Quale messaggio vorresti trasmettere a chi osserva le tue foto?
Sarei contento di sapere che chi osserva le mie foto possa dire che ha provato emozione, che le foto viste non lo hanno lasciato indifferente. Se la gente quando le vede pensa e sente qualcosa vuol dire che il tuo lavoro funziona e che stai svolgendo bene il tuo mestiere.

Il tuo reportage preferito?
Non ho un reportage preferito, alcuni mi piacciono più di altri ma in linea di massima sono legato a tutto il mio lavoro.

3 aggettivi per descrive Ascoli Piceno
Affascinante, malinconica e familiare.

Il luogo o l'atmosfera che ti piace o ti piacerebbe fotografare di più della nostra città?
La città intera racchiude atmosfere particolari e tutte meritano di essere fotografate, nel mio progetto ci sarà molta Ascoli….

La prima parola in dialetto che hai pronunciato?
Con tutta sincerità non me lo ricordo, mi piace molto il dialetto Ascolano ma non sono molto bravo a parlarlo.

Un difetto di Ascoli?
La mentalità troppo chiusa.

Un suggerimento ad un ragazzo che si è da poco appassionato alla fotografia?
Di avere un forte senso critico in quello che fa e confrontarsi quotidianamente con il panorama fotografico nazionale.

IGNACIO MARIA COCCIA

Ignacio Maria Coccia è nato a Madrid nel 1974, dopo numerosi viaggi tra Spagna e Italia si stabilisce ad Ascoli Piceno dove vive attualmente.
Nel 1998 frequenta l'Istituto Europeo di Design di Roma e nello stesso anno comincia a lavorare come assistente nel mondo dello spettacolo.
Nel 1999 realizza la sua prima mostra personale ad Ascoli Piceno, Saint'Jacquest, gipsy quarter. Nello stesso anno comincia ad occuparsi di reportage sociale e geografico, realizzando numerosi reportage per l'Europa.
Nel 2001 realizza il suo primo libro fotografico Le Piante Tenere, percorso per immagini attraverso l'opera educativa della congregazione delle Pie Operaie dell'Immacolata Concezione di Ascoli Piceno nella memoria degli insegnamenti del fondatore Mons. Francesco Marcucci. Libro realizzato con il patrocinio dell'Assessorato alla cultura del Comune di Ascoli Piceno e della Fondazione Carisap di Ascoli Piceno (edito da Grafiche D'Auria).
Nel luglio del 2002 le sue foto sono esposte presso la Pinacoteca Civica di Sant'Elpidio a Mare in occasione della IV Biennale Internazionale di Fotografia patrocinata dalla Fondazione Italiana per la fotografia di Torino.
Nel settembre del 2002 inizia a lavorare per il Comune di Ascoli Piceno e per la Provincia di Enna al "Peregrinus Progect" commissionato da Cultura 2000, piano della Comunità Economica Europea per la valorizzazione dei siti archeologici.
Nel 2003 entra a far parte dell'Agenzia fotogiornalistica Grazia Neri.
Dal 2004 è impegnato in alcuni progetti nella capitale spagnola, prevalentemente sulla trasformazione edilizia e su alcune tematiche socio-politiche che stanno caratterizzando la Spagna in questi ultimi anni.
Nel 2004 realizza un delicato quanto penetrante reportage in Ucraina, documentando il paese durante la rivoluzione arancione e dal quale ne scaturisce la pubblicazione del suo secondo libro fotografico, Ucraina, ritratto di un paese.
Nel 2005 viene chiamato ad esporre le sue fotografie al Festival Internazionale di Fotoreportage di Roma.
Tra il 2006 e 2007 sviluppa un progetto tra Marche e Umbria nelle zone terremotate in occasione del 10° anniversario del terremoto.
Nel Dicembre del 2007, a poche settimane della dichiarazione unilaterale di indipendenza da parte del Kosovo, realizza il reportage Kosovo, luci dell'ultimo inverno un viaggio attraverso tutta la regione kosovara, tra la grande maggioranza di etnia albanese e la ristrettissima minoranza serba.
Nel 2008 viene invitato ad esporre le sue fotografie al Festival Internazionale di Fotoreportage di Roma.
I suoi reportage vengono pubblicati su importanti riviste nazionali e internazionali: D,la repubblica delle donne, Sportweek, Le Monde, Cosmopolitan, Finalcial Times, SonntagsZeitung, L'espresso, Panorama, Jakc, National Geographic.

Conoscere le proprie possibilità e i propri limiti aiuta a non perdere tempo e a capire dove possiamo arrivare. In ultimo di crederci fino in fondo anche quando tutto sembra andare storto.

Intervista di Matteo Mattei, tratta dal sito www.ascolidavivere.it

Molto interessante è la collaborazione che da qualche tempo lega Ignacio Maria Coccia, in modo fattivo, alla casa editrice ascolana Paoletti D'Isidori CapponiEditori, con cui, grazie ad una reciproca stima ha realizzato nel settembre 2008 un interessante incontro con Davide Monteleone, fotografo vincitore del Word Press Photo sezione news. Per il 2009 sono in programma due progetti molto ambiziosi che avranno questa splendida città come protagonista. www.pdceditori.it

Le immagini in basso: servizi tratti da "Financial Times".

