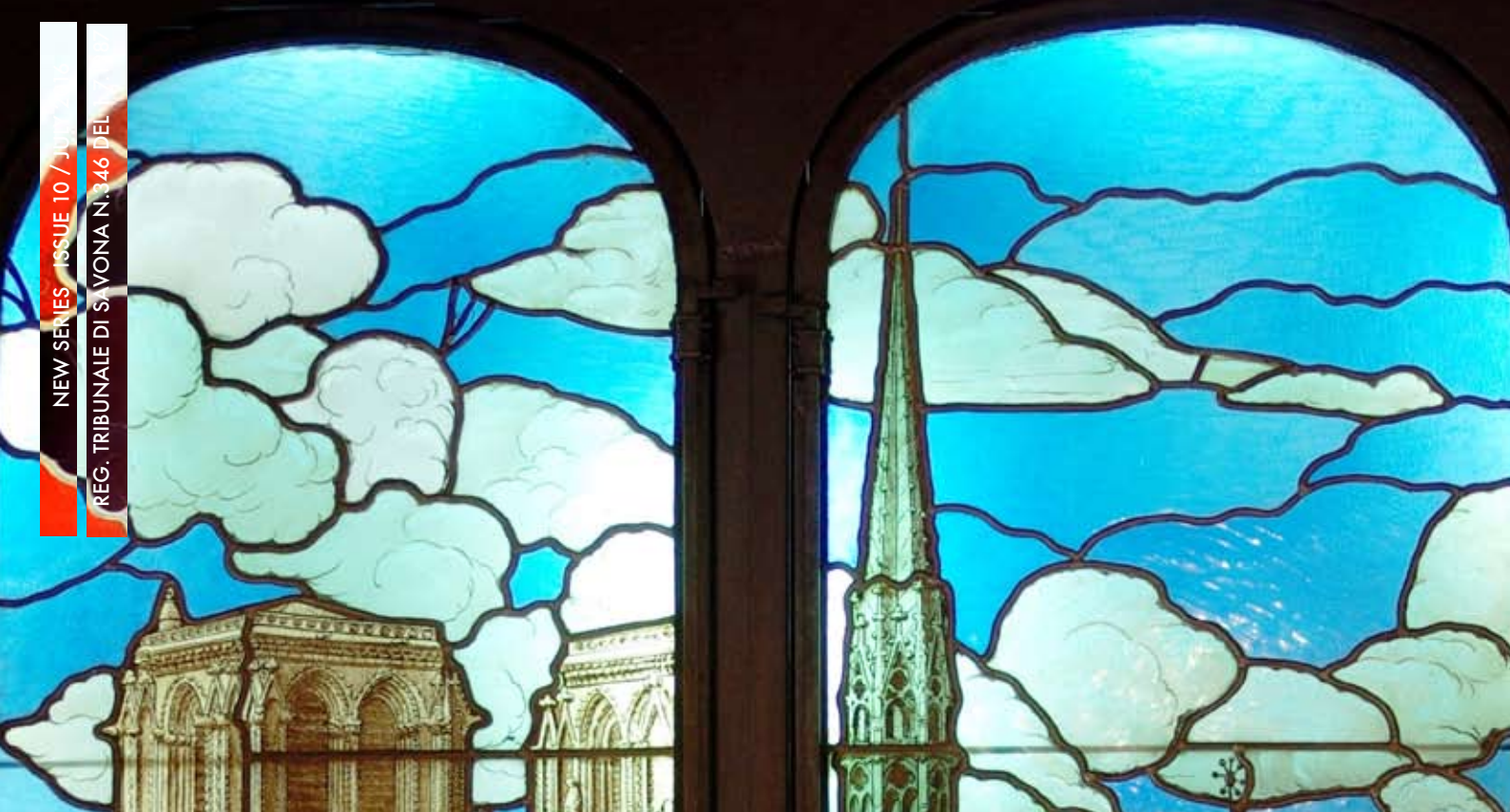


NEW SERIES ISSUE 10 / 3

REG. TRIBUNALE DI SAVONA N. 346 DEL



ALTE VITRIE

L'ARTE DEL VETRO E DINTORNI





The *presse papier*, his origin and history, are presented by two significant collectors, who, over the years, has collected these fascinating creations, which encapsulate an incredible microcosm, made from glass factories worldwide. Added to this, we submit a quick overview on the Altare's production of these fascinating objects.

The glass production by Fulvio Bianconi is presented in the fourth volume, reviewed here, published on the occasion of the exhibition "Le stanze del vetro" ("The glass rooms") at the Cini Foundation in Venice. Finally, in the section devoted to museums, we give space for the first time to a foreign collection: it is a private collection, based in Malaga and rich of more than 3000 pieces, which tells the history of glass and its techniques.

This issue comes simultaneously with "Altare Glass Fest", the event promoted by the Museum of Glass of Altare, now in its fifth edition. This year in July and August the museum hosts Italian and foreign glassmakers in Villa Rosa's hot shop, showing their inexhaustible creativity to the public.

