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ALTE VITRIE

L'ARTE DEL VETRO E DINTORNI





though we find them in very few examples: in a number of virtually monochrome compositions by the Dutch painter Pieter Claesz (1568-1661); in the still life featuring baskets of glasses by Sebastian Stoskopff (1597-1657), an artist from Alsace who, inserting broken glass elements into his paintings pondered the weakness of life and the fragility of human beings; in the compositional rigour of Spaniard Francisco de Zurbaran (1698-1664) and in the attention to atmospherics of Jean Baptiste Chardin (1699-1749), a leading exponent of French still life in the 18th century. During the course of the 19th century, according to the terms of a new vision of reality, the paintings with vases of flowers by Eduard Manet (1832-1883) and Auguste Renoir (1841-1919) restored the transparency of glass, but no longer as in the optical transcription of Flemish painting, but by paying attention to the relationships between light and colour, eliminating the implied static nature of still life subjects in order to restore a sense and a breath of dynamic spontaneity to the truth of the vision.

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This first edition of 2016 is a little unusual, because it focuses on the representation of glass rather than the artefacts themselves. We embark upon a fascinating historical journey through which we retrace the value and significance of **still life**, lingering upon the depiction of objects made from glass. A renewed interpretation of this genre of painting, unfairly considered of inferior importance, is provided by **Giuseppe Carta**, whose research masterfully depicts the lightness, fragility and transparency of glass. His work is also presented in an exhibition adorning the halls of the MAV (Virtual Archaeological Museum), the exhibits on display forging a strong relationship with one another. Nevertheless, the display at the Murano Glass Museum, with its renewed and highly evocative exhibition spaces and its clarity of presentation, brings us back to a world of objects deriving from the most extraordinary of traditions.

Editorial Staff

GLASS, VANITAS AND TRUTH IN STILL LIFE PAINTING

A direct descendent of the *Xenions* of ancient Rome, depicted with provisions that hosts would offer to their guests for a banquet or feast, *Still Life* (defined in Italian as *Natura Morta*, or *Silent Life*, *Still Leben* in German), is a name which focuses attention on the immobile nature of the object. This genre of painting features exclusively inanimate objects as a theme, without them being a descriptive element within a religious, historical or mythological painting. Still life originated in northern Europe before reaching Italy at the end of the sixteenth century thanks to the presence and work of Flemish artists; it went on to enjoy great success in Europe throughout the seventeenth century and the Baroque period. Among the various objects featured in still life paintings, including vases

of flowers, lavishly laid tables, musical instruments, baskets of fruit, including the famous *Basket of Fruit* (*Canestra di frutta*) painted by Caravaggio (1571-1610), rarely do we find glassware. This is probably due to the difficulties encountered by artists in depicting them. Indeed, it was not easy to render the transparency of glass and the reflections of light and of the environment within them using paint. In this sense, Caravaggio was masterful. In *Boy Bitten By A Lizard*, Giovanni Baglione wrote that he astounded his contemporaries by painting a young boy "with a jug of flowers full of water, and inside the reflection of a window could be seen excellently with other reflections from that room in the water"; and in the *Penitent Magdalene* in the Doria-Pamphili collection, he painted on the floor beside some jewels a glass vase containing unguent, underlining the abandonment of vanity. Although the fragility of glass objects was ideal for depicting the significance of *Vanitas*, intended as a reflection upon the fundamental concepts of time passing, human vulnerability and the centrality of inescapable death,





opposite page, above:
Fruit in a glass vase, 1st century B.C.,
 feature of the fresco from the House of
 Giulia Felice in Pompeii

opposite page, below:
Boy bitten by a lizard, Caravaggio,
 ca 1594., oil on canvas, Florence, Longhi
 Foundation, detail

side, left:
Penitent Magdalene, Caravaggio,
 olio on canvas, 1596, Rome, Doria-
 Pamphili Gallery, detail

side, right:
Still life with a basket of glasses,
 Sebastian Stoskopff, 1644, oil on
 canvas, 52 x 63 cm, Musée de l'Oeuvre
 de Notre Dame, Strasbourg

side, right, below:
Still life with glass, ca 1760., oil
 on canvas, Pittsburgh Museum of Art,
 Carnegie Institute

side, below:
Vase with peonies, Edouard
 Manet, oil on canvas, ca 1902

below:
Tribute to Altare, Giuseppe Carta,
 Museo dell'Arte Vetraria Altarese,
 2015



The still life of the Sardinian painter (he was born in Banari in 1950) is the product of a long tradition which dates back to the 15th century, particularly in Dutch and Flemish painting. However, unlike those masterful artists, Carta's intention is not to offer a true glimpse of reality, but rather to fulfil an ethical duty, inducing the beholder to look beyond the object itself, to leave objectivity behind and move towards a more idealistic view of thought and spirit. Indeed, his compositions are truly architectural, seemingly rigid, motionless and perfect, but in reality always showing discordant elements. They are constructions which cannot last, captured in an instant before everything collapses, leading the observer to reflect on our sense of existence. In these compositions, light is the crucial element. It arrives from the side and lights up the scene to form a frozen view in which the black backgrounds,



TRANSPARENCIES ON CANVAS

Giuseppe Carta bravely devotes his energies to a genre of painting, still life, unjustly deemed as "inferior", and provides a view of reality which goes beyond what is merely objective.

favoured by the artist, amplify the sense of estrangement. His work enchants with rare magic and, if the various materials painted on Carta's canvases are highly tactile, the glass itself becomes a tenuous substance, composed of light and transparency. Carta's painting is truly an ode to objects, to their value,

beauty and properties, inviting the observer to linger for a moment of reflection and salvage their true meaning.

