

Reflections From The Past:

David Salvatori's First Book

"Reflections from the Past" is a photographic exploration in the heart of Tirino valley in Italy, ending with the dive in the crystal clear waters of the Capodacqua lake.

The lake of Capodacqua is located in the Gran Sasso National Park and Laga Mountains, surrounded by unspoiled nature of vast archaeological interest. The cold and pristine water that feeds the lake comes straight from Gran Sasso along a 27km-long limestone path.

The lake hosts two submerged Middle-age windmills and a partly emerged paint manufacturer, located on the edge of the basin. This year the lake was included by Sport Diver among the 50 Best Dive Sites in the World. Besides being an amazing dive destination, Capodacqua and the surroundings can offer much more, history, nature and culture.

Anyway, this book is not simply a journey in and around Capodacqua, as it's mainly an autobiography where the places visited stimulate fascination and personal reflections, an opportunity to speak about my personal experience with water and diving.

The Water And Me: Why a book on Capodacqua?

Water symbolizes my personal dividing line between my first and second life. It was the



Nikon D800E, Seacam housing and Tokina 10-17mm fish-eye @ 10mm. f/7.1, 1/60 sec., ISO 100

conduit for introspection that led me to renew and become aware of the true and balancing essence of my soul when, at the age of 36, the passion for diving exploded inside of me; the romantic, utopian dreamer of my youth came alive again.

Taking underwater photographs immediately revealed to me, a lover of the visual arts, a suitable way to show a new balance in my life; photography and diving was at first a catharsis and affirmation, and then became the tool to profess my infinite love

for the sea and the creatures that inhabit it.

In recent years I have had the chance to travel extensively, and I am committed to sharing my past experiences to capture through observance some of the most threatened aquatic species on the planet. I have used these photos in competitions and publications, but until now I had failed to see in my work a common essence on which to base a project and articulate all that is required in the creation of a book.



Nikon D800E, Seacam housing and Tokina 10-17mm fish-eye @ 10mm. f/8, 1/50 sec., ISO 100

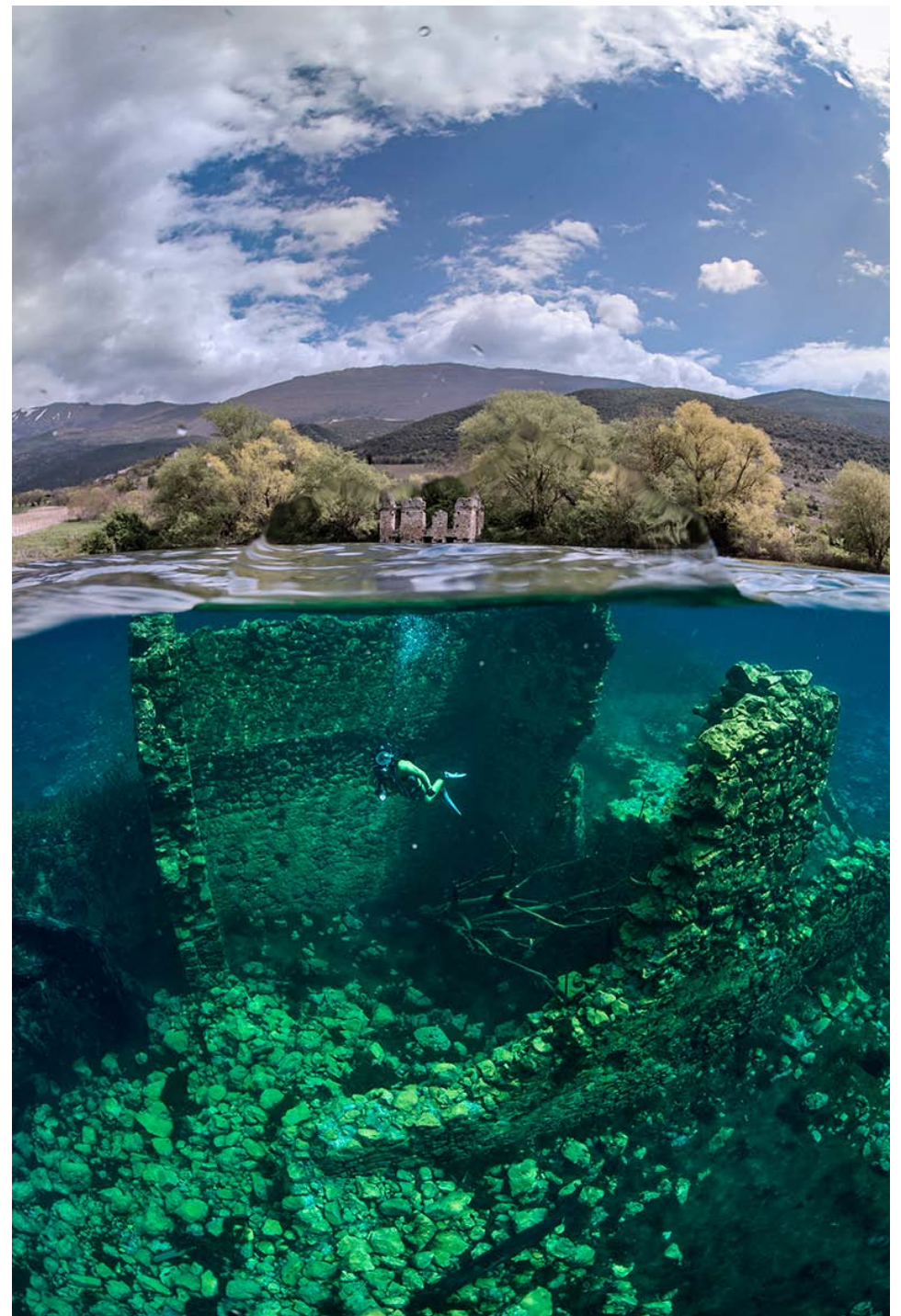
Nikon D800E, Seacam housing and Tokina 10-17mm fish-eye @ 10mm. f/8, 1/50 sec., ISO 100

