. Thinking about that mill, I saw that as I received and gave back, I was changed to the point that – to stay with the metaphor – I continued to see new water and new wind, and thus to receive the energy that I would then return to the world, in my case in the form of geo-poetic thinking and writing. And the miracle is that polluted water and wind can still drive a mill, and the energy that comes out is clean and powerful. Every day we carry this insight: we can transform everything, and in so doing become fully part of a whole which is not an abstract concept, but is precisely that which makes us receivers and transmitters life. Connections in movement. Walking. ■





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## WALDEN: A BOOK / GERARDO MASTRULLO

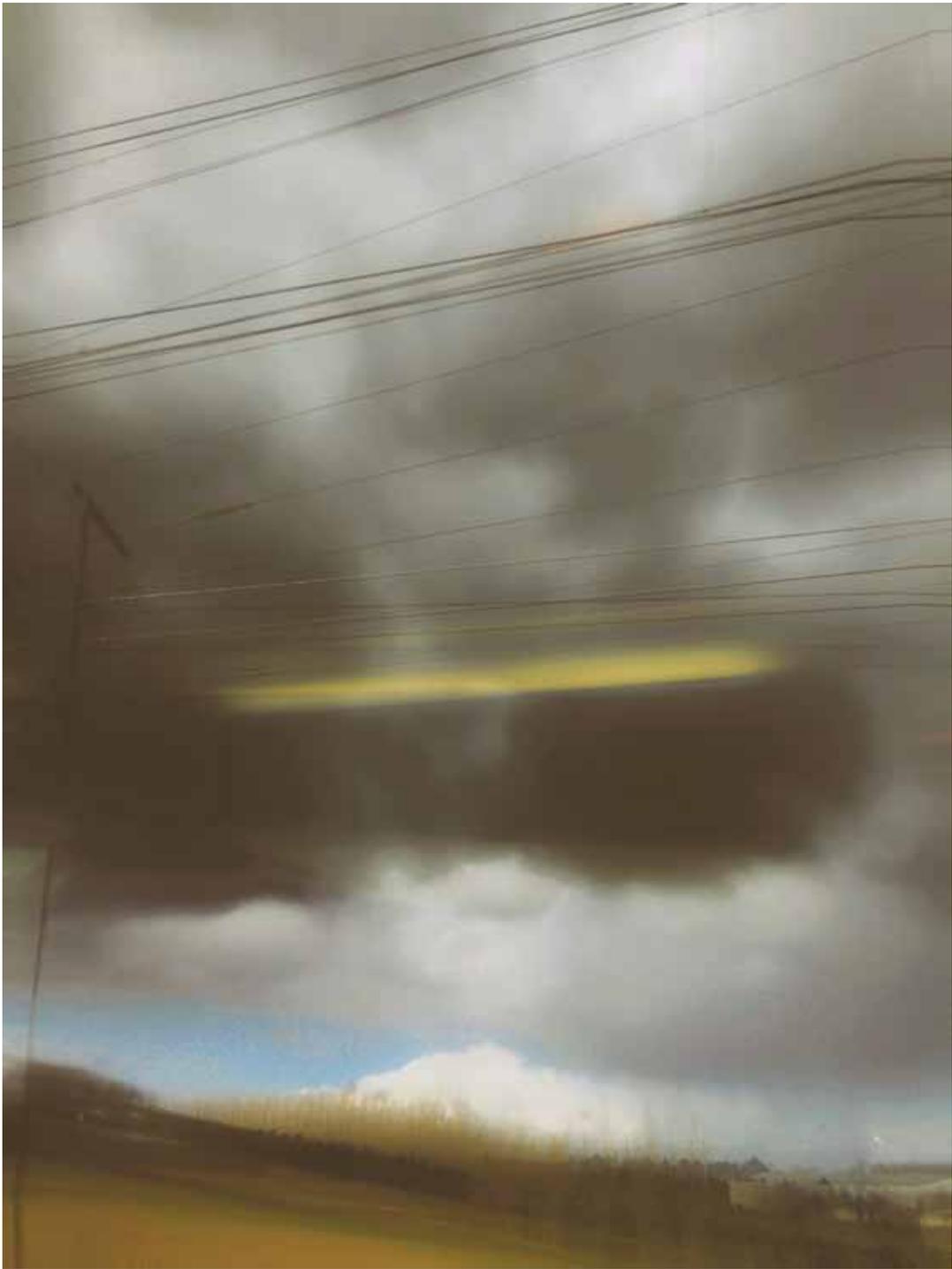
On 4 July 1845, a 28-year-old Henry David Thoreau, inspired by his teacher Ralph Waldo Emerson, his favourite readings (the Classics and Indian philosophy), and an uncontrollable attraction for nature took an extremely important step: on foot, alone, he set out to leave the town of Concord and head for the woods around Walden Pond, a wild and uncontaminated place where nature's beauty, solitude and quiet reigned.

