



**S**purred by movements such as the *Arts and Crafts* in England and the *Wiener Werkstätte* in Vienna, lacemaking and handicrafts experienced an increase in appreciation and a renewal at the end of the 19th century, with subsequent opening of schools specifically dedicated to spreading these skills. At the beginning of the 20th century, specific courses for teaching lacemaking were held in the Friulian part of the County of Gorizia, which had been under Habsburg rule since 1500.

In 1902, the *Institute for the Promotion of Industries (Istituto per il promovimento delle industrie)* was founded in Gorizia at the initiative of the local Chamber of Commerce, based on the Viennese institute of the same name, founded in 1879 to protect and support small local businesses. In 1922 the Gorizia Institute became the local headquarters of the Italian National Handicrafts and Small Industries Organization.

In 1946, at the end of the Second World War, the *Lacemaking Course Administration (Amministrazione dei Corsi Merletti)* was established in Gorizia under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, with the first course starting that same year.

Over the next thirty years, the school expanded and established branches throughout the region: the art of lacemaking became an additional programme of school education.

In 1979, the regional vocational training institute took over the management of lacemaking courses, continuing its activities until 2013, when the Gorizia Lacemaking School Foundation (Fondazione Scuola Merletti di Gorizia) was established, which in turn managed the teaching courses and activities until early 2023.

Since then, on the basis of regional regulations, the functions and activities of the Foundation have been managed by the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region, i.e., the Regional Agency for Cultural Heritage - ERPAC. The aim of the agency is to guarantee the continuity of the activities and to promote the appreciation of the traditional bobbin lacemaking art, spreading the knowledge and the techniques through various training courses.



MERLETTO  
GORIZIANO

GORIZIA  
LACE



**D**uring the 17th century, numerous religious orders - Capuchins, Jesuits, Poor Clares, Carmelites, Dominicans - settled and consolidated in Gorizia, enriching the religious, but also the cultural and social life of the city.

The Ursulines arrived in Gorizia on the evening of 8 April 1672, led by the superior Caterina Lambertina Pauli-Stravius and the prefect Angela Aloisa.

The nuns, who came from the monastery in Vienna, but were originally from Liège, had the task not only of establishing a monastery, but above all of educating girls from very different social backgrounds. In addition to the practices of piety, catechism, and teaching reading and writing, the nuns also taught embroidery and lace-making.

The nuns' exquisite handicrafts of the nuns were an important source of income that enabled them to carry out their activities. They produced liturgical robes, wax medallions with *Agnus Dei* motif (called *Drathl*) inserted in embroidered fabric, often with a metal frame; their products also included artificial flowers, tapestries for the decoration of private homes, and probably also sketches for men's and women's clothing.

The Ursulines' artistic skills came to life in perfect embroideries made with a technique called *agopittura* or needlepainting, in which silk threads of different colours

next to each other create three-dimensional effects; the nuns also made embroideries with gold or silver threads and very thin metal foils; *fleck* embroidery (from the German *Fleckarbeit*) was another technique in which small fragments cut from other fabrics were skilfully arranged to produce a design (a special form of 'reuse' of silk thread). In addition, the foundresses of the monastery brought their knowledge of bobbin lace-making from Flanders to Gorizia and passed it on to their pupils.

Lacemaking developed particularly in the 18th century and Gorizia's production became widely appreciated even then for its refined execution. The creations are influenced by Flemish and Bohemian schools and represent a vast array of geometric, phyto- and zoomorphic motifs on a variety of backgrounds, differing from the Venetian tradition by the use of bobbins instead of the needle.

The precious lace samples, dating back to the second half of the 18th century, are now held at the Fashion Museum in Gorizia: the collection consists of continuous bobbin lace, used as decorative borders or inserts. The sample collection has been studied and catalogued and presents an enormous variety of decorative motifs, from geometric to floral shapes, stemming not only from the nuns' imagination, but also from their familiarity with fashion magazines that arrived at the monastery.



REGIONE AUTONOMA  
FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA



Ente Regionale  
Friuli Venezia Giulia

SCUOLA MERLETTI DI GORIZIA

Via Diaz, 5 - 34170 Gorizia  
tel. 0481 385 300

merlettogoriziano.erpac@regione.fvg.it  
scuolamerlettigorizia.regione.fvg.it

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