

# Paper and Watermark Museum Fabriano



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Figure 1. Museum of paper and watermark.

The Paper and Watermark Museum is an international museum opened in 1984 by the Municipality and located in the former Monastery of the Dominican monks (Figure 1). It was created to highlight the 800 years of traditional papermaking in Fabriano.

Paper originated in China, more than 2000 years ago. The Chinese held their secret for centuries, after which it was spread to northern Africa and Spain by Arabs. The first paper mill in Europe was born in Xativa, close to Valencia, in 1150. Ships often departed from the Port of Valencia and the merchants brought with them the art of papermaking to the little town of Fabriano.

During the medieval period, Fabriano was a rich district full of arts. There were 12 arts with their captains and consuls. The synergy between these ancient crafts was the real secret behind three inventions that improved the art of papermaking in Western countries, these being:

- the hydraulic hammer mill, the first automatic machine to refine rags, the ancient raw material used for papermaking (Figure 2),



Figure 2. Hydraul hammer mill.

- the watermark, a translucent design or writing used to personalize the sheet, visible when the paper is held up to the light (Figure 3),



Figure 3. Watermark

- the animal gelatine which coated and waterproofed the sheets in the best way (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Animal gelatine

In the first room of the museum a medieval paper mill is reconstructed and the visitor can witness first-hand. The selection of the rags, the production of hand made paper and the movement of a perfect recreated hydraulic hammer mill can be admired during the guided tour.

In the second room a very rare model of a Fourdrinier paper machine from Germany is on display (Figure 5), to better understand the industrial production.



Figure 5. Fourdrinier paper machine

On the second floor there are rooms of precious collections, such as the Zonghi Collection with the most ancient watermarks found in the archives of the town, from 1293 to 1599.

A special place is dedicated to the chiaroscuro watermark (Figure 6 & 7) which in Fabriano, at the beginning of the 20th Century, became the most requested all over Europe. It was used, above all, as a security feature for banknotes: an international fame due to the members of the Miliani family, the founders of the modern papermill that started in 1782. In the Miliani room, the most beautiful watermarks made for Italy, America and other countries showcase the incredible skill and genius of Giambattista Miliani (Figure 8) the last heir and true captain of industry.



Figure 6. Chiaroscuro watermark

He transformed the paper mill of his ancestors, Pietro, the founder, and Giuseppe, the advertising expert, into a real high-tech factory. After his death, in 1937, the mill became state-owned until 2002, when it was bought by a big group of paper mills from Verona, known as Fedrigoni.

Very famous artists, engravers, and writers used Fabriano paper: Michelangelo, Raphael (Figure 9) Antonio Canova, Giambattista Bodoni, Ludwig Van Beethoven, Gabriele d'An-



Figure 7. Chiaroscuro watermark engraving



Figure 8. Giambattista Miliani



Figure 9. Raphael

nunzio, Francis Bacon, Georgia O'Keeffe, Roy Liechtenstein and many others.

The Museum of Paper and Watermark welcomes more than 45,000 visitors a year. It organises workshops for children and adults to teach the ancient production technique. After the guided tour everyone is offered the opportunity to produce his own hand made sheet with the help of the papermaker (Figure 10).

The collections, the machines, the watermarks and the workshops will let you enter this astonishing place in Fabriano, designated UNESCO Creative City in 2013. You will witness a fascinating material, the finest, thinnest, solid and most resistant that man has ever invented to make his ideas live and travel.



Figure 10. Visitors making paper by hand



Figure 11. Papermaking at the museum