The desire to go further, to leave the first tangible evidence of my passion for water and photography was very strong. As often happens, sometimes what is hidden right before our eyes is unexpectedly revealed: the lake of Capodacqua.

I have been diving in Capodacqua since 2011, but it was only this year that I realized this magical place, rich in history and charm, was the ideal place to begin my photographic journey. The

crystal clear waters of this lake are the perfect means to seek out and discover yourself, a place where peace and tranquillity gives the opportunity for the spirit to grow.

Capodacqua is a unique place, and although well-known by underwater photographers, no one has ever made it the subject of an articulated work. Its proximity to Rome gave me a chance to immerse myself seamlessly and eagerly. The submerged watermills are





Nikon D800E, Seacam housing and Tokina 10-17mm fish-eye @ 10mm. f/10, 1/60 sec., ISO 100

the most famous, but in combing the lake inch-by-inch I had the ability to find my voice. It was here, in the quiet solitude of the cold waters of the lake, that I finally found the way to interpret myself, the key to the title of my book.

“Reflections from the Past” because there is an obvious line that connects all my photographic work: those of reflections of the images on the separate surfaces of water and air.

Even more so, the reflections on Capodacqua seem to come from

the past: the stones of the old mills that are reflected on the surface of the crystal waters of the lake tell of a unique area, of saints and warriors, popes and princes, give the perception of something that was, that no longer exists, yet continues to exist through a transformation, immersed in a dreamlike dimension. The suggestion is to perceive only the reflection, while the object and story belong to the past. It is a story of extraordinary Italian history, a contribution to the recovery of the central role that our country has always had and deserves



Nikon D800E, Seacam housing and Tokina 10-17mm fish-eye @ 10mm. f/6.3, 1/200 sec., ISO 100

to have in world culture.

Reflection is in the end an instrument “of reflection,” a mirror to past fears and troubles, for which the exploration of Capodacqua and its surrounding areas is a “journey” whose powers of suggestion become encapsulated and processed in a symbolic way. The final goal is the achievement of a positive thought, peaceful, calm and as clear as the lake’s water; the communion with water being the road to rescue, the map to discovery of what is true and real in life.

The Tirino Valley And Capestrano: The Journey Begins

The “journey” starts from the Tirino valley: this area, where life still centers on agriculture and shepherds, is among the Gran Sasso National Park and Monti della Laga (Laga Mountains), the Green Heart of Abruzzo. The valley lies between the communities of Bussi sul Tirino, Capestrano and Ofena, and the provinces of Pescara and L’Aquila. The Tirino River, one of the



Nikon D800 and Nikkor 60mm. f/8, 1/250 sec., ISO 100

most beautiful and clean in Italy and Europe, meanders through the valley.

The Tirino River is unusual, originating at a low altitude and with three sources, Capodacqua, Presciano and Capestrano. Its name comes from the Greek word “tritōn,” for triple sources. Immediately upon leaving the Rome-Pescara highway, driving along the SS153 road from Bussi to Navelli feels like traveling back in time, everything changing in an instant: the noise and images of modern life disappear. The mountains remain, the wind, the cloud of flying birds and old rural homes sparsely scattered on the

slopes of this large valley of tectonic origin. Often I leave the city and travel in stormy weather, yet when I arrive here I magically find the sun, thanks to the protection provided by the surrounding massive limestone mountains.

