

# Il Pennato

Spannocchia Internship Program

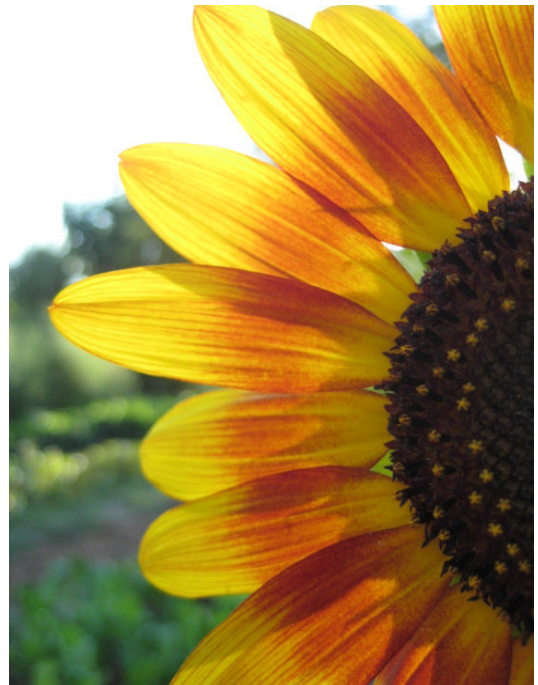
Volume 10, Issue ii

## Guess Who?

By Education Director Katie Phelan

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Sophie Rand	4-5	<i>There once was a girl called Jess, Who oft wore a very white dress. 'Kopf!', I'd impeach,</i>
Merrilee Thomas	6	<i>When she'd reach for the bleach, 'That puts the drain under stress'.</i>
Leah Preble	7	<i>Puffy white sleeve boy. Thinking, thinking, thinking hot.</i>
The End	8	<i>Thoughts about bra girl?</i>  <i>Anthropology. And throw an apology. Everyone happy?</i>  <i>Roisin had very nice hair. Long, like that of mare. But oh what a toil! She'd use olive oil, Thus leaving her group in despair.</i>  <i>Morning guest greeter, Portatrice di caffè, And always of smiles.</i>  <i>There once was chick from Montana, Who worked like a frenzied piranha. When she weeded and hoed, Her pace never slowed, She's rare as an Arctic banana!</i>



*Shoeless and shirtless,  
Green Mountain State Quagmire (poix?)...  
(Man, that's a great line!)*

*Cat lady in check,  
Or stripes? Patterns like mod 4.  
Oops. Still don't get it.*

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### Il Mercato

By Anthony Spine

It is impossible to sum up the Spannocchia experience in a short blurb, but from our rainy day arrival to our farewell lunch at La Compagnia, it was simply amazing. Daily, I find myself feeling blessed with good fortune that I was chosen for this experience.

One thing I remember fondly is the market with Riccio. Seeing all the local farmers come together to offer their goods to the people as well as share them with each other. All the fresh produce on display as is; no fancy packaging, or displays trying to convey how fresh it is. That fact is understood to the Italian people, especially in Tuscany. The Spannocchia Cinta Senese salumi arranged with pride in the glass cooler, with a whole leg of prosciutto out on the board, almost like a center piece. As Riccio opened up the leg, grabbing the hoof firmly with one hand, a miraculous smell hit my nose. And then, the sight of beautifully cured pork – all at once pink and vibrant red. I will never forget the experience of slicing prosciutto right off the leg, nor the glorious taste shortly after.



## A Letter

By David Kelly

To you all,

After traveling alone in foreign countries for months, I found myself living at Spannocchia with seven other interns. Together, we were 8 young adults forming and storming through an Italian way of eating, working, and speaking. Cooped-up in the same place for three months, at times we ran around like our heads had been cut-off; escaped pigs, escaped cows, encounters with Carabinieri, fraying tempers and travel mishaps. But despite it all, we made it through the Tuscan heat intact and better than we came. It takes time and space to see how far you've come and as a group, and as individuals, I think we grew at Spannocchia more than we guessed.



I took joy in my work even at 7am, gliding down the cool dirt road on a beat-up bike to peel off at the vineyard. "Tuck, Tie, Trim" became Team Tuttofare's mantra, the vines vested in leaves swaddling grape babies smaller than a peppercorn. We learned to stay shade-side, wear a hat, drink lots of water. At first I didn't have a hat, so I wore a bandana and t-shirt turban, calling myself Bandito Davito, the Leaf-Wrangler. As we corralled each vine into place and cut those rocketing skyward down to size, our spatial awareness changed. You could instantly sense the light green of a new shoot or pull off leaves by feel as the grapes swelled to bursting. Some afternoons we'd retreat to the cool cantina and siphon, filter, and fill the waiting wine bottles and boxes from Angelo's fermentation tanks. Or maybe it was hay bailing, fixing water tanks, rounding up stray animals. There was always a new experience to be had even in your routine.



The food, the place, the people, are amazing. Our fieldtrips, Katie's food presentations, Riccio's markets, Graziella's dinners, Heather's helping hands, Pietrina and Manuele's wonderful friendship, and of course Randall and Francesca's generous hospitality. The wild conversations and comradeship of Merrilee, Roisin, Sophie, Anthony, Charles, Leah, and Jess. Our teachers, Il Palio, the biodynamic creamery and vineyard. It all overwhelms me, like the power of the firefly, fairy-light woods in July. And there will always be a part of me there. I hope to someday come back and see you all again.

Love,  
David

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### Animali

By Sophie Rand



The other night I had a dream that I was helping to raise piglets in small rabbit cages and the pigs were acting very much like cats - they let you hold them, even rest them on their backs so you could rub their tummies! Even though I'm disinclined to interpret dreams, I know this happened for one main reason: I was confused about how I believe animals act. After returning from Spannocchia, I was reunited with my cat Lou, a sloth-like, attention-hogging ball of fur who will ham it up for any attention.



