

THE PLACE OF WONDERS

Experience available

Monday - Friday

9am - 7pm

Lunch closure

1pm - 3pm

Experience duration

1 - 1.5 hours

Ten days' notice of booking required

THE ART OF SCAGLIOLA WITH BIANCO BIANCHI II

Scagliola is a Roman era artform that without the passion of intrepid creative minds like Bianco Bianchi would have faded into oblivion long ago. Bianchi fell in love with scagliola—intricate inlaid decorative surfaces made with ground selenite, colored pigments, and natural glue, effectively a type of plaster, to look like marble inlays in the 1950s. After amassing what is now considered the most important collection of scagliola in the world, Bianchi decided to try his hand at the technique. And by the 1960s, his hand-crafted scagliola pieces were in high demand and a family dynasty was born.

Nowadays, stepping into Bianco Bianchi's scagliola workshop on the outskirts of Florence feels like entering a Tuscan treasure chest. To the left, a showroom of Bianchi's world-renowned antique scagliola collection, ancient tiles, old newspaper clippings, and family photographs with illustrious clients like Gianni Versace and Pavarotti. And to the right, a bustling workshop in action. This passion for plaster is in its third generation with Bianchi's son Alessandro and grandson, Leonardo hard at work hammering, etching, mixing pigment, pouring, and polishing scagliola tables that dazzle with detail.



The work is meticulous and fascinating to watch in action—taking up to three months to complete one piece. For Leonardo, the twenty-seven-year-old heir to this multi-disciplinary craft, the work is emotional. For a long time, he rejected his destiny, trying his hand at other professions but ultimately the draw of the workshop was too powerful. Taught by his father, this softly spoken young man with intense eyes and an urgency to his voice, explains that “passion and obsession” fuel him. Through this painstaking work begun by his grandfather, he found himself and his true passion.

While modern-style scagliola does exist, this father-and-son duo, aided by aunt and sister Elisabetta, like to iterate on the old to create the new. They respect the past while embracing the future. And while critics might say that scagliola is imitation marble, Leonardo reminds us, sweeping his hand across a staggeringly beautiful scagliola landscape more rich in detail and depth than any painting, “you can't realize pictures in marble.”

