

From the dream of Art Nouveau to the contemporary art

Spring. This is the subject that **Galileo Chini** depicts in his work shown here, realized by this great Florentine artist for the 11th edition of the Venice Biennial.

That sentiment of rebirth, of discovery, what the season that follows winter brings us every year, together with an explosion of the senses: the perfumes of flowers, colours that light up, everything suddenly is inflamed, in an almost dreamlike way.

This is the dream that guided many artists in that enchanted era which, in Italy, became known as **Liberty** style (after the name of an important English furniture and accessory manufacturer) but in English was and is known as **Art Nouveau**; **Galileo Chini** was its most important artist and its most important centre was Montecatini Terme.

A town, which lived a dream - that of the Belle Époque - and that made artists, musicians, writers, monarchs, dream: they wanted to immerse themselves in that 'unreal' reality made up of melodrama, operettas, café chantants and casinos, ballrooms, art exhibitions, theatre. Moreover, the town dressed itself in art in order to welcome that world.

A dream that was renewed in the 1950's when it found its home once again in **Montecatini** and in **Valdinievole**, creating new ideas for architects and even for directors who created and collocated their work here.

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Tuscany



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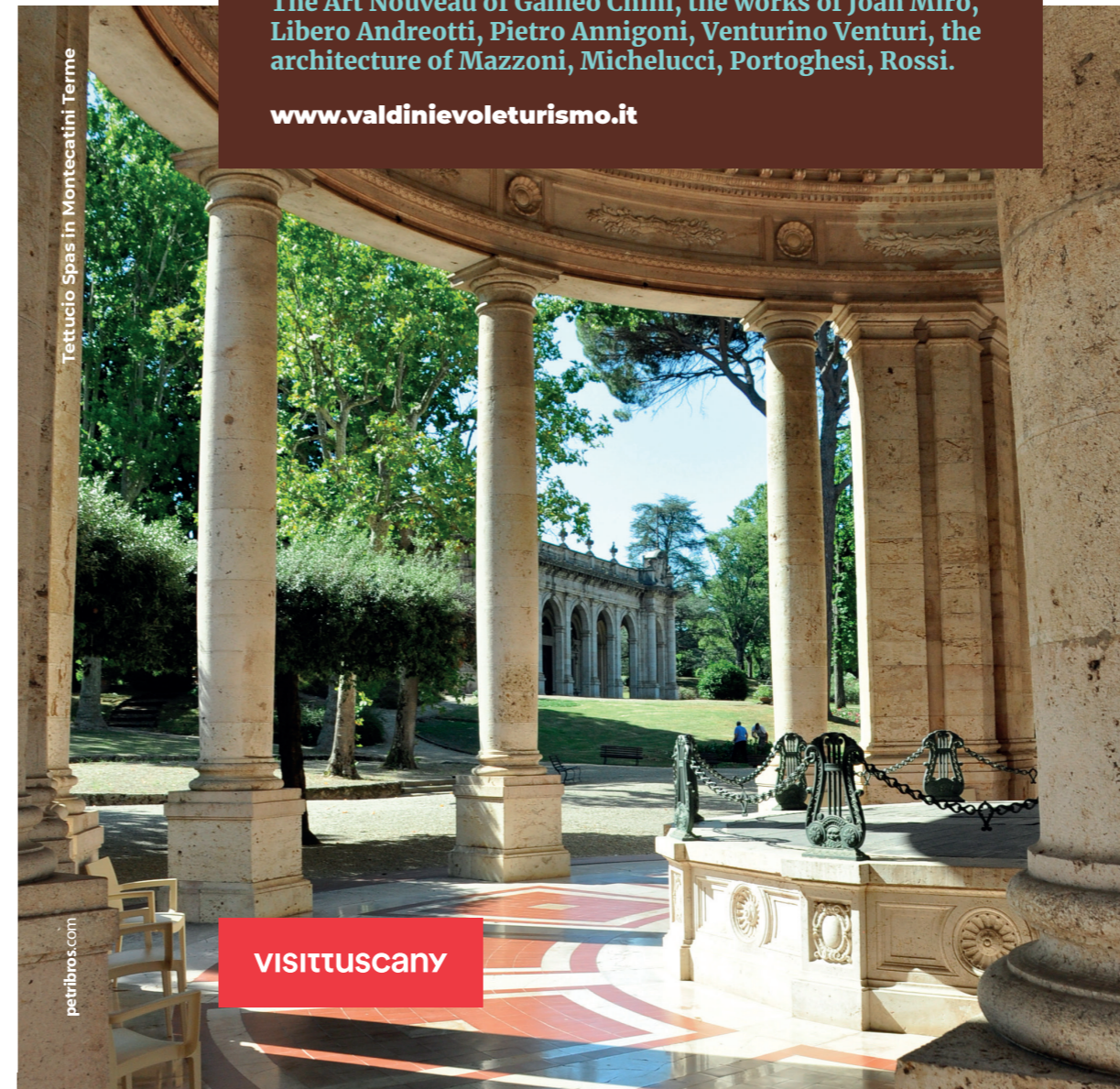
Regione Toscana



