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FIRED BY CREATIVITY

Federica Cipriani and Stefano Gambogi run ceramics brand RossoRamina from their studio in the Tuscan countryside. Handcrafted and delicately embellished, all of their pieces are designed to blend beauty and functionality. Here, Federica tells us the story behind the company

Interview TESSA PEARSON

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ROSSO RAMINA





I first met Stefano in 2003. I'd just finished a year's work experience in a Florence printing house, following five years' study at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Firenze. I had returned to my hometown of Lucca in Tuscany, where I was working on a restoration project. On one of my lunch breaks, I visited a local market and found Stefano selling his pottery. I bought a white jug with a black handle and gave it to my mother for Christmas. Today, we can't help but laugh when we pick up that jug. He was just starting out, and you can tell because the thing is so heavy. After more than a decade at the potter's wheel, Stefano is extremely skilled and his jugs are so light compared to that old one. We now live together with our two children, Lucio and Cesare, near Lucca in a house that used to belong to Stefano's grandparents. Our workshop is located in a former shoe factory nearby; it's a very green and peaceful spot.

At first, Stefano continued to work on his own, selling his pottery at art and craft markets in Tuscany, while I moved between several restoration sites around Italy. It wasn't always easy; there were times when Stefano wanted to give up everything, but I always encouraged him to hold on and keep going. He was creating beautiful pieces and I was sure he would eventually see success. Meanwhile, I had started experimenting in his workshop, decorating small objects and adding a little of my own style to his

creations. Life on the construction sites was good because I got to meet people and see places, but the work itself was no longer challenging me. So, with Stefano's support, in 2008 I gave up my old job – right after finishing my last and most important restoration project at the Tower of Pisa – and we started working together.

In the beginning, I would get extremely frustrated when a piece would come out of the oven and look so different from when it entered. That I couldn't control the whole creative process would drive me mad. I have learnt to live with that and it's now a joy to be surprised by what comes out of the oven. Every time a piece is ready, it makes me happy. Pottery's versatility is what makes us so enthusiastic about it. We can create whatever we want: a dish, a vase, a light, a necklace, a mosaic or a sculpture. I think we were always meant to create with our hands. For Stefano, the joy is in shaping the pieces, while for me it's about decorating. We think of ourselves as 'the arm' and 'the hand', respectively. We enjoy making objects for everyday life, and we love that our pieces find their way into people's homes. We always want to make sure that we combine both beauty and functionality in our work. rossoramina.com

Portrait Federica and Stefano live near Federica's hometown of Lucca in Tuscany with their two children, Lucio and Cesare. The country house once belonged to Stefano's grandparents

Workshop Stefano creates unique objects in the pair's tranquil studio located in an old shoe factory. They like to give functional, everyday items such as vases and crockery a poetic touch



'THE TUSCAN COUNTRYSIDE INSPIRES US
A LOT IN OUR WORK. AS THE SEASONS CHANGE,
SO DO THE COLOURS IN OUR PALETTE'



Ceramics The couple's pieces are mainly crafted using *maiolica* (Italian tin-glazed pottery). Every item is made by hand, meaning that each teapot, jug and vase is one of a kind