

Studio Moretti Caselli



Master Glasspainters

A family of artists has been making enamelled glass windows in the historic centre of Perugia since 1860. This activity, which was originally begun by Francesco Moretti and his nephew, Ludovico Caselli, was carried on by Rosa and Cecilia Caselli who inherited their skills from their father. The two sisters handed over the baton, so to speak, to their niece, Anna Matilde Falsettimi, who still executes stained-glass windows with the same technique of her ancestors; and Anna's daughters, Elisabetta and Maddalena Foreza, are still learning the secrets of this art with passion and perseverance.

Francesco Moretti (1833-1917) began by studying ancient chemistry and glass art textbooks in Perugia and together with his nephew, Ludovico Caselli, he executed a series of extraordinary works which can be admired in many Italian and foreign cities. Moretti restored, among others, the large stained-glass window of St. Domenico in Perugia and the one in the Cathedral of Orvieto. Along with Ludovico Caselli, Moretti created many stained-glass windows including those of the Basilica of S. Maria degli Angeli in Assisi, the Cathedral of St. Lorenzo in Perugia and the Cathedral of Orvieto.

Ludovico Caselli (1859-1922) on the other hand also looked after the production of the *vetri mussolinati* (or what could be described as muslin-like glass stencils) in which the refinement and intricacy of the embroidery of the time was etched and faithfully reproduced on glass thanks to a sandblasting machine which he designed and built personally. When Ludovico Caselli died, his daughters Rosa (1896-1989) and Cecilia (1905-1996) continued the family tradition by making, among other works, the stained-glass windows of the Basilica of S. Chiara in Assisi and a huge, 40 sq. m. stained-glass window reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper. Rosa and Cecilia's work has been continued by her niece Anna Matilde Falsettimi who, to this day, together with her daughters, brings to life the passion for painting and the skilfulness of her ancestors.



Francesco Moretti, founder of the Studio and talented painter, was a teacher and Director of the Academy of Fine Arts of Perugia, Director of the City Picture Gallery, Inspector of Antiques and Fine Arts and member of numerous committees, commissions and associations.

Ludovico Caselli, F. Moretti's nephew, was very close to Pope Leone XIII who had been the Archbishop of Perugia. Upon commission from Pope Leone XIII, Caselli executed not only some oil paintings but also the frescoes in the Church of St. Costanzo in Perugia. Like his uncle before him, he too was a teacher and Director of the Academy of Fine Arts of Perugia and the City Picture Gallery.

More reserved and averse to praise than their predecessors, Rosa and Cecilia Caselli led retired lives amidst glass, paper and colours. Their most demanding stained-glass window was executed between 1925 and 1931. The window, which reproduced Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper, can still be admired in the vast, monumental cemetery of Glendale in Los Angeles, California.



The Technique

Painting a stained-glass window means mixing colours and light so as to bring to life a work which can express itself fully only because of this union.

To do so means understanding the place where the stained-glass window will be set, watching the movements of the sun, seeking the best light and only then imagining the colours, selecting and mixing them, and applying the brushstrokes.

Francesco Moretti designed his stained-glass windows by painting each piece of glass, sometimes with colour sometimes not, with delicate short lines and touches of the brush so that every smallest space would be covered with a colour that blended well with the underlying base.

The process begins with the initial sketches and outlines which are then transformed into life-sized drawings. Then the selection of glass and the cutting begin.

The subsequent steps are preparatory phases to the actual painting of the glass which is always executed against daylight with powder pigments that are mixed at that very moment. The baking process to fix the colour is performed three or four times and each time the glass has to get another coating of paint. Finally, the lead mountings allow the putting together of the glass pieces thus creating the stained-glass window. Today, the Moretti-Caselli Studio artists still use the secrets of their ancestors, however they have integrated the old knowledge with new studies and projects.

Francesco Moretti was one of the greatest 19th century restorers of stained-glass windows. Currently, art scholars are re-appreciating and reassessing the value of his work. The Moretti-Caselli Studio carries out restorations in accordance with modern methodologies. Every phase of the restoration process requires persevering study in order to always find the most suitable solutions that allow the ancient splendour of the artwork to come to life again.

Thanks to the combination of traditional methodology and the study of new technologies, the Moretti-Caselli Studio creates modern objects with an old flavour. New ideas, sketches and projects give birth to lamps, accessories and unique coloured decorative objects.

