



living restoration

Leaving our past heritage to the future

History, aesthetics and technique come together and complete each other in the art of restoration

“A job which is a privilege. You need to have a mix of skills and sensitivity to dedicate yourself to this profession. Restoring a building, a monument, or a church is respect. A deep respect for what it represents: history, the origins of inspiration hidden under blankets of mortar and layers of paint. It is a job that teaches us to observe details and appreciate what is normally considered to be

something poor”. This is how Nicola Berlucci describes the art of restoration. Owner of the historical Studio Berlucci in Brescia and Specialist Conservation architect in the Royal Institute of British Architect Conservation Register, with years of experience working on monuments of international relevance. Modern restoration is something that is even more defined: “Today restoration is accompanied by a project for adaptation. Together

with the conservation work is that for modernisation. We need to protect the ancient, but make it contemporary for use with current technology and techniques”. Over the next few pages, we will discover what it means to work in restoration in the 21st century. This is a voyage through time and space, that will create a sense of continuing discovery and surprise.

- Elena Marzorati -



GÖK MEDRESE, SIVAS (TURKEY)

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Respect and
discipline for
the beauty of
history

The historical scientific approach as
told by **Studio Berlucchi**, a point of
reference for the industry

◀ **A** historical company, in the heart of Brescia, that celebrates a century in business this year. Three generations working in the field, since 1920: “My grandfather Antonio founded the studio, then came my father, Roberto with his brother Francesco, then myself and my cousin, Alessandro, working together with a number of specialists. What brings us together? We all have a degree in Engineering from the Politecnico di Milano, each one with a different specialisation. In particular, I focused on civil engineering, with a specialisation in the Restoration of Monuments at the Politecnico di Milano. My student number was 1, a testament to the newness of this type of specialisation at the university, a specialisation which changed my life”. So begins Nicola Berlucchi, partner and Ceo of Studio Berlucchi, an engineering company specialised in architectural design, in particular of buildings classified as monumental, and that has recently been added to the 100 Italian Conservation Stories by Fondazione Symbola in Roma. The room where the interview takes place is full of images of some of



NEW CEILING FOR THE TEATRO DI CAMOGLI (GENOVA)

the most important works done by the studio: from the Abside di San Pietro in Roma to the Shirvan complex in Baku, the Teatro Sociale in Camogli and Bergamo, the Fenice in Venezia, and the Tempio della Concordia in Agrigento. There are also a number of foreign works done and a number of Unesco World Heritage sites. “Restoration work has little to do with the free creativity found in other professional roles. Restoration is respect and discipline in regards to the history of a building, a church, or a monument. A hand-crafted piece or a building is a palimpsest of different phases of history, making it a unique piece. The difference between the original and the copy is the patina of time: recovering a monument must keep that in mind. In carrying out any work, our teams make it so that all the phases of that history can be ‘read.’” Restoration is therefore an elective job that, for example, allows you to closely observe a piece by Michelangelo, touch it, and admire it. It is a very attractive job, but almost always difficult, and very physical. “The job of a restoration designer is never done ‘remotely’, but is carried out directly on site and grows with the increasing knowledge of the building and its materials. It often happens that we spend entire days in attics, cellars, or holes in the ground in order to understand how the Medieval walls work alongside those built in the Fifteenth century, and how a structure is made. Our approach is a historical-scientific one”. Indeed, if one studies a

building carefully, it is the building itself that suggests compatible interventions, without moving walls and altering it. “Everything I have learned is also thanks to my decade of experience working in the diagnostic laboratory, ‘Il Cenacolo’ in Roma, where I coordinated over 300 diagnoses on monuments regarding nearly every conservative aspect. There, I learned how to find out more about the history of a façade through small 10 cm pieces of plaster, scrutinised through a microscope, thanks to which I could identify 27 layers of paint on an ancient plaster, which appears to be white to us”, notes Nicola Berlucchi, who is also a Specialist Conservation Architect of

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the Royal Institute of British Architects Riba, and professor at the Università della Sapienza in Roma, and the Politecnico in Milano, and a CERT certified engineer in the Ordine degli Ingegneri. One last observation on conservation restoration: “In this field it is indispensable to see everything altogether. I have always coordinated and directed teams of specialists without ever losing sight of the overview and using a multidisciplinary approach, which leads to the final objective of successfully recovering a monument, based on that added value, reliability and professionalism that are also the main distinctive traits of our studio”. ■



CHIOSTRO DEI SECOLARI, COMPLESSO DEL POLIRONE, SAN BENEDETTO PO (MANTOVA)