



BPLAJ – Lajatico interni, con opere di Nado Canuti. I materiali per gli interventi pittorici sono stati forniti da **Caparol Italia** (crediti pag.120)/BPLAJ – Lajatico, interior, with works by Nado Canuti. The materials for the pictorial interventions were supplied by **Caparol Italia** (crediti pag.120)

La Banca Popolare di Lajatico fu fondata il 14 settembre 1884 per iniziativa di un gruppo di soci coordinato dal Dott. Guelfo Guelfi, medico condotto del comune. L'iniziativa faceva seguito alla costituzione della "Società per l'Educazione del Popolo", pensata dallo stesso Guelfi per aumentare l'istruzione e ridurre l'analfabetismo; il suo motto era infatti: «Il progresso dei Popoli è un problema di educazione». A questa seguì l'istituzione di una "Cassa Mutua" per sostenere finanziariamente le famiglie degli operai e contadini. Qualche anno dopo nacque la Banca Popolare di Lajatico, immediatamente considerata, dai soci e da tutti gli abitanti della zona, come un bene proprio da difendere e sostenere in quanto strumento di progresso indispensabile per l'avvio di un processo di rilancio della zona, da sempre al margine, svantaggiata ed anche dimenticata. Nel corso degli anni settanta iniziò una graduale espansione, da prima in Valdera e successivamente in tutta la Provincia. Oggi il legame che la Banca ha con il suo territorio e la sua originaria funzione "sociale" si esplica anche attraverso altri strumenti, primo fra tutti l'arte. Nel momento in cui negli anni passati la Banca ha deciso di rinnovare la propria immagine e le proprie sedi principali a Lajatico e Pontedera, il progetto sviluppato dall'architetto Alberto Bartalini ha fatto dell'arte il fulcro centrale attorno al quale far ruotare l'architettura. Ma diversamente da quello che spesso succede in queste occasioni il caveau dove le preziose opere d'arte sono state collocate è accessibile a tutti perché sono i locali stessi della Banca, i suoi spazi esterni, le sue facciate. L'arte diviene architettura, arredo, finitura, che i clienti ed i semplici cittadini possono ammirare liberamente. Fedele al motto del loro fondatore la Banca di Lajatico ha reso l'Arte in cui ha investito qualcosa da vivere e consumare, strumento di una crescita culturale collettiva. L'astrattismo di alcune forme che si contrappone alla geometricità di altre, l'uso dei materiali, il disegno dei particolari, niente è casuale, niente è autoreferenziale ma tutto si integra con lo spazio architettonico e funzionale in cui si colloca. Il rapporto fra Arte e Architettura e Urbanistica è un tema che ritroviamo anche, e soprattutto, nell'esperienza, lunga un anno, dell'Officina Canuti, portata avanti dall'artista sul territorio della Valdera con il coinvolgimento fattivo di decine di studenti dei licei e delle Istituzioni. «Una democratizzazione nella fruizione dell'arte» come afferma Gillo Dorfles in un suo scritto a proposito del progetto; una lettura del territorio, e quindi della realtà quotidiana, attraverso l'Arte creata dai giovani studenti che non sono più utenti passivi ma soggetti coscienti e attivi di un processo di rinnovamento e crescita umana oramai inarrestabile.