THE SMOOTH GUIDE THE LONG LUXURIOUS WEEKEND

diego della valle's le marche

The founder of Tod's leads Rachel Spence **over his green Italian hills. Photograph by** Ignacio Maria Coccia.

"I count myself very lucky to have been born and brought up in Le Marche. The Italians have an expression for us: *modello marchigiano*. This suggests somebody both extremely hard-working and committed to their homeland. That certainly applies to me. I am so attached to my roots that I even make an effort to speak dialect with my son, although my wife doesn't like it.

I am also proud to employ over a 1,000 *marchigiani* in my company making shoes and luxury leather goods. Tod's Group has its headquarters down in the valley below my house in the village of Casette d'Ete. Shoe-making has been a cornerstone of the economy here for centuries. My grandfather was a cobbler and as a baby my mother used to take me to sleep in my father's workshop while she helped him, so you could say I have the smell of leather in my blood.

Although I work hard – much of my week is spent travelling – I draw sustenance from my home. It offers a wonderful quality of life. Less well-known than its neighbours Tuscany and Umbria, it is a rich, generous landscape, cradled by the Appenines on one side and the Adriatic sea on the other. The countryside is a patchwork of craggy limestone peaks, olive groves, vineyards and emerald-green hills peering over the sea.

The region is also home to splendid works of art and architecture. The Renaissance masters Carlo Crivelli and Lorenzo Lotto worked here and Italy's finest 19th-century poet, Giacomo Leopardi, was born in the town of Recanati.

After landing at Ancona, the best way to discover the region is to hire a car and take off into the interior. If you head north, you'll find yourself winding through hills dotted with unspoilt, walled fortress towns. They are a reminder of the region's bellicose past. First the Romans invaded, then Charlemagne, and then, in 1105, Henry IV made it part of the Holy Roman Empire and named it Le Marche because he had united three border regions. The battles continued through the Renaissance, as local dukes fought with each other and also with the armies sent by popes keen to assert their authority.

One of the best-defended cities is also the loveliest. Ringed by fine 16th century walls, Urbino is a little renaissance work of art. Overlooking a lush, undulating landscape, it's somewhere that man-made and natural beauty come together. The painter Raphael was born here – you can make a pilgrimage to his house, which contains a Madonna he painted as a child.

His work also hangs in the Galleria Nazionale delle Marche, which lies within Urbino's Palazzo Ducale – in itself a spectacular-looking building with two graceful towers framing a trio of balconies. Inside, the walls are peppered with masterpieces, including works by Paolo Uccello and Piero della Francesca. I collect contemporary art and find the Renaissance a little bit too feminine sometimes, but coming to this gallery reminds me of the innate graciousness of the period.

About half an hour's drive south of Urbino is a delightful hotel and restaurant, Symposium. Basking in infinite green countryside, it's a feel-good hideaway. The outdoor swimming pool, bordered with lemon trees, is in a pine-fringed garden and the rooms feature richly patterned textiles. I favour Symposium's Quatro Stagioni restaurant because the chef hunts down top-quality local ingredients of which the most prized is the truffle – his *fettuccine al tartufo* draws me back time and again.

To lay your head further south, I would suggest the Casa de Cumpo, a six-room B&B attached to an *agriturismo* restaurant, which only serves food sourced locally. It still feels like a farmhouse with its thick stone walls and simple decor and the panoramic views over the valley are a pick-me-up in the morning – as are the breakfasts of fresh fruit, yoghurt, homemade breads, doughnuts and fruit tarts. Equally enticing are the evening meals which are based around fruit, vegetables and meat from their farm. In summertime, the outdoor pool comes into its own.

Not far away is another charming small hotel, La Luma. In a restored medieval palazzo in the hilltop village of Ostra Vetere, my 80-something neighbour, whose bad feet had finally forced him to sell, I handed over my €17,000 cheque to Piero's son, a chain-smoking former traffic policeman grounded since he fell off his motorbike.

I'd first fallen in love with a glass of Prosecco in the bar afterwards, someone said to me: "Che cia. You are now a landowner. What are you planning to do with your hectare and 60 olive trees?" I hadn't a clue.

A true connoisseur, Piero had spent half a century or more hoarding anything that he thought might cause its owner joy. The house was crammed with trews, metal garage doors, old kitchen cabinets, an ancient bathtub, coils of rusted wire, stakes, ladders and a chest of drawers filled with old clothes. Piero carefully presented his junk with sheets of corrugated asbestos, leaving hundreds of asbestos shards working their way into the soil.

I began by clearing up. I bagged, scraped, I carted away. None of this shiny work improved my *bella figura* in the village: real farmers don't tidy. I turned to Pasquale, my caretaker, who has toiled after my house from the village below to tend to olives, vines and fig trees.

Together we created my original garden, with me trying to persuade Pasquale that not every plant has to be bright orange or bright purple (Italians love their flowers to look like them, however).

