GALLERY76 EXHIBITION GUIDE

REMEMBERING Ricamo

AN EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

CURATOR: APRIL SPIERS

AUGUST 2020

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https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=KF6Gc8AF9VE&feature=youtu.be

RETICELLO

Reticello (Italian, “small net”) is a variety of needle lace which arose in the 15th century, first recorded in Milan 1493, and remained popular into the 17th century.

Reticello was originally a form of cutwork (where threads are pulled from linen fabric to form a grid on which the pattern is stitched primarily using buttonhole stitch) Later reticello used a grid made of thread rather than a fabric ground. Reticello is characterised by a geometric design of squares and circles and geometric motifs and is traditionally worked on white or ecru fabric. It is regarded as a forerunner of punto in aria.

One of the contemporary champions of the style is Giuliana Buonpadre who established an Embroidery School in Verona in order to preserve the knowledge and skills involved in traditional Italian embroidery. Under her guidance, Giuliana’s students have taken these traditional Reticello techniques and introduced a contemporary twist with the introduction of coloured threads.

We have a number of these coloured pieces worked by Guild member Karen Little, along with a number of traditional pieces in this exhibition.

Also known as: *Greek point; reticello; point coupé; point couppe; radexela; radicelle*

Tina Miletta

Karen Little

PUNTO ANTICO

Punto Antico (Italian, “Antique Stitch) dates as far back as the 15th century and was known by a variety of names including *Punto Toscano, Punto Reale,* and *Punto Riccio*. The style did not became known as “*Punto Antico*” until the early 20th century.

Punto Antico is counted thread style combined with cutwork. It is traditionally white on white (or another neutral tone) but recently experiments with colour have become more popular. The fabric is cut, trimmed, and edged with an overcast stitch, *Punto Cordoncino, s*ometimes known as cord stitch. Satin stitch, *Punto Reale* or *Punto Piatto*, is used to create designs on the uncut areas of the fabric and to outline areas of work. Other stitches used include; Bullion stitch (*Punto Vapore)*, pierced Eyelet stitch (*Pallino Traforato,* which uses a stiletto or awl to open up a hole in the fabric), the four-sided stitch (*Punto Quadro)* is pulled to create open areas or to divide the design area. The one distinctive stitch to Punto Antico is the curl stitch, *Punto Riccio*. The design is created in running stitch, then worked over with a whip stitch. It is finished with the overcast or cording stitch and it mostly used to make curlicues within the design.

Thank you to Jeanine Robertson and her article on Punto Antico for Piecework Magazine for the correct Italian terminology.

