

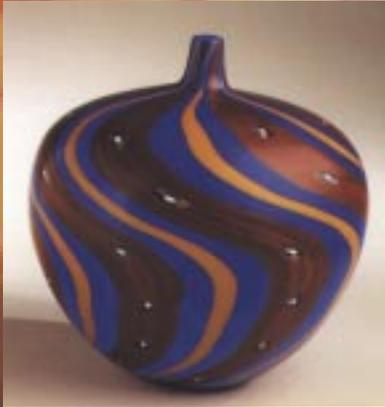
Tourist Glass: The Handkerchief Vases



ETRI

# Italian Glass News

THE WEBSITE SPECIAL EDITION



The Murrine Work of Yoichi Ohira

# VETRI: Italian Glass News

**PUBLISHER  
&  
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*Contributing Editors:*

*Sheldon Barr: Murano Glass of the 19th Century Renaissance*

*Odetto Lastra: Modern Italian Studio Glass*

*Uscha and Rainer Losch: European Correspondents*

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*Cover: The red and white Venini Fazzoletto vase courtesy H. Lockwood, The green and white Venini Fazzoletto Vase courtesy The Losch Collection.*

*The Ohira vase on the left "Nastri" courtesy of Barry Friedman, Ltd.,*

*The Ohira vase on the right courtesy of Odetto Lastra. The bottom two Ohira vases "Bambu" and "Autunno Damigiana" courtesy of Barry Friedman, Ltd. The background is a closeup of the two vases.*

## ABOUT THIS SAMPLE ISSUE OF VETRI

We hope you will enjoy this sample issue of **VETRI: Italian Glass News**. It is a compendium of some of our different issues. We have removed our normal upcoming events section. The article on *Fazzoletto* vases (known as handkerchief vases) is comprehensive and informative. Sheldon Barr, the well known author of *VENETIAN GLASS*, is a regular contributor and has contributed an article on a famous table done in the 1800's.

**Vetri: Italian Glass News** is a quarterly newsletter devoted to Italian glass of the 19th and 20th century. Our main goal is to educate the consumer and dealer about Italian glass, primarily the glass produced on the island of Murano by the major factories of Archimede Seguso, Aureliano Toso, Venini, Seguso Vetri D'Arte, Barovier, AVEM amongst others. The focus of the newsletter is NOT on the production ashtrays and clowns that are found on various auction services. It is our goal to educate the buyer of those items that there

is a world out there of highly collectible pieces by the major factories that can range in price from \$150 to \$100,000. Much of this production found its way throughout the world, and many highly desirable pieces can be found by the knowledgeable buyer for prices well below retail

The first issue of each year is a compendium of the auction results from around the world. Most pieces are illustrated, sized, and the estimates and prices realized are given in U.S. dollars. It is a valuable tool for the dealer and collector. The other three issues are devoted to informative articles about the different factories. Past issues have dealt with and illustrated fake Venini signatures, works by Ercole Barovier, Carlo Scarpa, AVEM, Fulvio Bianconi and other factories and designers.

Books are reviewed and offered to readers. These are the true books on Italian glass - the books that will

*Continued on page 21*

# A REPORT FROM EUROPE: THE QUITTENBAUM SALE

by Rainer and Uschi Losch

Quittenbaum called and (nearly!) all Europeans came. We saw Rainer Zietz, Marina & Marino Barovier, Maurizio Cocchi and his wife, Marc Heiremans, Jan Vicha.... and the collector himself.



*The Granulare Vase that sold \$18000*

Of the 136 lots, 102 sold. The quality of the lots was mixed and this result is no surprise. A surprise was that not all of the top lots were won by the Italian dealers, with their getting only a very few works like the Thomas Stearns or the Bollicine by Carlo Scarpa. The Thomas Stearns vase, unsigned, sold for the hammer price of \$17500. A very rare Carlo Scarpa Granulare vase sold for \$18000 – RESTORED! But a Fasce Applicati plate by Carlo Scarpa brought just \$3000, much less than the \$4000 estimate. A similar example had sold at Fischer, Heilbronn, for a much higher hammer price. The top lot of the auction was a blue red, white and green Scozzese designed by Fulvio Bianconi. It sold for \$27500.

The bidding itself was mixed as well - some fine works were sold cheap – others after hard fights, sold for very high prices. We

saw that the dominance of Venini seems broken – with works by Ercole Barovier and others are coming back into favor. It also appears that the work of Carlo Scarpa is more popular than the work of Fulvio Bianconi who is hard to sell at the moment. The market for Flavio Poli is very slow in Europe and, we feel that can be attributed to the preponderance of his work offered to the marketplace last year.

These single catalogue sales normally bring some very uncommon results, and Quittenbaum offered its own surprises. It is hard to understand that a most common Vistosi Pulcino (Triangular Blue) like lot 133 sold for \$ 2250 and the same model was passed at \$1200 at another auction... or that the Pulcino, lot 134 (J-Shaped) sold for \$2600 with damaged legs!

Over all, it was a fine auction with great results and we all hope the next one owner sale will be as successful. Much of the success of the auction is due to the work of Askan Quittenbaum and his staff. The organization of Quittenbaum was extremely good. They visited the major European fairs and the Pier show in New York City. They gave catalogues to many collectors and dealers around the world, and utilized the internet quite effectively. Their publicity was one of the reasons for the many Italians in attendance. So many people were informed of the auction and many attended. We feel that without this effort, the results would not have been so good, and that Quittenbaum, because of their public relations is one of the best auction houses.

# A REPORT FROM EUROPE: THE QUITTENBAUM SALE

by Rainer and Uschi Losch



*Top*

*The Bianconi Scozzese vase that sold for \$27500*

*A Dino Martens Oriente vase that sold for \$8000*

*Bottom*

*A Tobia Scarpa Occhi bowl that sold for \$4000*

*The Stearns vase that sold for \$17,500*

*All prices without Buyers Premium. Illustrations courtesy of Quittenbaum.*

## UPDATED UPCOMING EVENTS

Icon20 will hold an online auction this June with a nice collection of Italian glass. Check for the particulars at [ICON20.com](http://ICON20.com).

David Rago, Inc. of Lambertville, N.J. will hold an auction on June 11, 2000 with approximately 30 lots of good Italian glass including some Pezzati vases by Fulvio Bianconi. He can be contacted at 609.397.9377.

The exhibition of Italian Glass of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century that was scheduled for the American Craft Museum in New York City has been postponed until September 15, 2000. It will run through January 17, 2001. The collection is spectacular and the show will be one NOT to miss. Work from Artisti Barovier to Yoichi Ohira will be on display, with many great examples of Carlo Scarpa, Fulvio Bianconi, Ercole Barovier and Napoleone Martinuzzi.

We just received copies of Rossella Junck's latest catalogue; *THE COLOURS OF MURANO IN THE XIX CENTURY*. We have not had time to review it but it appears to be another of their great catalogues; comprehensive and beautiful!

Galleria Rossella Junck will hold an exhibition of the work of Michele Burato from February 26 through the month of March. The rest of their schedule is: Isabelle Poilprez (4/1-5/2), Marisa and Alain Begou (5/6-6/10), Andrea Morucchio (6/17-7/15) and Massimo Nordio (7/10-11/7).

The long awaited book on Paolo Venini by his daughter Anna Venini is due to be published this June. Reviews of the book will be in the Summer edition of *VETRI*.

## EDITORIAL

I happened to stop by Barry Friedman's the other day. I would like to say that I stopped by because I was in the neighborhood, but that would be a lie. The real reason is that I had heard he just received a shipment of five new Ohira vases. He had, and they were fabulous!