Editorial staff

THE GLASS

PAPERWIGHT:

ORIGINS

The paperweight is constituted by a ball of glass or crystal, moulded into a diverse range of shapes and assuming highly variable sizes and weights. It can incorporate any kind of composition through the application of techniques defined as "multicoloured", "by lamp" and "with sulphur", used either separately or in combination.

An extreme eclecticism allowing the craftsman to infuse into the glass everything that his imagination suggests to him and that his technical skill permits has been shown to be one of the main and unique characteristics of the paperweight.

But where and when the paperweight is born?

Does it have certain and acknowledged origins?

The paperweight was officially born during the International Exhibition of Vienna (Österreichische Gewerbe-Ausstellung) held in 1845, where Venetian Pietro Bigaglia presented for the first time a number of his "multicoloured" rounded paperweights.

They were dated and marked as being "...made of transparent glass containing numerous pen holder sections (made by the Franchini Family, editor's note) arranged in such a way as to simulate a flowerbed".

Since then, the production of paperweights in Europe, especially France, and soon afterwards in the Glass Factories of the USA, enjoyed so much success in terms of quantity and quality of craftsmanship that the period from 1845 to 1860 is justifiably referred to as a "golden age". The date, place of birth and paternity of the paperweight would therefore seem to have been indisputably documented. In reality, however, as early as the end of the 15th century, M. A. Coccio, alias Sabellico, in his book entitled *De situ Venetiae urbis* published in 1495, wrote about a master glass-blower who for the first time in Murano "... had the thought to include in a ball of glass a host of flowers like those that bloom in spring meadows", using the ancient technique known as "glass mosaic" ("multicoloured").

In Murano, the production of "decorative glass balls" continued into the 16th and following centuries, although it remained only a sporadic and unplanned activity which was

not specifically documented. Robert G. Hall however, in his book *Old English Paperweights* (1998, Schiffer Publishing Ltd.) reports with specific images that J. Kilner, having opened a glasshouse in 1829 for the commercial production of green glass bottles and jars in Wakefield (Yorkshire, UK), immediately began producing paperweights and doorstops with the same material, including the balls of air and/or flowers (morning glory) stylised into silver leaves and sometimes featuring sections coloured in pink and/or blue (rarely even in yellow). They were distributed as free gifts for advertising purposes.

The revelation that as early as the 15th century, and probably also in those that followed, "multicoloured" paperweights were being made, the information relayed by R.G. Hall that document English manufacture of paperweights from 1829 and the observation that immediately after the exhibition in Vienna in 1845, paperweights appeared on the market of such high artistic and technical quality (especially of French manufacture) that they could not have been early attempts, but rather the fruit of experience acquired and perfected over time, all shed serious doubt on the establishment of a date, place of birth and paternity of paperweights.

Whatever the truth of the matter, P. Bigaglia deserves credit for having been able to identify and officially present the paperweight to the public during the course



opposite page, above:
paperweight "end of the day" by P.
Bigaglia, dated 1845 on a murrina

opposite page, below:
paperweight by J. Kilner preceding
1845

side:
French paperweights 1845-50 from
the french manufactures of Saint
Louis, Baccarat and Clichy



of an international exhibition, unequivocally highlighting their sector specific and distinctive role in the world of glass making, worthy of inclusion due to the eclectic beauty and complexity of such products. In our opinion, despite evidence to the contrary, 1845 should therefore be maintained by right as the official date when glass paperweights were "given to the world", and Pietro Bigaglia must be considered, if not the inventor, their worthy and legitimate "father-godfather".

**Franco M. Bobbio Pallavicini -
Diego Pinasco**

Immagini: Studio Fotografico "Giudicianni & Biffi",
Via G. Matteotti, 22 - Mezzago (MB)

THE PAPERWIGHT IN THE ARTISTIC GLASS MAKING TRADITION OF ALTARE

Despite the fact that there does not appear to have been a systematic and regular production of paperweights at the Società Artistico Vetraria of Altare, the paperweight has carved out its own small but significant niche in the world

of glass making. Designed and produced mainly outside company premises, this fanciful rounded object was manufactured by master glass-blowers for special occasions such as weddings. The main purpose of the paperweight was that of a gift, a kind of souvenir given by individual glass-blowers or the Società Artistico Vetraria itself. Altare, which has always welcomed visitors, was accustomed to receiving figures of varying degrees of influence, attracted by the artistic fervour of the little town. And it was on these very occasions that the paperweight came into its own as a show of courtesy, and a personalised inscription was not uncommon.

The execution of the paperweight was entrusted to the individual skill of the craftsman, who could allow his imagination to run wild with a whole range of colours and shapes: the result was a selection of rather heavy objects which were set with coloured motifs, bubbles, plates made from refractory material, lettering applied with special glass-compatible paints and depictions of small animals. In order to make a paperweight, the glass-blower would extract from the furnace a portion of glass that would then be "flattened" until it became a disc of around 6 to 7 cm in diameter. It was on this flat and sufficiently hot

surface that colours, pieces of refractory material, personalised inscriptions and a whole variety of decorations could be added. In the final stage, the material was immersed in glass which had been modelled and forcibly tightened at the blowpipe so that it could be detached more easily. Given that the object in question was somewhat heavy, the firing of the paperweight was rather arduous. For this reason, it was often placed in buckets full of ash and left to cool very slowly.