Tirino Valley is a place of the heart, welcoming with the silence, smiles and old-fashioned unobtrusiveness of its people. Capestrano overlooks the Tirino Valley, and is a beautiful part of our history and ancient culture; it is the perfect place to understand that our future must reclaim our past, that our



72 shots @ f/5.6, 300 secs., ISO 400 - Nikon D800 and Sigma 15mm fish-eye

traditions are the ways to rescue our lost balance. It is the ideal place to begin the journey.

The first thing that opened my heart here in Capestrano was finding the same houses and steep alleys of the rambling adventures of my happy childhood.

In Capestrano the elderly see you coming and look at you with curiosity and a desire to talk to you. If you stop to chat, they ask questions that invite you to talk about yourself, something unusual in a world where the “social networks” are a multitude of voices speaking only of themselves.

Capestrano has brought me back to my childhood, and enlightened me to the subconscious reason that led me to take a trip here: the physical journey was actually a personal search for the right place to examine my life.

Going back to my memories invited me to sit and make me ask the right questions, discovering that the path I took through Capestrano and its surroundings is the path of change that I have undertaken in recent years thanks to diving.



Nikon D800E, Seacam housing and Tokina 10-17mm fish-eye @ 10mm. f/6,3, 1/200 sec., ISO 100



Nikon D800E, Seacam housing and Tokina 10-17mm fish-eye @ 10mm. f/6,3, 1/200 sec., ISO 100



Nikon D800E, Seacam housing, Nikkor 105mm and +10 external diopter. f/25, 1/320 sec., ISO 100

Rocca Calascio: Letting go

After Capestrano, the “journey” took me to Rocca Calascio, a requisite stop on the path to change.

The silence and mysteriousness of Rocca Calascio are the perfect elements for clearing the mind before entering the water. reality is ever-changing, and to believe it is not so is simply an illusion that brings nothing but suffering. The abandonment of these illusions and acceptance of change sets us free.

Rocca Calascio, with its face carved out over centuries, shows us this sense of constant change. At first glance, we might see this as a difficult and cold place from which we just want to escape, but if you have the courage and optimism to accept the idea of change, if you know and understand that at some point in your life you need to leave everything behind and begin anew, to start over, then this abandoned place will welcome you with open arms.

It will adopt you, inspire you, and be your guiding light.

Capodacqua And The Mills: Renewal

After Capestrano and Rocca Calascio, the “journey” takes us to Capodacqua, where we are “ready” now to dive in the crystal clear waters of the lake

There is something very spiritual about being immersed in water. There is an ancient relationship between water and spirituality, like the deep-rooted link between water and religion.

Through the stories of mythical and metaphysical collective and individual catharsis we see a theme as to how water held such value in religion. The water that cleanses sin and shame, water that purifies and allows man’s rebirth.