This summer, I learned that animals do not all act like this. As an intern working with *gli animali*, Charles and I spent almost every day tending to the fences, which our lovey Cinta pigs had little regard for. If they did regard the fences, then it was only as a game. The pigs were incoherent, or at least unaware of our intent to keep them in their areas with the use of fences. I admit to feeling a sense of relief after overhearing Katie on a Cinta Senese tour saying "they are not the easiest animals to raise and they won't survive if they are not in the forest". Their misbehavior was not our fault, no matter how many times we faced a fence repair with staples, nails and hammer in hand.



When we weren't chasing pigs, we tended to cows - great source of amusement this summer. Seeing these creamy white cows grazing and lounging in a large expanse of field was at once an ideal of Tuscan beauty, and a sight that brought on both pride and resentment. A project we spent many hours on was attempting to herd 10+ cows into a fenced field which was adjoined to the cow stable. The first time we tried, the cows rather calmly ran past us into another field, and we naively followed them, thinking we could get them.



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We ran up and down hills and fields, trying to corner them, but clearly, we weren't much of a threat and they just dodged us. Again and again we tried, bringing in more people and stationing them ever-more strategically, or so we thought. Once, we had the herd almost at the gate of the stable, but one false move sent them all charging toward me, which, even though they weren't aggressive towards us, was scary as hell! Eventually we gave up with the chasing and put some hay in the stable. Not long after we found them all in there happily munching upon it.

What does any of this have to do with Lou and my dream of nice, fuzzy piglets? Over the summer, the idea started to take form that all of what humans do is part of a never ending, back-and-forth, power struggle with nature. One might wonder why, as interns, we sign up to do physical work for three months. Riccio said once that the most important thing to do on a farm is to maintain the work you have already done. By working every day, we are maintaining our life for that day and for days ahead; working the land to grow vegetables, raising pigs in anticipation of slaughter. By not working, we would be falling backward - letting veggies rot and pigs get too skinny. In my city, and in most cities and towns around the world, we do not work directly in or with nature. Indeed, we often pretend that it is not even there. It's not that Lou is a shameful specimen of an animal, unable to act wild and free - it's that he doesn't even know nature exists.

Before I left Spannocchia, I thought of the things I would look forward to doing back home; wearing a dress and knowing it would stay clean all day; eating a bacon egg and (American) cheese sandwich on a roll; cooking the pasta and gnocchi I learned to make from Graziella and Loredana. It's nice to be able to look out of your window and see a world so much bigger than you, or do to a seemingly thankless task - like trying to contain pigs - and to be reminded that even if you're opening the door to a world that is seemingly uncontrollable, you will be like the pigs - crafty and intelligent, and working to make it through that day.



### Untitled

By Merrilee Thomas

You set the glass in front of me.  
Mountains, sun and moon  
Stretch across your face.  
Your smile cracks and  
Wine seeps through.

In this vase is my lesson  
Because as I drink it never empties.  
I am satisfied yet always hungry.

We meet eyes, slowly understanding  
That all you have given is for this moment.  
You know the peaks I must summit,  
And that I must go alone.  
And yet

You let me stand,  
Without a crutch,  
You let me explore,  
Without explaining,  
You let me learn,  
Without instruction.

The Vase sings Balance  
Breath. Enjoy. Relax.  
Work. Eat. Sleep.

In I fall, looking down at the water's reflection  
And recognizing my eyes, my lips, my mouth,  
But I am not my own.  
Within this vase is a mountain,  
And within this climb is a more brilliant me.

## A Journal Entry By Leah Preble

June 25<sup>th</sup>

I have not written in far too long. These last couple of weeks have been full. In some ways I am glad I am not documenting every detail, and that I have moved towards really being here and not being in my journal, being behind my camera, or feeling torn with my life in America. Often it is difficult to digest and be clear with myself why I am here and even where I actually am. I am in this building



that is nine hundred years old, this is my home, I am on this historic property built from generations of Italian history: vegetable gardens of past families, wheat fields, ancient grape vines and olive trees caressed by so many hands and now ours. Generations of trees, families, art, animals, recipes, business and developing sustainability. I am in Tuscany, in Italy, in Europe, across the world from all that is familiar. I am cooking with and creating connections with authentic people, inspiring people. I am rooting here and building something new inside of myself by giving a part of my authenticity to this place. I am taking in more than I can ever write about or ever share. This is not something to cry over, because I will take 'the me' I am here home and I am same person. In the cells of my body I have stored memories of Italy and I will always remember the feelings, and smells, and tastes of this place. I too often worry I that my memory will slip away but I can remember with all these sensations.

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Spannocchia Internship  
Program

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**Leah Preble and Merrilee Thomas**

**Internship Mission Statement:**

**The Internship Program is dedicated to enriching the lives of young people by providing them with a unique educational experience on a community oriented farm in Tuscany, Italy. Tenuta di Spannocchia's 1100-acre pastoral estate serves as an active model for responsible stewardship through collective effort.**

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**Summer 2011 Interns**

Left to Right:  
**David Kelly**, Tutto Fare  
**Anthony Spine**, Tutto Fare  
**Jessica Kopf**, Tutto Fare  
**Charles Barstow**, Animali  
**Leah Preble**, GSI  
**Roisin Malone**, Orto  
**Sophie Rand**, Animali  
And Loredana!



**With due regard and thanks to Scott and Cindy Jones, Paul Avis and Spannocchia's interns for the photos in this issue!**