

# ALTE VITRIE

L'ARTE DEL VETRO E DINTORNI



In this issue we have chosen to tell you about some little or lesser known stories and places. There is an old glassworks which was active in the 19th century in the Val d'Ossola, whose story has reemerged thanks to a series of interdisciplinary studies. Then we have a number of precious glass recipients once used in pharmacies. They contained oils suitable for the preparation of creams and ointments and are preserved in the Museum of the History of Medical Art in Rome. And finally, the Leone Museum in Vercelli tells us the story of notary Camillo Leone's collection, having spent his whole life gathering documents and objects with great passion.

The editorial staff

## THE CREVOLA GLASSWORKS VAL D'OSSOLA: AN OPEN STUDY

**E**xtensive interdisciplinary research has begun on the site of the Minetti and Morgantini Glassworks, situated in Crevola in the Ossola Valley and active from the first decade of the 19th century up until the 1870s. The work is characterised by a convergence of different investigative methodologies, and aims to reconstruct the activities of a factory producing glassware, crystal and panes in a pre-industrial era. Investigations will be extended to cover a vast range of technical knowledge and know-how applied to the optimisation of the production cycle. The studies, led by Maria Pia Riccardi from the University of Pavia, Marica Forni from the



Polytechnic of Milan and Sandro Baroni from the Maimeri Foundation, will benefit from important documentary acquisitions including the 1812 inventory and the architectural remains of the production site. The possibilities offered by a private collection to analyse a vast selection of glassware and waste materials produced on site will be able to provide compositional data and

comparisons with other formulations of the substantial production in which manpower originally from Altare was also employed.

Maria Pia Riccardi  
Marica Forni  
Sandro Baroni



SOME GLASS  
CONTAINERS FROM  
THE MUSEUM OF THE  
HISTORY OF MEDICAL  
ART IN ROME

**A**t the Museum of the History of Medical Art in Rome, inside the monumental complex of the Holy Spirit, a number of glass containers of exquisite craftsmanship are on display. The chronological origins of a small part of the collection have been traced back to Roman times (tiny glass bottles, ointment dishes, tear bottles), while the majority can be dated in the modern era, generally attributable to two distinct categories, one covering the 16th and 17th centuries, and the other from the 17th to the 19th centuries. From the latter period, we can highlight a number of small glass bottles,

without a bottle stop or lid, featuring particularly vivid decorations and which can be attributed to the late 18th century. They were donated to the collection by Professor Guido Rovesti (1877-1946), famous for his research and numerous studies into essential oils. The gift was presented to Professor Pietro Capparoni, (1868-1947), then President of the Academy – Museum of the History of Medical Art, after whom the room where these bottles are now on display is named. These small containers, unlike the other glass recipients, are distinguished by their frontal fusion painted decorations. They are bottles which had a widespread function in chemist shops, who used the substances contained in them to be mixed with others in order to prepare creams or ointments. With regard to the stag antler bottle (volume 661 cm<sup>3</sup>), one supposes that it once contained the volatile oil deriving from the burning of the antler, a substance which was used as an antispasmodic treatment.

With reference to sage on the other hand, and its 135 cm<sup>3</sup> bottle, we know the importance of infusions in the treatment of throat inflammation and as tranquilisers. Poppy seed oil, contained in another 135 cm<sup>3</sup> bottle, has well-known laxative properties and is used in the treatment of scrofulous afflictions. The flask that once contained depurative oil (volume 378 cm<sup>3</sup>), is supposed to have been used to disintoxicate the liver and also as a laxative. To complete this small and characteristic sample there is a fifth bottle with a volume of around 500 cm<sup>3</sup> (complete with a glass bottle stop). Dating back to the late 19th century, it came from the Sanctuary of St. Nicholas in Bari, and was probably purchased in the 1920s when Professor Capparoni lectured at the city's university. The water it contained could be drunk directly, mixed with medication or used sparingly on occasion, bathing only a part of the body in order to protect it.

Gaspere Baggieri

opposite page, above:

production waste from the glassworks in the Minetti and Morgantini factory

opposite page, below, from left to right:

the Minetti and Morgantini Glassworks buildings to the right of the Crevola bridge (Jean Frédéric d'Ostervald, *Voyage pittoresque de Genève à Milan par le Simplon...*, Paris, Didot, 1811)

Crevoladossola, the former Minetti and Morgantini Glassworks

below, from left to right:

bottle-flask in blown transparent glass, fusion painted in white, yellow, blue and red. The centre features a crest, inside which one can see the writing O(LEUM); DEPUR(ATIVUS), XVIII century

bottle "Manna di S. Nicola da Bari" in glass with bottle stop, it contains medicinal water collected in the crypt of St. Nicholas of Bari, where the urn containing the body of the saint is held, XVIII/XIX century

bottle in blown transparent glass, fusion painted in white, yellow, blue and red. The centre features a crest, inside which one can see the writing SP(ECIES); CORN(C)ERVI, XVIII century





# THE LEONE MUSEUM

Vercelli, Italy

**F**rom his love for his homeland and his passion for art, a museum dedicated to notary Camillo Leone (Vercelli 1830-1907) was born in 1910. It is a guardian of the history of the town and of the territory of Vercelli, with which it still remains in constant dialogue to this day. The Leone collection, composed of a variety of exhibits including archaeological findings, art objects and ancient books and documents, accompanies the visitor from prehistorical times up to the 19th century. The museum's halls also preserve numerous glass items significant both due to their elegance and the high quality of the techniques employed, and which allow, albeit partially, the visitor to retrace the history of glassworking. In the Roman hall, we can find a range of glassware of various sizes, from the delicate coloured doves to the olpai, decorated with blotches of colour, and numerous unguentaria of various shapes. Furthermore, the display also

includes square-bellied bottles, solomonic columns, a glass urn and elegant matrix-blown glasses. On the first floor of Palazzo Langosco, a large 19th century display case houses a collection of modern glassware featuring rare and precious items: a goblet with a metal mounting originating from the glassworks of the De' Medici family, various refined examples featuring the filigrana "a retortoli" and "a reticello" techniques, and glassware from Murano from the 16th and 17th centuries. The Leone Museum also preserves of group of items manufactured by the Antonio Salviati glassworks and by the Venice-Murano Company, which Camillo Leone purchased personally at the National Exposition of Turin in 1884. The study and the use of glass can also be classified in another way, by observing the stained and gilded glass planes from the 16th and 17th centuries and the two micromosaics from Rome, whose accuracy still belies belief even today.

Per maggiori informazioni:  
[www.museoleone.it](http://www.museoleone.it)



below, from left to right:

kantharos from Palazzolo Vercellese, second half 1st century AD

Cup, Medicean manufacture, 17th century

overview of the hall of glasses at the Leone Museum



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With the support of  
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A. De Mari

Cover:  
bottle in blown glass, with a round base and short neck. The centre features a crest, inside which one can see on two lines the writing: OL:(eum)/SALVIAE, XVIII century