Art of the 20th Century

The Art Nouveau of Galileo Chini, the works of Joan Mirò, Libero Andreotti, Pietro Annigoni, Venturino Venturi, the architecture of Mazzoni, Michelucci, Portoghesi, Rossi.

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Tettuccio Spas in Montecatini Terme

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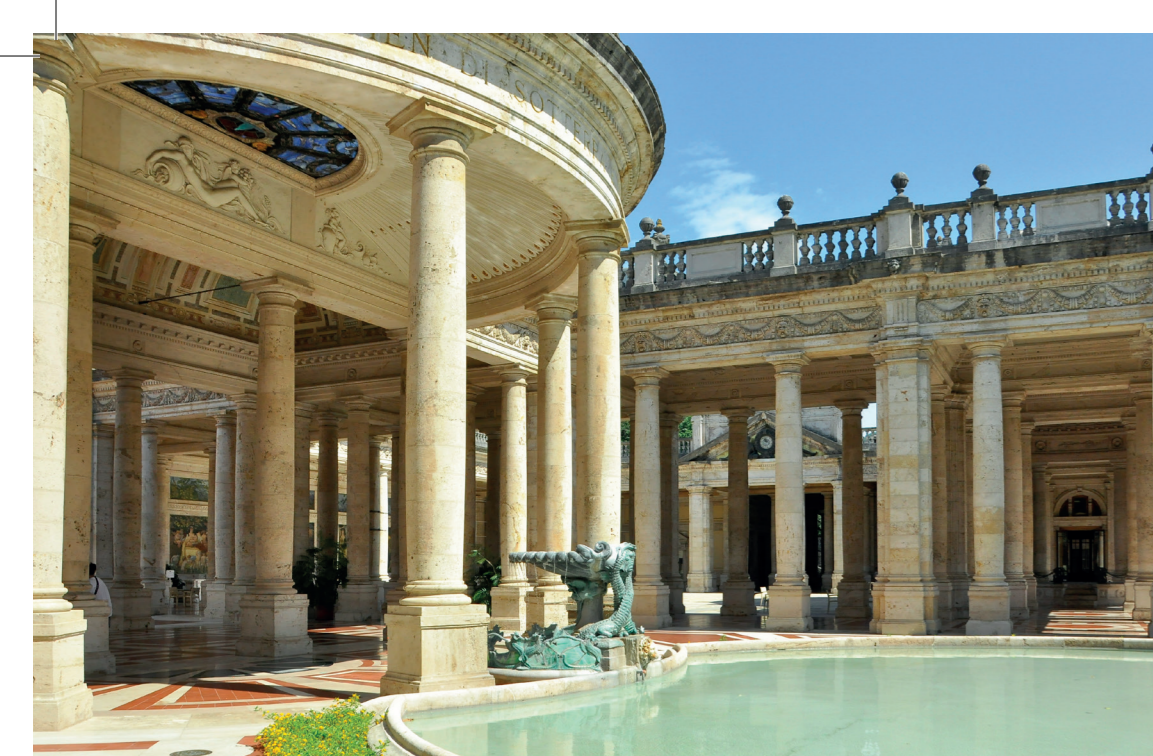
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IDEAS
ART OF THE 20TH CENTURY



"Primavera Classica" (1914) by Galileo Chini



Art of the 20th Century in Valdinievole

Tuscany is an open-air museum, capable of offering a repertory of works of art and architecture during every period of time. **Montecatini Terme** and **Valdinievole** represent - out of that ideal gallery - the part which is relative to the period between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century: a season that, starting from Neoclassical taste went on to **Eclecticism** and then, in the climate of the **Belle Époque**, on to **Art Nouveau**.