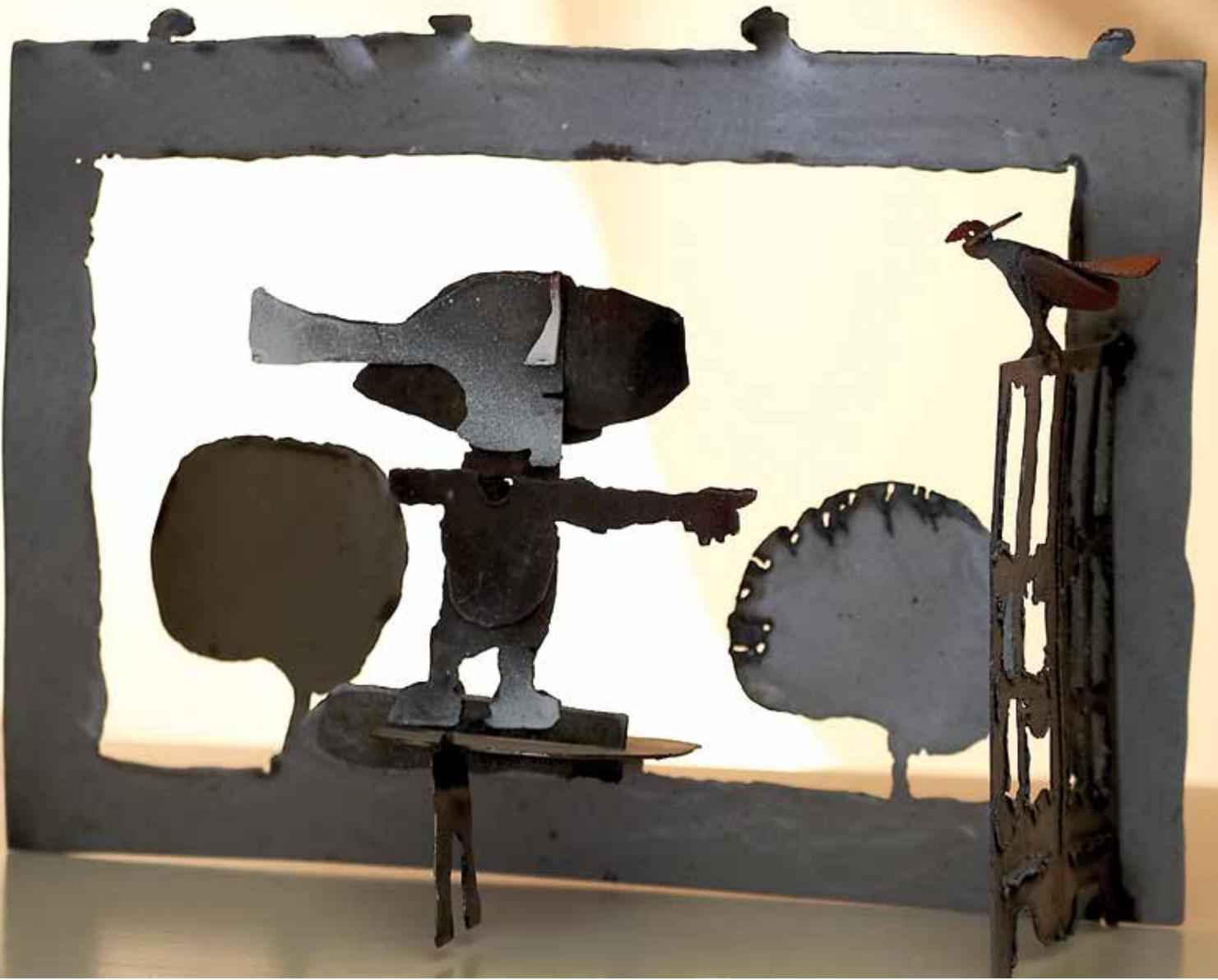
testo a cura di/text by **Fabio Rosseti**



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The Banca Popolare di Lajatico was founded on 14th September 1884, by a group of partners led by Guelfo Guelfi, the municipal doctor. The idea followed upon the creation of the "Society for the Education of the People", conceived by Guelfi to spread education and reduce illiteracy, his motto being: "Progress for the people depends on education". The creation of a "Welfare Fund" followed, to provide financial assistance for the families of factory and farm workers for periods when they couldn't work. And so, a few years later, the Bank was created as a Limited Liability Credit Cooperative, with the aim of providing credit through pooled mutual trusts and savings. Right from the start, both the partners and the local people felt ownership of Banca Popolare di Lajatico, and felt it was worth defending and backing as it was a tool of progress which was essential in giving a boost to an area which had always been marginal, neglected and even forgotten. During the 1970s a gradual expansion began, first in Valdera and then throughout the Province. Nowadays the Bank's links with the local area and its original "social" function are also expressed in new ways, above all through art. When a few years ago the

