

Damanhur – Temples of Humankind

I first heard of Damanhur 2 years ago. A friend mentioned that if I loved Findhorn community in Scotland, I might consider visiting Damanhur in Italy since many people feel that as far as sustainable and spiritual communities go, there is nothing better. I toyed with the idea for a while. I made the decision after an evening with the painter Alex Grey at the Chapel of the Sacred Mirrors in New York City, and seeing his latest book with the pictures of the Temples for the Humankind in Damanhur. I went to Italy with an eclectic group of 10 people from Canada, US and Switzerland, each of us searching, some studying anthroposophy, others theosophy, kabbalah, Feng Shui. And so it went – each of us curious to find out more about the history of this unusual community and see the temples. The easiest way to get to Damanhur is to fly to Milan and wait for a van from Damanhur to take you to Valchiusella, 40 km north of Turin in the foothills of the Piedmont Alps. I opted for the 7-day program (the shortest stay is 3 days) and I was grateful since there is plenty to see there and explore.

Federation of Damanhur was founded in 1975 by Oberto Airaudi, philosopher, healer, writer and painter, whose dream of a society based on optimism and human beings being masters of their own destiny came true. Today, 32 years later, Damanhur is an internationally renowned center for spiritual, artistic and social research. It is a federation of 44 eco-friendly, self-sustaining communities, part of European Global Eco-villages Network since 1998. 600 people live in the Damanhurian communities spread out all over the valley (1,112 acres) and 400 people live nearby and participate regularly in activities. Citizens of the Federation established more than 60 economic activities and services in art, agri-tourism, information technology, therapeutic research, eco-architecture, organic agriculture, courses and training, etc. The Federation has its own Constitution, daily paper and magazines, its own currency, schools from nursery to middle school, University open to researchers from all over the world, its own health services with doctors, naturopaths and therapists providing unique energetic therapies. And there is much more. The aims of Damanhur is to help individuals to integrate the material with the spiritual, to live out of freedom, with ethical principles, furthering evolution of

humankind. You may be interested in reading the First Articles of their Constitution:

“1. Citizens are brothers and sister who help one another through reciprocal trust, respect, clarity, acceptance, solidarity and continuous inner transformation. Everyone is committed to always giving others opportunity to aim higher.

2. Each citizen makes a commitment to spread positive and harmonious thoughts and to direct every thought and action towards spiritual growth....

3. ...The fundamental rules of life are common sense, thinking well of others and the welcoming and exaltation of diversity....”

As soon as I arrived, I was touched by the attention people pay to each other even when just passing by. Their greeting is “Con Te” – “With You” reminding each other of the importance of the other.

My days were filled with lectures on various aspects of life in the Federation, spiritual research, and meditation practices. We visited various communities, walked many labyrinths, watched various artists in the middle of their creations and slowly felt comfortable with Damanhur’s daily rhythm. We were lucky to be in Damanhur for the Festival of Wesak, the Full Moon of May and were

privileged to observe the Rite of the Oracle devoted to contact with Divine Forces. All of this was in preparation for the visit to the Temples of the Humankind. If I were to tell you that nothing could prepare me for this experience, you would think that I was kidding. After seeing some pictures I imagined a cave inside the mountain with some beautiful artwork. The entrance was well camouflaged. Once inside, a long narrow corridor with mural paintings and intricate writings in an unknown to me language, lead to the first cross point. I was surprised by the freshness of air (after all we were inside the mountain – no dampness, drippings or molds), light that felt natural although there was no natural light, and deep quiet. Our group of 5 was not able to figure out where the hidden door was to the next corridor or level. The guide pressed something on one of the walls and a folding, mechanized staircase appeared from below to take us down to the lower level and to one of the 7 Halls (large caverns) linked by the 4 levels of labyrinths. Digging into the mountain started in August 1978 by a small group of people without the use of any form of explosives. The work was done mainly at night (not to attract any attention) and today consists of intricate mosaic floors, huge domed cupola ceilings (one with

24,000 stained glass pieces), beautiful stained glass windows and large mural paintings. The Temples are not a place of religious workshop nor aligned with any particular religious group. To many they are the testimonial of where we were as human beings, where we are and where we are going. The 7 Halls: The Hall of Mirrors, Water, Earth, Spheres, Metals, Blue Temple and Labyrinth, tell the story of human evolution, our successes and struggles. The artists who created the Temples have their studios at the Damanhur Crea, a center for the arts, research and well-being, open to Damanhurians and visitors every day of the year. According to Oberto Airaudi (the founder of Damanhur), the Temples of today represent only 10% of what he envisions. Plans are underway to build a huge hall with enormous dome for over 1000 people, to host all types of human creative expression. There will also be a large library of sacred and spiritual texts and space for health spa. An underground train is to link the Temples of Humankind with the new area and a cable car will carry visitors from the village to the mountain. Oberto Airaudi's dream is to create space where influential people of the planet meet and find understanding. As if

all this wasn't enough, there are also other elements that add to the equation: synchronic lines and Selfica.

Damanhur is special due to 4 synchronic lines that converge here.

The area is rich in minerals of all kinds and has a peculiar gravitational quality. Similar places can be also found in Tibet.

And there is Selfica, apparently widely used in Atlantis and found in Egyptian, Etruscan and Celtic cultures. Selfica is a complex structure that accumulates and distributes subtle energies. In the Temples, 300 tons of these structures create a network of energy that extends and connects to the synchronic points. Their aim is to concentrate and direct intelligent energies through the use of metals, spirals and alchemical processes. For people in Damanhur, these objects are considered subtle being with different functions. Selfica is widely used in healing and art. You can see people walking various spirals as a form of healing meditation, selfic cabins and instruments are used for diagnosis and remedial treatments, there is even a form of acupuncture where steloself device (long gold needle with selfic cells) is used instead of acupuncture needles. There is also a large gallery of selfic paintings. Legend has it that Oberto Airaudi does 4 or 5 of these

paintings before breakfast every day. The paintings are a combination of Selfica metals and paints allowing for special energies to come to the surface and interact with the viewers. The titles are very poetic and can be used as a guide for meditation. At one point of our visit, we were told to pick one of the paintings and spend one or more hour just being with it, to see what it will tell us. The paintings are complex and yet they guide one through a series of steps, each step deepening one's understanding of oneself and the world around one.

There is so much more to Damanhur, a short article is not going to do the community, Temples of Humankind or Selfica justice. One is invited to visit, explore and experience what Damanhur has to offer.

To learn more about Damanhur, please feel free to call me and visit their website: www.damanhur.org or check out the following books: Damanhur: Temples of Humankind by COSM press and Damanhur: The story of the Extraordinary Italian Artistic and Spiritual Community by Jeff Merrifield, Hanford MeadPublishers, Inc.