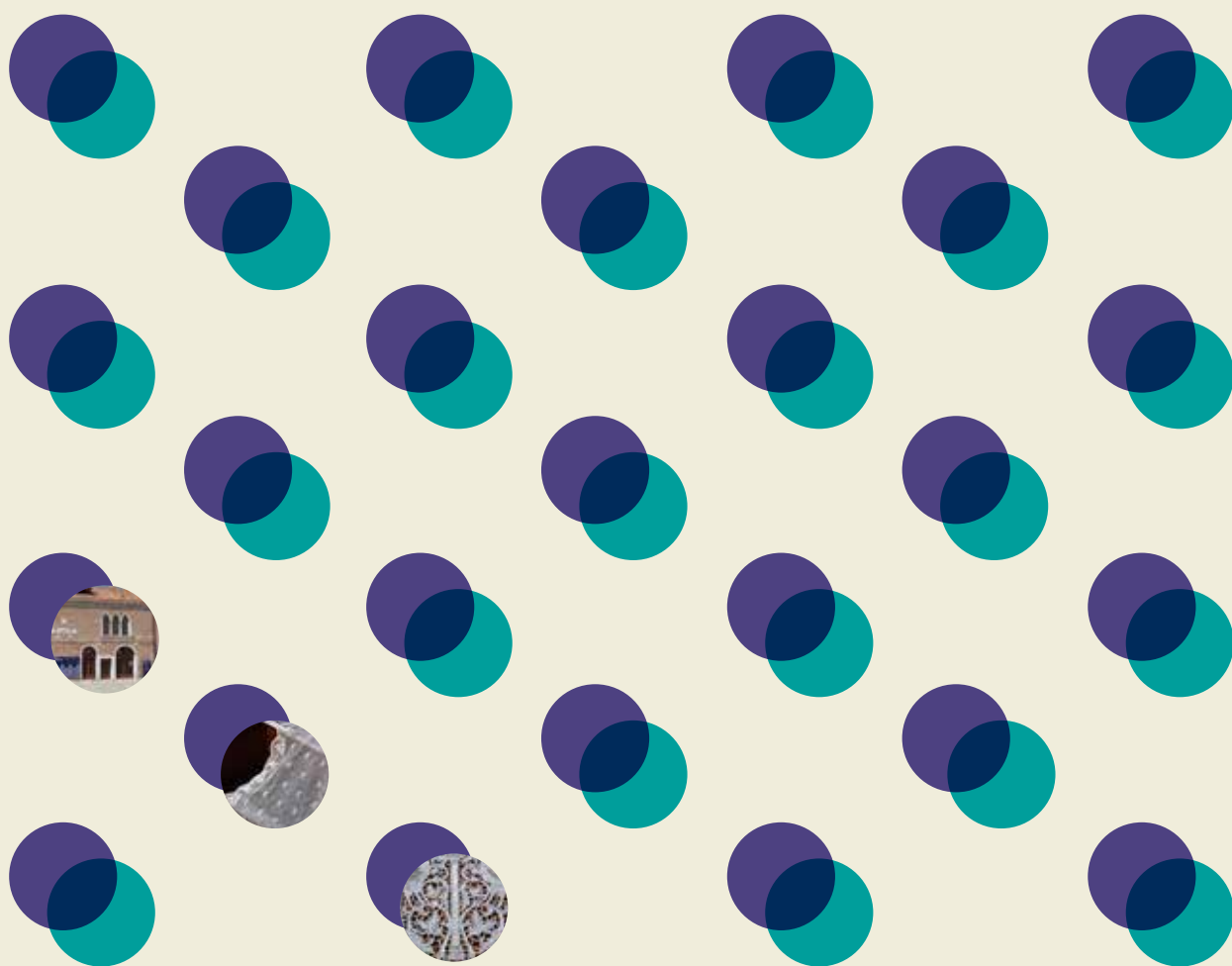


# Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia

Lace Museum  
Burano



ENG

# Building and history

In 1978 the public administrations of Venice (the Town Council, Provincial Authorities, Chamber of Commerce, Tourist Boards) joined together with the Andriana Marcello Foundation in a "Consortium for Burano Lace".

