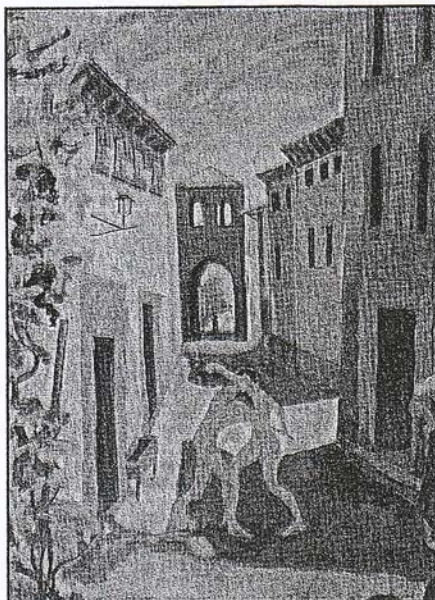


The Mural in Montecarlo

by Susan Jarman

Locally speaking, Montecarlo is a quiet hilltop village about sixteen kilometres east of Lucca. Liz Goldin and her husband Henry bought a house there in 1989. It will be a story familiar to many of our readers – tumbledown farmhouse with no roof or windows, no water or electricity, surrounded by acres of overgrown land, but nevertheless a challenge worth taking on if you want to have your own idyllic spot in Tuscany.

The Goldins have done their house up with scrupulous regard for local traditional features – more of a restoration than a renovation. Plaster was stripped from the façade of the house to reveal the original brickwork, and what had been used by the previous owners as a double garage was turned into a delightful pergola by opening up



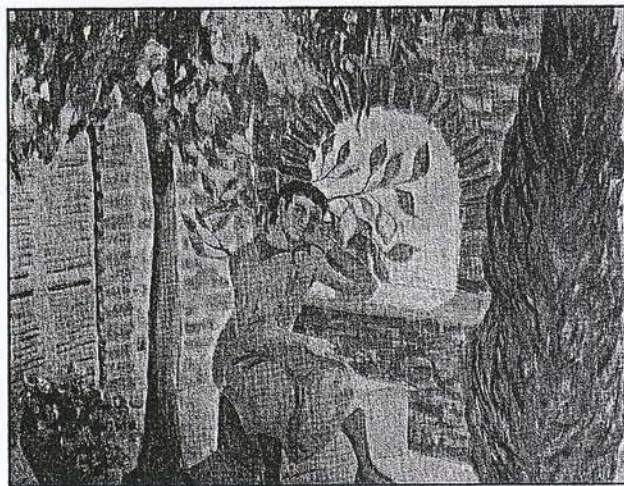
bricked-in arches. Ceiling beams were sandblasted, cotto floors were polished and all the inside walls whitewashed.

So far, so good. But Liz wanted to add something special. She had seen a mural by the English writer and artist Meg Harris Williams in a house near Oxford and decided to approach her about designing a wall-size mural for the

room which had once been a cow-shed. What Liz really wanted Meg to do was incorporate scenes from the Bible, from mythology, from poetry and from Renaissance paintings with scenes of local life in and around Montecarlo. The work was commissioned and completed in less than a year, and the result is breathtaking.

The centre of the mural is the Goldins' house surrounded by a dream-like mixture of the idyllic and the sinister, with vineyards and the pretty village of Vellano in the background. We see Cain and Abel struggling with each other in the centre of Montecarlo, while in the sky above, Adam and Eve are thrown out of Paradise. A figure from Piero Della Francesca's *Dream of Constantine* sits, deep in thought, by a pizza oven. Renaissance man, from Giorgione's *La Tempesta*, gazes towards the Goldins' neighbours as they lower watermelons into their well to keep them cool. Ulysses sails the seas while figures from Dante's *Inferno* and Keats' *Ode to Psyche* appear on the surrounding hills.

It is an absorbing and intriguing piece of work. The Goldins will be happy to show it to visitors by appointment. They can be contacted on henlizg@aol.com. Meg Harris Williams can be reached at meghwilliams@yahoo.co.uk.



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