Pieces Worked by Cathy Galati

ASSISI

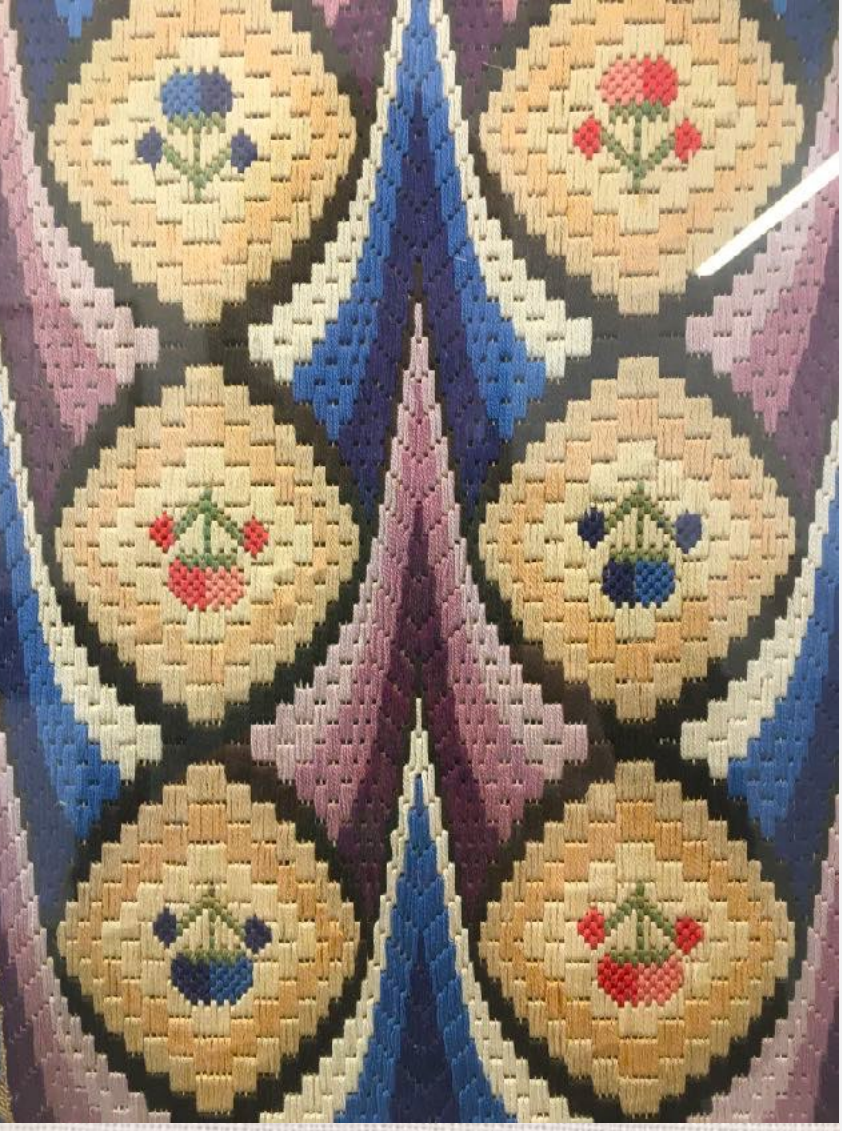
Assisi style embroidery began in the 13th century and was worked in convents by the Poor Clares. It was used to decorate household, ecclesiastical items as well as the traditional peasant dress of the area. Designs and motifs were hand drawn onto fine linen cloth with the outlines and background embroidered in coloured silk. Rather than being worked in cross stitch, historically long armed cross stitch was used, with Holbein stitch* (a style of linear blackwork) being used to outline and emphasise the voided motif. These were strongly influenced by traditional designs of bird or animal pairs surrounded by elaborate scrollwork with pieces being created for religious purposes such as altar cloths and chasubles.

By the 16th century the style had become so popular it had spread to the secular community, the motifs became more more influenced by popular Renaissance imagery of satyrs, demons and ancient mythical creatures.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, this form of embroidery fell into decline and many of the designs and motifs were lost. After the new state of Italy was formed in 1861, a movement was started to rediscover and revive traditional handicrafts in order to provide employment to poor women. In 1902, the *Laboratorio Ricreativo Festivo Feminale San Francisci di Assisi* was founded in Assisi to accomplish these goals. The traditional techniques were simplified in order to make them more accessible. Cotton was used instead of silk, and the outlines were counted instead of drawn freely on the cloth. The designs were simplified and background worked in standard cross stitch. The cottage industry flourished and the style became known as 'Assisi Work' from the 20th century onwards.

* Holbein stitch is known as 'St Chiara' stitch, after the Poor Clares in Assisi, and is known as '*Volterrano*' in Tuscany after the town of Volterra which used the stitch to decorate clothing and household items.

(Above: Guild Collection / Below: June Fiford)



(Above: Guild Collection - Royal School of Needlework, 1920s. Below: Lyall Willis)

BARGELLO

Bargello is a style of needlepoint which uses vertical flat stitches laid in a geometric pattern to create motifs. Bargello is the English name for the stitch, which is called '*Bargello*' after a series of 17th Century chairs found in the Bargello palace in Florence, which feature a "flame stitch" pattern on their backs. The catalogue at the palace however, refers to the stitch as *Punto Unghero* (Hungarian point).

For this reason, Bargello can also be known as Florentine work, Hungarian point (*punto unghero*) or even as Flame stitch (*punto fiamma*). Though it remains uncertain, there is a possible Hungarian connection or origin to the stitch. There are stories of a Hungarian princess marrying into the famous de'Medici family and bringing the Bargello style to Florence. We also have later examples from the Hungarian National Museum which shows Bargello work of Queen Maria Teresa of Hungary from the 18th Century.

Traditionally, *Bargello* is stitched in colourful wools on canvas, employing a series of vertical stitches. If these vertical stitches are stepped down quickly, the design forms sharp points or zig-zags (known as "flame stitch"). If the steps are gradual, then the design will appear to be curved.

CASALGUIDI

Casalguidi is a style of Italian embroidery which uses a heavy, raised stem stitch to create designs on a background of pulled thread work. It is then further embellished with surface stitchery. The typical designs include scrolls, heraldic and floral motifs. It also often also includes decorative tassels.