This was the beginning of a campaign to revive and re-evaluate this art: the archives of the old School, full of important documents and drawings, were re-ordered and catalogued; the building was restructured and transformed into an exhibition site.

This was the beginning of the Lace Museum.

The museum is located at the historic palace of Podestà of Torcello, in Piazza Galuppi, Burano, seat of the famous Burano Lace School from 1872 to 1970.

Rare and precious pieces offer a complete overview of the history and artistry of the Venetian and lagoon's laces, from its origins to the present day are on display, in a picturesque setting decorated in the typical colors of the island.



Lace, Museum, Piazza Galuppi, Burano



Burano island

# Laces

## Merletto, pizzo, trina

Are synonyms for lace which indicates artefacts obtained out of nowhere, without any textile support, by combining stitch upon stitch with needle and thread or interweaving a certain number of threads spooling off special reels, named bobbins. Other techniques use crochet hooks, knitting-needles, the tatting shuttle or, in macramé, simple knotting of threads by hand.

## Main technique typologies: needle and bobbins

The *point in air* is made starting from a design, bordered by tacking (*warping*), raised above a wooden cylinder (*murello*) placed on a padded cylindrical cushion (*cuscinello*). The construction of the decorative motif (*called guipure*) proceeds alternating a great variety of points and creating the background (*barrettes* or *sbari* in the *Venice lace point* or *rete* netting in the *Burano lace point*), finally adding *embossing* and *filling*. In the *bobbin* technique, once the design is fixed onto the *tatting* cushion (placed on an overturned scagno stool, in a basket or on the knees), one proceeds to braid a certain even number of threads spooling off wooden bobbins (*fuselli* or *mazzette*) and fixing the progressive steps by means of pins. Work may be with *unbroken threads* or in *separate parts*.

## Materials

In the past, threads of superfine linen, but also of silk, gold and silver, were employed, while since the 20th century, cotton in particular. The main characteristic of needlepoint lace is its consistency, and in bobbin lace its lightness.



Lace, XVI century  
Museum collection



Lace, XVII century  
Museum collection



Lace, XVII century  
Museum collection

# Layout and collections

## THE ITINERARY

The visit starts with the main room on the ground floor, where a short film subtitled in English calls for an impressive journey into the fascinating world of laces, while didactic panels reveal the secrets of this skillful technique and its lace points (Venice Lace point, Burano Lace point...).

The visit continues on the first floor, where the collection is chronologically organized and spread across four rooms correspondent to the following areas:

- From the origins to the 16th century
- 17th – 18th century
- 19th – 20th century
- The Burano Lace School (1872-1970).

Each of these sections is accompanied by videos, illustrated explanations, and a number of other vintage items (glasses, clothes, books, drawings, paintings) which frame the works and offer an easy and multidisciplinary understanding.

During the opening hours of the museum you will be able to see the work of the skilled and tireless lacemakers, custodians of an art passed down from generation to generation.



Burano Lace Museum  
Groundfloor



Burano Lace Museum  
Exhibition rooms, first floor

# Layout and collections

## ROOM 1

### Origins

The triple-petalled golden corollas on the fringes enriching the purple mantle of mosaic madonnas in the apses at Torcello, Murano and in the most ancient of St. Mark's mosaics (11th - 13th centuries), which would disappear from Venetian images after 1204 with the victory over Constantinople and the emancipation of Venice from Byzantine dominion, were possibly executed with *bibila* stitches, a needlepoint still carried out in Aegean islands and which would represent itself in an identical fashion in Veneto-Cretan icons in the 15th century. Instead, the *needle* lace which developed in Renaissance Venice, even though stemming from that initial *origin*, is a different, complex and advanced ensemble of manifold stitches and, as in bobbin lace, it was the creative and manual expression of aristocratic female sensitivity, cultured thanks to close contact with refined artistic and intellectual circles. The first decorations were essentially geometric and ornamented the neckline and corners of handkerchiefs.

