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“*Antichi Strumenti Orafi*” of the Garuti Collection – The Virtual Exhibition

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Abstract. The “*Antichi Strumenti Orafi*” Virtual Exhibition is a multidisciplinary project developed by The Department of History and Cultures of the University of Bologna in collaboration with the Garuti Collection’s owner, Adelmo Garuti. Garuti, a goldsmith in retirement, has been collecting tools and machineries related to his profession for years, and has placed them in Sasso Marconi (Bologna, Italy). This unique Collection shows the inside of the old goldsmiths’ workshops, giving us the opportunity to rediscover a world that has changed dramatically since the coming of Information Technology and 3D Computer Graphics in the gold working industry. This Virtual Exhibition (www.antichistrumentiorafi.it) (Fig. 1) shows the most relevant objects of the Garuti Collection and describes their functioning, so the visitor can follow each step of the precious metals working process. The objects can also speak on their own about the workshops they belonged and about their producers. That gives the visitor the opportunity to know something more about goldsmithing in Bologna - the main city represented in the Collection – and in general about this sector in Italy between the 19th and 20th century.

Keywords. Virtual exhibition, Ancient Goldsmithing, ancient tools, industrial heritage, industrial archaeology.

The realization of this Virtual Exhibition has requested over three and half years of documentation and study of the huge and heterogeneous Collection set by Adelmo Garuti. Probably there is no such an exhibition in Italy, and maybe in Europe, for the quantity and quality of objects and documents included. They belong different workshops and refer to different ages and come from the 18th century to the second half of the 20th century.

All the objects have been captured in high resolution, classified and dated, including all the hardcopy archive of the Collection, made up of sheets and technical notes from the workshops (Fig. 2), ancient photos, old catalogues, and much more.

Researches in historical archives have been performed to collect information on single workshops or factories, in order to dedicate a special session of the Exhibition to the Industrial Archaeology. The importance of this virtual platform was clear since the early stages of the work. It has the pur-



Figure 1. Home page of “Antichi Strumenti Orafi” The Virtual Exhibition.

pose of dissemination to the public, including non-specialist visitors, and also to give the academics new perspectives in the studies concerning ancient metallurgy. It also gives the opportunity to visit the Collection from different parts of the world, without physical barriers and limitations of time. Another purpose of this project is to get in touch with other exhibitions or collections like this around the world, to discuss and share knowledge and experiences.

Very often old workshops definitively close down and all their equipment are sent to dump. Most of the objects and tools of the Garuti Collection have been donated to Garuti through the decades by goldsmiths in retirement or by their families. Many of these objects have also been restored by Garuti himself.

He likes to talk about his Collection, about the circumstances of the recovery of the objects and, above all, about his profession. He started as apprentice in Bologna, in the workshop of a goldsmith, Romano Degli Esposti, in 1960 (Fig. 3). His job became his life and even now he dedicates himself to it, preserving the knowledge of the past and trying to pass it down to the new generations.

Considering how this technical and artistic knowledge was handed down, from one generation to another, during the years of practice, the risk to lose all this heritage with the current industrial progress is real.

The platform chosen for this Virtual Exhibition is a CMS software (Content Management System) that allows to handle different kind of contents, like photos, videos and more.

The Exhibition is designed to guide the visitor through a main path, that starts with the first steps of gold manufacturing.

The main menu, at the top, has several sections, including the one that leads to the heart of the Exhibition: the “Virtual Tour” (*Visita Virtuale*) (Fig. 4). This one is dedicated to the working stages of precious metals

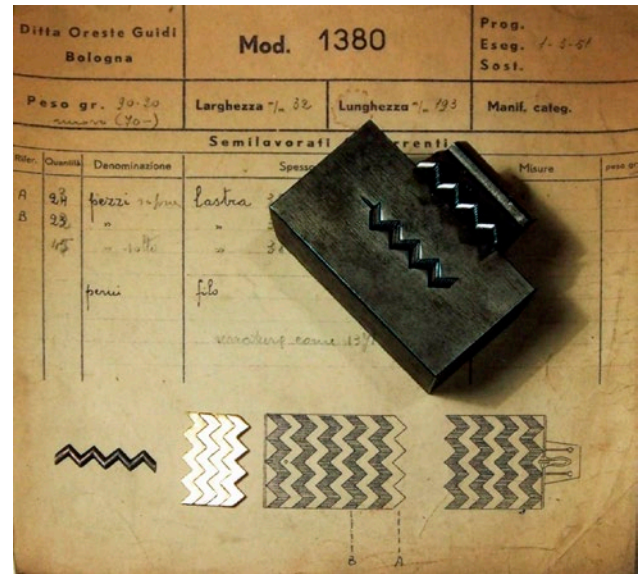


Figure 2. Technical sheet and its mould from Ditta Oreste Guidi.



Figure 3. The “History of the Collection” (*La Storia della Collezione*) page, and a picture of young Adelmo Garuti in the Romano Degli Esposti’s workshop.

and starts from the melting of gold, going on with rolling, drawing, engraving and so on. A multi-level menu shows the user how the tour is structured, step by step, so he can choose to follow this *fil rouge* or not.

Every working stage is explained in detail, focusing on the tools and machineries employed, with particular attention to those from the Collection.