I do not take my role in publishing this newsletter lightly. There is a responsibility to you, the readers, not to be publishing articles about people for the sake of creating a market. I try to be very objective in what is published. After all, my first goal is to educate the reader about Italian Glass. Therefore, articles about early glass, forato vases, handkerchief vases or Venini are very important, and the primary goal of the newsletter.

I do feel, though, that it is my responsibility to inform you when I 'discover' somebody who is unusual. Yoichi Ohira fits that prerequisite perfectly. My first exposure to his work was a group of vases illustrated in a Galleria Rossella Junck brochure. I did not know who had done the pieces but I noticed them. Then, last year at Sofa, I saw three vases by Ohira in the booth of Barry Friedman. I fell in love with his sinuous wood finishes. Since then, Barry has had a great exhibition of his work, I had the good fortune to meet Mr. Ohira, and I have found out an amazing fact.

The fact is that collectors and dealers whose taste I admire and respect have known about and collected Yoichi Ohira's glass. Odetto Lastra, a collector/dealer with an eye for great glass has been collecting his glass for years. He approached me about an article. I have mentioned his work to several collectors. One, on his annual pilgrimage to New York City, stopped by to see the work and ended up purchasing one. There have been articles in the New York Times and The Wall Street Journal about Ohira's work. He is represented in the collections of The Cooper Hewitt, Corning, Musee des Arts Decoratifs in Paris and The Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Yes, I am happy that I stopped at Barry's gallery today. It is with VERY mixed feelings that I did not have my checkbook with me!

Howard J. Lockwood

# YOICHI OHIRA: GLASS OF SERENE BEAUTY

by Odetto Lastra

In the March of 1998, the Mayor of Venice, the Citta Serenissima (the Serene City) invited the glass world to a special exhibition of Venetian glass by Yoichi Ohira at the Muse Correr. It was an event of significant importance, because, never before, had a foreign glass artist been honored with such a distinction - a special exhibition at the Museo Correr.

I, a collector and dealer who first caught the 'glass fever' 38 years ago, was introduced to the glass of Yoichi Ohira in 1994 at a group show organized by the Galleria San Niccolo in Venice. When I discovered the perfect beauty of his work, I was immediately carried away by it. Ever since, I have been collecting his work, purchasing it from well-known art dealers like Venezia's Rossella Junck and Bergamo's D'Arte Di Vetro. I felt very happy for Ohira when, in October 1998, the renowned New York gallery of Barry Friedman, Ltd. included his work in an exhibition of contemporary Murano glass. Ohira became an immediate success with New York's art glass collectors and has since been mentioned in articles in the Wall Street Journal and The New York Times. The ultimate honor was the choice of an Ohira vase for the cover of the APERTO VETRO VENEZIA catalogue, the 1998 catalogue of the glass exhibition held in Venezia.

Ohira's yearly exhibition on Japan is always impatiently awaited by the local glass world. Since 1995, he has been represented by the Galleria Rossella Junck in Venezia and, since 1998, Barry Friedman, Ltd. in New York City. In spite of all his fame, Ohira remains pleasantly modest in his way of thinking and acting.

At the age of 27, Yoichi Ohira came to Venezia in 1973, to study at the Academy of Fine Arts. The Academy is known worldwide for the architects and artists who studied there. His graduate thesis was titled "The Aesthetics of Glass." It was this paper that influenced him to concentrate on the medium of glass.

He started working in Murano with the well-known companies Fucina degli Angeli and the Vetreria de Majo. His first individual works for Fucina were sculp-



*Yoichi Ohira as photographed by T. Sera,  
Courtesy of Yoichi Ohira*

tural in nature. In 1987, he started working for Vetreria de Majo. That same year he was awarded the Premio Selezione by the city of Murano. In 1990, he designed a series of thirty goblets, goblets that were exhibited in the Palazzo Querini Stampalia. Rosa Barovier Mentasti wrote of this work: "Ohira's creative sensitivity can be retraced to his studies and affection for Murano's historic traditions, its fine blown-glass and exquisite hues, the refined techniques of local maestri. While Venetian colors are filtered through oriental harmonies, the study of antique styles has led to the highlighting of essential elements in traditional models, thereby fostering the invention of new proportions in post-modern works." (p. 184 VENEZIAN GLASS 1890-1990). In 1991, he designed vases for Cleto Munari, a well-known Italian design company.

In 1994 he decided that he could venture in new directions. He daringly combined oriental aesthetics and culture with the stimuli of modern European trends in

*Continued on page 7*

**YOICHI OHIRA**, *Continued from page 6*

glass. He created his unique asymmetrical pieces modeled in glass cane material using typical Muranese techniques. Ohira himself cuts the glass murrines and canes and composes the shapes and color combinations.

As important as the design is the execution. Ohira's work is done in collaboration with the master glass blower Livio Serena. Serena, like the families of Toso, Barovier and Seguso, is a name of long glass heritage. There was a Serena working in glass in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one of the Serenas invented the zanfircio technique. Livio, who was born in 1942, started working for Fratelli Toso at the age of 14 and continued until the plant closed in 1982. He started his collaboration with Ohira in 1993.

For me, the beauty of Yoichi Ohira's work comes from the blending of the Japanese sensibilities with Venetian techniques. He creates about 150 pieces a year. Many of his latest works have a wood grained finish, but always with a gentle curve and feel. He uses murrines, but not in abundance - just the correct number. Many times, his murrines have a gentle bend or curve. The titles of Ohira's glass works have a flowery oriental, prosaic touch, e.g., Stars of the Night, Lotus Flowers Floating on the Water, Opacity and Transparency, Drops of Crystal, Canal Grande, and Laguna. Each piece is a work of art that stands on its own merit. Yoichi Ohira signs each piece in both Italian and Japanese. The signature of the gray bowl illustrated on the cover is "Yoichi Ohira, m L. Serena, Unico 1/1 1997 Murano Il Cielo."

The Japanese feeling and sensibilities will remain with Yoichi Ohira. Though he lives in Venezia, he still has family in Japan and commutes regularly between Japan and Venezia. There is an annual exhibition of his latest work each year in Japan.

Yes, I am glad that I went to that show at the Galleria San Niccolo in Venice and saw the work of Yoichi Ohira.

**A Selected List Yoichi Ohira's Exhibitions**

- 1990 "Divine Glass. Design of drinking in thirty Venetian Goblets by Yoichi Ohira" Palazzo Querini Stampalia, Venezia
- 1992 "Venezia e l'Oriente" Civic Museum of Padua  
The Fine Arts Salon of Isetan, Tokyo
- 1993 The Fine Arts Salon of Isetan, Tokyo
- 1994 The Fine Arts Salon of Isetan, Tokyo  
Art Salon of Hankyu, Kobe  
San Nicolo Gallery, Venezia
- 1995 The Fine Arts Salon of Isetan, Tokyo  
Hotel New Otani, Tokyo  
L'art du Verre a Murano au XXeme Siecle,  
Passage de Ritz, Paris  
"New Glass a Venezia"
- 1996 The Fine Arts Salon of Isetan, Tokyo  
Vetri Veneziani, Ohira, Collezione Pastello,  
Caffe Florian, Venezia  
Sanske Galerie of Zurich  
Venezia Aperto Vetro, International New  
Glass, Museo Correr, Venezia
- 1998 Vetri Veneziani Ohira, Museo Correr, Venezia  
New Traditions in Italian Glass, Barry  
Friedman Gallery, New York  
Venezia Aperto Vetro, International New  
Glass
- 1999 Vetri Veneziani, Ohira, Collezione  
"Opacita e Trasparenze" Caffe  
Florian, Venezia

*Odetto Lastra is a collector and dealer of Fine Glass for over 38 years. His knowledge and expertise in glass is impeccable. Multi-lingual, a visit to his booth, under the trade name Odellas Antiques, at an antique show is an experience for the breadth and depth of his knowledge, collection and inventory. He is one of those rare dealers who has an eye for what is and will be great.*

# MUSIC WITHOUT SOUND

The beautiful, serene glass of Yoichi Ohira is the result of a very long journey, a journey through two diverse cultures. It was a journey with obstacles at every corner, but yet, the resulting glass is perfection, a glass that has taken various cultures and traditions and effectively merged them into one essence, the essence of Yoichi Ohira.

