

Zafferani Glas: versatility and ease of use in specialized machinery

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for ZAFFERANI GLAS

A recent visit to the premises of Zafferani Glas gave Glass-Technology International the possibility to learn about how the company meets the needs and requirements of its sector - the



small- to medium-sized glassworks. The response of Zafferani is complete availability and reliability, as well as stock on hand and specialization in its machines. A visit to one of the company's clients gave even more confirmation of this relationship between the manufacturer and end-users of its products.

Founded in the 50s by Alfredo Zafferani, Zafferani Glas, located in the area of Genoa, northern Italy, has grown from being a “generalized” machinery manufacturer to being a specialist in the manufacture of grinding and bevelling machines.

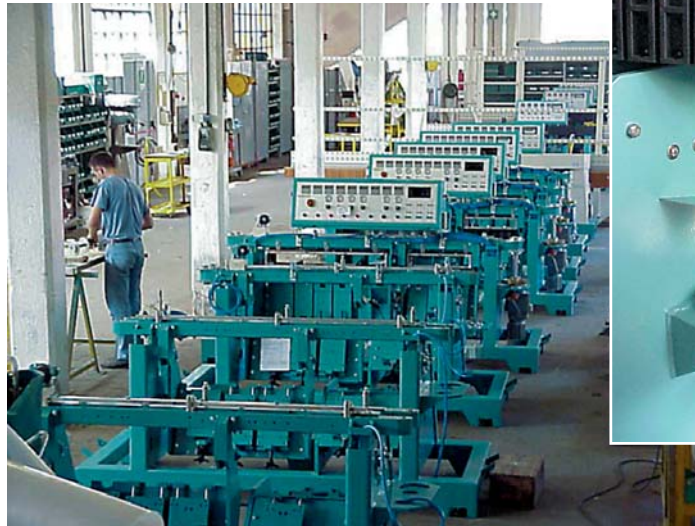
The start up of the company took place just like many other family-run companies in Italy: from different requests for modifications and repairs on other companies’ machinery, the decision was taken to make its own.

PRESENT SITUATION

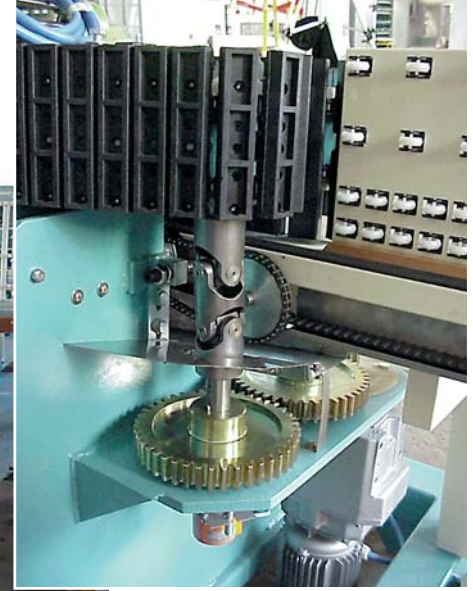
At present, the company has about 5,000 to 6,000 machines working worldwide - one of the oldest machines still running is an *Astra* of 1953! - with areas such as the United States and Africa also covered. In fact, a Zafferani machine is working in Namibia, southwest Africa.

European countries where Zafferani is present include Germany and Austria, followed by Great Britain, Spain, Russia and Poland, Croatia and ex Yugoslavia countries, Greece, and France.

Out of the already mentioned 5,000 to 6,000 working machines, there are also a few two-wheel peripheral grinding machines that have been working for the past 30 years. The flagship products of Zafferani - with five motors, tilting, and with tools can now, even with their small dimensions, work in the same way as an eight-motor machine. Obviously, they do not work at high speeds or give high productivity, but have the main feature of Zafferani’s machines - flexibility. These machines are aimed at small to



A view of the workshop at Zafferani Glas, Genoa, northern Italy



Machinery modules in stock in the warehouse at Zafferani Glas

medium family run companies where trust and reliability are fundamental parts of a commercial relationship.

As many other family-run companies, Zafferani prefers to “work” alone. This means considerable costs and concentration on creating value-added products and guaranteeing custom-made post sales.

ANALYSIS OF THE COMPANY IN THESE LAST TWO YEARS

In these last two years, the market and the sales percentage of single countries has really changed. There were certain areas where sales were concentrated and where, now, sales are more fragmented. This can also be considered a benefit for companies such as Zafferani, but it is more costly to handle 40 countries instead of 20 with the same sales network and the same number of collaborators.

Zafferani, however, has worked very well in these first months of 2005, and there have been good results, even if sales are not really stable and there are several peaks and decreases during the year. This creates problems to production organization and to fixed company costs due to the fact that the number of employees remains the same. Zafferani deals with this problem by creating warehouse stock. This means not only parts but also complete machines.

CHOOSING ZAFFERANI OVER A LARGER COMPANY

A strong relationship and reliability are the main facts that make a glassworks choose Zafferani rather than a larger company. The important thing is to communicate - not just with words but also with facts - who the company is and what it offers. This is carried out by direct contact at the fairs and also by phone, organizing meetings and visits to clients and possible future clients. A further advantage of



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The Zafferani
Flat 5BS

that they can also process large sized glass sheets at slower speeds, perfect for those glassworks that do not have a regular work load of this kind.

