

Giovanni Previdi

THE ART OF
HAT-MAKING

ITALIAN
CRAFTSMANSHIP
FROM THE
CERVO VALLEY

newHeroes&Pioneers

To Lucia, my mother





THE DISCOVERY OF A FORGOTTEN CRAFT IN THE VALLEY OF WATER

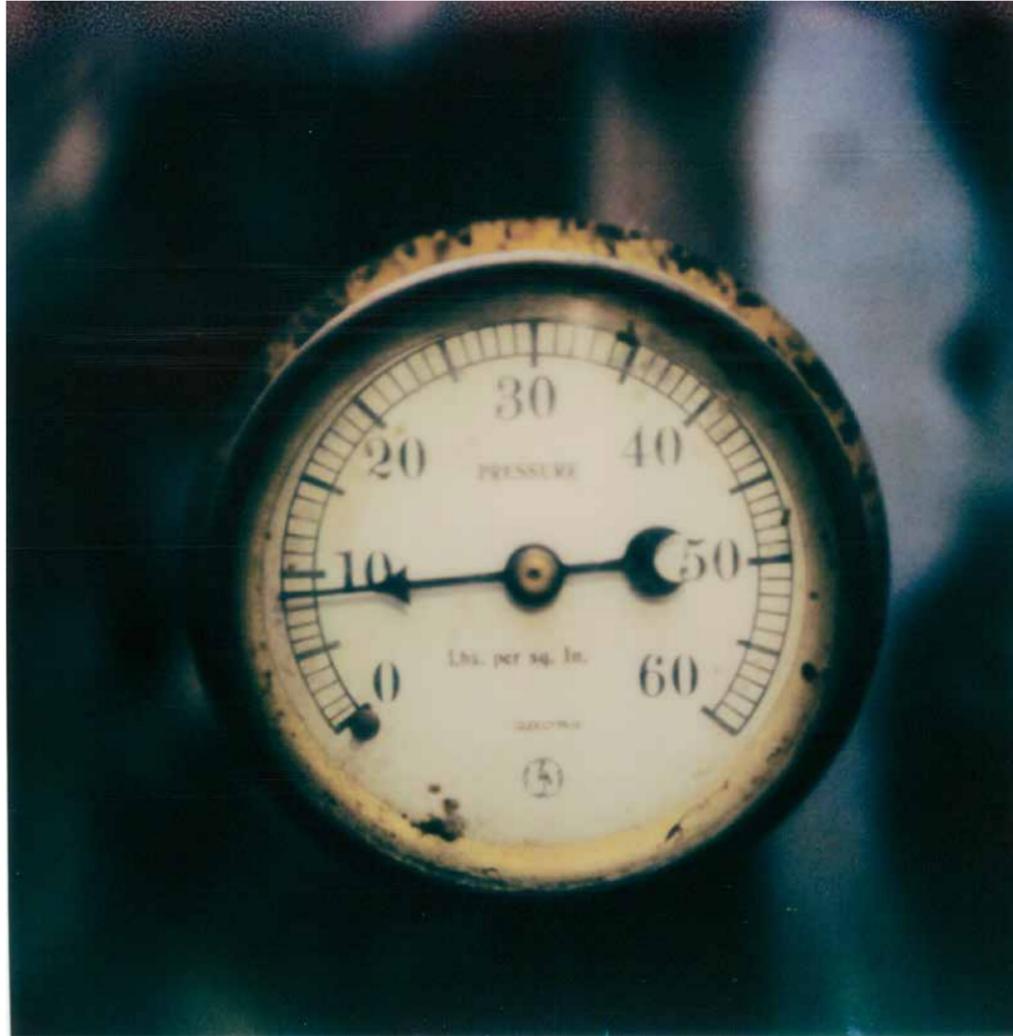
In the Piedmont region, in Sagliano Micca, there is a long, narrow valley — shady and cool in summer, dark and icy in winter. In this glimpse of the Alps, before the road becomes steep and gets lost among the chestnut and ash trees, stands the Cappellificio Cervo, there since first established in 1897.

One morning in November 2019, I find myself in these parts once again. Attracted by the tall chimney that towers above the factory and driven by my curiosity as to whether hats are still being made there, I decide to knock on the door. In my backpack, I'm carrying my Polaroid SX-70.