## JAPAN THE LAND OF SAKURA SONGS

There was the culture of Yoichi Ohira, an artist with a vision, an artist who would go to the extremes to attain his vision. Yoichi Ohira was born and raised in Japan, a country with an extremely evolved 'Eastern' culture and tradition. It is a country with a different system of written communication. Its diet, music, and dress are singular. The brushstrokes of their favorite artists were measured, perfect and minimal. It was an artistic culture that many Western artists studied and emulated. It was also a culture that favored ceramic and porcelain over glass. But for an outsider, to attain many of the secrets of Japan was impossible.

Yoichi Ohira grew up fascinated with transparency. His greatest pleasures emerged from the transparency of glass, rock crystal, and water. Around the age of twenty, he read a novel by the noted Japanese author, Hiroyuki Itsuki, a novel about the love between a Japanese glassmaker and a blond Finnish glass dealer.

It was this Itsuki novel that would change Yoichi Ohira's life. Itsuki describes, with an extraordinary poeticism, his fascination with glass by depicting a character who felt through his glass, "music without sound." Yoichi Ohira explains "Thus I have dreamed to create 'my music without sound' by means of glass."

Ohira, who had been attending art and design schools in the Tokyo area, soon started to work as an apprentice at the Kagami Crystal Company in Tokyo. His career was started. While at Kagami, he saw a television program on the glass of Murano and was fascinated by this island so foreign and mysterious. A few days later he went to the library of the Institute of Italian Culture in Tokyo where he found a book entitled



*Two Ohira vases "Bambu" and "Autunno Damigiana" courtesy of Barry Friedman, Ltd.*

Murano. As he studied the many beautiful color illustrations in this book, he was captured by the beauty of Muranese glass and he said, "here is where I must go."

## VENEZIA THE LAND OF THE CANZONI

The other culture is the Venetian culture, as far different as one can imagine. Venezia and its neighboring island, Murano, was abounding in Italian opera, food, tourists, the Commedia Dell'Arte, traditions and glass. Like Japan, for an outsider, it was impossible to attain the many secrets of Murano.

The name Murano is synonymous with glass. The island, for the last six or seven centuries has been a world leader in the production of glass. There is no question, though, that the twentieth century was the greatest century in the history of Murano. The century started out with the great, innovative art glass of Artisti Barovier, glass that rivals the best glass of Tiffany and Galle. Then, the 20's and 30's featured great designers like Napoleone Martinuzzi, Carlo Scarpa, Ercole Barovier, Vittorio Zecchin and Paolo Venini. Designers including Fulvio Bianconi, Ercole Barovier, Flavio Poli, Alfredo Barbini and Archimede Seguso dominated the post war years. Until 1960, Murano was a very closed society, with infrequent outside visitors. *Cont. on page 9*

## The Silent Song, Continued from page 8

In 1960, things started to change in the glass world. Young artists around the world saw glass as a medium and Murano, the only creative glass blowing center in the world, became a destination. Thomas Stearns visited Venini on a Fulbright Fellowship and shocked the island when his series of glass was awarded the Gold Medal at the 1960 Biennale (later the award was taken from him for being non-Italian). Robert Willson soon arrived on the island, and with Alfredo Barbini's guidance rewrote the book on glass sculpture. Dale Chihuly, Richard Marquist and James Carpenter spent time training on the Island of Murano. Since these talented students could not stay in Italy, they were forced to take their talent back to the United States and they opened their own furnaces. The Studio Glass movement was started.

This is the life that Yoichi Ohira wished to enter and where he wanted to remain and learn. He left Japan and moved to Venezia in 1973, where he studied Sculpture at the Accademia and started working at the factory of the Fucina del Angeli. The Fucina was a non-traditional factory that started working in Murano in the 1950's. Its owner, Egidio Constantini, had broken two of the cardinal rules of Murano; he brought major artists such as Picasso to the island to create designs (or he went to the artists) and, rather than a decorative or utilitarian object he viewed the medium of glass as an Art. Much of the glass was non utilitarian and had a sculptural quality.

As a new glass artist, it must have been difficult for Ohira to work at the Fucina. He was considered an outsider by the workers, which created a fear, based on the centuries old traditions of Murano, that he would learn their techniques and then take them to Japan. Also, unlike a commercial glass enterprise where an artist's work becomes production, the Fucina produced artistic glass in very small quantity. Finally, by the 80's, themes for exhibition were given to the artists by Constantini. One of the themes for a 1985 exhibition at a chapel in Umbria was the importance of wine in both the secular and religious life of Italy. The exhibition consisted of wineglasses, carafes and bottles. Ohira had several designs in the exhibition. Some of these glasses ultimately ended up in a solo exhibition at the Palazzo Querini Stampalia.



*"Il Cielo" a mosaic bowl in gray glass with blue, green, yellow and red canes.  
Collection of Howard Lockwood*

In 1988, Constantini created an exhibition For Woman, Universe, Harmony that appeared in Barcelona, in homage to his wife. The goal for the exhibition, according to Constantini "was to see how far, with glass, we could get away from the beaten track of sculpture and bas-relief, and create something less than conventional, more original, which, through its form and content, would speak for my life spent with Mamma Emi [his wife]" (Fucina, p. 227). For this exhibition, Ohira produced two different totems.

For a retrospective exhibition of the work of Constantini and his Fucina artists in Brussels a "Botany" theme was created to honor the role plants had in his color sense. For the exhibition, Ohira produced Three Pears, in which he incorporated many of the traditions of Murano glass. It was obvious that he was mastering the Venetian techniques.

In 1987, Yoichi Ohira became the designer for deMajo, a commercial company where he designed many pieces, many incorporating the Soffiato techniques of Vittorio Zecchin. Finally, he left de Majo and started the next chapter of his life, the final merging of two cultures and traditions.

*Continued on page 10*

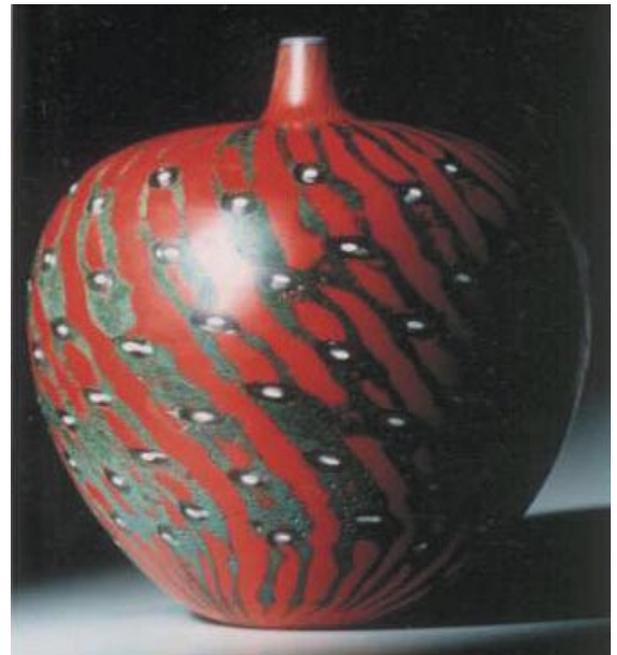
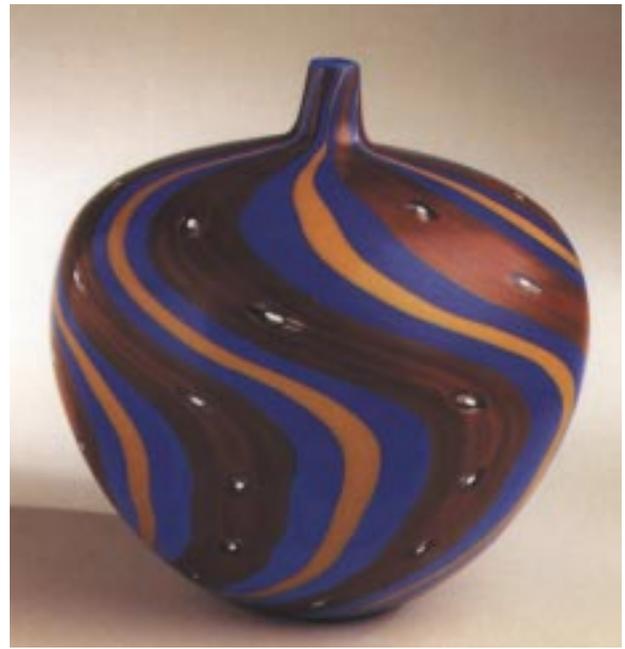
## **The Silent Song is Sung**