In this remote place full of wonder, Thoreau built himself a wooden hut in which he then lived for over two years, feeding on readings and walks in total communion with nature and its glory. Not until 6 September 1847 did Thoreau decide to return to civilisation. His experience, which he recorded in painstaking detail, led to *Walden, or Life in the Woods*, which was published only in 1854 after many rewritings and revisions. His most celebrated book, and considered a classic in the American literary canon, it offers an account of an experiment carried out by the author with the purpose of seeking a reconciliation between man and nature. He was aided in his purpose by an innate optimism and the conviction that man is dependent on sensation and emotion, and is therefore ultimately the shaper of his own destiny.

For Thoreau, man is perfectly capable of living in conditions of material poverty, even drawing a greater measure of happiness from them as he learns to appreciate small things more deeply. And this is indeed the primary aim of life: to reach ultimate freedom untouched by industrialisation, mercantilism, or the presence of the state and its laws. Thoreau lived and wrote in the mid-1800s in New England, a predominantly rural state, and

# PORTFOLIO

DIMITRI MARCHANT



# DIALOGUES

ANTONIO PORTANOVA



# A TOP-DOWN REVOLUTION

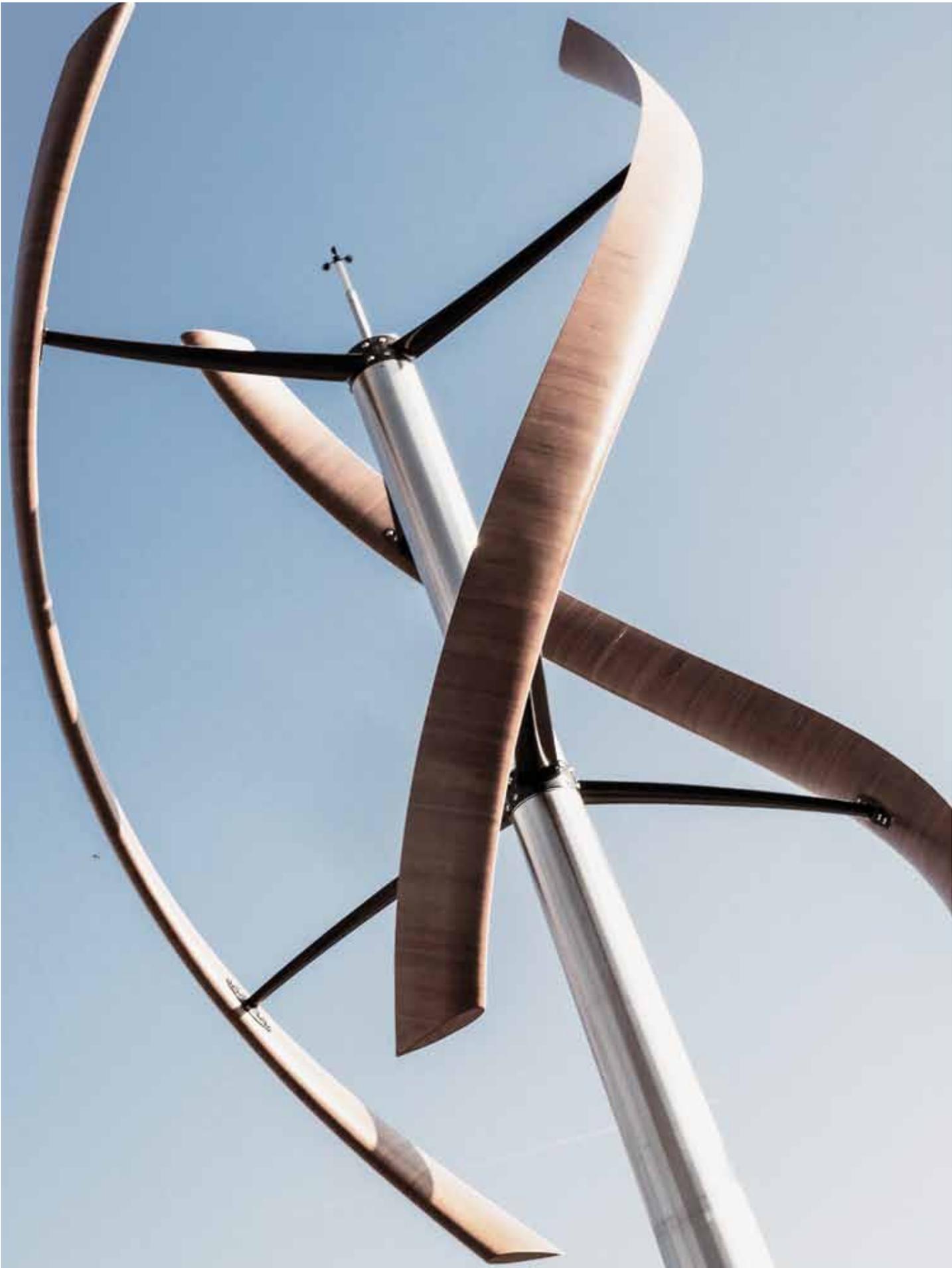
## / A CONVERSATION WITH ALBERTO TESSARO, ENESSERE

