

Beauty is good for Health

Flavio Lirussi<sup>1</sup> and Donatella Belotti<sup>2</sup>

Explore Association

<sup>1</sup> University of Padova and <sup>2</sup> University of Palermo, Italy



Explore the connections with ourselves, the others, the environment....and take action!





## Who we are

- We are a team of professionals working in the field of Health, Environment, Education and Sustainable Development

## What we do

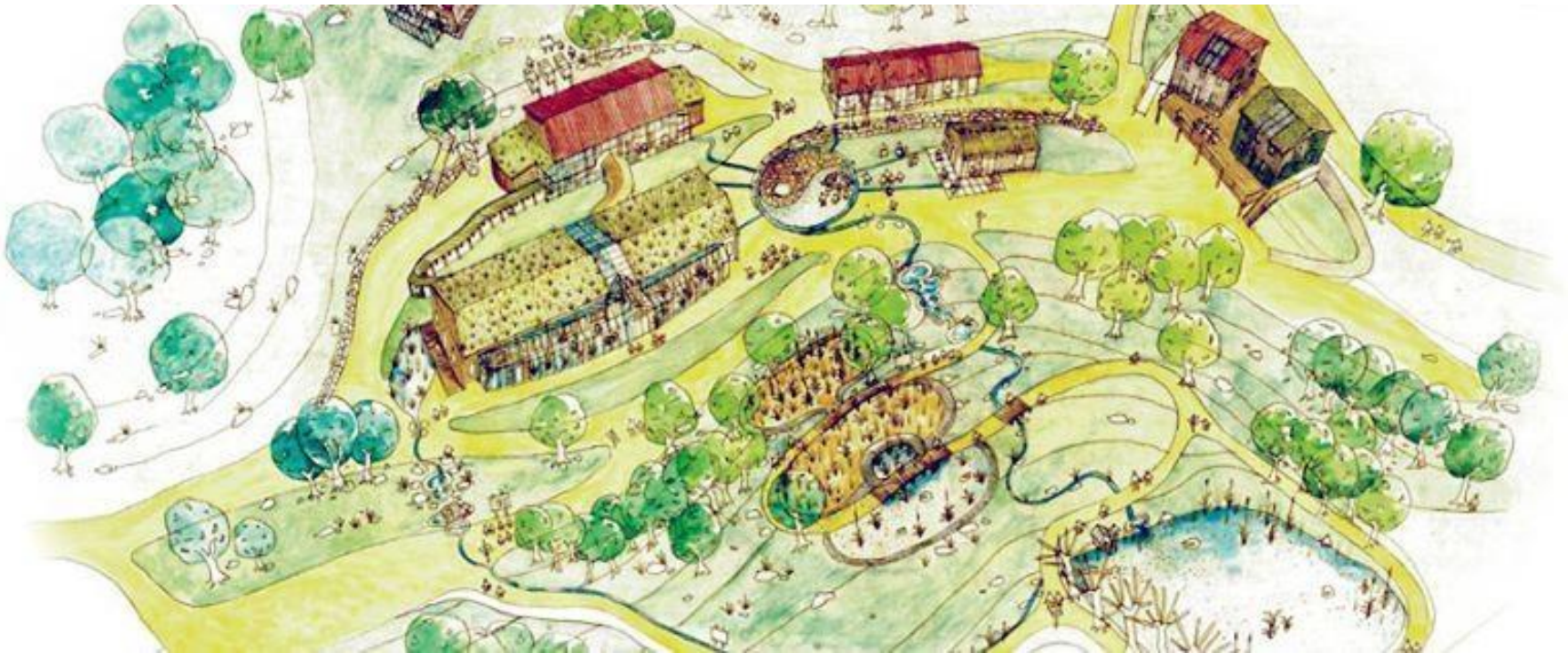
- Explore pursues its mission through the design, organization and realization of:
  - training courses, conferences and conventions;
  - research and consulting;
  - development and dissemination of scientific knowledge and best practices for the promotion of human and environmental health

## Where we are

- We are based in the Ecovillage of 'Panta Rei' located in the hills 500 meters above Lake Trasimeno, in the green heart of Umbria, in the province of Perugia (Italy)



# Panta Rei Ecovillage





...houses are built using local material such as wood, earth, hay





Artist: Enzo Priore





## Land art and art therapy: art, health, environment

- ...for us art is not just art work but is connected with the environment and promotes health and well-being
- ...art can also be perceived as its traditional ways of expression: dance, music, theater...





...the environment can be the natural environment...





...the natural environment plus something...





... or the built environment... -1





... or the built environment... - 2





...and the evidence?

...is beauty really good for health?



# Art for the heart: the Vicoforte study\*



\*By Prof. Enzo Grossi, University of Bologna, Italy

## Aim

- Demonstrate scientifically that looking at art reduces stress

## Site

- Dome of the Sanctuary of Vicoforte, in Piedmont, Italy. One of the great masterpieces of the Piedmontese baroque style, the 600-year-old basilica features the largest **elliptical** dome in the world. It is decorated with over 6,000 square metres of frescos, completed in 1752 by Mattia Bortoloni and Felice Biella



# Art for the heart: the Vicoforte study\*



\*By Prof. Enzo Grossi, University of Bologna, Italy

## Methods

100 participants (19-81 yrs; 51% males, with middle-high education level) were given a questionnaire before their tour of the dome.

Saliva samples were taken before and after the visit to determine whether viewing the magnificent frescoes resulted in significant changes to the production of the stress hormone cortisol



## Art for the heart: the Vicoforte study\*



### Results

- After a two-hour tour, cortisol level was decreased by 60%
- 90% of the group said they felt better

\*By Prof. Enzo Grossi, University of Bologna, Italy



## ..in conclusion



- Lowering cortisol levels can help reduce stress, improve sleep and reduce the risk of heart disease and strokes
- The use of art as a form of therapy is not something new but this is the first time that concrete measurements reflect the positive effects of art on our health

From the Venice Biennale of Art 2017