There is a freedom in the glass of Yoichi Ohira that is difficult to find in most glass artists. He is not trying to grab one's attention by the use of immense, wild shapes. It is the work of an artist who has worked hard fighting the battles of the opposing traditions and finally fused, through glass, the two traditions into one.

His forms are classical, simple and traditional. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he does not try to impress people by forced spontaneity. These classical forms are the forms that can be found in the work of many designers such as Carlo Scarpa and Vittorio Zecchin. But there is a difference, for there is a merging of traditions. Mr. Ohira has made very subtle changes that were influenced by Japanese forms. The curves may be more graceful or the form more precise, but in the spirit of Scarpa's work, everything is planned, but planned with a Japanese sensitivity rather than an Italian sensitivity.

The techniques found in many of his vases are in the Muranese tradition. His use of Murrines, pieces of glass, is a centuries old technique. In some, Mr. Ohira uses them as windows into the inner world of glass. Light can enter, but not escape; it glitters and beckons your eye. These windows draw your eye towards the object and force you to see the object as a whole. They envelop you in the inner world of glass. Again, there is the merging of traditions, for many times the pattern of the windows is always subtle, flowing and elegant.

It is the area around the windows that astounds and forces the viewer to transcend the visual and enter the world of the object and actually desire handling the object. The genius of Mr. Ohira is that he has magically integrated the feeling of Japanese porcelain and wood into glass. There are vases that, at first look, appear to be wood. The viewer accepts them as wood until one notices the murrines or the green lip wrap. That is where the tactile need arises. There are vases



*Two Ohira vases*

*Courtesy of Barry Friedman, Ltd.,*

where Mr. Ohira has surrounded the murrines with a glass that appears to be rough, earthy clay. The viewer again accepts the vase as clay until they are drawn to the murrines. Again, the tactile need arises. Finally there is his Laguna series, where he pictures the spirit of the water in waves of transparency. There is a tactile need to ascertain whether the waves are the transparent, smooth portals or the marbled glass that surrounds.

*Continued on page 11*

## The Silent Song, Continued from page 10

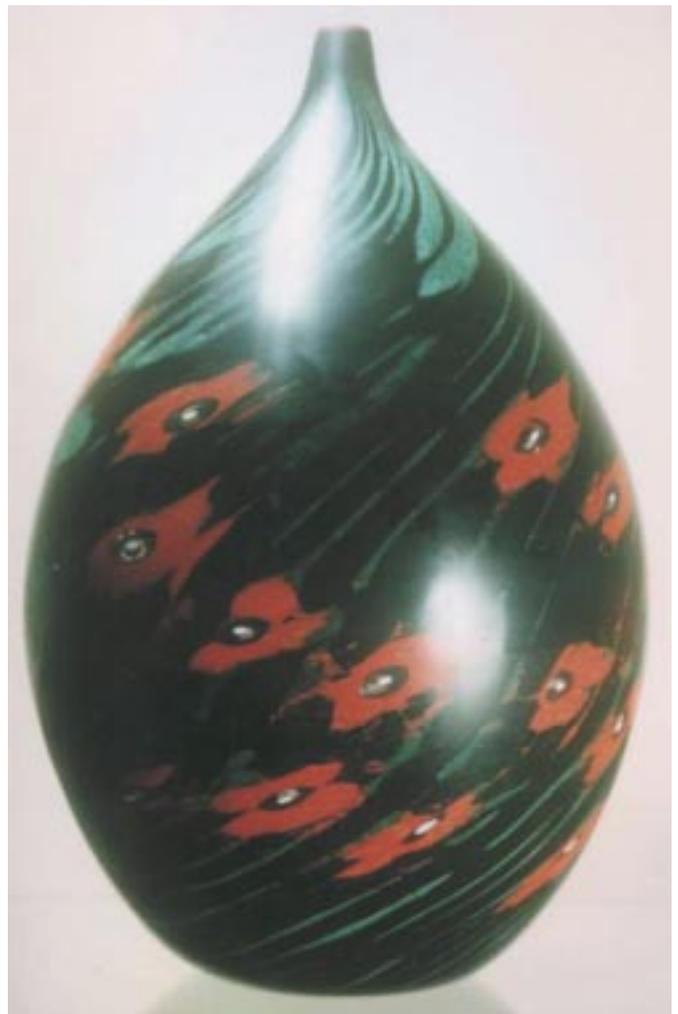
Mr. Ohira has a color and design sense that, at first, perplexes the viewer. He uses colors that should not work. He may place primary colors next to glass that emulates the grain of wood. There may be patches of brightly colored opaque color that draws your eye into the vase. His agate vases are subtle in their grains but use contrasting colors. What is remarkable is that it always seems to work. What one may first find shocking grows ever more beautiful. It is rare for an Ohira vase not to succeed in gaining the greatest praise from the viewer.

The most remarkable part of Yoichi Ohira is the sheer amount of creative work of the highest quality. There is always something new and fascinating. His work in the past five years has not been focussed on large, multi-copied series, but on artistic, unique works of art. Each piece is remarkable in the amount of creativity and individuality. There is a danger in Mr. Ohira's work. It is extremely addictive. One never tires of looking at his work. Each piece stands on its own merit and 'sings' its Japanese-Venetian song. Each piece continually draws one into its own world, a world of perfection. The danger arises because he has created such a wide and diverse variety of voices, that one always wants to add to the choir.

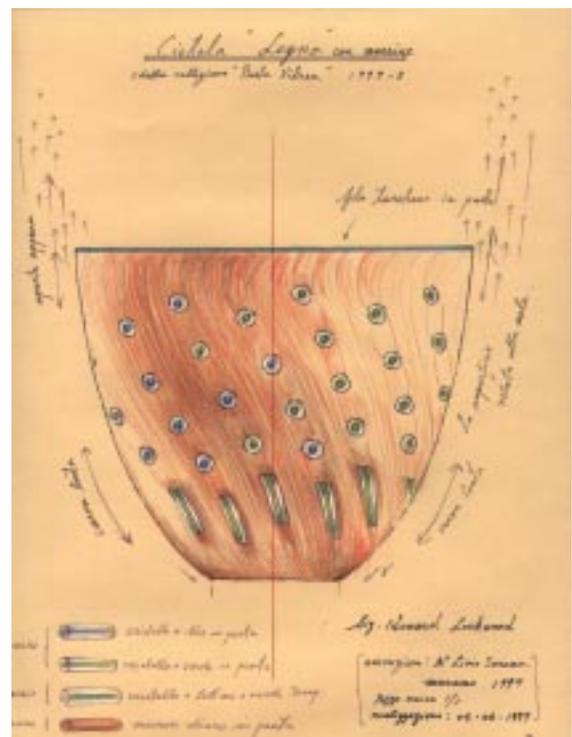
The work of Mr. Ohira has finally reached the public and is receiving the ovations it deserves. His hard work at merging the traditions of Venezia with Tokyo has been rewarded with acclaim and has opened up his world to tremendous new opportunities. His essence is now everywhere. His silent songs are finally heard.