### 16th century

The Sixteenth century was witness to an interesting editorial boom (in Europe, in Italy, and especially in Venice), featuring the publication of hundreds of books, called *modellari* or pattern-books, with designs for lace and embroidery, conceived by the greatest engravers and typographers of the time. Dedicated to the noble and virtuous women who executed the art within the intimacy of their home, they show a preference for geometrical decorations, arabesques, rosettes, subsequently becoming more elaborate in the second half of the century, with botanical-zoomorphic and *grotesque* elements. Lace-making activity in monasteries and in the laboratories of orphanages and charitable institutes were documented already in the late 16th century and afterwards, due to the extraordinary success of lace in fashion both in clothing and in furnishings, seeing that such kinds of family and convent production were no longer sufficient, other types were organised on a much larger scale, involving entire female populations concentrated in isolated localities, in order to make exploitation more worthwhile.



Burano Lace Museum  
First floor, Room 1



Lace, XVI century  
Museum collection

# Layout and collections

## ROOM 2

### 17th century

In the Seventeenth century, the century of lace par excellence, which invaded the male, female, junior, ecclesiastical and professional apparel from head to toe, Flanders, Milan and Genoa specialised in bobbin work, while Venice, although not excluding this, created inimitable needle-work artefacts. Baroque lagoon laces in *Venetian Gros point embossed leaf design*, were so spectacular and costly that France was induced to organise home manufacturing under the guide of Venetian women-masters “abducted” to this end, in order to counter excessive sumptuary costs at the court of the Sun King. The Serene Republic retorted against such competition by inventing the even more breathtaking *rose point laces*, whose characteristic miniaturised intricate designs, actually rendered similar to snowflake crystals by micro-stratifications in relief, would be executed with further stylizations also on the *tatting cushion*. Decorations in the first half of the century were characterised by many varieties of botanical specialities rendered realistically, structured in circles within which small animals and birds alternated; between 1650 and 1675 circa, we witness the invasion of Indian flower motifs, taken from herbal books and interpreted with imagination; in the last quarter the same motifs undergo a transformation with a progressive diminution in size and stylization.

### 18th century

In the Eighteenth century, super-light lace of the Flemish type (French and Belgian) became fashionable, which Venetian needle artefacts attempted to resemble by increasing the background surface made of lightweight netting, where measured floral elements appeared to be englobed: it was the invention of the *Burano point laces*. The impalpable natural silk-colour *blondes* were also produced in Venice with bobbins, however they were preferred dyed black, to be used as capes in Carnival disguises. The simplification of trends, due to the emergence of a more practical and sporting Anglo-Saxon lifestyle, also influenced the lace ones, characterised by tiny and disseminated motifs, suitable for fichus (small shawls), jabots (short necklaces) and pouffs (caps).



Burano Lace Museum  
First floor, Room 2



Lace, XVII century  
Museum collection

# Layout and collections

The dramatic events of the American and French revolutions would lead to abandoning lace, considered as the odious symbol of a vanquished aristocracy. Decorative motifs followed those proposed by clothing fabrics: in the first half, luxuriant and mingling rocaille or shell elements, in the second, “meanders” with peach blossom and roses and in the last quarter their significant lightening and trivialisation.



Museo del Merletto di Burano  
First floor, Room 2



Laces, XVII century  
Museum collection

# Layout and collections

## ROOM 3

### 19th century

Lace manufacture was resumed in Europe at the beginning of the Nineteenth century by will of Napoleon who, seeing that thousands of professionals in the sector were jobless, made its use in court ceremonial robes compulsory. Lace production, which saw an unhoped-for rise in England, France, Belgium and Spain, proceeded instead wearily in Venice in the course of the 19th century, trying in vain to compete with the economical and apparently equally pretty mechanical lace, until its renewed launch in the last quarter of the century. Committees of intellectuals, politicians and cultured aristocratic ladies, Andriana Marcello in the first place, not only organised schools for learning by retrieving ancient designs and lace to copy, but most to the point, purchased those very expensive artefacts, without expecting favourable prices.

### 20th century

Such artistic activity revived everywhere (even in China through the missionaries), with alternate fortunes according to the whims of fashion, became anachronistic and antiquated in the post second war era. The winds of novelty coming from America first and from England afterwards, the student movements all over Europe, would spell its end. Having been recognised as a form of traditional craftsmanship to save and recuperate historically and technically, it would be resumed once more in the last quarter of the 20th century, and carried forward to our days thanks to the passion and goodwill of individual professional women in this sector.



