

VALLE DELLE CARTIERE

The history of the Paper Museum

The Maina Inferiore Paper Mill

Maina is the name that indicates the central section of the Valle delle Cartiere distinguished in the localities of Maina Inferiore, di Mezzo and Superiore. The Paper Museum is located within the ancient paper center of Maina Inferiore, a production complex whose oldest nucleus dates back to the 15th-16th century. Epoch engravings and images show us the structure of the building as it must have appeared between the 18th and 19th centuries, with wooden blinds for drying the sheets on the upper floors. Important changes were made to the structure in the second half of the nineteenth century, made necessary by the modernization of the production plant with the activation of a continuous machine (the second in the Valley after the one introduced in 1875 in the Maina Superiore paper mill). At the end of the 19th century, 5 Dutch machines and a paper machine, two steam boilers and a dynamo stood out among the machines installed. Even today, the profile of the structure is characterized by a 33 meter high chimney, built after 1905, the only one left intact among the many that populated the Valley. The paper mill maintained its activity until 1962 and with it ceased the production of paper in the Valley. Its longevity has made it possible to collect the memory of former employees in order to be able to reconstruct the production phases of the ancient papermaking within it.

The Project

The recovery of the buildings in Maina Inferiore, carried out between 2000 and 2007, was aimed at restoring a high-value production center with reference to special artisan papers and watermarked papers. The intervention was not aimed only at the preservation of a paper mill that has historically played a leading role in the evolution of the Valley, but has carried out a functional adaptation of the complex, allowing it to be the site of different common theme: the world of paper. Since 2007 Maina Inferiore has housed the Paper Museum, an exhibition that illustrates the centuries-old history of paper in the Toscolano Maderno area.

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Opening time

From 15 March to 15 October: Monday
to Sunday, 10.00 - 18.00 with
continuous opening hours

The Museo della Carta (Center of
Excellence) is open all year round by
reservation for school groups or
groups and from Easter to October it is
also open on holidays





The Paper Museum

The last factory in the valley to stop production, in 1962, was that of Maina Inferiore. And right where the extraordinary entrepreneurial story of the paper district had stopped, the Municipality of Toscolano Maderno (which became the owner of the entire valley in 1993) has planned the rebirth of this unique place, which today is considered one of the most important industrial archeology sites. important in Northern Italy.

After having supported the elderly workers group of the Cartiera di Toscolano, which had long ago set up a small paper museum in the old concierge of Maina Inferiore, the Municipality, with the support of Burgo Group SpA and the Mountain Community, has promoted the architectural recovery of the entire monumental complex, creating the «Center of excellence and business incubator dedicated to the paper-printing chain». The works began in April 2005 and ended on 2 June 2007, the day of the inauguration.

The Center, now called the Paper Museum, in 2017 obtained the regional recognition of "Museum Collection".

The museum itinerary

The museum itinerary, located inside the ancient Maina Inferiore paper mill, allows you to retrace the history of paper and the Valle delle Cartiere in chronological order from its origins to the twentieth century. The visitor is welcomed in the sixteenth-century rooms of the paper mill, where they are illustrated the different phases of the ancient method of making paper. The raw material for the production of paper was made up of rags (linen, hemp and cotton). The rags, after being carefully sorted and chopped, were put to macerate in large stone tanks (some still visible in the museum) with water and quicklime. Subsequently the rags were reduced to pulp thanks to the work of the wooden mallets, moved by the water wheels. With the white pulp thus obtained, the paper master produced the sheets using a special form. The sheets were then pressed and left to dry on special drying racks positioned on the highest floors of the paper mill. Once dry, the sheets were glued to obtain the right waterproofing and finally smoothed. In the section dedicated to the finds from the archaeological excavations conducted in the Valle delle Cartiere, an interactive station will allow you to relive everyday life in an ancient paper mill. Paganini printers, rare and precious volumes printed in Toscolano from the first half of the sixteenth century on display.