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*A preparatory drawing of a bowl.  
Courtesy of Yoichi Ohira*



*An Ohira vase courtesy of Odetto Lastra.*



# THE FAZZOLETTO VASE ART GLASS OR TOURIST SOUVENIRS?

by Howard Lockwood

Ah, the ubiquitous handkerchief vase, otherwise known as the Fazzoletto vase. It is one of the most misrepresented, misattributed vases that was ever produced in Murano. In fact, it is so bad that I saw a very poor imitation at the pier show (similar to the vase illustrated on page 11) with a price tag of \$795, because, according to the price tag "It is Venini." I did not even bother to argue. They should have known better. I saw a similar vase on Ebay attributed to Venini and quoting an illustration in the Bianconi book. That dealer knew he was committing fraud. The buyer should beware.

The first of the handkerchief vases was produced not in Murano but in Milano and is technically not a handkerchief vase. It is the Cartocci (paper cone) vase designed by Piero Chiesa for Fontana Arte in 1935. It consisted of industrial glass shaped by pressing the glass to a mold. The top of the vase was even or slanted, with no peaks. Its appearance was similar to a paper bag. There were two versions of his vase, narrow and bulbous. According to Ricke (p266), the narrow versions were constructed from either a circular or square piece of glass. Most had a matte finish, though pieces done in the postwar era could also have a pattern of dots. The version with the dots made its appearance in the United States at the Italy At Work exhibition in 1950. It also made an appearance at the L'Art du Verre exhibition at the Musee des Arts Decoratifs in Paris in June 1951. According to Ricke, a version is still in production. Early versions of this vase are very desirable.

After the war, Fulvio Bianconi started designing glass for Paolo Venini. One of his first designs was a varia-



Two Fazzoletto Vases by Venini.  
Courtesy Fischers, Heilbron

tion of the Cartoccio vase, which was to be called the Fazzoletto vase. The main difference from the Chiesa example is that Bianconi created his vase with asymmetrical peaks. Spinning the molten vase in a complete circle and allowing gravity and g-forces to create a random look created these peaks.

There were originally two models of the Bianconi fazzoletto vase listed in the white drawing catalogue. Model number 2986 was a large fazzoletto vase with pronounced peaks that came in two sizes. The price multiplier was 30 and 40/50. (For comparison purposes, a Commedia Dell Arte figurine had a multiplier of 100.) They also produced the model using zanfirico canes. This model had a price multiplier of 84. A second model, #2987, was created with no raised peaks and was also made in two sizes. Other than the regular lattimo model, with a multiplier of 25, it was created in three other techniques: A Canne (40), spagnoletto (50) and zanfirico (60). The largest of the vases was generally 14". Though just two versions were illustrated in the catalogue, there were many different variations of the vase. There was the wide vase illustrated on the cover. There are the highly collectible small (2.75") and medium sized (3.75") vases which can be found in the A Canne, zanfirico and lattimo techniques.

Venini's fazzoletto vase became one of the most popular items in their catalogue, and it was sold throughout the world. The vase made an appearance at the ITALY AT WORK exhibition that toured the United States in 1951-53. In New York City, Macys' offered the vase/bowl in a newspaper advertisement celebrating the exhibition on September 9, 1951 for \$19.98. A

*Text continued on page 13*



*A Fontana Arta Cartoccio Vase, illustration #8 from IL VETRO ITALIANO A MILANO 1906-1968*



*A Fontana Arte Cartocci Vase from L'Art Du Verre, July, 1951, Musee des Arts Decoratifs, Paris*



*The bases of two Venini vases. Notice the polished base and indented polished pontil. The Lockwood Collection*



*Three signed Venini Fazzoletto vases: 2.5" high & 4" high  
The Lockwood Collection*

## FAZZOLETTO VASES, *Cont. from page 13*

Commedia Dell'Arte figurine was also advertised for \$49.95. The STUDIO YEARBOOK of 1954-55 illustrated a fazzoletto vase that was available at Liberty's in London.

The December, 1953 issue of Casabella contained an advertisement for Venini featuring a fazzoletto vase. According to the advertisement, one could obtain the vase from stores in New York, London, Paris, Hamburg, Brussels, Copenhagen, and Stockholm. In Italy, they had outlets in Genoa, Torino, Milano, Roma and Venezia.

It is virtually impossible to catalog the color combinations that Venini used to create the handkerchief vase. In researching this article, I have come across many different color combinations, too numerous to elaborate. One of the greatest examples is at The Corning Museum of Glass, a deep iridized purple/red vase with an iridized gray interior.

Venini still produces the Fazzoletto vase. A single colored version has been in production since 1960. The model number is 700.2. Since 1987, Venini started overlaying one color with a second and was called the fazzoletto opalino. (Ricke) These pieces would be engraved Venini Italia with a date.

To the trained eye, handkerchief vases produced at Venini are very identifiable. Most have a polished, inset pontil. If you find one without the polished pontil, in all likelihood, it is by another company and should be priced accordingly. The area around the pontil is very polished and flat. Almost every Venini handkerchief vase is acid stamped, but try to find it! The problem is that there was a very small area for the stamp so no vase has the complete signature. On the small vases, the stamp would not fit into the pontil area, so many times; one must tilt and play with the light to see parts of the acid signature. Since only Venini used the acid stamped signature, just seeing part of the signature is enough to authenticate the vase as Venini.

*Continued on page 15*



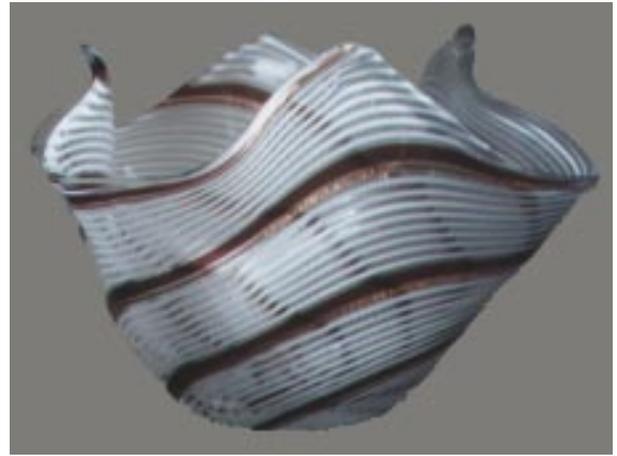
*An AVeM vase designed by Giulio Radi, circa 1950. Courtesy Stadion, Trieste*



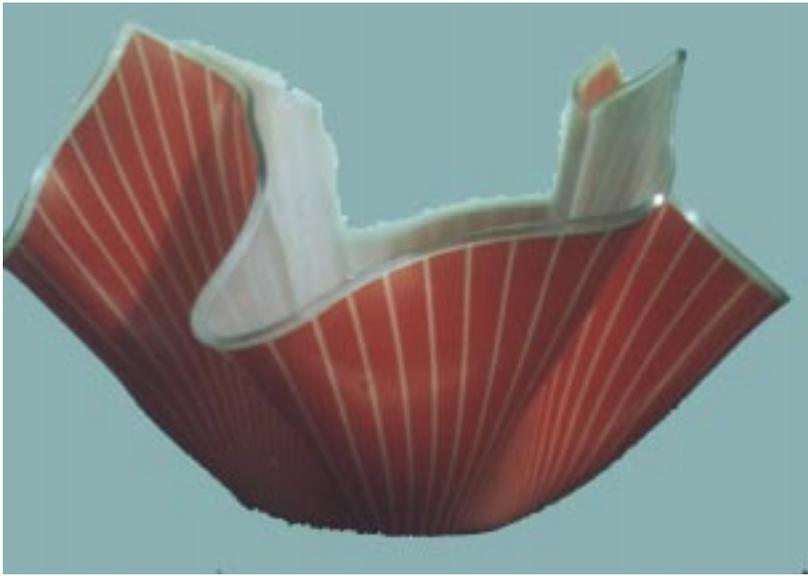
*A blue glass quilted fazzoletto vase. Collection of Gary Gand*