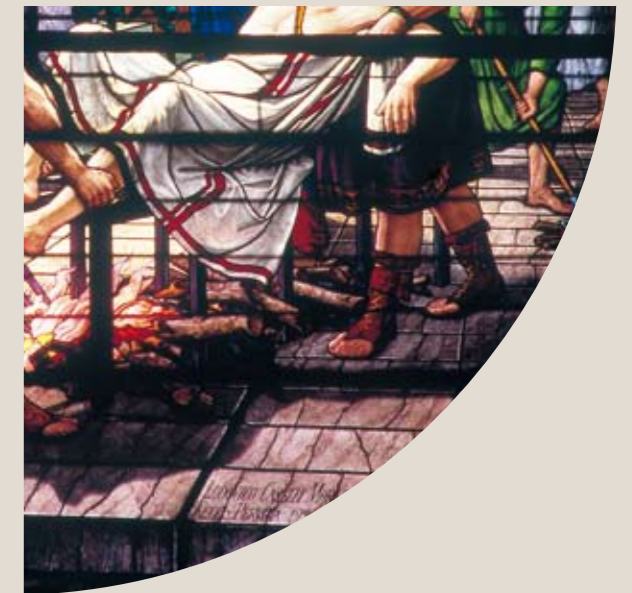
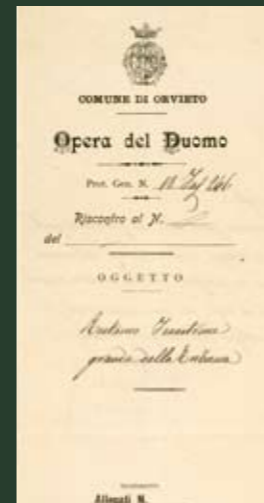
The Caselli sisters devoted part of their life to painting miniatures on glass. Very thin brushes, the opal glass, the maulstick and the play of mirrors that allowed for the best light to be reflected through, were and are the tools used to execute these unique and precious works.



Papers

Throughout the two centuries in which the Studio has been active, numerous documents relating to the Studio's activity have intermingled with those relating to family life. These papers have been kept with care in an archive which has been rearranged, classified and opened to the public. The documentary material comprises all the documents concerning the Studio, the running of the workshop, the correspondence linked to the public life of the artists and the various cultural interests and events. The archive also contains private papers which provide an insight into the life of a 19th century family. The photographs of the models and of the executed works are very interesting. So too, are the drawings and the preparatory studies. In fact, enamelled glass works require a preparatory phase that consists of a meticulous study of the subject through different sketches and outlines. Some drawings represent the life-sized work (which were and still are sometimes mounted on a light wooden frame or scaffold), others were used for the glass cutting and leading and therefore show only the contours of the subject. In addition, there are pounces, tracing stencils and imprints of lead lines which are especially used in restoration work. Notwithstanding the tears, lacunae and lacerations, the drawings are still quite clear and well preserved which undoubtedly allow us to appreciate the various aspects of this fascinating yet little-known art of glass painting.

A stained-glass window requires numerous sketches before it can be put together. Photographs of models, developed directly in the Moretti-Caselli Studio itself, were also used.



The Residence

The Moretti-Caselli Studio is located in an old residence that once belonged to the Baglioni family of Perugia. Its walls echo the history of the town and the interests of the artists reverberate through the stained-glass windows, sketches, drawings, old objects, antiques and photographs that can be found here.

The building itself dates back to the 15th century and it originally belonged to Guido Baglioni, a member of the most important Perugian family of the time that contended against the Pope for power over the town. Between the 15th and 16th century Pope Paul III reaffirmed his supremacy by building his fortress, the Rocca Paolina, directly over the Baglioni houses. The only house which was spared was the one belonging to Guido Baglioni; and that, simply because it did not fall within the Pope's architectural project. In time, the residence housed an institute for poor youths and then the Libera Università di Perugia who sold it to Francesco Moretti in 1894. Since then, the family has been living in the building which comprises both the Studio and the workshop where five generations of skilful and passionate master glassworkers have created stained-glass windows that adorn many famous Italian and foreign churches as well as many private homes. The lofty rooms have retained unaltered the 15th century structure along with the period frescoes which were restored by Francesco Moretti. Inside, you can admire the numerous photographs, sketches and cartoons (some of which are quite large) of the stained-glass windows that have been created here throughout the years. The artistic objects attest to the owners' love for antiques as well as their many cultural interests such as music and photography. In the quarters which house the workshop itself, you can see the tools, kilns and colours that to this day give life to magnificent enamelled glass windows just as they did in the past.





Visits and Workshops

The art of glass painting reached its greatest splendour in the 12th and 13th centuries. However, from the 15th century onwards, it was progressively abandoned both in Italy and abroad. Francesco Moretti, a young painter from Perugia, rediscovered this art, revived it and enriched it. Since the 19th century, the workshop has kept the frames, the easels used for painting, the colours, the kilns and the tools that, to this day, allow skilled hands to execute marvellous enamelled and baked stained-glass windows. Inside the workshop, visitors can plunge into history and the activities of the past by enjoying guided visits by appointment. It is not just a museum but also a place where you can breathe the atmosphere of an old handicraft that has been handed over for five generations. Here, children and teenagers in particular can satisfy their curiosity; in fact, great care is given to them during the visits to this house-workshop. In addition, those who want to measure themselves against this ancient art can sign up for individual training courses that are conducted under the watchful guide of today's master glass painters.



During the guided visits you will walk through the lofty painted rooms to the old enamelling kiln which was used to bake the pieces of glass. Inside the workshop, you can observe a short demonstration of the various steps that are needed to make a stained-glass window.

Various courses and 1-day workshops are organized to help you explore and enjoy this still little-known art and execute stained-glass windows by learning how to cut the glass, paint it and mount it with lead.

Particular care is given to organizing guided visits for groups of children and teenagers. They can go back in time through history, anecdotes, photographs, tools, documents, plaster casts and coloured glass to discover some of the yet hidden aspects of Perugia and relive past emotions.





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