



## Casa Morra hosts the Vittorio Avella Laboratory

The installation of Vittorio Avella's **Laboratorio** in the spaces of Casa Morra is part of the long-awaited **II Quartiere dell'Arte** project, a journey of regeneration of urban standards through the new-found centrality of cultural and creativity, including artistic craftsmanship – very much alive in the city – helping to foster the growing relationship between art, the city, and its creative communities.

Of central importance in this growth process is craftsmanship and its evolution, to be repositioned in semantic terms in new urban policies as a form of tangible culture, or non-verbal knowledge, building an interface to strengthen the relationship between manual skills and project design.

Today, the Morra Foundation expresses this idea explicitly and places it on four columns interconnected among themselves and in empathy with the city: Casa Morra, the Nitsch Museum, Vigna San Martino, and the Shimamoto space in Palazzo Tarsia are the cornerstones of a longstanding polyphonic project known as **Quartiere dell'arte, il quartiere si fa città (The art district, the district becomes a city)**.

At the global level, the **Laboratory of Vittorio Avella in Nola** is one of the most significant realities for the renewal of applied art as an actor in contemporary creativity, and Casa Morra contributes to the generation of economies of scope and diversity around the *Cento anni di Mostre. Il Gioco dell'Oca (One Hundred Years of Exhibitions. Snakes and Ladders)* project.

Here, what is proposed is a spiral vision, where art becomes a learning space, where, Learning by Doing is reflected in the Doing by Learning of the new *lemmario* (headwords) project at the **Morra Archive**. A network of unexpected connections calls for artists to become involved in the work of the **A District Becomes a City** project, and a new demand for art requires craftsmanship to accept a change of scale, extending to the use of traditional techniques interacting with new communications technologies.

ICT technologies are, in fact, constantly changing, and other C's are being added: Cognition, Consciousness, and Conceptuality open up new intersections between craftsmanship and the manufacturing services. In this context, **Vittorio Avella's Laboratory of Applied Arts** tells the story of this network starting from its history, being changed as it enters Casa Morra's proactive network. As it transforms, the Laboratory also innovates the urban context that hosts it, in symbiosis with the numerous and varied creative realities that form a network on the margins of the old city centre, a part of the city that seems to seek in tangible culture, in a reconfiguration of the ancient, a way to a new urban and individual history.

The Nola Laboratory adds perspective to the perspectives of what can happen in a city that seeks new horizons in the collaboration between art, architecture and the city, rejecting purely decorative engagements or those that merely represent a desire to be seen.

It thus unfolds that it is no longer enough to place immobile works of art in finished buildings or in defined urban contexts (as so-called public art), but we must reconsider the role of art and artists in a fresh vision of symbolic and professional responsibility in the process of (re)designing what is urban, seeking a new humanism, indispensable in today's world.

Is the fifth wave of urbanism still far off, or is it already upon us?

**Text by Pasquale Persico e Pasquale Napolitano**

## **A brief history of the Vittorio Avella Laboratory in Nola**

The Laboratorio Avella is an art printing house founded by Vittorio Avella and Antonio Sgambati in Nola (Naples) in 1978. It was created with the purpose of preserving manual knowledge of chalcographic techniques and rediscovering the link between art and craftsmanship. After gaining extensive engraving experience both in Italy and abroad, Vittorio Avella returned to his hometown, Nola, where he set up a copperplate workshop with his friend Antonio Sgambati, who had previously directed the Centro Arte Spazi Nuovi art gallery in Sarnico (Bergamo) for a number of years. Over time, the workshop became a reference point for the Campania region as a research centre for engraving techniques, and after thirty years of activity he opened another workshop in Naples. It is now one of the leading Italian printing houses and boasts a great international reputation. The workshop was initially set up as an art print shop for the use of artists, galleries and publishing houses but went on to specialise in working directly with artists and in particular in the production of illustrated books where the artist's work is accompanied by the text of a poet, immersed in a form of experimentation that draws on both figurative art and literature, committed to deepening the link between the image and the word. Important working relationships have been established with Achille Bonito Oliva, Gillo Dorfles, Edoardo Sanguineti, Mario Persico, Mimmo Paladino, Errico Ruotolo, Stelio Maria Martini, Riccardo Dalisi, Lello Esposito, Mario Lunetta, Tommaso Ottonieri, Gabriele Frasca, Mariano Bàino, and Michele Sovente. The books are manufactured using ancient techniques, returning to a now lost historical tradition in the Neapolitan area and are truly works of art, printed in limited autograph editions requiring lengthy production times. The workshop employs ancient presses and mainly uses copperplate techniques, reflecting the specialism of the workshop, in addition to etching, aquatint and silkscreen printing. The aim of these works is to decommoify the book as an object and establish a distance from the luxury art publishing market, seeking to involve the reader as user as far as possible. The sales process is a long one, and the majority of buyers continue to be private collectors.