Bank decided to update its image and renovate its main offices at Lajatico and Pontedera, the project created by the architect Alberto Bartolini made art the fulcrum around which architecture would turn. But, in contrast to what often happens in these cases, the vaults holding the valuable works of art are open to everybody, because they are the very rooms of the Bank, its external spaces and its facades. Art becomes architecture, furnishing and finishings that the clients and everyday citizens can freely admire. Faithful to the motto of its founder, the Banca di Lajatico has made the art in which it has invested something that is to be experienced and consumed, and a tool of collective cultural growth. The abstract nature of some of the shapes – which contrast with the geometrical forms of others – the use of materials, the design of details: nothing is there by chance, nothing is unconnected, but rather everything is integrated with the architectural and functional space in which it is housed. The close relationship between Art and Architecture and Town Planning is a theme which also shines in the year-long experience of the Canuti workshop, which was led by the artist in the Valdera area

with the hands-on involvement of dozens of high school pupils. "A democratization of the enjoyment of art", as Gillo Dorfles wrote in his review of the project; an interpretation of local surroundings, and thus of daily reality, through art created by young students who are no longer passive recipients but have become active participants in a human renewal and growth process which is now unstoppable.



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opere di Nado Canuti/
BPLAJ-Lajatico, interior, with
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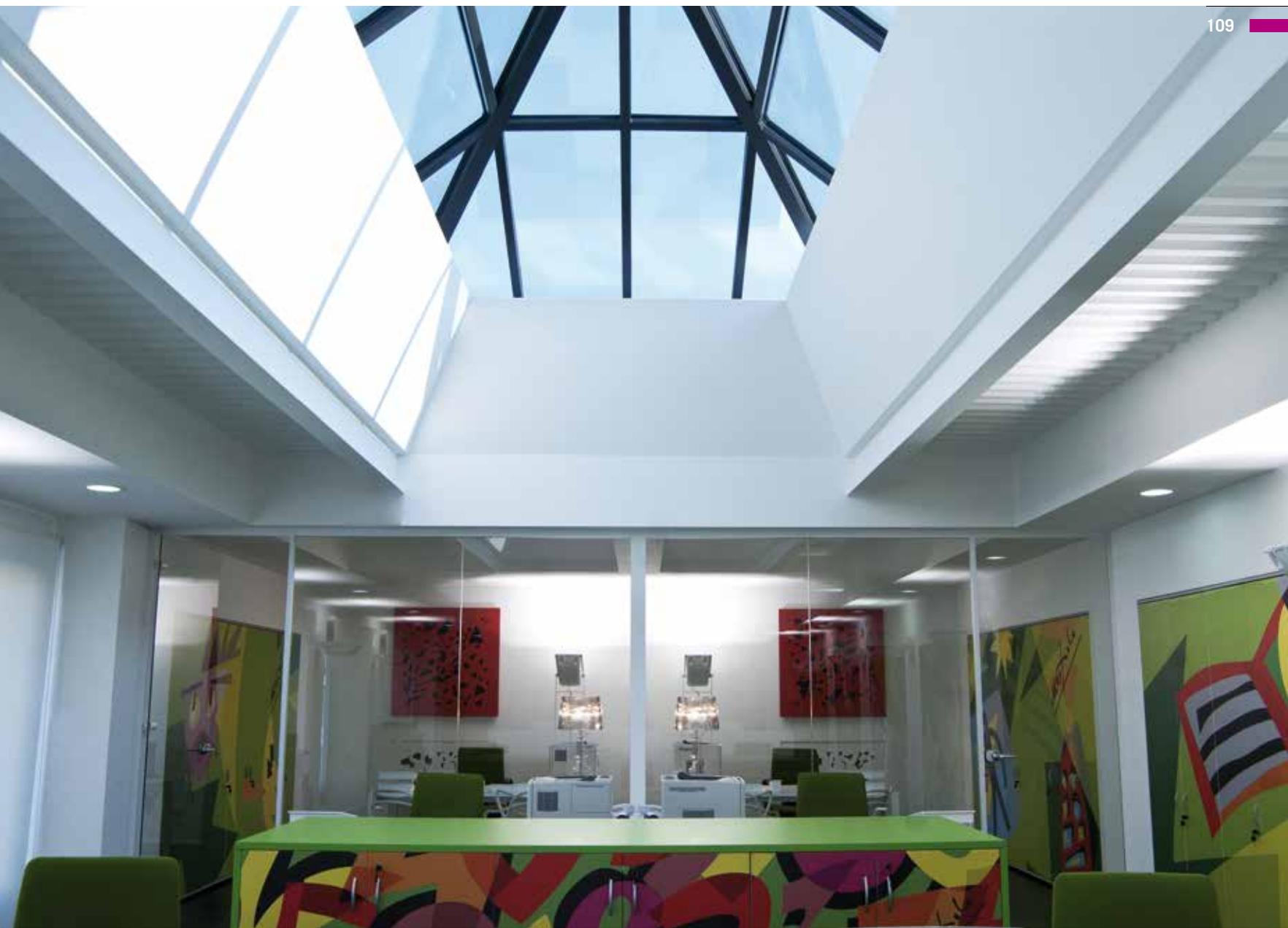
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a sinistra: BPLAJ Pontedera, Pontedera (PI)
L'ingresso e la hall principale; i pavimenti
in gres porcellanato sono stati realizzati da
Menichini s.r.l. (crediti pag.120)
regia Alberto Bartalini/ on the left: BPLAJ
Pontedera, Pontedera (PI)
The entrance and main lobby; the porcelain
stoneware tile floors were made by
Menichini s.r.l. (credits pag.120)
director Alberto Bartalini