Burano Lace Museum  
First floor, Room 3



Lace, XIX century  
Museum collection



# Layout and collections

## ROOM 4

### The Burano Lace School 1872-1970

At the end of the 19th century, under the patronage of Margherita of Savoy, enlightened aristocracy and policies elaborated a project to re-launch Venetian lace-making by opening schools: the first one in Burano in 1872, having found an elderly surviving teacher, then other ones in Venice, along the Coast, on the Mainland.

The decoration was taken from past repertoires: all stylistic typologies were reproduced, often with higher technical precision in comparison to the originals, but renewals in the design, inspired by Art Nouveau and Déco, remained modest. This activity continued for decades thanks to generous commissions on the part of Royalty and endowments by the Marcello family, but the general changes in fashion and diminished financial means bowled over by the Great War, the tendency to persist on iconographic models of the past, the very high cost of handmade products compared to industrial ones, competition with the many other centres sprouting up in Italy, would make every effort vain.

After World War II, minor accessories and souvenirs were produced for a less élitarian tourism and schools and laboratories ceased to exist in the 1970s. A decade later, however, the initiative of a Consortium endorsed by public and private bodies, and the A. Marcello Foundation, led in 1981 to the inauguration of the School Museum, to a series of successful thematic exhibitions and to the organisation of theoretical-practical courses on the art of Venice and Burano lace-making, to avoid it being forgotten once again.



The Burano Lace School  
1930s advertising poster



Burano Lace Museum  
First floor, Room 4

# Laces: Glossary

**Barbole:** bands of lace placed as ornamentation to caps. Used since the 1600s, in the 1800s they decorated hats.

**Blonde:** silk bobbin-lace, with a netting background. Originally from France, from the mid-1700s, it then spread to Venice and Spain. The term derives from French “*blonde*”, from the colour of the natural silk used; dyed in black it was preferred for making *bauta* capes (Venetian Carnival disguise).

**Burato:** fabric with a very loose warp, used as a support for embroidery, which was to get a book dedicated to it in the 1500s.

**Rabat collar:** male “downturned” collar, formed by a quadrangular panel (afterwards two rectangular ones) of lace that just covered the shoulders, then falling down in the front. Used from 1600, in 1700 it changed into a jabot and is still used nowadays by gowned magistrates.

**Bertha collar:** round collar (also called “godet”) positioned as a cape to enhance the necklines typical of the second half of the 1800s; a mediaeval revival recalling the name of Charlemagne’s mother.

**Berlin collar:** designation given by the Burano Lace School to a model probably commissioned from Berlin.

**Pistagna collar:** designation given by the Burano Lace School to a shawl-collar model with elongated ends.

**Cushion (small):** see tombolo cushion.

**Facciole collar bands:** strips of fabric or lace placed around the neck from the end of the 1600s; used by abbots also in the 1700s.

**Filet:** square mesh netting embroidered in linen and darning stitch with a shuttle or needle, called “modano” or double headed needle.

**Fichu:** triangular shoulder-kerchief with ends thrust into the bodice (corset) or crossed in front and tied behind. Worn by dames and bourgeois in the last quarter of the 18th century, it varied in the quality of its fabric.

**Grotesque:** this term designates a type of wall decoration deriving from that discovered in Nero’s Domus Aurea (in the so-called “*grottoes*”), composed of a light and fanciful array of vegetable forms intermingled with human figures, extravagant animals and narrative scenes. Appearing at the beginning of the 1500s, it underwent a naturalistic revival during the 1700s

**Mitten” gloves:** bare-finger gloves, up to the elbow, made of embroidery or lace; fashionable

# Laces: Glossary

in France in the age of the Sun King; at the end of the 19th century they were only used in the evening.

**Needle-lace:** lace made with a needle and linen thread (in cotton as well since the 20th century) without employing any support, using a *cussinello* cushion, similar to a bobbin pillow, upon which a wooden cylinder rested (*murello*) covered by a cloth on which the design was previously drawn.

**Bobbin lace:** once the design was fixed onto the pillow one proceeded by braiding threads connected to the bobbins (also called *piombini* or *mazzette*) and fixing the work with pins.

**Macramé:** (from the Arabic mahrama) still made today in the area of Liguria, it is created knotting threads fixed high up, then left freely hanging, into a fringe downwards.