**FAZZOLETTO VASES, Cont. from page 14**

As mentioned, the fazzoletto vase was a very popular tourist item and a variation could be found in most of the shops of the major factories. Aureliano Toso produced a version in the Bianco Nera technique. Ercole Barovier, Vistosi, Fratelli Toso, Archimede Seguso and AVEM all had versions and variations on the theme. When a vase can be definitively attributed (based on a special technique or shape) to a particular company they do have some value, otherwise they are non-descript.



*A vase probably by Aureliano Toso The Lockwood Collection*



*Not a Venini vase, probably German. I have seen this vase at the Pier show for \$795 as 'Venini' and on Ebay. It is enamelled. I have also seen it in brown with the signature "Venini for Wanamaker's" a department store in the United States. The Lockwood Collection*



*Two vases of unknown origins - probably Aureliano Toso. Collection of Jolene Brenner*

## Frank Lloyd Wright at Venini



*A Carlo Scarpa for Venini vase similar to model #3920 that was purchased by Frank Lloyd Wright. Courtesy CARLO SCARPA, GLASS OF AN ARCHITECT, ILL. 187.*

Paolo Venini had a special relationship with architects. This relationship started with his inclusion in the group of architects and designers called the Il Labirinto. The group, which was formed in Milan in 1927 included Tommaso Buzzi, Piero Chiesa, Emilio Lancia, Gio Ponti, Michele Marelli, and Paolo Venini. Buzzi was to become the artistic director at Venini. Chiesa was to become the design genius behind Fontana Arte. Ponti, an architect by training, was to start the Milan Triennale and edit DOMUS. Carlo Scarpa, who succeeded Buzzi at Venini, was also an accomplished architect. Paolo Venini was so tied in with architects that it was a natural for the great American architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, to tour the Venini factory.

Not only is the production of the fazzoletto vase fun to watch (it is spun in a circle to produce the folds), it can be assumed that the fazzoletto vase was so identified with Venini, that it would be the piece the factory would create when they entertained important dignitaries.

This holds true for Frank Lloyd Wright. Following his visit to the factory with Oscar Stonorov and Carlo Scarpa, an invoice was prepared on October 8, 1951, for 16 items. One of the pieces he wanted was a fazzoletto vase, model number 2986, a “zanfirico triple

lattimo vase”. It was noted on the invoice in English that “this was the vase they made before your eyes – it is a present. O.S.” For the record, Wright purchased several pieces of Venini. The purchase included a special plate “Piatto rosso velato a mola,” ten black velato vases with a green interior (model #3920) designed by Scarpa. A similar vase is illustrated in CARLO SCARPA, GLASS OF AN ARCHITECT, #187. He also purchased four various *alga con base pesante* vases. The models were #1326, #1339, #3519 and #3545. The models #3519 and #3545 are also illustrated in CARLO SCARPA as number 28 and 56. The total cost, less packing was \$62.50.

It is interesting to note that Wright purchased several conservative pieces. He did not choose a Bianconi pezzato vase, first presented earlier that year at the Triennale, nor a Gio Ponti female formed decanter. Nor did Venini choose to give him one of these pieces. In CARLO SCARPA: GLASS OF AN ARCHITECT, it states that “FLW is stopped in his tracks by a piece designed by Carlo Scarpa.” (Barovier, CS, p. 300) We do not know if one of the pieces he purchased was that piece.

Howard J. Lockwood

## A REVIEW: IL VETRO ITALIANO A MILANO 1906-1968

The catalogue of the exhibition IL VETRO DI MURANO ALLE BIENNALE set a very high standard for exhibition catalogues. Though very weak on textual material, the inclusion of black and white period photographs of glass followed by a color section of glass that had been exhibited at the Biennale's has made the catalogue a great reference work and a benchmark for exhibition catalogues. The main criticism of the catalogue was that there was very little textual material and that there was no English translation. One could only hope that the new, 1998 catalogue IL VETRO ITALIANO A MILANO 1906-1968 would accentuate the positives and overcome the negatives of the Biennale catalogue. After all, this is the catalogue that accompanied an exhibition loosely organized around the Biennale of Monza and its successor, the Triennale of Milano. The importance of the Triennale to the Murano glasshouses was extremely important, and many great series, including Bianconi's Pezzati vases, made their initial debut at the Triennale. Unfortunately, this catalogue is inconsistent. Yes, we have to thank them that it is in both Italian and English! There are many more scholarly articles, seventeen to be exact, which is a positive. But the articles relate primarily to the glass produced before the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Loosely organized around the articles are some black and white archival photographs. The key word is 'some'. I only wish that there were many more black and white photographs from all of the Triennales, arranged in the book like the Biennale catalogue.

Rosa Barovier Mentasti has presented an excellent treatise on "Muranesi Glass in Monza and Milan." It is a well-written article, full of facts and is arranged chronologically. It is very weak on the post-war glass.

There is the start of a very interesting article by Giovanni Mori called "The Monza and Milano Biennale and Triennale (1923-1936) as Seen in the Press." I say start because I would have liked to have seen a second part on the reviews and articles on the years 1936 to 1960. Those were extremely interesting and important years. Also, it is a very general article. At one point Mori states, with a footnote to the article, that



"The gallery of artistic glassware and lighting was highly praised." I would like to have seen the original source or, at minimum the actual quotation from the article.

What could be the most interesting aspect of the book is an annotated map of the city of Milano. The annotations list every installation of glass (primarily lamps, architectural and stained glass windows) in a public building with specifics as to the architect and maker. It is very valuable, but confusing because they also list buildings or installations that are now non-existent. The legend is confusing – it states that the negative number indicates non-existent work when in reality, it is a number in a red background. There are no windows listed by Fuga. Did he have any installations in Milano churches?

Continued on page 18

**A REVIEW**, Continued from page 17

The article by Mariateresa Chirico, “Glass ‘How’ and Glass ‘Where’ in the Monza/Milan Biennali/Triennale” is an interesting discussion of architectural uses of glass, both for lighting and furniture. It discusses the various pieces and fixtures, but only contains five black and white illustrations. It does not discuss the role or influence of Lalique on the Italians and focuses on pre-war work.

The color section of the book is interesting for the inclusions and exclusions. One sees some of the same vases that have been illustrated in previous books, but there are also many other inclusions. The first major difference between other books results from the fact that the book is comprehensive and covers all of Italy. . Therefore, companies that have never been mentioned in a book on Venetian glass or Murano glass are well in evidence.

The color illustrations are arranged by city, Triennale, Compasso D’Oro and then other companies. The first inclusion is the work out of Milano, including the work of Fontana Arte (see the illustration from the book on page 10), Willi and Erwin Burger, and other companies. Then there is a section on the company Empoli. This is very valuable information because every collector has seen some green Italian glass, which was probably produced in Empoli. This book has color illustrations of 20 items between 1935 and 1958.

