



mercanteinfiera

Press Release

THE FASCINATION OF THE LUNI MARBLE THAT MAKES ROME ETERNAL AND THE DISTANT PAST OF TOYS THE 25TH EDITION OF MERCANTEINFIERA SPRING IS HERE

The international fair for antiques, modernism and vintage collectibles is returning to Fiere di Parma on Saturday 2 March with a homage to the archaeological heritage of the Museum of Luni, including items on show for the first time, and an exhibition of toys from the private collection of Gianni Marangoni.

(Parma, 15 February 2019) The Emperor Augustus said of Rome: “I found a city of bricks and left a city of marble”. This marble, which has been used to magnificent effect in both sacred and secular structures and signposts the architectural and urban development of the “eternal city”, came from Luna (now Luni), an ancient Ligurian urban centre founded in 177 BC as a Roman outpost and featuring in Dante Alighieri's Divine Comedy (Paradise, XVI, 73-79).

This same marble, now referred to as Carrara marble, is one of the main attractions at the 25th edition of **Mercanteinfiera, the international fair for antiques, modernism and vintage collectibles running from Saturday 2 to Sunday 10 March at Fiere di Parma.**

Indeed, the fringe exhibition (Pavilion 4) “**Storie della città di Luna. Frammenti di vita all’ombra di Roma**” (“**Stories of the city of Luna: Fragments of life in the shadow of Rome**”, staged in collaboration with the **Polo Museale della Liguria**, demonstrates, through a series of extraordinary discoveries from the Imperial period, how widely used this marble was as a decorative and architectural element, for creating objects of daily use, from mortars to scale weights, and in religious settings.

Together with the drawings by Carlo Promis in 1857 of the Luna digs, which began in 1800, Fiere di Parma will also feature the “**Head of Eros**”, son of Aries (god of war) and Aphrodite (goddess of beauty). Dating back to the 3rd century BC, this exceptional example of Classical sculpture was most probably part of a group representing the famous myth of Cupid and Psyche. You will also find the head of Medusa, the mosaic of Silenus (a bearded man from one side, and a male face with a rich head of hair when viewed the other way up) the Ocean mosaic and one of the **bronze torches that completed the statue of the goddess Luna**. Because they are so fragile and difficult to conserve, torches like this are rarely recovered in archaeological digs.

Another interesting object is a **weight equivalent to 20 pounds** engraved using the point technique, **on public display for the very first time**. The text alludes to a measures reform imposed by Emperor Claudius in 47 AD, and implemented by the *aedili* (Roman magistrates responsible for public buildings) in order to produce the so-called “true copies” for use by the local communities, so that they too could conform to a consistent Roman style.

These Museum of Luni artefacts, will be exhibited alongside its **hidden art**, pieces that have lain hidden in the Museum's storerooms, invisible to the public until now.

Whilst the appeal of archaeology is clear - museums, sites, parks and monuments in Italy attract 27 million visitors, or 24% of the total (*TCI source on 2015 ISTAT data*) - it is generally the case that over 50% of Italy's artefacts are kept in storage rather than made accessible in archaeological museums (Brunella Muttillio, *Le risorse invisibili*).

On the subject of this “hidden” art, **Antonella Traverso**, Director of the Museum of Luni, says: *“I don’t think the quantity of material withheld from public view is ever a problem, but rather that it is the duty of museum staff to make sure that what they do choose to exhibit is truly visible, in the sense of intellectually accessible. I could fill display cases with thousands of marble fragments, but if I don’t properly convey the exceptional nature of the industrial centre of Luna, from which these tonnes of stone were excavated, then I have not done my job correctly”*.

Whilst the Archaeological Museum of Luni currently exhibits around 200 objects, thousands lie in storage.

Alongside the elegant grandeur of 17th-century Napoleonic-era furniture, Sumerian statues and iconic design objects - by Gio Ponti, Joe Colombo and Albin, among others - and vintage Chanel, LV and Jimmy Choo collectibles, this edition of Mercantefiera has yet another story to tell. **“Let’s play: come giocavamo. Giochi e giocattoli della collezione privata di Gianni Marangoni”** (“Let’s play: how we played. Games and toys from the private collection of Gianni Marangoni”) in Pavilion 4.

The 25th edition’s second fringe exhibition sends the visitor to a decades-distant dimension, composed of the memories and sensations triggered by objects beloved of children, and more besides: the ancient and timeless magic of toys. An array of artefacts awaits, from dolls, baby clothes and sewing machines - this is what “playing at home” meant for Marangoni, according to his family’s tradition (in 1935, his father Giulio founded the Istituto Marangoni, a major name in Italian fashion) - to improbable trains, ships, cars and aeroplanes, much beloved and sought-after by collectors.

Highlights include the **“Marinaretti” sailor boys, painted by Attilio Mussino**, famous for his illustrations for Carlo Collodi’s “Adventures of Pinocchio”, and the papier-mâché marionettes, complete with original clothing, dating back to the 1920s. There is also an **American Snoopy** from the 1930s and, from the same period, a **collection of discs** containing images in cardboard that could be cut out to create real pieces of set scenery.

“Toys and archaeology represent different ways of describing our country’s cultural identity, one of the objectives of this fair” concludes **Ilaria Dazzi**, Brand Manager of Mercantefiera. *“For this edition, we chose archaeology in particular because talking about the connections and links between peoples is an extraordinary way of binding cultures together. A bold endeavour, but it is our audacity over the years that has won us the loyalty of over 5000 international buyers who see the Parma fair as a mix of business and culture”*.

To celebrate 25 spring editions, at the fair on Sunday between 11 am and 5 pm, Poste Italiane will be presenting the special Mercantefiera postcard stamp cancellation.

The magnetic pull of the 1000 exhibitors will be attracting over 50 thousand visitors to this year’s edition.

PRESS OFFICE

Antonella Maia

Mercantefiera Press Office

Mob 349 4757783

Email: antonellamaia.ufficiostampa@gmail.com

ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION

Location: Fiere di Parma - Viale delle Esposizioni 393/A

Date: From Saturday 2 March to Sunday 10 March

Times: 10 am - 7 pm

Day-entry price: 10 euro (whole day); free for children aged 14 and under