

Wrought Iron

New shapes for an Ancient Art

The Liberty trend, in its revaluation of applied arts, gave new life to the ancient art of wrought iron that, after the rigor of the neoclassical style, experienced a new, lively season. This was also thanks to new-found technology, such as steam machines and oxy-fuel welding, which allowed iron craftsmen to put all their craftsmanship to use. Gates, railings and balconies, divided into well-paced spaces and adorned with soft lines inspired by plants and animals, began to embellish the external and internal architectural spaces. This fostered the close collaboration of architects with wrought iron masters as well as with interior decorators, cabinetmakers and creators of furniture, furnishings and objects, such as chandeliers. The greatest representatives of the art of wrought iron in Italy were Alessandro Mazzucotelli (1865-1938) and Alberto Calligaris, who developed the 'Humanitarian School' of Milan, a place of training for artisans in the various disciplines. Mazzucotelli was also one of the founders of the current 'Higher Institute for the Artistic Industries' of Monza, born as a sort of university for the decorative arts.

In Stresa you can spot valuable evidence of the art of wrought iron, such as the decorative features of Villa Teresita and the canopy of the 'trackless train' of Mottarone, next to the railway station.

In this context there was developed the art of Cesare Petoletti, born in 1883, who moved to Stresa between the nineteenth and the twentieth century from nearby Lombardy (Cerro). With forging, hammer and mallet he made his iron wrought flexible and flowery - many of them can be found throughout the province of Novara and in many regions of Italy. There was no villa or palace that did not once have a fine piece of work signed by him.

His masterpieces can still be admired today in every part of the town of Stresa. His son Edoardo followed in his footsteps, especially as a draughtsman, and some of his skilled apprentices are still transmitting his art.