VISIT TO ONE OF ZAFFERANI'S CLIENTS - MILANO PROGETTO VETRO 2000

Glass-Technology International went to visit one of the glassworks that has a Zafferani machine. Based right in the centre of Milan, northern Italy, *Milano Progetto Vetro 2000* is a small glassworks, manufacturing articles for furnishing and interiors. These range from the small cabinets and supports for televisions and hi-fis, up to coffee tables and dining tables of all dimensions, as well as bathroom furniture. The strong point of *Milano Progetto Vetro*

this kind of relationship with clients is often the possibility of taking a future client to see company machines up and working at a glassworks - this is trust. It also works the other way too. It means that a machine can never be left not working - that is bad publicity.

Zafferani delivers machines in 30 days, from the signing of the order to the delivery of the machine to the client's premises, thanks to the modular construction it is now using. The same modular construction has been used for the past five years and means that the company works more to build the machines but has 15 per cent more sales because of their availability.

Important features of Zafferani's machines, as well as their strength and specificity is



The entrance to Milano
Progetto Vetro 2000, in
Milan, northern Italy



Examples of production of Milano Progetto Vetro 2000 using the Flat 5BS

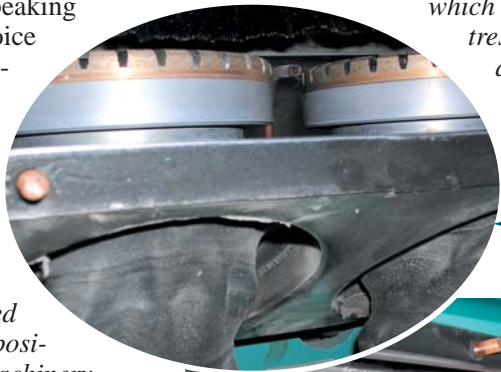


2000's production are stairs, balustrades, and balconies that are real works of art following designers' indications but often from the designs of the owner of the glassworks - Antonio Perone.

Perone showed us round, speaking about the reasons behind the choice of a Zafferani machine - the second for him - and showing us the features that this machine - a Flat 9BS30 - has.

Why did you choose a Zafferani machine?

When I took over this small glassworks, the first thing I wanted to do, as everyone who is in my position does, was to change all the machinery in the workshop. With my professional background - qualified mechanic - my idea is that the best machines for reliability and strength are those that are simple. The previous machine that I had here was a very good machine but there were some difficulties with changing the grinding wheels and everyday work. I went to one of the trade fairs and had a look round for a new machine. The one that I thought would be the best for my needs was, therefore, my first machine from Zafferani, smaller than this one,



Easy change of grinding wheels



but with more or less the same features. I chose another Zafferani machine not only because of the quality of its machinery, but also because of the relationship that this company has and maintains with its clients. Assistance is always available, and almost immediately, even when the machine is no longer covered by guarantee.

What kind of glass do you work with?

I generally use medium to large-thicknesses, which range from 8 to 12, 15 and 20 millimetres, right up to 30 millimetres for stairs and balustrades. This machine - the Flat 9BS30 - can handle up to 30 millimetres, and the speed of this machine is

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almost double that of the previous one. This means that I have halved work times.

How many times do you change the type of glass in a day?

Because I work only as per exclusive designs, I do not work in great quantities. On the other hand, I often need to do one of those, two of these others....

A typical example: the other day I used four sheets of 12 millimetres, followed by half-size sheets. This means that the machine must be very precise - up to one tenth of a millimetre.

Why not a bilateral?

I chose this machine over a bilateral because it would take more time to set up a bilateral for the different glass types.

With respect to other machines I have seen, this machine has a very easy method to calculate the quantity of material to be removed - it takes a tenth of a second. From my point of view, this is very important because I change continuously the size and type of glass I am using.

The same is valid for grinding wheel changeover - a very important job. In fact, they need changing often and the less time it takes the better. Refrigeration of the grinding wheels is also a very important feature. The system for removing the waste material from the machine is also very simple. In fact, the Flat 9BS30 takes only a few seconds to clean.

Another important fact - the spindle is attached to the grinding wheel. This means that there are fewer parts that can break over time and the same machine takes up less space.

What about grinding wheels? How often do you change them?

It depends on how much material there is to remove and the glass type to be processed. This machine, in fact, has already processed 4,346 different pieces of glass since it started working at the end of January 2005.

What about the five grinding wheels? Which ones do you use more? Diamond or polishing?

Definitely the polishing wheels. There are three polishing wheels for flat edges and four arassing wheels. This machine also has variable angle, meaning that it can work up to 60°,



Another view of the grinding wheels in movement of the Flat 9BS 30

where the diamond wheels are used more. This is what the wear of the wheels depends on. However, the polishing wheels are always the ones that are used more.

What will be your next machine?

If Zafferani continues to manufacture machines that give the same results I will certainly buy another one from them. I would, however, like to ask the company to make some small improvements, such as, for example, updating the graphic design of the machines' software. But, at the same time, I would rather have other features remain the same, such as the adjustment knob near the commands, cleaning and removal of the grinding wheels....a little bit of modernization combined with the experience of Zafferani dating back to the 1950s. ■



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