



■ **Fig. 1** The ditches where schoolchildren practise archaeological excavation

## *Experiencing archaeology and interpretation*

### The educational program at the Terramara of Montale (Italy)

**The open air museum dedicated to Terramare civilisation associates reconstructions with the archaeological site and allows its visitors to retrace the archaeologists' steps from discovery to 3-D interpretation.**

■ Ilaria PULINI, Cristiana ZANASI  
(IT)

The idea of opening an archaeological park and open air museum dedicated to the terramare<sup>(1)</sup> civilization which developed in the Middle and Late Bronze Age (1650–1150 BC) in Northern Italy, came as a response by the Modena Civic Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology to an increasing demand for new methods of exhibiting past cultures, capable to combine a sound scientific approach with a high level of interactivity. From this point of view, the existence at Montale of a still partially preserved terramara, where the Modena Museum has been conducting fruitful research excavations since the 19th century and which was the source of most of the museum's terramare exhibits, offered an excellent opportunity. In 1998 a project was launched that, using the evidence of the archaeological inves-

tigations carried out at the site, led to the museographic presentation typically employed in the archaeological open-air museums with a life-size reconstruction of a sector of the ancient village, including two dwellings and a portion of the moat and embankment which surrounded the settlement.

Although the Museum's location is not supported by a particularly attractive natural setting, it nevertheless offers an added value thanks to the joint presence of the archaeological site and the area of the reconstructions, where one provides the basis of and key for interpreting the other. This circumstance highlights the tight interaction between research and dissemination of knowledge, which is one of the cornerstones of the mission of the Modena City Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. This is also the assumption which stands behind the educational programs organised for school groups at the Terramara of Montale, where the evocative side of the reconstruction is combined with the scientific aspects of the archaeological excavations. The visit is not merely a journey into the atmosphere of a Bronze Age village, but rather an authentic research ex-

perience that retraces the steps of the archaeologists' work. Young students are engaged in tracing back the history of the ancient settlement starting from the archaeological records, thus becoming aware of the methods implied in the archaeological fieldwork, from excavation to analysis and interpretation. The visit tours are run by young archaeologists who are in first person involved as "faithful testimonials" of what the archaeological work is all about.

Schoolgroups come to the terramara park throughout the schoolyear and they represent approximately the 60% of the public.<sup>(2)</sup> Educational visits last three hours and are aimed at primary (8-10 years) and lower secondary schools (11-13 years). Different presentation methods are used, according to the age of the students. Programs for higher secondary schools and university students are also organised, but they are not dealt with in this presentation.

#### **Training in archaeological investigation**

The visit starts in the area originally occupied by the bronze age settlement, where the preserved outline

1 The word "terramarà" comes from terra marna (rich dark soil) which was the name given to the deposits of organic matter which were extracted from Bronze Age dwellings during the XIX century and used by farmers as a concentrated source of compost.

2 From its opening to the public in April 2004 through September 2008, the Terramara of Montale was visited by more than 75.000 people, incl. both general public and schools.



■ **Fig. 2** The site of the Montale Terramara, with the entrance to the area of the archaeological excavations



■ **Fig. 4** Construction and destruction of houses in phase II



■ **Fig. 5** Digging in the ditches



■ **Fig. 6** Analysing seeds



■ **Fig. 3** Schoolchildren visiting the terramara excavation area. In the foreground is the cast reproducing the layer of Phase II

of the village's perimeter gives information on its size and on the defensive structures (moat and embankment) which surrounded it. A path leads to the area of the archaeological excavation which is set inside a building that recreates the profile of the terramara hillock before the excavation work began (fig. 2) Here the exhibit of the excavation is presented taking into consideration the needs of an educational approach: a plaster cast gives records of the excavation's stratigraphy which shows the development of the site during the Bronze Age, from its occupation in 1650 BC through to 1250 BC. Another cast reproduces the archaeological layer of Phase II (1500-1450 BC) with wooden remnants of dwelling structures, while on the ground level the young visitors can detach the original post-holes of a house built during Phase I (1650-1500 BC), when the site was occupied for the first time (fig. 3).

On the wall next to the stratigraphy, display panels give a clear picture of the development of the site during the Bronze Age showing phases, layers, levels and materials. Each phase is documented by photographs of the layers and by illustrations reproducing the events that caused their formation (construction, destruction, fires and reconstruction) (fig. 4). Drawings of the archaeological materials unearthed in the excavation are ordered according to phase and class of materials (ceramic, bronze, horn/bone, wood, amber). Other display panels refer to archaeobotanical and archaeozoological aspects.

