

# The Traces of Marble

Regione Toscana - Comune di Minucciano (Lucca)



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# Project Overview

**The Traces of Marble** is the title of the book through which the project comes to life: marble tells its story by becoming the core of the narration, not just a character in history. The enhancement of intangible heritage between marble and the social context is the goal around which the work has been carried out, particularly creating a visual narrative around the theme of valuing intangible know-how (“knowing how to do”) in direct connection with people, the context, and the material.

The narration through words and illustrations for educational purposes aimed at young people plays a very important role with the goal of making this reality known. **The book is designed for children around 8-10 years old** and aims to develop skills that help them face and better understand some mechanisms related to marble and its role. The book is divided into two parts: the first is a **story** section with some tales and illustrations, while the second is a **workshop** section, supporting the execution of manual activities. The recurring elements are **play and curiosity**, aiming to fascinate and therefore, impress.



## Problem Statement

Minucciano faces gradual depopulation and limited economic diversification while its cultural and natural assets remain under-communicated; the town needs new, place-sensitive channels that reconnect residents, visitors, and everyday practices with meaningful educational, creative, and economic opportunities.

## Turbulences

- Intangible knowhow related to marble and traditional craft practices is currently dispersed among individual artisans and small workshops, risk of fading away rather than being effectively transmitted to younger generations.
- Cultural offers are often episodic and geared to peak seasons; without accessible educational formats, the territory struggles to attract sustained interest from families, schools, and slow-travellers.
- Young people lack structured, place based learning and hands on activities that link curiosity to local livelihoods, reducing incentives to stay, train, or build careers locally.

## Bold Vision

Situate a children's illustrated book and workshop kit at the core of a wide educational ecosystem: a narrative object telling the story of marble becomes a practical tool for schools, family visits, and maker workshops. By translating intangible know-how into accessible narrative and practice, the project seeds long term interest in local crafts, creates new learning pathways and stimulates interest in micro entrepreneurship.

## Where We are Now:

The Traces of Marble concept is authored by Laura Coppioni and Marco Altemura, two students at the Department of Architecture of the University of Florence (DiDA).

At the NEB Festival held in Gramolazzo on 14 June 2025 the idea was awarded the 2nd prize.

*Pilot status: now in its prototyping phase*

## How did we get here?

II semester 2024:

- a B4M local node was created in Minucciano, with the involvement of 4-Helix stakeholders.
- thanks to an agreement between the Tuscany Region and DiDA, a group of international students was engaged in an idea contest, after a study visit onsite.

I semester 2025:

- all concept designs were presented to the local population in a public event and then voted by a jury of experts (weighted 60%) as well as by the citizens themselves (weighted 40%) through a combined online and offline polling system.

II semester 2025:

- private funds were mobilised to support the prototyping phase.

**What if...**

# What if...

As a Young Learner or Aspiring Maker

I could discover craft gestures and creative careers through playful practice

With guided workshops where participants design “their own marble” using drawing, texture exercises, and simple fabrication demos led by local artisans

So that curiosity becomes a pathway to hands-on skills, mentorship, and longer term interest in the territory’s material culture.



# Who will benefit?

## Target Groups

- **Residents and families** could access playful, place-based learning that turns walks and visits into moments of discovery, helping children and adults recognise the value of local material culture and craft.
- **Visitors and slow-travellers** could enjoy guided workshops and interactive stops that make quarry history tangible, offering meaningful experiences that extend stays beyond seasonal peaks.
- **Teachers and schools** could adopt ready made curriculum modules and laboratory kits that link science, art, and local history, enabling hands on, cross disciplinary lessons for primary classes.
- **Young people and aspiring makers** could access mentorship, workshops, and simple fabrication exercises that translate curiosity into practical skills and potential creative pathways.
- **Local artisans and cultural organisations** could run itinerant labs and co-design sessions, gaining visibility while transmitting intangible know-how through direct contact with children and families.
- **The Municipality of Minucciano** could use the book and workshop programme to activate schools, trails, and community events, strengthening heritage education and long-term cultural tourism.

# Key Learnings

The project shows that narrative objects can transmit craft knowledge. A well-designed book and workshop kit make intangible skills visible and teachable, turning stories into practical learning moments that children can repeat and share.

It reveals that playful, place-based education builds attachment. Hands-on labs and drawing exercises help young learners recognise material processes and local gestures, fostering curiosity and a sense of belonging to the quarry landscape.

It confirms that schools and families are powerful distribution channels. Ready-made curriculum modules and itinerant workshops allow the book contents to reach children and embed heritage learning into everyday routines.

The project also proves that heritage education can seed creative pathways. Early exposure to material literacy and maker gestures opens routes to mentorship, local apprenticeships, and small creative enterprises that help retain talent and revive traditional know-how.

# NEB Values

## Beautiful – Ambition: To Tell

- A children's book and illustrated narrative make marble the protagonist, turning material traces into stories that spark curiosity and visual imagination.

## Sustainable – Ambition: To Teach

- By using storytelling and simple workshops, the project preserves intangible know-how and encourages low-impact, educational reuse of local material culture.

## Together – Ambition: To Pass On

- The book and itinerant labs connect artisans, schools, families, and visitors, creating shared learning moments that strengthen intergenerational transmission.



# NEB Working Principles

## **Participatory Process** **Ambition: To Engage**

- 4-Helix Stakeholder Involvement
- Consultation of the Local Population
- Circularity-driven Design

## **Multi-Level Engagement** **Ambition: To Liaise**

- Local B4M Node as starting point & network hub
- Regional Government as prime motor (with B4M)
- Now building links with the European NEB hub

## **Transdisciplinarity** **Ambition: To Merge**

- Material science with art education
- Young and seasoned designers
- Storytelling with hands-on experimentation

# Common Themes

- Narrative as pedagogy
- Playful, hands-on learning
- Place-based education
- Low-tech digital augmentation
- Intergenerational transmission and local activation



# Lessons Learned



- Framing craft gestures and quarry practices as a narrative lets children and aspiring makers grasp complex processes through characters, images, and step-by-step activities, turning abstract heritage into repeatable learning moments.
- Introducing material practices to children supports artisan visibility and can stimulate small-scale enterprises that help retain talent.

# Sharing for the Future

What knowledge can contribute to the B4M Toolbox

- Place-based narrative and hands-on knowledge**
- How to turn quarry stories and craft gestures into an illustrated learning object that children can read, draw, and experiment with, making intangible know-how accessible and repeatable.
  - How to design a compact laboratory kit and simple classroom modules that translate observation, texture study, and basic fabrication into age-appropriate activities.
  - How to pair low-tech digital overlays with tactile exercises so the book remains a physical learning tool while gaining interactive depth.

**Education as cultural activation**

- How school programmes and itinerant workshops can distribute heritage learning year-round, reducing seasonality and embedding material literacy into curricula.
- How early, playful exposure to craft gestures can create mentorship links between artisans and pupils, seeding local apprenticeships and micro-projects.
- How a narrative toolkit can be adapted for festivals, family trails, and museum education to amplify reach and sustain community engagement.