The technique originates in, and is named for 'Casalguidi', a small town in Tuscany. It evolved in the 1890s and remained popular until the late 1930s with the outbreak of WWII.
Many designs were specifically made for sale to tourists and overseas visitors as well as for the trousseaux of young women. The style was created by the two 'Morelli sisters' at their school and taught to their students in Casalguidi and surrounding villages. Husbands or agents would take the embroideries to other areas such as Livorno to sell at markets or deliver ordered articles to customers.
Casalguidi was described in Turin newspaper in 1914 as having "a great variety of gorgeous embroideries, it is a genre which is totally different from others".

The style was revived in the mid-1990s with a new embroidery school called the *Club del Ricamo di Casale.* The school was created to ensure this historical technique survived.

Top - Selection of Casalguidi handbags. Loaned by Effie Mitrofanis.

Middle - 1930s Vintage Bag Loaned by Effie Mitrofanis.

Bottom - Traycloth Loaned by Effie Mitrofanis

Above: Loaned by Cathy Galati
Below: Loaned by Effie Mitrofanis

SFILATO

Sfilato literally means “unthreaded” but it is usually translated as “drawn-thread work”. Sfilato is the typical style of Sicily and, like other Italian needlework, is often used to decorate domestic items. The style is subcategorised into four distinct techniques. The oldest and most traditional predates the Fifteenth Century, in it, the design is needle-woven onto a drawn-thread background. In the Sixteenth Century, the technique evolved and the pattern was made using the background fabric surrounded by cording which brings the design into sharper relief. This style is very like Sardinian drawn-thread work, which uses satin stitch as well as cording.

In the Eighteenth Century, the technique and style of Sicilian drawn thread work changed again, and the design was achieved simply using drawn thread, leaving the background unchanged - this is considered the most difficult approach. Finally, in the Nineteenth Century, they returned to the Sixteenth Century technique but employed classical motifs.

MACRAME

Macramé first appeared in Italy in the port cities of Genoa and Liguria. However, its origins are much older and go back to the 13th Century, where Arabic weavers created the technique to decoratively finish the ends of rugs and other woven goods. In fact, in southern Spain, the technique is known as ‘morisco fleco' (Moorish fringe). The word *Macramé* is a loan word from either the Arabic *migramah* (ornamental fringe), or Turkish *makrama* meaning fringed towels or clothes. For centuries, straps and belts for donkeys in Liguria and Sicily (which also has strong Arab links) have been worked in *Macramé.*

While most people know of *Macramé* from the resurgence in the 1960s and 70s, the style arguably reached its peak in popularity in England during the Victoria period where it was considered an elegant female accomplishment. Ladies used silk thread to make *Macramé* fringes for homewares, handkerchiefs and garments.

GROSSO INTAGLIO

Grosso Intaglio (Italian, “large cutwork”) is another traditional style of embroidery which evolved from older forms of reticella and cutwork. The style as we know it today dates to the early 1900s and remained popular for much of the 20th Century.
It is traditionally worked on white or cream linen with a lower thread count and thicker threads and is characterised by the buttonholed outlines around the design and the woven bars across the larger spaces. *Grosso Intaglio* designs can be floral or geometric and are sometimes embellished with additional whitework surface stitchery.

As a far more robust form of cutwork than the older styles, *Grosso Intaglio* was often employed for household objects such as curtains, tablecloths and pillows, and on fashion items such as bags and ladies parasols.

The style is often referred to as Richelieu Work and is named for the influential French cardinal Richelieu (famously depicted as the villain of *The Three Musketeers*) who imposed a tax on luxury Italian imports such as cutwork lace, and brought lacemakers to France to encourage the local lace manufacturing industry.

Also known as; *Grosso Richelieu, Doppio Intaglio or Doppio Richelieu.*

Above: Loaned by Cathy Galati (family heirloom)
Below: Both pieces worked by Cathy Galati

PUNTO PERUGINO

Emerging in the 18th Century in Perugia, *Punto Perugino* is characterised by its geometric or linear counted satin stitch. These are used to create designs which often depict figures from the medieval art and literature of Perugia. As is often the case, the oldest surviving examples were worked by Poor Clares in convents. Many colours were used but the most popular and traditional was the saffron yellow which the nuns dyed from crocus flowers they grew.