



# ITINERARIO LIBERTY



## Arch-confraternity of the Misericordia

The Confraternity of Misericordia, present in Borgo San Lorenzo from 1847, was transferred in 1904 to these new headquarters purposely built according to the design of the engineer Niccolò Niccolai, and in which it is possible to observe works coming from the San Lorenzo Furnaces in the course of several years or produced individually by members of the Chini family. The decorative display, in fact, was amplified over a period of time thanks to the contributions of the Brothers or of well-to-do middle class families who annually donated the decorations still needed to the Oratory of the Confraternity, often on the occasion of the patron saint St. Sebastian. The furnishings gradually acquired in this way, fortunately preserved almost entirely, and often in their original setting, also allow us to ascertain the qualitative and quantitative variety, since Chini Manufacturing did not only produce ceramics, but also glass, and with the collaboration of the single decorative elements managed to practically “sign” the entire furnishing of a building, thus guaranteeing a certain unity, even in the variety of things recovered.

### **PRINCIPAL STAGES**

**1904** : the Arch-confraternity was transferred to the present headquarters.

**1908** : the Oratory extended by the Engineer Niccolai and decorated by Galileo and Pietro Chini, who offered their work free of charge, was officially inaugurated. At this time the decoration consisted of the external **Lunette with the Saviour source of the Sepulchre**, designed by Galileo, realized by the San Lorenzo Furnaces and donated by the Counts Pecori – Giraldi, of the Rosette with Cherubs on the facade, in which the symbol of the martyrdom of St. Lawrence, and the trademark of the Furnaces themselves, are visible at the centre of the gridiron; of the Six Polychromatic Windows, decorated with family coats of arms and inscriptions which recall works of Misericordia (of which only three survive today); finally of the Madonna with Child, painted on the apsidal basin, inappropriately called Mater Misericordia, realized by Galileo Chini.

**1911** : for St. Sebastian’s Day the “merrymakers”, that is the two brothers elected and responsible for the organization of the festivity, donated a statue of St. Sebastian in cardboard – stone to the Confraternity, which is on the altar at present, while the Furnaces enriched the right altar, where still today there is an image of the Madonna with Child and St. John in painted ceramics, which recuperate the Florentine Renaissance tradition, personalized by the effect of gold-plated mosaic given by the ceramic tesseras which framed it.

**1913** : for St. Sebastian’s Day the image of St. Joseph with Child was displayed on the altar, nowadays on the left side altar, donated by the Brothers and realized by the Furnaces. Very similar, from a stylistic point of view, to the other one with the Madonna, the Child and St. Giovannino which decorates the twin altar, this small terracotta presents the image of Baby Jesus alone with St. Joseph in an original way, new in the iconographical Renaissance repertoire by which it was certainly inspired. On this occasion the Coats of Arms of the Misericordia and of San Lorenzo were added within garlands of fruit which still remain on the two altars.

**1915** : for St. Sebastian’s Day the superintendent of the Misericordia, don Luigi Tesi, offered the Confraternity the Glazed Screen placed at the entrance of the Oratory. The project derives from Dino Chini, Galileo’s cousin, who will be nominated “ head guard” of the Misericordia on the 25th. April 1915; the Furnaces took care of the glass manufacture while the carpenter – cabinetmaker Cesare Bini worked on the wooden parts. The polychromatic glass represent the Coat of Arms of the Misericordia and dedicate it to the donor with the Coat of Arms of his family. On this occasion, Dino Chini also gave the finishing touches of the

pictorial Squaring of the two side altars.

**1916** : for St. Sebastian's Day the "merrymakers" Igino Berretti and Federigo Sicuteri donated the Front Door to the Confraternity, deigned by Dino Chini and harmonized with the fifteenth century style of the facade. As we can see, to the liberty of recuperation conducted by the Chinis within the traditional figurative repertoire, corresponds a certain approximation of the judgement of the public, which eight years before had defined the building "Gothic".

**1930** : the new facade is inaugurated with the addition of the completion with small arches and with the small bell tower, deriving from the Engineer Severino Crott, after the death of the Architect Giusti. This time Pietro Chini supervises the decoration: on the new facade of the building the Coat of Arms in ceramics of the families who have made the work possibile with their generous donations: Pecori Giraldi, Del Campana, Romanelli, Maganzi – Baldini and Frescobaldi are positioned and can still be seen. The double lancet windows are padded with " suitable glass walls" of the Furnaces; lastly in the corner tabernacle a terracotta statue of the Immaculate is placed, realized the Franciscan P. Rossi. At present the statue is preserved inside, and replaced by a copy in stone.

In the course of the thirties it is believed that the two Candle-bearing Angels, which nowadays are on the side altars, were added; in fact, they are not mentioned in the documentation gathered by the periodicals, but bear the hallmark which the Furnaces used until 1939. They are real copies of the angels which Luca della Robbia realized for the Vestry of the Florence Cathedral, " but modernized with a different tone represented by small gilded stars, typical of the manufacture.

There is no news about when the Stoup, in glazed terracotta in the form of a shell with a cherub on the front, was added on the right of the entrance. Being identical to those to be found in the Chapel of the Balcony in the Salaiole, decorated by Chini in 1923, it may have been produced on that occasion, or else this could also date back to the thirties, following the habit of reutilizing old models at different times.