After the presentation of the excavation's site, schoolchildren are engaged in an archaeological excavation in a purpose-built ditch recreated in the same building of the original excavation's site. The ditch presents different situations encountered during

the Montale's excavation (fig. 1). Digging is not meant as a funny game, shovelling out earth until a "treasure" is unearthed. It consists of a careful inspection of the surface until an archaeological layer is uncovered (fig. 5) Each student analyses a specific aspect of the excavation and selects one record from the excavation for further examination.

The next step of the archaeological investigation's program takes place in the laboratory, which is nearby the archaeological area. Here each student fills up a record sheet with consistent indications about the archaeological find he has just uncovered and with the help of the guide analyses and studies it. They can compare archaeological fragments with pictures or drawings of fully reconstructed records in order to learn the methods of classification of records according to components and types. They can even use the microscope to find out how carbonized seeds or charcoal look like, or to detach use-wear on stone, bones or metal artefacts (fig. 6-7). Through all this work they are able to fill up record sheets with consistent indications about the archaeological find he has just discovered.

### Interpreting archaeological records in the open air museum

After training on the methods of the archaeological research, school children go to the reconstructed dwellings to cross-check the data they have collected with the reconstructed setting of the open air museum. Here they can see the true-to scale reproduction of the two houses of Phase I and II reconstructed on the ground of the archaeological evidence (fig. 8).

After preliminary information on the defensive structures of the village

(moat, embankment and entrance door) and on the building techniques used for the construction of the two houses, students divide into two groups of about 12 people and enter the two houses where they find faithful replicas of objects excavated in Montale as well as in other terramare or contemporary bronze age contexts. In order to make clear the terramare social context, the two houses are referred to emblematic features and characters of the terramare society. The house of Phase I is furnished as a common people dwelling, equipped with a work area for craftwork and provided with places for food storage. The house of Phase II is arranged as the house of a higher status family: to highlight this aspect an area has been created in which the head of the family, surrounded by his weapons, can receive his guests (**cover picture**).

Inside the two houses children are asked to identify the objects they have “excavated” in the archaeological area and then analysed and classified in the laboratory. To this purpose they are provided with a map of the two houses where they can locate the objects. In the common people dwelling they find and interpret all those objects relating to farming and hunting such as wood and deer horn bows, arrows and farming instruments (**fig. 9**). In the other house they “discover” the fine black earthenware that characterise the most refined terramare production used by high rank members of the society to offer libations to their guests, while in a corner of the same house they can see the whole equipment used for metalworking, a production which is likely to be controlled by the terramare chiefs.

At the end of the visit schoolchildren are aware of the process that leads from the excavation and scientific research to reconstruction.

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## Summary

### De l'expérience archéologique à l'interprétation: le programme didactique à la Terramara de Montale (Italie)

En réponse à une demande croissante de nouvelles méthodes de présentation des cultures anciennes, combinant approche scientifique et forte interactivité, le Musée de Modène a conçu un parc archéologique consacré aux populations de Terramara à l'Age du Bronze moyen et tardif.

L'intérêt de ce parc est d'associer un véritable site archéologique à sa reconstitution, démontrant ainsi l'intérêt de lier recherche scientifique et diffusion des connaissances. Il propose aux visiteurs une véritable expérience sur les pas d'un archéologue, un style de visite qui convient particulièrement bien au public scolaire.

### Archäologie und Interpretation erleben: Das pädagogische Programm in der Terramara-Siedlung von Montale

Die Idee zum Aufbau eines archäologischen Parks und eines Freilichtmuseums zur Terramare-Kultur entstand als Reaktion des Staatlichen Museums für Archäologie und Ethnologie Modena auf eine verstärkte Nachfrage nach neuen Methoden der Aus- und Darstellung vergangener Kulturen, die einen soliden wissenschaftlichen Ansatz mit einem hohen Grad an Interaktivität kombinieren sollten. Das Freilichtmuseum verbindet dabei die Rekonstruktionen mit dem am Ort befindlichen originalen archäologischen Fundplatz, und hebt dabei die Beziehungen zwischen Forschung und Bildung hervor. Die Einrichtung ermöglicht es den Besuchern, die Arbeitsschritte des Archäologen von der Entdeckung bis zur Rekonstruktion nachzuvollziehen und ist somit für die Besuche von Schulklassen gut geeignet.

■ **Ilaria Pulini** since 2004 is the Director of the Modena City Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology and of the Archaeological Park and Open Air Museum of the Terramara of Montale.

■ **Cristiana Zanasi** is coordinator of the activities of Archaeological Park and Open Air Museum of the Terramara of Montale. She is also in charge of the pedagogical programs both at the park and at the Modena City Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology.



■ **Fig. 7** Analysing “archaeological” finds in the laboratory



■ **Fig. 8** Terramara of Montale. The reconstructed houses in the open-air museum.



■ **Fig. 9** Inside the reconstructed dwellings of a farmer