This is the first golden period for Montecatini when artists, writers, musicians chose this thermal town as their selected place of work: **Giuseppe Verdi**, **Giacomo Puccini** (both honoured in two bronze statues), **Ruggero Leoncavallo** all stayed and worked here, in an urban scene that offered - apart from the historic **Leopoldine Thermal Baths** - the large, international hotels, the **Excelsior** establishments, the **Tamerici** and **Tettuccio Spas**. Here, art and architecture blended



GALILEO CHINI (1873/1956). THE SOUL OF ART NOUVEAU

Painter, graphic designer, potter, founder in Florence of one of the most important artistic productions of the times, decorated the rooms of the **Venice Biennial** from 1904 to 1913, did the scenography for **Sam Benelli's** works, and created scenic designs and sketches for **Giacomo Puccini**. His fame took him to **Bangkok** in 1910 to decorate the king's throne room.

together, representing at their very best that artistic climate where there was no sense of continuity between an architectural project, a drawing of a frieze, of a decorative device, of a fresco, of a publicity slogan. It was the same in the great capital cities of **Art Nouveau** and the **Jugendstil** (diverse names that were given this period in different languages including *Liberty* in Italian), such as Brussels and Vienna, and on a different scale, in Montecatini.

One of the leading artists in this magnificent period was the Florentine artist, **Galileo Chini**. Here, he worked in the **Pavilion** for the sale of **Tamerici Salts**, at the spa of the same name, at the festival hall in the **Grand Hotel La Pace**, at the **Palazzo Comunale**. He worked in paintings, decorations, glass panes and skylights, floorings, ceramic panels and stoneware.

It is easy to breath the *Belle Époque* atmosphere in the **Terme del Tettuccio** - the Tettuccio Spa - a wonderful piece of architecture created in 1916 by **Ugo Giovannozzi**, who wanted to evoke the beauty of the antique Roman baths by means of columns, courtyards, galleries, fountains, all richly decorated, amongst which are the gallery of wine bars with seven allegorical panels, painted by **Basilio Cascella**, the platform for the musicians with the dome painted by **Ezio Giovannozzi**, the hall of the Post Office, the historic Café.

This magical atmosphere can also be found in the **Excelsior Spa** with its two side exedras closed in by artistic glass panels spaced out by Corinthian columns; at the **Tamerici Spa**, which was the typical expression of Eclecticism of the period which joined together the Tuscan Renaissance, the Venetian Moorish style, the Middle Ages (with turrets, crenellation, arches and coat-of-arms) and finally, in the facade of the **Kursaal**, built in 1907 as the "Temple of the Operetta and of High Society", which later became a casino, a cinema/theatre, an exhibition hall, and a large ballroom. But great art of the 20th century can also be found in other places of the Valdinievole area.



LIBERO ANDREOTTI

This sculptor, illustrator and potter was born in **Pescia** in 1875 into a family of modest means but his talent soon became evident. He worked as an illustrator in **Palermo**, as a potter in **Florence**, as a sculptor in **Milan**, and wherever he went, he was always at the heart of cultural discussions. He exhibited in **Venice**, **Paris**, and **Stockholm**. In his later years, he lived in **Florence** where he died in 1933.



PIETRO ANNIGNONI AT PONTE BUGGIANESE

This Florentine maestro, of international fame and a great expert in the art of frescoes, began his work at the Sanctuary of the "Madonna del Buon Consiglio" at **Ponte Buggianese** in 1967, realizing a cycle of works inspired by the **New Testament**. In 1978, the **Ministry of Cultural Heritage** confirmed the sanctuary's artistic importance,

Pescia offers its visitors a collection of 200 plasters made by the sculptor **Libero Andreotti**, which came directly from his studio (thanks to his family's generous donation), a rare example of a collection that succeeds in describing the entire life of an artist. The **Libero Andreotti Plaster Cast Gallery**, set out over three floors of the 'Palagio del Podestà' pays homage to the great artist and to the town where he was born.