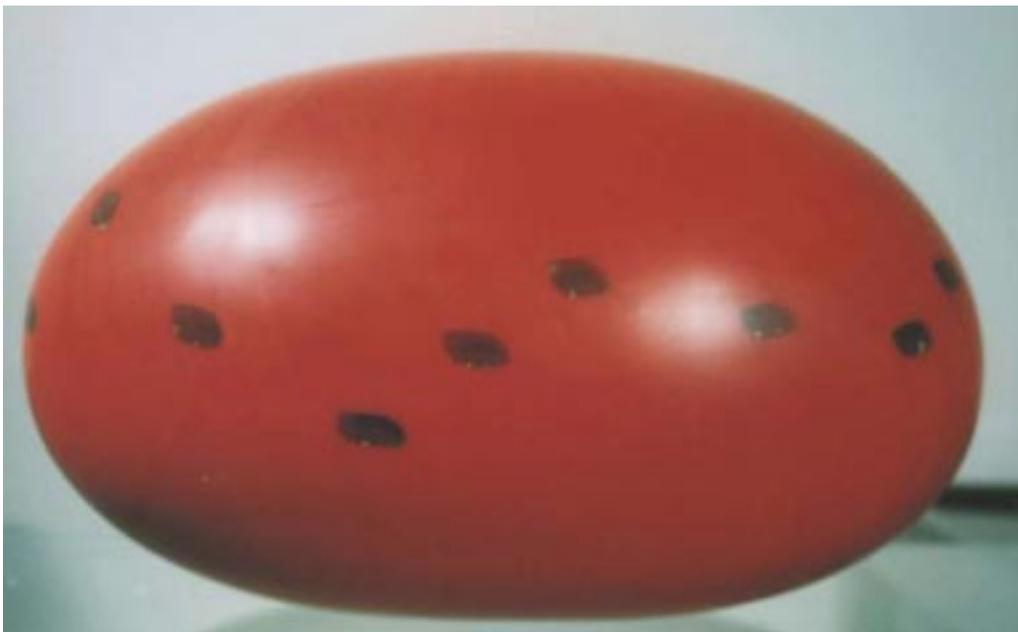
There is a short section of color illustrations of items that won the coveted Compasso D’Oro. In this section are several nice Flavio Poli sommerso vases from 1954, a Nason and Moretti carafe and six glasses designed in 1955, a Vignelli Funghi lamp from 1956, three Vincio Vianello vases from 1957 and the 1962 Sergio Asti Portofiori vase from the Marco series produced by Salviati.

The regular section of glass has some nice Poli vases, some interesting work by Romano Chirivi for Salviati (1960) and many pieces of glass – many from series that have been illustrated in other books, but many new shapes and colors. The glass from the prewar era is almost better than the later years, but both seem to be lacking in pizzazz. I do find it interesting that there are no examples of the work of Anzolo Fuga. Did he exhibit at the Triennale?

All in all, this paperback catalogue has a lot of important information and some great illustrations. There are better books published on the subject, and unfortunately, this is not the definitive book on the Triennales. Hopefully, that will be coming sometime in the next five years.

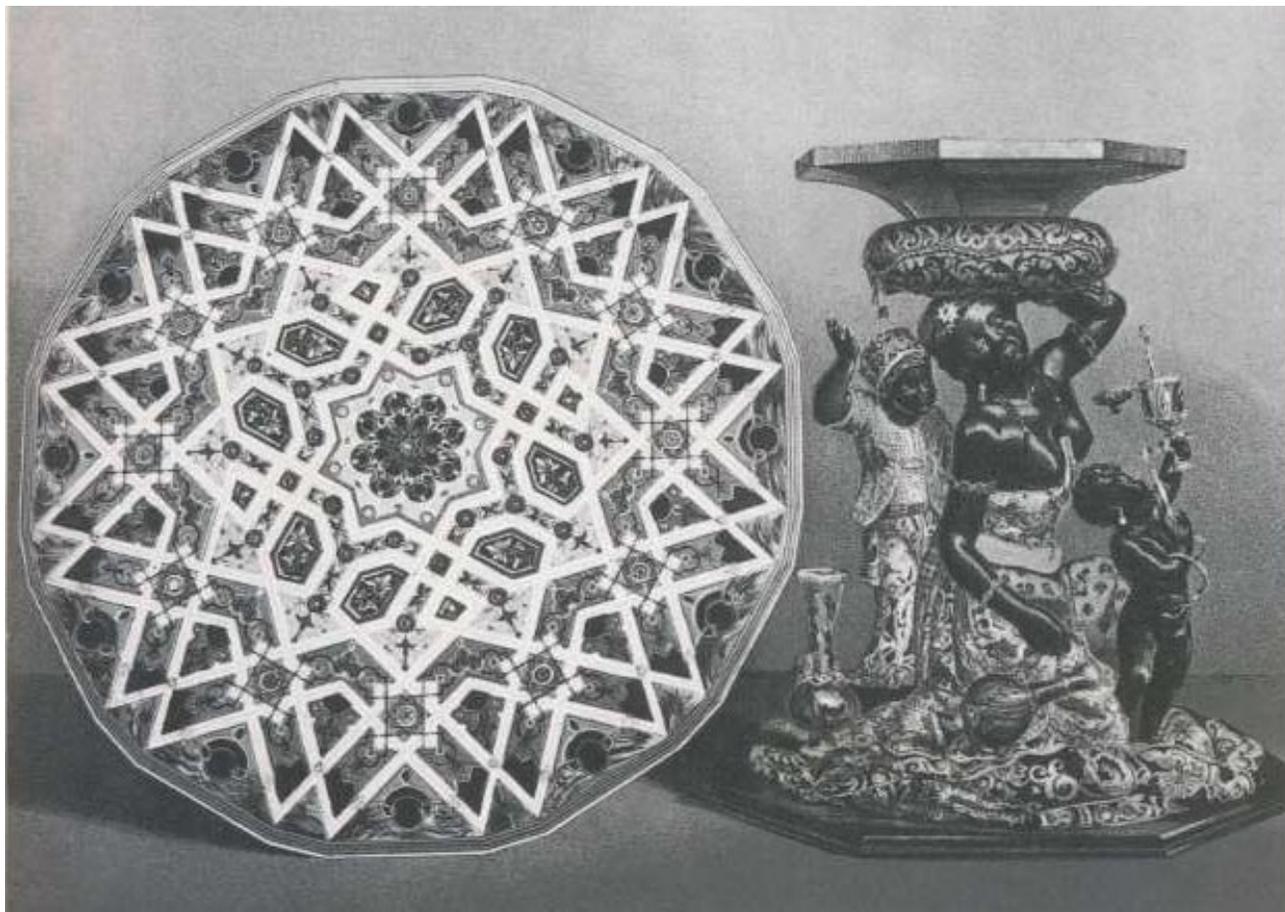
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*See the article on page 5. A “Rugiade” red vase with clear and white murrines by Yoichi Ohira. 1998-99. Collection of Odetto Lastra*



## A REMARKABLE TABLE

by Sheldon Barr



*Mosaic Table Top and Stand* – Salviati Dott. Antonio Fu Bartolomeo. Lorenzo Radi, Domenico and Antonio Giobbe, makers. Diam. 41.75" 1859-62 From J.B.Waring: *MASTERPIECES OF INDUSTRIAL ART AND SCULPTURE AT THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION, 1862, VOL II, London, 1863, pl. 280.*

The Victorian nineteenth century was characterized by a fascination with the less complicated artifacts of the preindustrial world. Consequently, in the 1860's and '70's, the mission of Murano's newly revived glasshouses was the faithful reproduction of antique Venetian glass from previous centuries. By the mid-nineteenth century, due to the political and economic conditions which resulted from the fall of the eleven hundred-year-old Venetian Republic in 1797 (in particular the stifling domination of Austria which lasted from 1815 to 1866), Venice's venerable glassmaking industry was in serious danger of extinction. Many glassmaking techniques and processes had fallen into disuse and were forgotten. A Venetian glass technician, Lorenzo Radi, embracing the prevailing European post-industrial-Revolution credo (dubbed the 'Arts and Crafts Movement' in Britain), had been at-

tempting to recover Venice's forgotten glassmaking techniques for years. In 1840, Radi had invented an award winning new process for the manufacture of gold and silver *smalti* (the opaque, colored glass-like raw material used in the creation and restoration of mosaics). In 1856 his diligence was rewarded when he rediscovered the lost process needed to recreate *calcedonio* (chalcedony) glass<sup>1</sup> – a type of glass that resembles stone. After melting antique Venetian beads<sup>2</sup>, and insuring that the colors did not blend before blowing, Radi created chalcedony glass for the first time in nearly 100 years.

