

HOMMAGE: THE FONTANA, MANZONI AND BURRI VASES

By Giberto Arrivabene Valenti Gonzaga

Curated by Cristina Beltrami

It's been over twenty years now since Giberto Arrivabene Valenti Gonzaga made his entry into the glass world with an unshakeable determination to reinvent tradition. His passionate quest has been to marry the expertise of the Murano glass masters to Art with a capital A, as created by the great artists of the past, which remains an inexhaustible source of inspiration. It is enough to mention his Paolina Borghese, the bust of Augustus Caesar, his Sleeping Putto... the impulse to create a fine object in glass comes directly from the beauty of the art already surrounding us.

In the early months of 2017 Giberto found himself particularly struck by the work of Lucio Fontana, and in particular by the Spatial Concepts series with their slashed canvases 'going beyond' canonical ideas of space. His rediscovery of the artist occurred during his frequent visits to Buenos Aires, where Fontana lived during the war years and contributed to the famous White Manifesto. Back in Venice, Giberto began to play with the possibility of 'slashing' glass as a homage to the founder of Spatialism.

The result was the creation, not without difficulty, of the **Fontana Vase**, a large-scale piece on which one or more deep cuts have been carved, apparently slicing through the glass to reveal the vase's internal colour. It is now in production in a limited edition of fifteen. Despite its reputation as a 'moribund city' Venice is alive with events linked to contemporaneity: it has fantastic museums and is the theatre for that magnificent show the Biennale. This regular encounter with modern art is the background to Giberto's electrifying encounter with the work of Piero Manzoni and Alberto Burri, two artists with very different approaches but equally interesting in the possibilities they offer for 'translation' into glass. Maestro Gianni Seguso has risen to the challenge and created with Giberto the **Manzoni Vase**, some thirty centimetres high, blown in white glass and wrapped with a skein of heat-applied filaments, to mimic the effect of Manzoni's Achromes.

Giberto's engagement with Burri could hardly not concentrate on fire, the element that ineluctably links glass to the Umbrian artist's Combustions. Once more with the invaluable assistance of Maestro Seguso, he has designed the **Burri Vase** which fuses a deep red impasto onto a black glass base; at the final stage of the process, the vase is then irregularly coated with applications of clear glass to recreate the effect of Burri's blowtorch-melted plastic while highlighting the overlapping of colour strata.

These new vases, presented on the occasion of Glass Week 2019, are wholly consistent with Giberto's explorations over the last decade into translating acknowledged masterpieces from the history of art into glass, an approach that becomes, too, a different way of looking at great art, seeing it from a new and original angle and constituting besides an overt tribute to the age-old tradition of Murano glassmaking, ever ready – given the right stimulus – to renew itself again and again.

On Thursday 12 September at 17:00 the Ca' Pesaro International Gallery of Modern Art will host in the ground-floor hall a discussion between its Director Elisabetta Barison, Luca Massimo Barbero, Director of the Art History Institute at the Giorgio Cini, and Giberto Arrivabene Valenti Gonzaga.

Ca' Pesaro, Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna
Santa Croce 2076 – 30135 Venezia

From Saturday 7th September to Sunday 15 September 2019

Opening times: 10:30 – 18:00, closed on Mondays

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