

The ancient chandelier from the 1400s is returning to the Collegiata Museum

Pubblicato: Giovedì 29 Novembre 2018



The precious chandelier of the Collegiata Museum has come back to Castiglione Olona, at the end of the exhibition “Restituzioni 2018. La fragilità di bellezza” organised in Venaria Reale by Banca Intesa San Paolo, who sponsored the recent restoration. After being admired by 70,000 visitors, who were able to see it in a spectacular setting, hanging above a mirror two metres in diameter, the chandelier has, for a few days, once again been in the place for which it was commissioned by Cardinal Branda Castiglioni, as a splendid gem of a culture that had extraordinary European influence.

The chandelier is **the work of Flemish or German craftsmen**, and is attributed to the third or fourth decade of the fifteenth century, often compared to the famous portrait of **The Arnolfini Portrait by Jan Van Eyck**, in which a similar but more modest chandelier is depicted in every detail. The Collegiata Museum’s chandelier is not only one of the few examples we have, but is also a fortunate exception with respect to similar chandeliers, variably attributed to the school of Dinant or Nuremberg, which are now, almost exclusively, to be found in private collections or in such museums as the **Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.**

The **restoration** of the rare chandelier has provided new legibility and many elements of knowledge, confirming its great artistic value and the authenticity, which, in the past, had been doubted because of a

theft in disguise, which occurred towards the end of the nineteenth century, **when renewed attention to the so-called applied arts generated many forgeries and fraudulent trafficking.** The captivating account tells us that the priest sent the chandelier to Milan to be cleaned; when it returned, it was put back in its place; it was only some time later that, by chance, the architect Luca Beltrami saw the original at an antique dealer in Milan, leading to the discovery that the original had been replaced with an excellent copy, which was then moved to the Villa Church.

In the catalogue of the exhibition, Dr **Isabella Marelli** wrote about other copies or individual parts copied from the fifteenth-century work, reported in the United Kingdom, Germany and Spain; however, the search continues by the curator Dr Laura Marazzi, who is on the trail of other nineteenth-century lights, used independently as wall lamps.

For this reason, the fact that the **nineteenth-century chandelier has been entrusted to the restorer Lucia Miazzo**, who had already worked on the chandelier in the Collegiata, is of great interest; under the direction of the competent authority, Dr Ilaria Bruno, the dusting and analysis of the chandelier have begun *in situ*, in the Villa Church, to verify its state of preservation and to understand if the techniques and mechanisms of setting it between the parts are the same as the original. The work, promoted by the “Beata Vergine del Rosario” Parish, has been made possible thanks to a crowdfunding campaign begun spontaneously by a group of women in the parish.

This is the first phase of the complete restoration project, which has already been approved by the competent authority and which is waiting to find sponsors interested in shedding light **on a story that could give some twists.** And new elements may already be reported next spring, during the presentation of the restoration of the chandelier in the Collegiata, as part of the exhibition **Restauri Rari, by Agostino Alloro.**

di Translated by Maifredi & Ruperto (Reviewed by Prof. Rolf Cook)