



# ITINERARIO LIBERTY



## The Town Hall

Built and decorated according to a joint project due to the council engineer Augusto Lorini and to Tito Chini respectively, the Town Hall building was terminated and inaugurated in 1931. The building shows plain, linear architecture on the outside, but on the inside there are quite original variations, not only for the superficial decoration, but also through the insertion of particular architectural elements. The first of these is the **Great Staircase** which links up the entrance-hall on the ground floor and the upper floor, and which occupies a cylindrical space, underlined by cylindrical fluted columns which form the handrail and the jambs.

According to the testimony of the sculptor Augusto Chini, his brother, Tito Chini, was not extraneous to the project of this stairway, regarding the formal solution, demonstrating that he maintained a total idea of the decoration of an environment, not unbound from architecture. On the other hand, Pietro Chini, uncle and collaborator of Tito in this undertaking, seems to have had a secondary role, limiting himself to the fulfillment of some pictorial parts. Both the structure and the decoration were based on few geometrical modules, rectangles, diamonds or rhombus, circles, already recognizable in this entrance-hall in the design of the glass doors.

All the parts in glass and ceramics were produced by the San Lorenzo Furnaces, as always capable of supplying almost all the ornamental elements, as, for example, the four wall lamps in wrought iron and chalices of opaque glass on ceramic bulbs, or yellow ceramic lists inserted at regular intervals on the cement skirting board. Based upon Tito's drawings were also the wooden decorations, like the doors and the benches, afterwards realized by Bini's joiner's shop. Various elements with strongly stylized and geometrized lines, in vivid, pure colours, are related to the Art Déco style, the influence of which is dominant in this first environment.

Going up to the upper floor, one notes the large windows and the mural paintings which cover the semicircular space of the walls with geometrical and allegorical representations. On the ceiling, a false round skylight reassumes the colours and shapes of the glass of the windows. The ceiling of the landing, on the other hand, is adorned by a mural painting in red and gold, which precludes to the antique style of the next room, the entrance-hall on the first floor, which leads into the rooms of the various officials. It is a hexagonal environment, this figure being also underlined by the large skylight which reproduces, in an amplified fashion, the precious stone cutting. The walls are decorated by a skirting board in Pompeian red on which there are graffito designs of amphoras, rosettes and gridirons, as a symbol of the martyrdom of St. Lawrence, patron saint of the comune together with St. Martin, also utilized by the Furnaces as their trademark.

The two saints appear painted on the walls facing the Mayor's room. The painting is by Tito Chini, it has the romantic taste of the medieval recovery and in the lower part reproduces an ideal view of Borgo San Lorenzo. The doors which open onto this room repeat the design of the diamond and the circle and are embedded in cement jambs which reproduce the entrances of antique temples in a schematic manner. The bench in the centre of the room is formed by the combination of two benches which are identical to those on the ground floor.

In the Mayor's room, which is also polygonal, the mural decoration, carried out in few, but efficient, colours on fabric panels alternated with ceramic reliefs, with putti holding sheaves of wheat, honours the major local glories, from Giotto to Monsignor Della Casa.

The floor in pink and white tiles, produced by the Furnaces, bears the image in the centre, unfortunately quite consumed today, of the patron saint with his gridiron, inside a circular frame with geometrical designs and volutes. The chandelier in wrought iron with glass chalices has the same pattern of Art Déco of the

lamps on the walls of the entrance hall on the ground floor. The glass windows, protected today by a supplementary window on both surfaces, bear the rhombus and the circle in tones which reproduce the effect of the antique windows in alabaster. Finally in the Secretary's room a length of material is preserved, painted by Galileo Chini, entitled

The Last Invitation, a late work of the artist, that may be dated towards 1952, the disturbing meditation on old age and death, in which the critics have also wanted to see an ideal portrait of Eleonora Duse and a stylistic appeal to European Expressionism. The peculiarity of the Municipal Palace is that of having maintained the original aspect almost intact, thanks to the preservation of the antique furnishings and the restoration of the pictorial part carried out by Augusto Romagnoli (1988), an apprentice at the Furnaces in the years 1928 - 1931 and collaborator of Tito Chini in various enterprises, amongst which the decoration of this same building.