

RSVP: wb2149@columbia.edu

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
THE ITALIAN ACADEMY FOR ADVANCED STUDIES IN AMERICA

An exhibition on
Italian Mosaic and Terrazzo Workers
in New York City

April 15 – April 28, 2008

OPENING RECEPTION: TUESDAY, APRIL 15, 5:30 – 7:30 pm

Gallery hours:
Monday-Friday, 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM
Through April 28

New York, NY— March 12, 2008— The Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America at Columbia University presents an exhibit on the unknown history of mosaic and terrazzo workers, a new chapter in the story of Italian immigration to New York and America. The exhibition will be open to the public from 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM each weekday from April 16 through April 28.

The gem-like decoration of many of New York's most famous buildings came from the hands of skilled Italians - the palatial homes of Vanderbilts and Goulds, and public buildings such as Christ Church (520 Park Avenue), the Metropolitan Club (1 East 60th Street), and the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company Building (1 Madison Avenue). Glowing gold leaf and brilliant jewel-toned glass masterpieces of mosaic were a hallmark of these Italian immigrants, as were the inventive and sturdy floors of inlaid, polished marble (known as Venetian mosaic and terrazzo).

In contrast to the traditional story of the Italian immigrants who flooded into America around 1900 – unskilled newcomers held back by the language barrier and even by racial prejudice among native New Yorkers – Italian mosaic and terrazzo workers from northeastern Italy (especially Friuli) were paid well for their highly specialized work. Cannily hoarding their professional secrets, these firms built a powerful network and dominated the market across America, embellishing the Boston Public Library, the New Haven Post Office and Courthouse, and the opulent residences of Chicago barons such as Pullman, Armour, and Potter Palmer.

The exhibition is curated by Javier Grossutti, who is currently a Fellow at the Italian Academy. He was born in Argentina and in 1991 “returned” to Friuli, his ancestral homeland. He took a Doctorate in Political Geography from the University of Trieste and now teaches at the University of Udine's departments of Economics and of Foreign Languages and Literatures. **The exhibition is made possible with funding from the Port Morris Tile & Marble Corp.**

Free and open to the public. RSVP: wb2149@columbia.edu

The Italian Academy - 1161 Amsterdam Avenue (between 116th and 118th Streets), New York, NY 10027
Subway line (1) to 116th Street - italianacademy.columbia.edu