

Editorial

In this issue, it is a pleasure to continue the series of occasional columns in which the different national ceramic societies in Europe have the opportunity to introduce themselves. We welcome:

The Italian Ceramic Society (Società Ceramica Italiana)

The Italian Ceramic Society was founded at the beginning of 1972. It was initiated by several groups and associations that were already present and operating in the Italian ceramic sector. The purpose of the new organization was to promote, strengthen and coordinate different initiatives for the service and support of the Italian ceramic industry, and to represent Italian ceramic culture and industry at every level in Europe and throughout the world.

This aim was pursued through the organization of periodical meetings and national and international conventions, particularly during exhibitions, thematic shows and other similar initiatives. There was also intense editorial and public information activity, with publication of articles and technical essays, texts, and practical and applicative monographs on topical subjects. In this last field of activity it should be remembered that the official organ of the Society, the monthly publication *Ceramica Informazione*, has been published since 1966 with a circulation of 5000 copies.

The functions and roles of the Italian Ceramic Society, given such cultural and technical ends, are proportioned to the importance, at both the national and international level, of the Italian Ceramic Industry. This is an industry of important and recognized tradition, above all in sectors such as ceramic materials for the building industry, tableware and artistic ceramics as well as the machinery sector.

The members of the Italian Ceramic Society comprise individuals and companies, as well as various boards and institutions. To operate efficiently in accomplishing the institutional aims mentioned above, the Society has given itself both a thematic and a geographical organization. Different 'thematic' sections have been instituted, so as to cover in the most complete way possible both the professional and cultural interests of the members as well as the need for technical–scientific development in the Italian ceramic industry. These sections are (fraction of membership in per cent):

—Research	(25%)
—Education	(9%)
—Technology, production and marketing	(35%)
—Machinery and equipment	(23%)
—History, art and handicraft	(8%)

The main offices of the Italian Ceramic Society are in Bologna; in order to promote a more incisive presence locally, autonomous regional delegations have been put into action, especially in the centres with a strong ceramic presence: Sassuolo, Faenza, Novara, Treviso, Florence, Civita Castellana.

At present there are about 400 members of the Italian Ceramic Society, representing the sectors of tiles (25%), research and education (24%), machinery (22%), raw materials (9%), sanitary ware (7%), technical ceramics (5%), cutting tools (5%) and tableware (3%).

The topic 'education and training' is worth a particular mention since the Italian Ceramic Society has paid a great deal of attention to it from the beginning. With the aim of giving incentive to specific initiatives for

ceramics in scholastic environments, and of favouring the training of technicians prepared and ready for a more profitable and rapid insertion into the realities of production, the Italian Ceramic Society has founded various prizes and scholarships for high-school students. Some of these awards can boast a tradition of more than ten years.

Moreover, in 1988 the 'Ing. Aldo Villa' International Prize was established, dedicated to the first President of the Italian Ceramic Society. This Prize is awarded to a personality who has contributed to the growth of the discipline.

As regards the role of the Italian Ceramic Society in the field of university education, it should be remembered that the study of ceramics has always been a part of courses in the faculties of engineering, particularly in degree courses in chemical, civil and mechanical engineering. Ceramic construction materials, bricks, cement, glass, refractories and ceramic techniques have been for many years the objects of research in many Italian universities, as well as in the two ceramic research centres operating in our country, CENTRO CERAMICO of Bologna and IRTEC-CNR of Faenza.

The growing importance of ceramic products for advanced technologies in all industrial sectors and throughout the world has been well noted. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that today in Italy—and also in Europe—the majority of products are made from traditional ceramic materials. The Italian Ceramic Society is an integral part of this national and European reality and a prime objective of the Society is to contribute to progress in the sector of traditional ceramics alongside the ceramics for advanced technologies to which the Society gives ever growing attention.

It is with these orientations and promises that the Italian Ceramic Society will plan to play its part in contributing to the development of the 'young' European Ceramic Society.

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