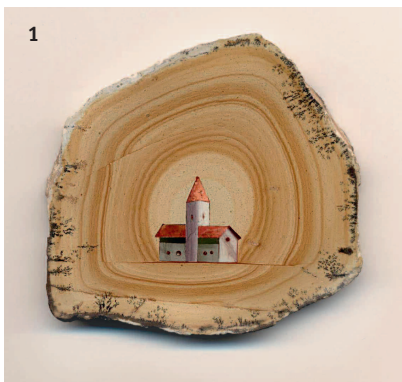


## ORIGINATING FROM FLORENCE: Exhibition "Nature's Creations in the Master Hands"

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1. "House", plaquette. Bruno Lastrucci, Studio Musivo Lastrucci, Florence, 2013. Comesso, limestone, marble. The Vernadsky State Geological Museum.

**Photo: Michael B. Leybov.**

2. "Landscape", plaquette. Florence, Italy, first quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Ruin marble, oil. The Polytechnic Museum, Collection of the House of Yusupov.

Craftsmen from Florence (Italy) made mosaic since olden times but the special technique that brought fame to the city was developed there only by the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is distinguished by the use of the natural uneven coloring of stones, the spots and streaks on them, slight hues as if made by an artist's brush.

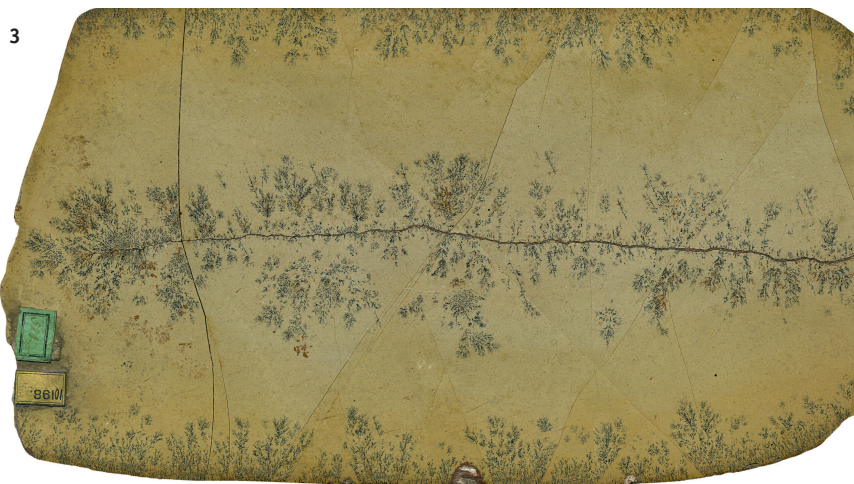
The best studio founded in 1580 belonged to the House of Medici and was located at Uffizi city. Its glorious traditions that emerged at the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries are carried on by mosaicists to this day. The technique of mosaic has seen almost no change during its long history while the contents of mosaics changed together with the general development of fine arts.

Today works of applied art are made with the application of this technique at four studios in Florence (Italy) but only one of them belonging to the Lastrucci family meticulously follows 16<sup>th</sup> century traditions both in the choice of stones and in the technique of handling them. Masters use a bow tool for cutting stones and fix thin stone plates in a wooden vise made according to a drawing by Donatello, great artist of 14<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 1).

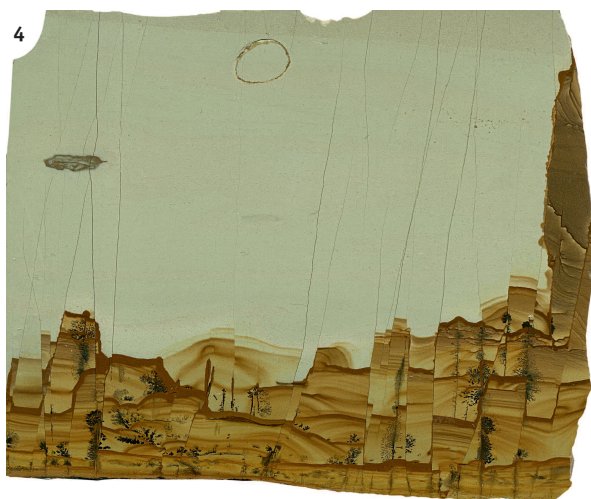
Starting with the 17<sup>th</sup> century small decorative plaques from an unusual stone that was named the landscape stone have been made using the technique of Florentine mosaic also known as comesso. It contains patterns that create the illusion of bead-work depicting the ruins of stone buildings. Genre compositions of such stones



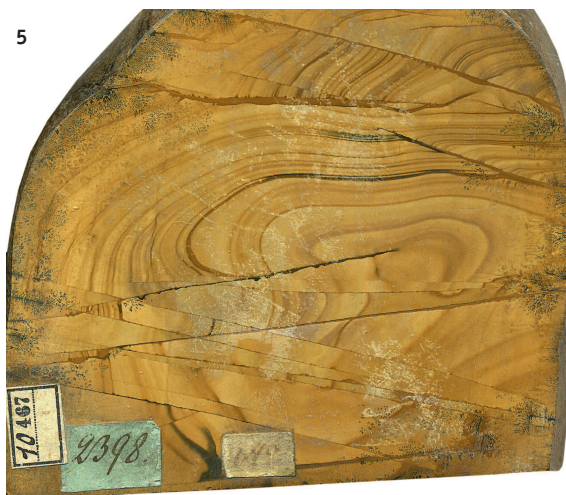
3. Limestone with arborescent crystals. Outskirts of Florence, Italy. The Vernadsky State Geological Museum, Collection of Count A. K. Razumovsky, beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



4. Ruin marble. Outskirts of Florence, Italy. The Vernadsky State Geological Museum, Collection of L.P. Prokhorova, end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



5. Striped limestone. Outskirts of Florence, Italy. The Vernadsky State Geological Museum, Collection of Count N.P. Rumyantsev, beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



became collection items at the court of Grand Duke Cosimo II de Medici (1590–1621) (Fig. 2).

The modern name of the stone is ruin marble. In Italy it is attributed to landscape stones and three types of it are distinguished: limestone with arborescent crystals (Fig. 3) – alberese, marlaceus limestone (ruin marble) – pietra paesina (Fig. 4) and striped stone of the Arno river – pietra d’Arno (Fig. 5). Since ancient times these stones have been mined in the Arno river valley 10 km outside of Florence. We find them in many Florentine mosaics of the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The exhibition “Nature’s Creations in the Master Hands” is a joint project of two museums – the Vernadsky State Geological Museum of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Polytechnic Museum. Works of stonecutting art from the collections of the mining section of Russia’s oldest technical museum and samples of minerals and rock from the collections of the oldest museum of natural history are represented as equals in the showcases.

At the exhibition the visitor is able not only to enjoy unique creations of Nature – stones – but fully feel that in the combinations of fantastic images born by stones. Masters find wonderful forms of a creative perception of the world around us.