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The Monte di Pietà building turned into the Museo della Ceramica in Savona, Italy



January 2015 — Savona, the fascinating Italian city located in the Liguria region, has a new gem of art and culture in the heart of its historic district: the **Museo della Ceramica** (Ceramics Museum). The eagerly awaited museum has now been completed thanks to the commitment and close collaboration that saw the Fondazione A. De Mari (A. De Mari Foundation) work alongside the Municipality of Savona to create an unprecedented museum complex dedicated to Ligurian ceramics and particularly those of Savona and Albisola. It boasts about a thousand works of great artistic merit dating from the 15th century to the contemporary period,

carefully selected by the curators Cecilia Chilosi and Eliana Mattiauda.

The museum is housed in the magnificent 15th-century Palazzo del Monte di Pietà — owned by the Fondazione A. De Mari — that was built by Pope Sixtus IV, a native of Savona, in 1479. The Fondazione A. De Mari restored the building specifically for this purpose, with a project designed to preserve and highlight the existing historical parts, but also to make it more accessible to the public. In its updated function as the Museo della Ceramica, this restored space — laid out on four floors — has been opened to the public for the first time. Moreover, thanks to this work, it is now directly connected with the adjacent Pinacoteca Civica di Savona (City's Art Gallery), in turn located in the Palazzo Gavotti (Gavotti Palace) owned by the municipality. The art gallery boasts extraordinary old paintings, notably Donato de' Bardi's Crucifixion, unique in Renaissance art, as well as works by famous contemporary artists in the collection of the "Fondazione Museo di Arte Contemporanea Milena Milani in Memoria di Carlo Cardazzo" (Milena Milani Contemporary Art Museum Foundation in memory of Carlo Cardazzo), including masterpieces by Picasso, Fontana, De Chirico, Magritte and Miró.

The union of these two museums thus endows the city with a major attraction, the Museo d'Arte di Palazzo Gavotti (Gavotti Palace's Art Museum), boasting extraordinary art collections. The result is a cultural and artistic itinerary unique on the international scene and closely connected with the churches and palazzi of the historic district.

It is unsurprising that the Museo della Ceramica would have been established in Savona, as ceramic production has characterised the art, history and culture of this area for more than six centuries. Drawing on this tradition, from the very beginning the museum has represented the expression of an entire territory and of the excellence that has helped make it so highly regarded around the world. This represents a convergence between artistic talent and craftsmanship that, from the past centuries to today, has permitted important collaborations with local and international painters and sculptors using ceramics as an expressive medium with great potential and artistic value.

This heritage has been promoted through the collaboration of the Fondazione A. De Mari and the Municipality of Savona. Both institutions have shown great attention and foresight in combining professional expertise and financial resources, making the Museo della Ceramica part of the broader circuit of the Civici Musei di Savona (MUSA) — the city's museum network — with the aim of creating and expanding this complex and its extraordinary collections, envied around the

world.

Roberto Romani, President of Fondazione A. De Mari, commented, "We are extremely proud and satisfied that we have completed such an important project for our community and our territory. We are convinced that turning the Monte di Pietà building into the Museo della Ceramica should be viewed as the natural evolution of a structure that represents a key chapter in the history of Savona and that will thus become a place of knowledge and representation of our area's economic and cultural history." Federico Berruti, Mayor of Savona, commented, "The establishment of the Museo della Ceramica and the creation of a new cultural complex for Savona ceramics offer the city an important opportunity to promote local tourism and cultural development. Starting with the establishment of an exhibition centre of this scope, the aim was to allow our city and its distinctive historical aspects to play a leading role on the scene of Italian ceramics."...

...The restoration and architectural work

The restoration project was by Armellino & Poggio Architetti Associati, Studio di Architettura Fallucca and architect Marco Ricchebono, called upon by the Fondazione A. De Mari to redefine the spaces chosen to house the new museum from both a structural and exhibition standpoint. Choosing to situate the museum in the 15th-century Palazzo del Monte di Pietà made it necessary to adopt architectural solutions oriented chiefly to preserving and recovering original parts of the building, and adding new and contemporary architectural elements, with fascinating structures in steel and glass to provide a dramatic backdrop beautifully highlighting the over one thousand pieces on display.

Photography: Fulvio Rosso

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