

FAITHFUL TO THE ORIGINAL BEAUTY  
 Andrea Pacciani created this jewellery box with a digital synthesiser and adorned it with graphite and gold. Opposite page, the original drawing from the Grollier De Servière collection, a mid 17th century Wunderkammer.



# KING'S DELIGHT

ANDREA PACCIANI  
 REPRODUCES  
 THE WONDERFUL  
 ARTWORKS OF  
 ORNAMENTAL  
 TURNING USING 3D  
 TECHNOLOGY

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TRADITION  
AND TECHNOLOGY  
Two jewellery  
boxes by Andrea Pacciani.  
For the shellac  
finish he prepares  
the surface  
with Armenian bole and  
an ivory burnisher.



Put yourself in the shoes of a 17th-century artisan. Not just any artisan, but a master belonging to the restricted circle of ornamental turners, who were extremely jealous of their know-how. Only very few craftsmen mastered this art, which was secretly passed down from father to son. And just as secret were the tools of the trade, the special lathes that were used to carry out extremely refined decorations on an exceptional material such as ivory. The amazing skills of these artisans (who were mainly German and Flemish) opened them the doors of the European courts. Turned sculptures were prized by Russian tsars and French kings, who welcomed the expertise and creativity of these masters not only to enrich the collections of their *Wunderkammerns*, but also to learn a craft with which they too were eager to amuse themselves. In other words, it was a hobby for kings. A mysterious world that crossed the 17th and 18th centuries and then silently disappeared during the 19th century, leaving virtually no trace behind it. Save for the few rare items that occasionally turn up at auctions (with hammer prices in the range of 100,000 euro) and the beautiful and rich collection of turned ivory works in the "Museo degli Argenti" (the Medici Treasury) at Palazzo Pitti, in Florence.

Andrea Pacciani is a 49-year-old architect from Parma who became passionate about these objects and decided to put himself in the shoes of a mysterious 17th century artisan. Pacciani expresses his multidisciplinary creativity and philosophy ("I recover and reproduce objects from the past in order to delight in their eternal beauty," he says) in many different and surprising fields that range from masonry and restoration to handmade carpets and ornamental turning, his latest passion. Reinterpreted, however, using the most advanced technologies, including a laser synthesiser - the big brother of the 3D printer - that can create complex geometric figures by crystallising a special resin powder. "The reason why I resorted to technology is sim-

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*Ornamental turning  
in ivory was a craft mastered  
by a restricted circle  
of specialised craftsmen*



ple: the very special lathes that were used to make these objects in the past have disappeared, and no one would be able to recreate them today. The tools of the trade were part of an artisan know-how that was transmitted orally, and is forever lost." Pacciani's passion, almost an obsession, for ornamental turning has accompanied him for years: "I always dreamt of approaching this universe. When I first started working on a traditional lathe, I was even more impressed by the perfection of the works produced 400 years ago, and I wondered how those craftsmen had managed to reach such outstanding levels."

Question after question, retracing the history of these objets d'art and the stories of their creators, Pacciani came to the conclusion that modern technology could "bridge the gap that, at one point in history, separated those who design from those who make. This division of roles led the artisan to lose his design skills and, in the same way, the designer to move away from production techniques. My objective is therefore to reunite these two skills, to make them co-exist in one person: the creative-craftsman." When an artistic artisan meets technology, normally regarded as the antithesis of manual know-how, the potential is enormous and fascinating. Pacciani's work is based on an erudite philological research, the recovery of original designs and projects ("literature and iconography on the subject are very rare" he says), and their digitalisation, so that they can be read and "translated" by the synthesiser. After the first technology-assisted phase, the manual skills of Pacciani the artisan take over: he finishes his works using timeless tools and techniques, such as the graver, gelatine, Armenian bole and graphite. Giving a soul to his objects and making them unique. His first mini collection of jewellery boxes was presented last summer. With prices ranging between 400 and 1,500 euro, Pacciani's is not so much a business venture as a "great personal satisfaction." The fulfilment of a small and refined dream.

**JOYFUL JEWELS**  
Pacciani called his collection "Porta Gioia", a wordplay which in Italian means "bringer of joy" and "jewel box". They are approximately 33 cm high and the base measures 12.5 cm in diameter (andreapacciani.com).