The initial discovery of the technique needed to create chalcedony glass is reputed to have taken place in the mid-fifteenth century. Paolo da Pergola, a Venetian

*Continued on page 20*

### **A REMARKABLE TABLE, Cont. from page 19**

alchemist and Antonio Salviati, a lawyer from Venice's neighboring town of Vicenza, found the lagoon city fascinating and decided to move there. He became obsessed with the run-down condition of the city, especially the devastated antique mosaic decoration of the Basilica of San Marco. He soon found two equally – inspired allies – Muranese Abbot (and glass historian) Vincenzo Zanetti, who yearned to rescue Venice's glorious art of glassmaking from impending oblivion, and Antonoi Colleoni, Murano's mayor, who, embracing another equally compelling point of view, wanted to revive the dying craft in order to provide much-needed employment to the people of his island. The considerable persuasive powers of the two were amply demonstrated in 1859 when they convinced Salviati to establish a new company he named *Salviati Dott. Antonio fu Bartolomeo*.<sup>3</sup> The scholarly priest and pragmatic mayor had joined forces in a concerted effort to convince the then forty-three year old Salviati to relinquish the legal profession and launch a new business devoted to the manufacture of mosaics. At the time “*it was impossible to restore the mosaics of the church of San Marco, because the basic material, colored smalti was unobtainable.*”<sup>4</sup> so the initial thrust of the new company was the manufacture of smalti, and, shortly thereafter, the commercial production of large scale mosaics for churches and public buildings. Both the showroom (Stabilimento Salviati)<sup>5</sup> and the factory were located in Venice at Dorsoduro 731. Salviati hired Roman mosaicist Enrico Podio as art director and as his collaborator the above-mentioned glass-technician Lorenzo Radi. In the mosaic studio adjoining their new shop, Radi and Salviati set up a small furnace for the production of glass tiles imitating chalcedony, jasper and lapis lazuli. Soon Radi began to blow his chalcedony glass into reproductions of Renaissance vessels. These were offered for sale in the shop and shown at the industrial exhibitions, both national and international, at which the firm would soon participate regularly.

After several half-hearted, failed attempts earlier in the century, the auspicious association of Salviati and Radi proved to be the turning point in the revival of Venice's endangered glass-blowing industry. Within a short time the firm's gold, silver and colored smalti production was considered fine enough for the restoration of the

mosaics of San Marco. In 1860 the authorities in charge of the Basilica drew up a fifteen-year contract with the Salviati company for the repair of the old mosaics and, where necessary, the creation of new ones. The new mosaics themselves were judged “*superior to all others being produced at the present time, and in many respects superior to the old ones.*”<sup>6</sup> “*In one year the miracle-worker [Salviati] had cast his spell. Monumental mosaics were no longer as mere possibility: they existed.*”<sup>7</sup>

Salviati choose to exhibit the new firm's production for the first time at the National Exhibition of 1861 in Florence. Ignoring the Austrian interdiction, Salviati smuggled his products out of Venice “*... by devious routes ...*”<sup>8</sup> (Unlike Venice, Florence was by then part of the newly-formed Kingdom of Italy.) Mosaics predominated but Salviati also presented examples of Radi's glass tiles and a number of his blown chalcedony glass vases embellished with antique-style metal filigree. The judges were dazzled. “*The products of this Venetian factory surpass all others in splendour, in good taste and in originality, and are sufficient to vindicate the glorious renown of Italian industry.*”<sup>9</sup> The Viceroy of Egypt ordered Radi's glass tiles to decorate his palace at Mex.<sup>10</sup>

Salviati considered London's large and influential 1862 International Exhibition the most appropriate venue to introduce his new production to the world. He exhibited the firm's mosaics, tiles and blown chalcedony vases. The South Kensington Museum (now the Victorian and Albert Museum,) bought one of Radi's superb metal mounted chalcedony vases.

One of the highlights of Salviati's exhibit was a remarkable mosaic-topped table with a carved wood base incorporating five more of Radi's chalcedony glass vases. The Moorish-inspired geometric mosaic top, which includes bits of Lorenzo Radi's chalcedony glass as well as his award winning gold smalti, was executed by the brothers Domenico and Antonio Giobbe. It reflects the advanced state Salviati and Radi had achieved in mosaic art by that year. The base, carved by Antonio Toso and painted by Pietro Maggi, depicts three blackamoors – woman and two children.

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Radi's five silver filigree mounted chalcedony vases are incorporated into the base. With this tour-de-force, Salviati was able to exhibit the diversity of his production and in his words: "*manifest the good taste particular to Italy.*"<sup>12</sup> It was priced at 1000 pounds, an enormous amount of money in those days. Its present location, if it survives, is unknown.

Eventually, the production of chalcedony glass was taken up by others, notably after 1866 by the Barovier family of glass blowers at Salviati's new company and later, from 1890, the firm of Francesco Ferro e Figlio. Exciting new chromatic combinations, often incorporating bits of aventurine glass, filigrana (filigree) or murrine were produced. At the 1908 "Esposizione Venezia" the firm of Artisti Barovier & C. exhibited examples of blown chalcedony glass. Severely limited by the character of the melt, blown chalcedony was always produced in very simple, classic shapes. Rare today, most surviving examples are preserved in museums and private collections.

1. To produce conventional glass, silicon dioxide (from sand or pulverized pebbles), a flux (plant or wood ash), a stabilizer (lime) and coloring agents (metallic oxides, etc) are fused overnight in a crucible placed in the glassmakers' furnace. This normally results in a "melt" of homogeneous color, unsuitable for creating chalcedony glass. To produce chalcedony glass, glass shards of different colors
2. Dandolo 1861, p.15.
3. *fu Bartolomeo* in Venetian vernacular indicates that Antonio Salviati is the son of Bartolomeo Salviati, deceased. Salviati most probably did this to honor his fathers memory.
4. Castellane, 1867, p 298
5. A stabilimento was a retail showroom, often of vast proportions, sometimes occupying an entire palazzo.
6. The London Times of June 26, 1862, cited in *Stampa Inglese* 1863, p3
7. Bolaffio 1881, pp 184-185
8. Bolaffio 1881, pp 184-185
9. Bolaffio 1881, pp 186
10. The Morning Post, June 26, 1862, cit. In *Stampa Inglese* 1863, p12.

inform you about what to look for. These are the specialized books that are published throughout the world that are not found on the bookshelves of your local bookseller. They are the invaluable tools that will help you make informed decisions.

Prepare yourself for the world of Italian Glass. It will be bursting onto the radar screens soon. There is a major exhibition of glass being planned for the American Craft Museum this September and an auction in the fall of a major collection at David Rago's and three new major books to be published this year.

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Above: A vase designed by Carlo Scarpa for MVM Cappellin sold for \$24150. Courtesy: Christies East, NY

Below: A Valva vase designed by Flavio Poli that sold for \$6069. Courtesy: Stadion, Trieste, Italy.