A bank turned into a work of art. This is what has happened to the Pontedra branch of the Cooperative Bank of Lajatico with the reproduction of a sketch specially created for this project by contemporary artist Ugo Nespolo onto a 300m² facade, as part of the renovation of a building which used to house a cinema. It is a sort of oversized canvas with numbers and elements in relief, typical of the tree-dimensionality of the work of the Piedmontese painter and sculptor who has already worked on several projects in the Pisan province, including urban fittings. The ventilated facade of the Lajatico Bank building was specially constructed for Ugo Nespolo's work to be added to the exterior. The three floors boast 12 windows, four for each floor, which, by showing everybody on the outside what happens inside, symbolise the transparency of the banks operations. The concept of transparency and accessibility of the banking world is also expressed by Nespolo's use of numbers in his work which can be seen by all who pass through via Belfiore, the street behind of the historical centre of Pontedra where the new branch is located. Numbers are a fundamental part of a bank's work, but for the artist they are also a harmonious element of creativity. As for the historic branch of the Bank, at Lajatico, the architectural project created by Alberto Bartalini with

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BPLAJ Pontedera, Pontedera (PI) Ugo Nespolo, Arredi e accessori. **Ideal Forme 2000** (crediti pag.120) ha realizzato la fornitura "chiavi in mano" di strutture in acciaio, illuminazione; arredi ufficio, arredi su misura e accessori vari su disegno di Ugo Nespolo regia Alberto Bartalini/ BPLAJ Pontedera, Pontedera (PI) Ugo Nespolo, furniture and accessories. **Ideal Forme 2000** (credits pag.120) carried out the supply "turnkey" of steel structures, lighting; office furnishings, specially designed furniture and accessories designed by Ugo Nespolo director Alberto Bartalini