Some of them have also dedicated pages, because of their importance in the working process or for their rarity (Fig. 5). After each explanation there is a gallery of

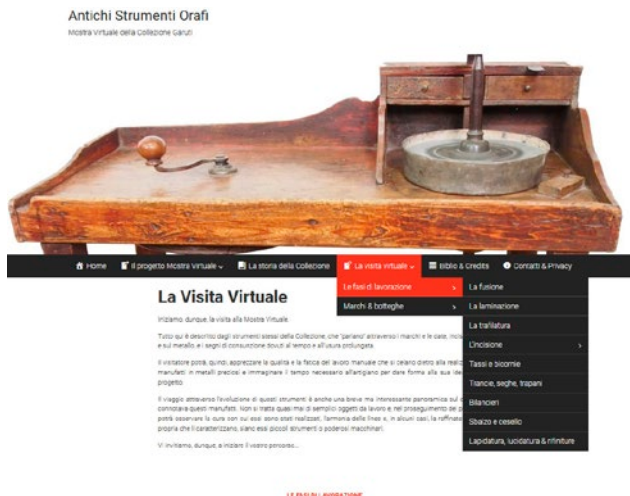


Figure 4. The multi-level menu of the “Virtual Tour”.

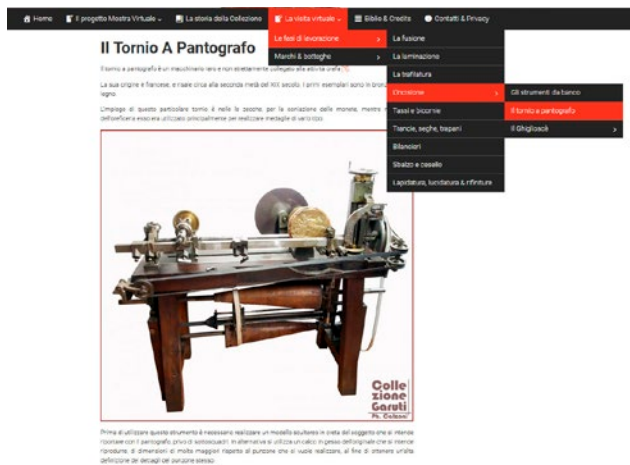


Figure 5. The multi-level menu and one of its pages, dedicated to relevant objects.

all the objects referring to the page. The user can watch them one by one, with a slide show. At the end of each section visitors can go on with the guided tour or jump to another section at their will.

Many of the machineries are manually operated and for some of them videos have been provided to show their functioning. More videos will be recorded in the next future to increase that kind of contents.

Every page has links to specific contents, that send back to other sections of the exhibition, or lead to other external contents shared by on-line museums or digital archives.

A dedicated tool gives the visitor the opportunity to look closely into every object with a special lens. It allows the observation of specific details on the surface



Altri due esempi di trafilè più antiche presenti nella Collezione Garuti
Ritrazzate a mano dagli orafi, riportano la data di fabbricazione e le iniziali degli artigiani
1826 e 1839
Provenienza: donazione di R. Venturi e O. Cavalieri

Figure 6. The “lens” tool at work, a square window to see details on the surface.

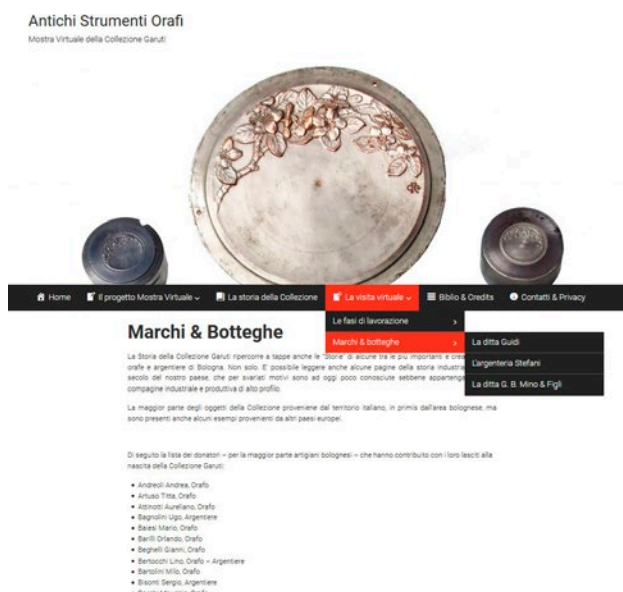


Figure 7. The “Factory Brands and Workshops” page and its related sub-sections.

of the objects, like dates, brands, colours and signs of use (Fig. 6).

Concerning brands, as previously said, there is a special section dedicated to the history of the workshops and producers of the objects exhibited. This section is called “Factory Brands and Workshops” (*Marchi e Botteghe*) and leads to three different sub-sections (Fig. 7). One is dedicated to the Ditta Oreste Guidi, established in Bologna in 1898 and closed before the early 2000s. The second one is about another important workshop in Bologna, established in 1909 by Enea Stefani. Stefani mainly worked silver objects that are still highly renowned and appreciated even after the closing of his shop, occurred in 2015.

The third subsection is dedicated to an Italian factory – established in Alessandria in 1840 by Giovanni Battista Mino – and therefore called G. B. Mino & Figli. The Mino factory produced machineries and tools for goldsmiths and silversmiths and received awards from the Italian Government for its innovations in this sector. The Garuti Collection has numerous objects from Mino, especially rolling mills and drawing plates.

There are also machineries from foreign countries like Germany, France, United Kingdom and from the U.S.A.

The “*Antichi Strumenti Orafi*” Virtual Exhibition is still improving its contents, with researches and new relevant acquisitions. This project cannot be considered completed, it’s still in progress and our purpose is to offer the public new sections and increase the current ones. Sharing and dissemination are as important as preserving objects, because we now live in a transition era. Some professions are now referring more and more to machines, therefore we are losing some techniques and know-how that are not reachable in books but are learned from every day practice and from the voice of old artisans.