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Interview with Massimiliano Gurrieri



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This exclusive interview with Massimiliano Gurrieri, Owner of Laboratorio Federici was conducted by Nicola Linza and Cristoffer Neljesjö in Bologna, Italy during March 2013

How did you enter the framing business?

My father was working at Laboratorio Federici since he was 15 years old. When he was 40, He always took me to the workshop to watch the work and play with wood so I started to be interested in frames when I was very young. When I was thirteen, I carved my first frame and I understood that the profession of "carver" and "gilder" had to be my professions in the future. My father ran Laboratorio Federici between 1982 and 1999 so I had the great opportunity to learn all his secrets about work and when I finished the Institute of Art of Bologna I started to make frames professionally for a living. That was in 1989.

Is there a reason why a particular frame fits a picture more than another?

The frames have always to follow their paintings in shape and style because they actually are complementary to them. In terms of shape and style, the major rules for framing are the following:

- If you have a portrait you should frame it with a frame with a large section width and with big carvings to give to it importance.

- If you have a landscape you just have to do the opposite, using a smaller section width and with smaller carving just because the landscapes themselves are plenty of small details.

So this is more or less the way we have to reason. "*Frames have to follow paintings in their style and shape!*" In terms of light that we are trying to give to dark paintings by framing them we can use sometimes gilt and dark lacquered frames rather than bright gilt frames.

Actually when a painting is dark should be framed with a very dark frame to let it appear more bright. I know that could sound strange but it is just like that. At the same way if we have to frame, a bright painting we really need to use a bright frame otherwise the big contrast could be not that handsome. These are few simple rules to behaviour for framing paintings. In the end, art is not like mathematics, and it should be the client who expresses the last preference for framing his own painting.

Do you have a favourite commission that comes to mind?

I have in mind several works but one of my favourite work is the one I made for the "*Patriarca of Venice*," for whom I made 30 frames. They were framing the 30 past *Patriarca* of the town of the past centuries. I used the frame code 023 that is just one of my favourite frames in terms of shape and carving and it fits very well to portraits. It is a very rich frame, an 18th century roman frame with plenty of carvings and it is round, which is perfect for portraits. I remember that I carved them in almost 100 days because my clients were in a rush, so I had almost to go to work in the evening.

After that huge work for just a single carver, I felt really satisfied. The day of the delivery that was at "*The Patriarcato of Venice*" was a pleasant sunny day. I reached the place by boat and I was proud of putting something made from me in such a big mix of style and arts that is Venice with its old buildings.

You can design or select a single frame from any time period to re-frame the Mona Lisa, which would it be? And why?

For the Mona Lisa I would use my frame code 017 which is a Tuscany 15th century frame because I think it represents more than other any frame the "*Rinascimento*" and I can describe this model frame as the original first classic frame that marks the very beginning of the numerous prestigious frames that were designed from most important old master painters since and after Renaissance times.

Actually this frame is so classic in terms of style, with its ornate elements that were used even during Roman Empire, that I think it will be the best marriage between a frame and a painting like Mona Lisa. Leonardo was and is considered as one of the most important artist of the

Renaissance times, so in this special case, frame and painting belong to the same century, to the same region and in fact to the same classic style.

How would you frame a portrait of yourself?

As I am a man of contemporary time, I will not use a Renaissance or a Baroque frame but I will use a more sober one. I will use code 016 (18th century roman frame) because is a very simple frame, very adaptable to any kind of image. Even if it is simple and without carving, it has an important section width designed probably from Salvator Rosa himself, and it is a great combination of sobriety and beauty. For its own shape, most of the time, is used by Italian antique dealers for framing any kind of painting, portraits as landscapes, because never happen that final clients and buyers find it wrong for the painting that are buying. It is actually a kind of “passpartout” that you could use anytime for anything. This is the best reason for why I will use it.

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