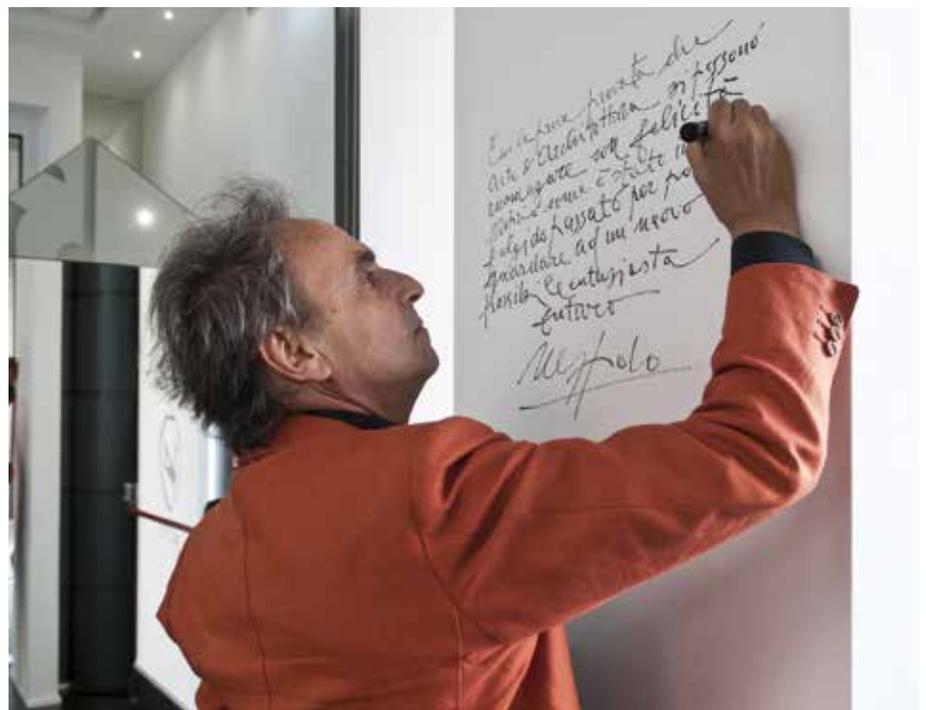


the contribution of Ugo Nespolo becomes a unique work of art available for all who appreciate, and all who will appreciate in the future, artistic creations. The Piedmontese artist has always sought to bring art into the midst of people, making it accessible to all. In this, he was in total agreement with the Bank of Lajatico. Furthermore the essential architectural lines of his creation maintain the basic features of the old construction, the historic “Massimo” cinema which has always been an important feature of life of the city and its neighbouring area. Innovation, but also respect of a specific urban identity and of its past. Nespolo's work is not limited to the external facade, but also permeates the interior which, as is the case of the historic branch in Lajatico with Nado Canuti's work, becomes an art gallery. It showcases furnishings designed by Ugo Nespoli and his drawings and colourful artwork on the walls, contrasting with the white textile which covers walls, ceilings and dividing panels. They look like precious carvings, like fine lacework, but actually are numbers, repeated ad infinitum, engraved and covered in holes. But what is a Bank without numbers?



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BPLAJ sede operativa di Pontedera,
Gillo Dorfles e Ugo Nespolo/
BPLAJ operational headquarters in
Pontedera, Gillo Dorfles and Ugo Nespolo

in basso: facciata esterna BPLAJ su disegno di Ugo Nespolo. Gli infissi sono stati forniti da **B.N.V.**(crediti pag. 120) below: *BPLAJ exterior facade designed by Ugo Nespolo. Window frames have been supplied by **B.N.V.** (credits pag. 120)*

a destra: sedile urbano su disegno di Ugo Nespolo/
right: *bench designed by Ugo Nespolo*