Our first project was to rip out Piero's rows of 50-year-old vines, most of them dead already. Much as I like drinking it, I had no interest in making my own wine. I felt that to Giorgio, the village pharmacist, who retired to run the experimental blending different grapes. The results were so awful the entire village begged him to take his wine back and pour it down the drain.

The vines in my field were strung on baling wire between ugly concrete posts, deeply embedded in soil that sets like concrete for most of the year. I had to hire a local farmer with a tractor to pull them up. The price for half a day's work: €90.

Not a lot, but I was starting to realise that, in Italy, the cost of growing olives is a luxury, a decision to spend money not to make it.

At Christmas I returned to London. "Don't prune the trees until I get back," I instructed Pasquale. I wanted him to teach me how to prune, which I felt was a necessary monotheme involved in growing olives.

In Italy they say that when a *contadino* stands under a properly pruned olive, he should be able to throw up his hat and catch it. The more literary French say that a swallow should be able to fly through a well-pruned tree without breaking a wing.

Pruning olives looks like a bucolic pursuit but turns out to be a risky business: people fall off ladders and down wild boar potholes

After pruning, the timing of the harvest is olive farming's other great mystery. In Umbria they are picked when they are just starting to change from green to violet, which is usually mid-November. Last year was earlier still: the doors of our two mills opened in mid-October.

They put out stacks of plastic crates for us farmers to borrow. For a few weeks the supermarket in Ovetico sold 50-litre stainless steel storage tanks (€60), five litre tins (€3 each), dark bottles of various sizes (price unknown), and nets (€10 each). I failed to buy any of those items, not knowing that I would need them.

Picking olives turns out to be hard work. The huge nylon net I'd inherited was cumbersome and unwieldy. I had to wrap it around the trunk of the tree, looping up the outside edge with stakes to create a net container for the olives to fall. Pasquale bounced merrily down my steep hill.

It took time to drag the circular net from tree to tree and then pull it out into position. Only while it is in place, its scallloped edges looking ethereal and delicate as butterfly's wings, could I raise a ladder and climb up with my arms above my head to reach the tree. Pasquale, who was seventy-five, had the cut day-tide orange plastic comb beat like a gnarled hand. There is an electric flail, telescopic version of this comb that you can use standing on the ground but they are dear (€1,000 and Pasquale hates them.

Picking olives is as dull as the dreadfulest – don't only. So I now have 52 litres of premium olive oil – far more than I can ever use but far too little to ship or sell commercially – sitting in my garage in the middle of the Umbrian countryside, where you can't even give it away.

If all goes well, next year I'll have even more. Such are the economics of the mathouse – or the passion of the virgin olive farmer.

After six days Pasquale and I had 14 crates – the harvest minimum for a pressing. At 7.30am the next morning they are just starting to change from green to violet, which is usually mid-November. Last year was earlier still: the doors of our two mills opened in mid-October.

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Carolyn Lyons at her olive farm: 'when the field abutting my garden came up for sale, I had to buy it to preserve the land'

Ignacio Coccia/Grazia Neri

'I'm a reluctant olive grower'

A hectare of Umbrian hillside and 60 olive trees – what could be finer? **Carolyn Lyons** learns that living the dream can be challenging

I never wanted to be an olive farmer. I did, however, want to live for part of each year in Italy.

I wanted to see sun and sky – both scarce commodities in north London, where I grew up and in turn brought up my own children. Fifteen years ago, I had bought a small 18th-century divisoni cum farmhouse in an Italian hillside between a lake and a village, an hour north of Rome.

After surviving the bilingual hassels involved in resurrecting a ruined shell, I was able to sit on my terrace with a glass of wine and watch the sun set behind ranks of soft, Umbrian hills.

Olive trees were part of the scenery, not only the seasons but a way of life changing around me. When I moved in, there were two working farms along my pot-holed lane, plus strips of land where old men from the village would work the heavy clay, grow their olives and make their own oil.

I felt I lived in a medieval book of hours: the only concession to the modern world was that the *contadini* (peasant farmers) drove bumping, three-wheeled "Apes" and the occasional tractor instead of donkeys.

The *contadini* – the old men – died. The Apes didn't. Young people didn't want to do that work. Now there are seven big new houses – weekend homes owned by wealthy Romans – lining my narrow lane.

So when the field abutting my garden came up for sale, I had to buy it to preserve the land and protect myself from more building.

On a cold, dark, rainy night in November 2000 I found myself listening to a lawyer read aloud every word of a comprehensible, legalese-free contract. Ten times in our conversation I found myself and my husband agreeing to an olive farm. I did, however, want to live for part of each year in Italy.

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HOUSE & HOME

FINANCIAL TIMES | Saturday March 22 / Sunday March 23 2008

True grit Bringing hope to Glasgow's rundown waterfront **Page 2**
Eastern eye Emerging design in China and South Korea **Pages 11 & 12**
Green rooms Indoor style for outdoor spaces **Page 13**

Next neighbourhood 2 **Property hot spots** 4-7 **Design** 11-12 **Outside space** 13 **Expat lives** 15 **Home is where...** 16