

DOSSIER

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Future Craft

By Elysha Beckerman

I'm well-acquainted with Florence's famous cultural riches, but my latest stay in the city introduced me to an under-the-radar yet critical addition to its cache. The Place of Wonders is a non-profit foundation from Italian hospitality group The Hospitality Experience dedicated to preserving the legacy and beauty of Italian craft by providing support for contemporary makers. Led by Claudio Meli, general manager at The Place Firenze hotel, and Michela Babini, director of the foundation, it allows guests to access exclusive areas of some of Florence's most remarkable workshops and laboratories, such as Ginori 1735, Moleria Locchi, and Pampaloni 1902, with guest contributions used to support annual scholarships for the next generation of artisans. I had the pleasure of visiting Elisa Tozzi Piccini, the fourth-generation proprietor of Fratelli Piccini, a fine-jewelry atelier that has housed an operating laboratory on the Ponte Vecchio since 1903. Her passion for jewels, gems, and rare finds (such as pieces by Gustav Fabergé and his pupils and boxes built for Czar Nicholas II) is contagious, and her love for the craft is evident in each piece produced in her family's house.