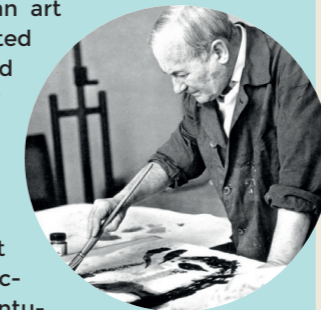
Once again in **Pescia**, and in particular in **Collodi**, in 1956 the concept of a "garden artist" was born, for the first time in Tuscany, offering the works of masters like **Venturino Venturi**, **Emilio Greco**, **Pietro Consagra**, the designer **Marco Zanuso**, and the landscape architect **Pietro Porcinai**, who all interpreted the world of **Pinocchio** in the park of the same name.

Monsummano Terme is home to the **Museum of Contemporary and 20th century Art**, a rich collection donated by artists and collectors, with works by **Vinicio Berti**, **Ferdinando Chevrier**, **Marcello Guasti**, **Quinto Martini**, **Jorio Vivarelli**, **Pietro Annigoni**. The latter created, at **Ponte Buggianese**, an important cycle of frescoes between 1967 and 1984, which may surprise the viewer due to their intense visual power.



THE GIFT OF JOAN MIRÒ

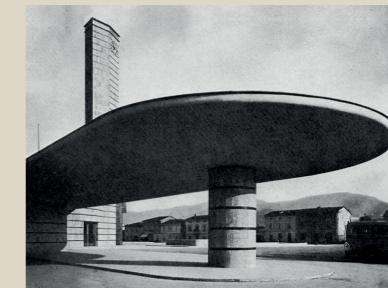
Since 2012 the **Palazzo Comunale** - the **Town Hall** - of **Montecatini** has held the **MO.C.A.**, an art gallery dedicated to modern and contemporary art. Situated in the former **Postal Office**, decorated by **Galileo Chini**, it has in its collection of 20th century art, 'maestri' such as **Orfeo Tamburi**, **Salvatore Fiume**, **Pietro Annigoni**. **Joan Mirò** is also present in the collection with his large canvas entitled "Woman Encircled by the Flight of Birds", exhibited in **Montecatini Terme** on the occasion of the 1980 exhibition dedicated to him, the "Mayo Mirò" exhibition, looked after by **Carlos Franqui**, a great friend of his. The maestro, emotionally and sentimentally very close to **Montecatini**, could not attend due to old age, but his link to the town was sealed by his giving this imposing work to the town which since then, has been a part of the communal collection.



Excelsior Spa



Tettuccio Spa



The Montecatini Railway Station, by Angiolo Mazzoni



The 'Portoghesi Hall'

WE SUGGEST YOU
ART OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Art and architecture at Montecatini Terme

Montecatini Terme is considered to be the most significant centre for **Art Nouveau** in Tuscany. If you take a walk down **Viale Verdi**, (the former "Stradone dei Bagni") you will realize how many traces of **Art Nouveau** there are in the very texture of the town, which here found its original, artistic, high quality expression, particularly in the rooms of the thermal baths. From the central **Piazza del Popolo**, with its fountain dating back to 1926, designed by **Raffaello Brizzi** of **Montecatini** and promoter of the 'Scuola Superiore di Architettura di Firenze', you can see on the right the complex of the **Locanda Maggiore**, one of the first hotels of the town, commissioned in 1787 by the **Cassinesi della Badia** monks, to whom the **Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo** had entrusted with the care and development of the thermal area.

Further along, you come across the covered walkway of the **Gambrinus** with shops and art galleries set up in 1913 according to the plans of **Giulio Bernardini** and **Ugo Giusti**: in the early decades of the 20th century, this was a place of socialite and smart meetings, thanks to the café chantants which were there. In the adjacent **Piazza d'Azeglio** stood the **Politeama Theatre** which is now the **Imperial Cinema** theatre, built in 1926 for the **Lavarini** brothers. Still further along, in front of the 18th century **Palazzina Regia**, totally restored in 1920, stands the **Palazzo del Municipio** - the **Town Hall** - inside which are the pictorial decorations and skylights of **Galileo Chini**.

Architecture is also important in town: the railway station by **Angiolo Mazzoni** (1937) is a part of the Italian rationalist architecture, and the **Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta** (1953/1958) bears the signatures of **Raffaello Fagnoni**, **Pierluigi Spadolini**, **Mario Negri** and **Alfonso Stocchetti**. Two great 'maestri' left some important works here in the last years of the 20th century: **Paolo Portoghesi** with his wooden great hall in the **Tettuccio Spa** (1989) and **Aldo Rossi** with his restoration of the area next to the **Kursaal** (1995).