

## The Restoration Work of Villa Ficana a Raw Earth Quarter in the Town Macerata



**Anna Paola Conti**

Via Roma 388 62100 Macerata, Italy

phone-fax +39 0733 36124; cell 338 8687679

[apconti@alice.it](mailto:apconti@alice.it) ; [suricina@tiscali.it](mailto:suricina@tiscali.it)

### ABSTRACT

This paper deals with Villa Ficana, one of the few urban areas of continental Italy which is completely composed of raw earth houses, located in the town of Macerata in the Marche region.

The quarter, built in the mid XIX century, is made up of about fifty small lowish two-storeyed buildings, arranged in parallel clusters. The raw earth buildings are called locally *atterrati*, the building technique is *massone* (cob), but unfired bricks are used as well.

Although these buildings represent a poor way of living, they often show particular attention to the aesthetic aspect, revealed by the analysis of the facades, which are always balanced and symmetrical.

Recently the district was abandoned, and there were several attempts to destroy it, to regain a valuable urban area. Thanks to a new sensibility and to the diffusion of scientific knowledge, nowadays raw earth houses are beginning to be valued.

*In 2003 the Architectural Heritage and Landscape Authority issued the tutorship laws usually applied to buildings and artistic works.*

At the end of 2004 the Macerata Local Authority, adopted a new Rescue Plan (The present writer drew up the rules) and a year later ordered the restoration work of about half of the buildings (The present writer was one of the planners). This work, carried out using traditional techniques, began in September 2005 and was finished in June 2006.

The *atterrati* generally were not in good condition, but only three were seriously damaged and only one was destroyed.

The most important damage was caused by the rain, insignificant damage was caused by recent seismic events (the earthquake in 1997).

The restoration work was difficult because of the extensive damage to the buildings and because raw earth technology is no longer used. So before beginning the project it was necessary to start experimental work aimed at testing the ancient technology and learning how to use it again.

The materials used were only: earth, straw, sand, wood, lime and bricks for the baseboards, no concrete was used.

The destroyed *atterrato* was rebuilt using purpose made adobe. This work was an exception because the current laws do not allow the use of raw earth in seismic zones like the Marche.

*The Ficana restoration work is very significant because it has allowed us to learn once again how to utilise the ancient raw earth technology.*

### KEY WORDS :

tutorship, restoration, rebuilding.