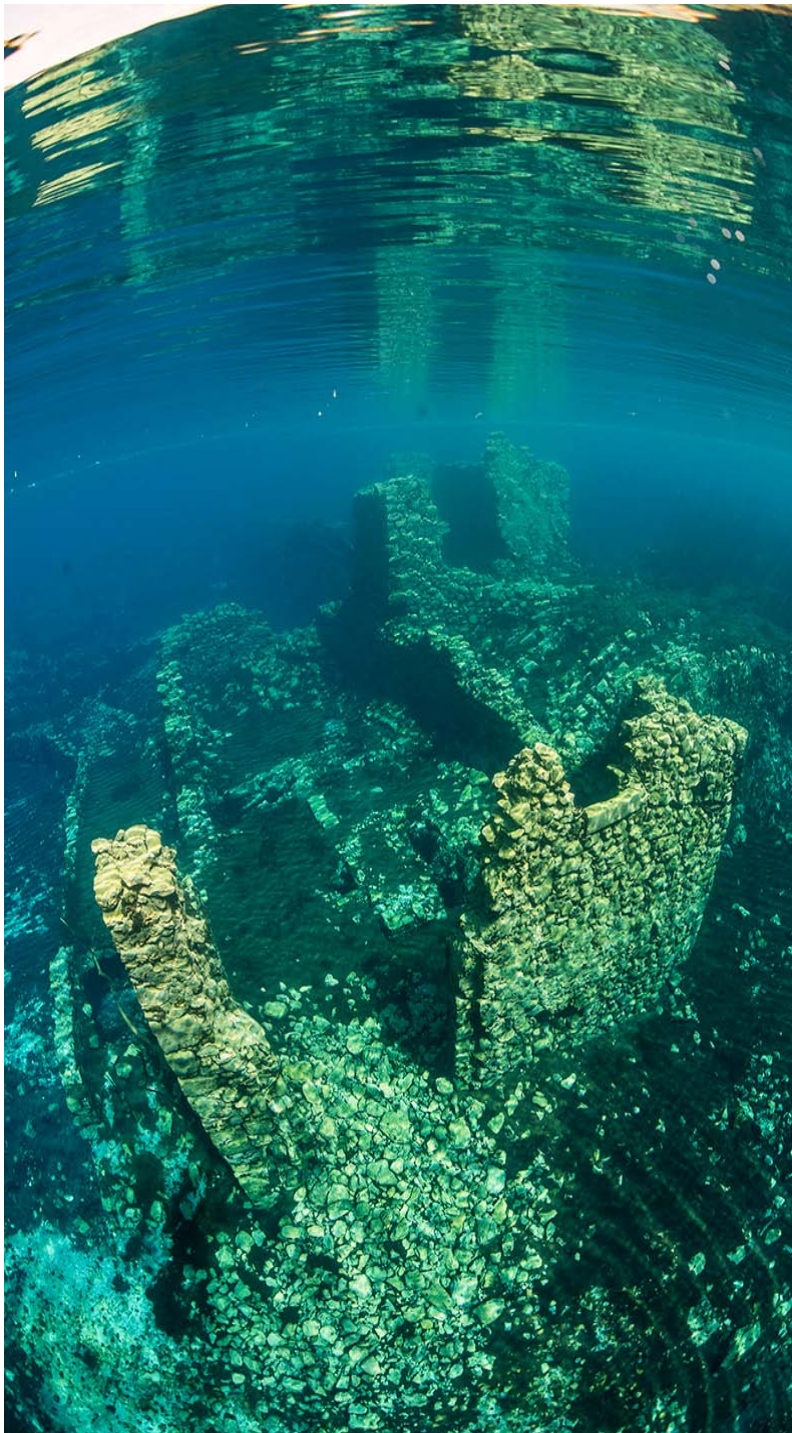
It becomes clear why water must therefore be part of the “journey”: the journey, from Homer’s odyssey to that of Dante and Joyce, is a metaphor

for the psychological journey of self-growth. Even the act of a shipwreck is an abandonment of self, a rejection of physicality and oblivion.

My dive in Lake Capodacqua becomes the critical step of the journey, the point of no return, the rippling reflections split the crystal waters; sinking into its depths is cathartic as an abandonment of the old self and the completion of my renewal and revitalization process.

Now the plunge into the lake is the culmination of a journey in which the places I visited stimulated my fascination and personal reflections. Exploring the submerged ancient structures of the mills, you find the key to understanding growth: the past, letting it go, change.

The submerged structures of the mills, once the scene of fervent human activity now forever silenced in the depths, become symbolic of the moment of change and personal transformation. The photographer portrays with crystal clarity the perfect representation of a transition that is



expressed in the present, the moment when diving among them.

The past regenerates and is reflected in this new light.

The Life In The Lake: Rebirth And Journey's End

Capodacqua is not only the lake of the submerged mills, it is also house and shelter for many animals being resident here. The lives in the lake are real and existing beings, giving a sense of change and rebirth. The new life in the mills is that of small beings that inhabit it, the water fleas, shrimp, water snails, water birds, and colonies of brown trout. They are the continuation of a never-ending cycle, the metamorphosis of a lively and intense past.

These animals invite us to live in the present moment, to turn our attention to the reality around us, the here and now, and to interact with it. Observing and photographing them gives serenity because it gives a sense of presence in reality, in life. This distracts from the obsessive thoughts and gives peace and tranquility to the mind.

The “new life” symbol of rebirth and continuous renewal of the lake are these little beings, delicate and gentle symbols of our Mother Nature that renews life where before there was death.

A few years ago I started to live a full and intimate contact with nature through water. By observing nature I learned love, love for life.

This is what gives meaning to my travels in and around Capodacqua.

This is the goal of my inner journey.

David Salvatori

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David started underwater photography in 2008. Since 2011 he is participating in the most important national and international competitions, achieving many recognitions and awards.

His main interest is around nature photography and conservation issues, to which devotes his travels around the world. In recognition of his activities and awareness of some of the most endangered species of the planet, he was selected as a member of the Ocean Artist Society in 2015.



Fotografie di David Salvatori



www.reflectionsfromthepast.com