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Gorgona - Island Of Hope

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Gorgona – situated in the Arcipelago Toscano – is the last prison island in Europe. Since 1869 it is established as an agricultural penal colony. Actually 70 prisoners work in agriculture and take care of many animals, like cows, goats, pigs, hens, horses, donkeys, sheeps, bees, dogs and cats. Working in nature and with animals guarantees positive results also concerning the future of these men: only 20% of the released prisoners from Gorgona were rearrested, very few compared to the 80% of men in other Italian prisons. My interest was also focused on the very special relationship between prisoners & animals: during the last 25 years the veterinarian Marco Verdone (supported by the prisons director Carlo Mazzerbo) was able to achieve a 'revolution' on the island, establishing higher standards for animals and setting their rights, even the slaughterhouse was closed. Gorgona became a totally cruelty-free prison, which honours the commitment that prisoners from this island should be released in freedom as better men. Unfortunately in spring 2015 the veterinarian was "suddenly" transferred to another place, also the director left the island. The achieved goals - worldwide unique - are now seriously endangered.

About the Author

Rachele Z. Cecchini grew up in Rome and moved to Salzburg (Austria) in 1981. She is collaborating with many international magazines as a photographer, author and translator. In January 2015 she participated in the group exhibit "1600 km Italia", presented in Salzburg, with a choice of photos of the prison island Gorgona. Winner of the photo contest "Architecture & plants" held by the Salzburg Museum of modern art & Werkschau in 2013.



