

## VareseNews

### Arcumeggia: the painted village of 52 inhabitants, with a UNESCO dream

**Pubblicato:** Sabato 6 Agosto 2022

Plans are afoot for a new association, an investment of more than €400,000 for redevelopment work, the idea of opening a widespread hotel, and of preserving the sculptures and paintings that have made the village unique. And there are plans to apply to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

#### Arcumeggia, 52 inhabitants and a UNESCO dream

Arcumeggia, the “village of art and culture”, is encouraging people to rediscover its uniqueness. After two years of pandemic, the village, which lies a few kilometres from Casalzuigno, is looking for new ways to bring visitors and tourists back and has big plans for the future. There are **52 inhabitants, according to the General Registry Office (the youngest are an 11-year-old and a 14-year-old boy)**, who live on the mountains of Valcuvia, in a village which seems to be frozen in time. Walking along its streets in the mornings during the week, it is unlikely you will meet anyone, but over the last few years, new residents have come here, attracted by the desire to live surrounded by nature.

#### A new association founded in Arcumeggia

One of these new residents is **Mattia Stefani, 31, from Cunardo** (where he is member of the council), who decided to move to Arcumeggia with his partner. “I’d never been here before, and when I think of it, I find it incredible. This place is more popular to foreigners than it is to us,” he claimed. For this reason, together with a large group, he founded the association “**DiArte e Natura Associazione Ricreativa Culturale**” in **September 2021**, with the idea of spreading local culture and folklore (**the most recent event was at Easter**), but not only. The village still is an attraction for foreigners and recently has become attractive also for the local tourism. Today, there are about **forty places in bed and breakfast hotels** and rooms for rent, Mattia explained, and during summer, the number of inhabitants doubles.

The Association, whose President is Anna Maria Barbara Mazzini, has brought together about forty people from all around the valley, **who have undertaken to carry out ordinary maintenance of the village, like cleaning the streets and paths**. “This is very important for us,” **claimed the Mayor Danilo De Rocchi**, and as he walked along the streets in the village, he told us about the plans for the future, as well as the many difficulties that a small council has to face.

#### €400,000 for redeveloping the village

Arcumeggia is indeed a treasure, but it is also very fragile. This is why the Mayor Danilo De Rocchi hopes that the **€ 436,000 provided by Lombardy Region** will be a good start to redeveloping it. The work will begin as soon as the bureaucratic procedures are complete, and will consist of: the renovation of the façade of the former elementary school and of its rooms, which will be made available to associations and initiatives, and the reorganisation of the whole historical archive. Furthermore, there will also be the construction of a stand at the entrance to the village, with a refreshment point (at the moment, there is just the privately-run La Locanda del Pittore). What is also planned is the renovation of **three historical washhouses** (in Ronco di Casale, in Zuigno and in Arcumeggia), and interventions on the paving of some streets in the village of Aga. However, the Mayor has also explained that the

intervention of private individuals is needed. “There are many houses that need to be renovated, that have dangerous roofs, for example. We’ve already sent some communications where necessary.”

Thanks to a grant from Varese Province, the large painting by **Innocente Salvini**, entitled “**Il taglio della polenta**”, which can be found on the building at the entrance to the village is going to be restored. Another €40,000 is going to be used to repair **Via Nuvoloni**. Meanwhile, over the last few years, the council has resurfaced the village car park, which is named after **Don Mario Munaretto**, who, for twenty years, was the village priest. “**This village and Villa Della Porta Bozzolo** are two gems of Valcuvia. Restoring them means bringing prestige to the whole valley. Tourism, nature and art are the ingredients in an effort to relaunch our areas, which previously survived primarily off industry and handcraft,” De Rocchi said.

## Arcumeggia’s paintings and its artistic soul

In Arcumeggia, there are about forty paintings by great artists of the twentieth century. Mayor De Rocchi explained that, **70 years from the beginning of the projects, it is time to ask to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site**. “In 2026, we can apply, and this would give us greater protections and rules for preserving the village. It would become an ‘immaculate’ place.”

The **Casa del Pittore**, which accommodated many artists during their stays in the village, **will be open to the public**. “Together with Varese Province, which owns the building, and with the Mountain Communities, we started the process of opening it to the public, to encourage people to discover this place of art and culture,” De Rocchi said. Meanwhile, the procedure with the Academy of Brera continues, “to bring a school back to the village, but the pandemic has slowed down this process.”

The village applied to the Recovery and Resilience Plan for funds to modernise the **Bottega del Pittore and turn it into a widespread hotel**. About the possibility of enlarging the existing paintings, De Rocchi explained, “In recent years, we’ve had several requests, but when we decide to do this kind of operation, there’ll be a commission that will choose the artists and methods.”

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