

CRITICAL TEXT · ENGLISH TRANSLATION

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Ornament Is No Longer a Crime



Alessandro Moreschini · Museo Civico Medievale, Bologna · 17 January — 22 March 2026

English translation of the original Italian critical text written for the exhibition. Prepared for raffaelequattrone.com.

I have written on Alessandro Moreschini's work on several occasions. It is entirely distinctive, as this exhibition confirms, revealing two levels: there are precious objects of a collector's kind, but, as if that were not enough, everything is covered by a shower of refined fragments that heighten the preciousness of the whole.

I first encountered the artist's work back in 1997, when I saw his solo exhibition curated by Roberto Daolio. The natural next step was to invite him, that same year, to my Officina Italia, which I inaugurated at the GAM in Bologna and at other venues throughout the region. To put it in a formula, he confidently manages what may be considered an epochal transition of our time, from hard to soft, and demonstrates it in his works. As I wrote in the catalogue: "Alessandro Moreschini invents arabesques, decorative motifs with which he patiently covers the domestic and urban furnishings of our habitat, seeking to redeem them through flair and imagination."

The artist follows a script that takes the banal and the everyday and assigns them a code of redemption through a fine shower of decorative values. His is a light, graceful, subtle insinuation of a counter-power, aimed at redeeming the banality of objects, irrigating them with a delicate esprit de finesse so as to rescue them from their overly conformist surrender to an esprit de géométrie, that is, to a total and bare functionalism. At first glance, the surfaces might seem to have been seized by the symptoms of an inexorable disease; instead, what we are witnessing is a providential reflourishing, in which the soft and the supple take their revenge on what would otherwise be too immobile and stale.

The maximally "hard" climate found one of its outlets in the notorious dictum of the architect Loos, a precursor of Gropius's Bauhaus, according to whom ornament is a crime.

Yet before that — and again immediately afterwards — there had been “soft” phases in which ornament, on the contrary, was felt almost as a physiological need: Art Nouveau, for example, or Symbolism more generally, with which I made my first attempts as an art historian, followed closely by Art Deco.

Then, of course, came a long absence, until the 1970s and their return to “weak” forms of art, including decoration itself, reborn under the label of “Pattern Painting” within the group managed in New York by Holly Solomon, with a substantial counterpart among my “Nuovi-nuovi”, within which I have always carefully distinguished an Aniconic strand. Today, moreover, if we consider the dominant phenomenon centred on “glocalism”, a taste for the arabesque and other ornamental forms is resurfacing everywhere, forms that are so deeply rooted in the visual cultures of areas outside our severe and dogmatic West.

I conclude by reaffirming that “Moreschini carries out a valuable activity aimed at relaunching a strand that has been too neglected by the entire climate of recent years, stubbornly intent instead on weaving refined decorative motifs”, as I wrote in the catalogue for my exhibition *Bologna dopo Morandi 1945–2015*, inaugurated ten years ago at Palazzo Fava, right next to the Museo Civico Medievale in Bologna, a treasure chest of celebrated works that now welcomes Alessandro Moreschini’s works in dialogue with the permanent collection.

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ORIGINAL CRITICAL TEXT

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