Mariateresa Chirico

For further information:
Trasparenze dipinte. Giuseppe Carta. Catalog of the exhibition, E20progetti Editore, Biella 2015



**THE MURANO
GLASS MUSEUM
REOPENS AFTER
BEING EXPANDED
AND COMPLETELY
RENOVATED**

The museum that was reopened to the public on February 9th 2015 was one which had been completely transformed: exhibition spaces almost doubled and the exhibition design entirely renewed, with displays and itineraries revamped in order to allow visitors to appreciate the intersections and multifaceted nature of the history of glass in Murano and to gain the maximum possible enjoyment from the masterpieces presented by the museum. The Murano Glass Museum, one of the twelve run by the Civic Museum Foundation of Venice, is perhaps the only place in the world where the art of glassware is recounted right from its origins: from the examples of Roman glassware dating back to between the

first and third centuries A.D., to renaissance creations and the innovative virtuosity of the eighteenth century, pre-empting the unexpected rebirth of glass making at the end of the nineteenth century and the experimentation of the twentieth. The museum's expansion, with the salvaging of a part of the ex Conterie and its extensive restyling, has embraced the historical halls of Palazzo Giustinian (which has housed the museum since 1861), as well as an area of the ex glass bead factory adjacent to the museum's gardens.

Around fifty pieces covering the period from the Roman era to the twentieth century introduce the visitor the world of glass, providing evocative examples of the noteworthy milestones in the history of glass-making in Murano as well as the technical and stylistic developments which accompanied it.

The Glass Museum, with its long-awaited expansion, aims to keep alive its relationship with the various elements of Murano glass-making, including craftsmen, their creations, success stories and periods of crisis, acting according to the will of its founder Abbot Vincenzo

Zanetti. His intention was to provide a stimulus and reference point for master glass-makers and companies: a historical archive, documenting a mysterious and fascinating world for those approaching it for the first time, an ambassador for a unique and precious art.

From this perspective, we have seen the foundation's participation in the EGE – European Glass Experience - Project, as part of the European Union's "Culture 2007-2013" Programme, in which artistic glass making has acquired recognition as an intangible asset of Europe's cultural heritage.

An important opportunity, not only because it is bravely contextualised within one of the most difficult periods of Muranese glass-making, but also because it establishes a dialogue between master glass-makers and young artists, promoting a contemporary productive activity which contradicts the mournful epitaph currently looming over the island of Murano. The main aims of the European project can be summarised as the resumption of an articulate and constructive dialogue which does not fear opposition. It focuses above all on glass and

side:
Hall 2 – Between the 14th and 17th centuries. The golden age
New display on the first floor
Glass Museum, Murano

below, left:
Hall 8 - 1900/1970: glass and design. New display on the first floor, Glass Museum, Murano

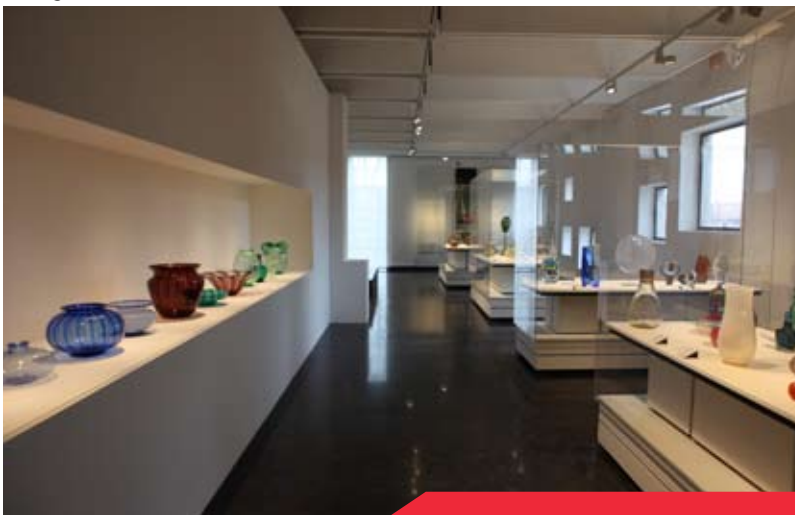
below:
Chalice in smoked glass on a rigadin stem with handles applied in a zigzag fashion, with morisia, Venice, Compagnia Venezia Murano, 1878, Glass Museum Murano

its leading role as a suitable and ideal material for giving life to works of art which, now more than ever, depend on the skill and knowledge of the master glass-makers of Murano.

An operation which begins with the acquisition of clear awareness on the part of those constituting Murano's intrinsic potential and the will to restore the prestige of the role of master glass-maker.

Chiara Squarcina
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Glass Museum, Murano

For further information:
<http://museovetro.visitmuve.it>



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Cover:
Trasparenze with basket,
Giuseppe Carta, oil on canvas,
2013-2014