**“Meander” motif:** decoration which developed starting from 1740, characterised by parallel series of undulating vertical tendrils from which more or less natural floral posies branch off.

**Pilgrim:** (from Fr. *pélerine*, wide collar on the pilgrim's mantle), in the 1600s reaching towards the waist at the back and with long ends in the front; in the 1700s and 1800s, shaped like a semi wheel.

**Burano Lace point:** type of needle-lace differing from the Venice point in its background, made of a netting with tiny rectangular meshes similar to the vertical sequence of ladder rungs.

**Coral or flat point:** flat needle-lace, with decorative flimsy and contorted branching taking inspiration from coral growths, which developed from the last quarter of the 1600s.

**Milan Lace point:** bobbin lace characterised initially by continuous motifs, with no background, created separately in linen stitch and then assembled in the final stage. In the 1600s a background with simple or double bars appeared at first, then a round or hexagonal mesh netting, also found in Flemish artefacts.

**Pellestrina Lace point:** bobbin lace appearing at the beginning of the 1600s, very similar in its technique (linen, braid, tent stitch) and decoration to its contemporary Milano lace point, from which it differs in the background bars, often “Y” shaped.

**Rose Lace point:** needle-lace with decoration distinguished by the miniaturisation of its elements and the superimposition of multiple layers developed from 1680.

**Venice Lace point:** type of needle-lace differing from the Burano point in its background, formerly chaotic and now honeycombed, made by interlacing simple barrettes (*sbari*) or with picots (*pipiolini*) produced by buttonhole or scallop (*cappa*) stitch.

# Laces: Glossary

**Flat Venice Lace point:** see coral or flat point.

**Venice raised Gros-Lace point:** characterised by a free interpretation of decorations in leaf or floral shapes rendered with a great amount of padding and fillings. It developed from 1650 at first simply with joined motifs, then with a barrette background. Famed in Europe as *Gros Lace point de Venise*.

**Venice Lace point cut into leaf-work:** similar to the previous, but characterised by the lack of padding and fillings.

**Renaissance embroidery:** similar in appearance to lace, it is based on the positioning of a thin *toilé* strip made with bobbins in linen stitch, or woven on a loom, according to a predefined design, connected by filling elements in needlework. This is an economical version of the Venice point cut into leaf-work.

**Netting:** A type of embroidery obtained by drawing out warp and weft from a fabric base so as to reduce it to few vertical and horizontal threads on which to create a determinate decoration little by little.

**Rocaille:** decoration inspired by the shell motif (used to embellish grottoes and gardens since the 1600s), from which the Rococo term comes, to indicate an artistic style.

**Tombolo cushion:** a cylindrical pillow stuffed with straw or sawdust resting on a sort of overturned stool called "*scagno*", and used to make bobbin lace. In Venice it is called "*balòn*" or balloon.

**Tramezzo:** or insert (from Fr. *entredeux*), a strip of lace to place between two pieces of fabric.

## NOTES

**The artefacts collections:** Cini, CMB, FAM, Grassi, IRI Jesurum and the documentation material from the Burano Lace School are kept at the Mocenigo Palace Museum Centre for Studies on the History of Textiles and Costume located in Venice (San Stae 1992).

The **paintings** of the Correr Collection come from the various centres of the Fondazione of the Musei Civici di Venezia.

# General Information

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## Venue

### LaceMuseum

Piazza Galuppi 18  
Burano

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## How to get there

### Vaporetto

Line 12  
Burano stop

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## Opening Hours and Tickets

For ticket information and opening hours please consult the website:

**[www.museomerletto.visitmuve.it](http://www.museomerletto.visitmuve.it)**

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## Bookings

- on-line: **[www.museomerletto.visitmuve.it](http://www.museomerletto.visitmuve.it)**

- calling the call center: **848082000** (from Italy); +39 **041 42730892** (only from abroad) from Monday to Friday, excluding holidays, from 09:00 to 13:00

The booking office will also reply to customers through the e-mail address [prenotazionivenezia@coopculture.it](mailto:prenotazionivenezia@coopculture.it)

Reservation is not mandatory and it is not necessary in case of free tickets.

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