

R.E.D. project

ROOTS OF THE EUROPEAN DESIGN RESEARCH

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Culture



Merletto di Burano

(Burano lace)

The history of the lace produced in the small island of Burano is lost in the mists of time and is related to speculations or legends. For some, the typical processing "buranella" would be connected to the maritime tradition of the inhabitants of the small island, linked to fishing and as a result of the manufacture and repair of nets on-site.

The first evidence of the blossoming trade of Venetian lace, is from the late fifteenth century, accompanied and followed by a boom of publishing in Europe and in Italy - especially in Venice - which saw the publication of hundreds of books, said "modellari", of designs for lace and embroidery, designed by leading engravers and printers of the time.

In 1665, the "point in the air" - the typical processing of Burano - became a "point de France", starting a fierce competition with the product of Burano. To this is added the heavy import duties, which although causing business damages did not prevent the Burano lace to thrive: in the early eighteenth century in the Venetian workshop "Ranieri and Gabrielli" were used about 600 lace makers. But the end of the Venetian Republic (1797) coincided with the beginning of a slow crisis: the production of lace became exclusively familiar, and the number of lace makers began to decline, to run the risk of running out of this typical production maintained for centuries.

In the winter of 1872 it was decided to try to revive the ancient tradition of Burano lace, with the main purpose of relieving the destitute island. It was then asked to an old lace maker named Vincenza Memo - called Cencia Scarpariola - remained last custodian of the secrets of that art, to pass them to the elementary school teacher Anna Bellorio d'Este, who in turn passed them on to her daughters and to a group of girls. So it was that, at the ancient palace of the mayor, was born the School of Burano lace, that thanks to the orders of the Countess Marcello and a number of noble women she contacted - including the Princess of Saxony, Duchess of Hamilton, Countess Bismarck, Princess Metternich, the Queen of Holland and Queen Margherita - did the job again flourish and trade. In 1875 the Lace School already had over 100 students. In the school they used to work for six hours a day, during the winter, and seven in summer. Students were admitted at age of 12, after six years of education provided at home. At 18 they passed to the group of skilled workers until marriage, after which they returned to work at home.

The production of the school continued to grow until the First World War and remained high until the '30s of the twentieth century, and then decreases slowly in the following decades. The lace school was finally closed in 1970. The production continued privately, thanks to the emergence of a number of local shops. Currently the extreme technical difficulty of the high points, and their long or very long gestation (to create a great tablecloth thickly embroidered lace serves the work of ten people for three years), have, on one hand, did rise dramatically prices, on the other encouraged the search for a more expeditious processing technique and fast, with a consequent lack of quality.

The technique that characterized the school of lace of Venice and Burano was the "point in the air", executed with the use of only needle and thread, without any support. Over the centuries, they used various points, some of them invented by their lace makers. Among them, remember the "point Venice" (so named because it reminds the bridges of the city), the "point Burano" (network performed with fine thread, reminds the fishing nets of the island), the "needle point", the "point Rose", "point Hood", and so on. Typical of Burano lace is working rigorously with the needle: the original lace of Burano are distinguished by the extreme complexity of the design and the execution technique, the use of threads (cotton, linen, silk, gold or silver) very thin, and consequently a making extremely long, for which it's needed a study and an application of decades. This is why the prices of Venetian lace can get to thousands, or even tens of thousands, of euros for each artifact. To perform a needle lace they prepare a drawing and, after, the support for the warping, made of two layers of fabric, three sheets of paper to straw, the sheet with the drawing and a sheet of greaseproof paper, each one on the other. They follow the edges of the drawing with a double running stitch,

once done by hand but now mainly done by machine: this warpage at the end of work will be deleted. Then they create the texture of lace, called "ghipùr" (transliteration from French dialect "guipure"), followed by a series of dots of various types: "sacola" (or "sacolà", a point slotted in turn divided into subsections called "sacola ciara" or "sacola fissa"), "formigola", "greco", "redin" and so on. After they use yo work on the connections that bind the spaces between the shapes by using other types of point yet, which were already mentioned "Venezia", "Burano" et cetera. They surround, then, the work with relief (smooth or chunky), so as to create a depth to some areas of the lace: a wire of greater thickness is then fixed with tiny points from a thin thread along the contours of the drawing. Alternatively - or in addition - may be used for the relief even a metal wire, cord-then by the yarn in the fabric. In some places of the lace you can make some scallops. At the end they take off the job by cutting the warp between the paper and cloth and wipes with tweezers the lace from fragments of remaining warp.

