

 BERETTA

EXCELLENCE

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The last of the perfectionists

In Umbria an ultra-modern craftsman of yesteryear makes Beretta firearms more beautiful and safer

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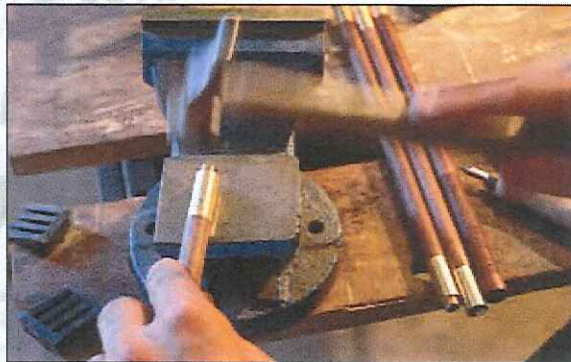
Umbrian hills slope softly down Lake Corbara, an artificial body of water above which stands the town of Civitella del Lago. The woods, the atmosphere, the medieval walls: the flavour of the art of hunting is everywhere in what, centuries ago, was a domain of the Papal State, located halfway between Todi and

Orvieto, and has always been the realm of wild dove hunters. Amidst the narrow streets of rough-hewn stone, facing onto a terrace with a view of the middle portion of the Tiber Valley, Maurizio Cairola (in the photo to the left) has chosen the ideal site for his shop. Assisted by young Valerio, he transforms ebony,

blackwood and rosewood into diminutive jewels. After working for a period as an executive, he decided to devote himself to his life's passion: hunting rifles. He loves them, he cares for them and he collects them. "Like all collectors – he explains – I look for details. It is the detail that makes the difference, and the English have

To the side, three phases of process for manufacturing cleaning rods. Below, the ebony, blackwood and bois de rose used by Cairola to create his accessories.

always been masters with details. I started by going to auctions in London where antique accessories for rifles were sold. They are full-fledged masterpieces, crafted in such a refined manner that it calls for hours of work. Up through the end of the nineteenth century, English companies produced the limited quantities requested of them, bringing enviable skill to the task. Then, as the cost of labour rose, the work was moved to India. Now there is no one able to hand make a bullet mould or a cartridge extractor. The maniacal care for the product has been lost altogether. When I began making my own accessories, I wanted to return to all those traditional techniques that were abandoned because they made no sense under a



To the side, a view of Civitella del Lago. Below, Maurizio Cairola with his helper, Valerio, exhibits the carrying case for Beretta accessories.

policy of quantity. But quantity is always the enemy of quality. In 2003 I took my creations to the Exa in Brescia: the firearms manufacturers were enthusiastic. Especially Beretta, which immediately commissioned me to make a number of objects. But before any accessory arrives at Gardone, I have to approve of it". Maurizio Cairola, with the precision and slow pace of an artisan-artist, he turns out cleaning rods for rifle barrels, oil containers, screwdrivers and dozens of small tools for the maintenance of Beretta hunting weapons whose refined, precise craftsmanship place them under the category of luxury goods. "I try to reconcile the demand, which is increasingly intense, with quality. If I were to mass produce an item, it would turn into something else. Every instrument I create needs time. Smoothing the wood the old-fashioned way means spending at least three hours on a single piece, until I get the finish I am looking for. It is a job that calls for months of research: I study old models, the materials to be used, even the English intervals of the threading. All this to produce the kind of accessories you no longer find in circulation. And to satisfy a company like Beretta, I have no choice but to bring together tradition and modernity". As in Civitella del Lago, where the modern and the historic meet in a medieval jewel. The chefs Vissani and Trippini have opened restaurants here, but the traditional dish is still "scrumptious dove". ❦