A very tall man dressed in a long, blue, well-buttoned shirt and, needless to say, a wide-brimmed hat on his head, opens the door. Two pens in his breast pocket, glasses on his nose. The pleasantries are very quick. Giorgio Borrione — that's the name of the last master hatter — loudly calls for a certain Benedetta, then disappears behind the door. Next thing I know, I find myself standing in front of his daughter, who is as tall as he is. I feel small. *Now, what do I tell her?*, I think to myself. *What am I really doing here, at the hat factory?*

Benedetta invites me in. We chat in the 'outlet' room and I begin to learn about the history of this magical, timeless place that, inevitably, summons childhood memories in those who visit it — assuming they know Lewis Carroll's 'The Mad Hatter', that is.

I discover that this is the birthplace of the official hat of the Alpini, the Italian Army; that the American director Spike Lee wore a hat made by these hatters at the last Cannes Film Festival, one that was made in just two days; and that, the stylist of a prestigious international fashion brand could enter through the same door I did, at any given moment. Paris, Milan, Sagliano Micca: it's a small world, indeed.





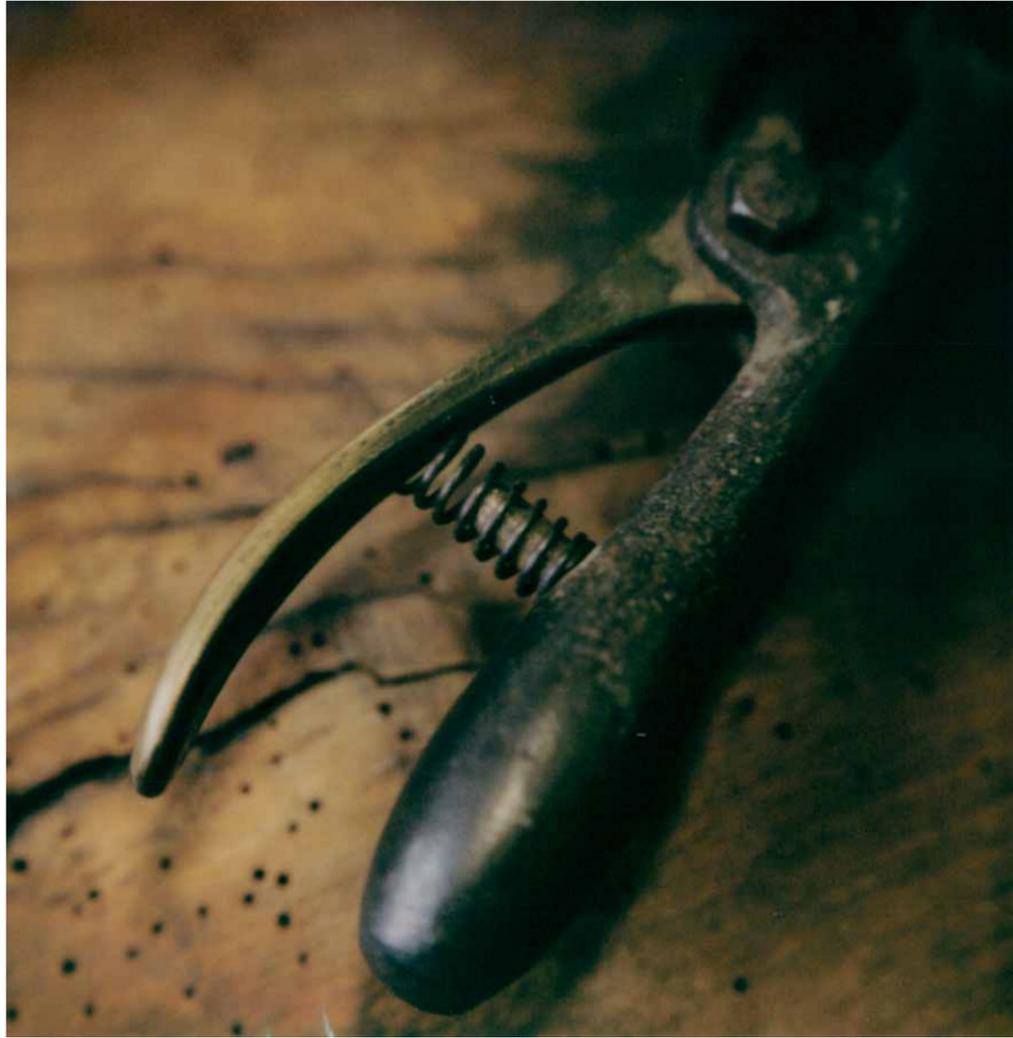


Steaming machine



Francesco, hatmaker





Handle of turning machine



Scissors on a felt plate