Martina Castellano

FULVIO BIANCONI

ALLA VENINI

curated by
**M. Barovier with
C. Sonogo
Skira, Milan 2015**

The journey undertaken by the Cini Foundation with the "Stanze del Vetro" ("Glass Rooms") in 2012 continues with a new exhibition which, as well as the fascinating and extensive exposition of more than 300 pieces presented in the west wing of the former Boarding School of San Giorgio Maggiore, provides us with

a volume of great historical and critical significance. This is a progression of the reconnaissance of Paolo Venini's truly unique and far-sighted activity, a man who was able to collaborate with designers, architects and artists armed with great innovative skills. He worked alongside them, and succeeded in giving them the right space and conditions to allow their inexhaustible creativity to emerge. This fourth event dedicated to Fulvio Bianconi accompanies the reader through that extremely colourful decade that was the 1950s, after having presented the work of Scarpa (2012), Martinuzzi (2013) and Buzzi (2014) in the previous editions. This volume also goes deeper into the research carried out by Marino Barovier with the collaboration of Carla Sonogo, taking advantage of the wealth of material held at the Venini Historical Archive as well as documentary sources from the period. Nevertheless, the most original aspect certainly lies in the transversal interpretation of Fulvio Bianconi's work. He moved from Venice to Milan in the mid-1930s and from there, on behalf of the firm "Ditta Gi.vi.emme." for whom he worked as a graphic designer, he returned to Venice in 1946 in order to design perfume bottles. There he began his collaboration with Venini.



Indeed, the relationships of Bianconi, graphic designer, caricaturist and illustrator, with postwar artistic culture are thus highlighted. He was a friend of Munari and Fontana, who he met in the galleries of Carlo Cardazzo in Milan and Venice. He intercepted the most avant-garde experiences of the time and as a result he was able to organise personal exhibitions in both the cities in which he operated. And if Bianconi ever openly adhered to artistic movements, he was nevertheless a sensitive observer of how much experimentation was being done. As such, Carla Sonego's essay underlines, thanks in part to rich documentary sources, relationships with Munari's *Useless Machines* and with Fontana, who formulated the Manifesto of Spatialism. Munari and Bianconi exhibited together in an exposition in Venice at the Cavallino in December 1949, while Fontana had already presented *Wood's Spatial Environment in Black Light* at Milan's "Galleria del Naviglio" at the beginning of that year. Cristina Beltrami's essay dedicated to Bianconi as illustrator highlights the master's ability to see reality through ironic eyes, often light-hearted but always acute. His investigative abilities can

numerous collections, from the Masks of the Commedia dell'Arte to the Moors, from the Musicians to the Costumes of the various regions as well as period costumes, from the Months to the African figurines, from Tiepolo to the Grotesque. Bianconi only worked at Venini for a decade, from 1947 to 1957. This short period was however characterised by a prolific output, of which the volume provides a rich and comprehensive catalogue. The pieces are arranged in chronological order within a typological subdivision. Each group, preceded by full-page colour images, presents a reproduction of the pieces on display, the preparatory sketches from his sketchbook, signed black by the furnace, but also from other company catalogues, period photos referring to exhibitions and/or publications in contemporary magazines as well as the technical profile completed by the bibliography. In such a way it is possible to follow his creative process as well as relive the climate of the time and understand the circumstances in which these extraordinary artefacts, some limited editions and others one-off pieces, were presented.

Mariateresa Chirico

MUSEO DEL VIDRIO Y CRISTAL Malaga, Spagna

The museum is located in a carefully restored 18th century house, where we can browse through the history of humanity by means of the glass. It is a private collection of more than 3.000 pieces of glass of different epochs, accompanied by pictures, furniture, and decorative objects in a setting that corresponds to each historical period represented, immersing us in an environment close to the domestic context of the era. It is a museum of decorative arts that aims not only to contribute to the rehabilitation of the old craftsman's neighborhood of San Felipe Neri, but also to be a reference centre for artisans' techniques of the past, many of them lost, unknown or forgotten.

Gonzalo Fernández-Prieto
Director
Museo del Vidrio y Cristal

below, left: seating room of the 18th century, Museo del Vidrio y Cristal, Malaga, Spain

below: Oinochoe, East Mediterranean, century VI-V B.C., Museo del Vidrio y Cristal, Malaga, Spain

Cameo vase, Thomas Webb, England, 19th century, Museo del Vidrio y Cristal, Malaga, Spain

Drunken vase, Bricklayer, Whitefriars, England, 1967, Museo del Vidrio y Cristal, Malaga, Spain



Cover: Glass window, Violett Le Duc, 1800, Museo del Vidrio y Cristal, Malaga, Spain

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