*“Everything one man can imagine, other men can make real”*

- Jules Verne

Just over a year ago, I went with my wife, Sara, to visit certain exhibition spaces at the Fuorisalone in Milan. It was there that I first came across the Enessere project. Before us, in one of the pavilions in the Lambrate area, stood an imposing structure made of wood and metal (I later discovered it was titanium) with a decidedly futuristic look, the beauty of which struck us immediately. It was clearly a windmill, but unlike anything we had seen before. Intrigued, we approached the exhibitor, and our first impression of him was very positive. Alberto Tessaro answered all our questions in an attractive Venetian lilt, and displayed such energy and enthusiasm that we were completely won over. A design project applied to the question of renewable energy was obviously a story that needed looking into. Walden at the time was still a pipe-dream, but we parted with promises of staying in touch. We both left our meeting with the feeling that somehow our paths would cross again – we just didn’t know how. When many months later I contacted him again to lay out the plans for this magazine, and explained that I would like to write up the story of his life in business, I was met with the same passion and enthusiasm that had struck me at our first meeting. I wanted to get him to tell me his story because his project resonated deeply and I felt it was worth dedicating full-length feature to it. Alberto welcomed my invitation, and from that moment on we made sure we didn’t lose sight of each other again. What started as a plan for an interview very quickly became an exchange of comments, ideas and reflections such as occurs only infrequently.

Alberto is proud of what he has achieved, and he has every right to be. The Hercules, as the windmill produced by Enessere is called, is in many ways the quintessence of Made-in-Italy design applied to the sphere of renewable technology. Titanium, wood and carbon fibre are the materials of this almost totemic object which is born out of the design genius of the wind engineers who imagined it and the wise, patient work of the craftsmen who put it together. Yes, because this is precisely where the lucid madness of the challenge which Enessere has set itself lies: to bridge the gap between two separate worlds, advanced technology and high-level craftsmanship, which we often perceive as being distant from one another, if not even diametrically opposed. The result is an object that is deeply striking and remains impressed upon one’s memory. There’s something about the forms and proportions of this windmill that captivates you at



first sight. A friend and photographer, who is accustomed to seeing the hidden geometries of landscapes and architecture against the light, told me it was “the most beautiful windmill I have ever seen”. And it really is. The Hercules’ blades describe the wondrous geometry of the DNA’s double-helix, and its proportions are expressed in exact golden ratios. This is perhaps the real uniqueness of the project.

The driving philosophy behind Alberto and his team is clear even from his website: working for solutions for producing clean energy without giving up on beauty, the latter being the project’s real added value. Alberto is in some sense the heir to Adriano Olivetti, of that way of thinking and doing business which long ago made the real fortune of Made-in-Italy design. He often mentions Olivetti in our conversations. “That is a time in history which has gone forever; that train left long ago. Olivetti embodied the type of businessman who knew how to manage creativity and innovation and translate it into reality,” he says with tone of nostalgia.

And he accompanies this reflection with an emblematic anecdote. At the last Fourisalone, he received a visit from an American businessman, a delegate from an extremely important and strategic group in the renewable energy sector. Having heard about the Enessere project, the man wanted to see it in person. Standing before the Hercules, he said: “I see many references to the architect Scarpa in this project, it is as if you had hit upon a solution and replicated it continuously, obsessively.” In a strange kind of circularity, it was Scarpa who created one of the Olivetti’s most celebrated projects, the shop in Piazza San Marco in Venice. But the incredible element in this story, which Jung would have called a ‘synchronicity’, is that the craftsman who actually made the windmill for Alberto many years before had spent almost five years working for Scarpa. Destiny works its magic...

Compared to other residential wind turbines, the Hercules is a whole new departure. The idea of having handcrafted components for a wind turbine produced by a carpenter seems to me to be something between a stroke of genius and a visionary’s gamble. This was not just the reverie of a friend showing me a prototype in his garage. Nor is it some madhatter’s project destined to sink beneath the waves of oblivion. No, on display in the Fuorisalone, one of the most exciting, high-profile industrial design showcases in Italy and internationally, there was Alberto with his Hercules. I wanted to understand. Where did he start. How did he get the idea. Why and how did he choose to go ahead with it. All these questions translated into a conversation in which we spoke freely about everything that related directly or indirectly to the themes of Walden.