

masters of MARBLE and METAL



by John Schanck

From the beginning of the trip to the end, everything was perfect, or as one would say in Italian ‘perfecto!’ When I first read about the “Masters of Marble and Metal” lot before the 2015 Naples Winter Wine Festival, I knew it was the one I wanted. Consisting of the *8 Cubes* sculpture made from Carrara marble by the renowned artist Márton Váró, a gold and diamond ring from Fratelli Piccini’s “Tetti di Firenze” Collection, two Calamai Chronograph G50 watches forged with the same steel as the General Electric turbines from the F-104 of the Italian Air Force, and a trip to Italy to see where they’re all made, I couldn’t let it get away! And so I placed the winning bid on lot # 53, and, believe it or not, my whole life changed.



From the time I walked off the plane in Italy with my son and his fiancé, everything exceeded our expectations. Not only did we get to visit the Carrara quarries where *8 Cubes* was sourced, and spend the day at Fratelli Piccini’s Florence shop, but we got to meet the artists themselves. It began during the first leg of our trip in



Tuscany, when we met Márton Váró and traveled with him to the marble quarries, about a fifteen-minute drive up the mountains with beautiful views of Carrara, to visit the Cave Michelangelo. There, Márton’s friend Franco Barattini greeted us and gave us an in-depth explanation of the marble and his background. Franco was such an inspirational and humble man; he started working in the quarry when he was twelve years old and is so passionate about the marble quarry.



A few days later, after exploring the wineries of Bolgheri, we arrived in Florence to meet Elisa and Catherina Piccini, the granddaughter and great-granddaughter of the founder of Fratelli Piccini, one of the most famous jewelry brands in Italy. There, we were greeted with champagne and hors d’oeuvres and enjoyed a special dinner on the terrace of their shop overlooking the Ponte Vecchio. The food was delicious, from a beet salad with a crème, mushroom risotto, beef with a sauce and some vegetables, to a Tuscan grape harvest cake that was excellent. After dinner, we received our



incredible jewelry: two watches and a unique ring made out of rose gold with white and black diamonds.

Next, we had a beautiful two-hour drive to Montalcino, famous for its wine, and attended Brunello's Harvest Party, which was an amazing experience. At the Harvest Party, we tasted various types of Brunellos that were all fabulous and enjoyed the

authentic Tuscan food and dessert. After the Harvest Party, we drove to San Filippo estate in Montalcino where we enjoyed dinner with the owners of San Filippo and several vintages of their outstanding San Filippo wine.

The next day, we toured the San Filippo estate and watched the process of how wine is made, from cutting the grapes off the vines to watching the grapes being dispensed through a machine. The winery was beautiful and was a great experience to watch how many steps go into making wine. After viewing the winery, we had lunch in the little town of Montalcino and then were off to Rome for a private tour of the Coliseum. It was incredible to learn the history behind this ancient amphitheater, and throughout the private tour we also got to see the restoration that is currently taking place.

Not only was this auction trip one of the best experiences we have ever had, but it was truly life changing. Because of our incredible experiences, I have decided to purchase a vacation home in the center of Florence and can't wait for this new chapter of my life!

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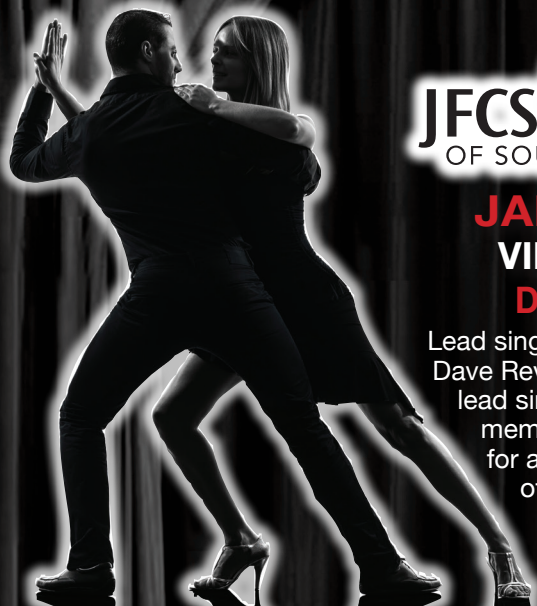


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