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ALTE VITRIE

L'ARTE DEL VETRO E DINTORNI





GLASS JEWELS FROM THE LATE 16th CENTURY

**A finding from
Bergamo at the
former Church of
St. Augustine**

Archaeological research never ceases to amaze us, even in the prosaic cities of Lombardy which for centuries we presumed to know almost everything about. And so it was in the excavations which took place between 2008 and 2010 at the former Church of St. Augustine in Bergamo. The work was directed by Maria Fortunati, of the Archaeological Authority of Lombardy, during restoration work on the building destined to become the main hall of the city's university. During the investigations, 185 tombs of various types were unearthed, belonging to seven burial periods ranging from the late medieval period to the 18th century. Also found were the foundations of an earlier, older church which until then had been unknown, as well

as the exterior walls of the 14th century church and other post-medieval structures. Such findings are very interesting from a historical point of view, but were certainly not unexpected. The surprise, and one could say the gem of these excavations, was to be found in a late 16th-century tomb, and it is a gem of particular importance for scholars of ancient glass!

Indeed, inside Tomb 94, various remains of female clothing accessories and ornaments were discovered, albeit it in a poor state of preservation. The textile remains were mainly silk and had been conserved thanks to mineralisation upon contact with metallic elements. They belong to very fine fabrics with discontinuous weaving, perhaps indicative of a veil, as well as to other heavier fabrics and simple cloths.

Metallic thread and silk had been used to create five-petalled flowers and garlands to adorn the accessories or the headdress of the deceased. The most surprising objects, however, were blown glass beads which probably once formed a necklace and little glass rings linked together in a chain.

The beads were blown with extremely fine violet, almost black, glass and decorated with colourless tops lined with twisted gold leaf and speckled with white opaque glass. Five lobes, each one with a white

point on the inside, encircle the holes in the beads. Along the circumference, two threads interweave and form a chain with a white point inside each ring. The same motif also decorates a teardrop pendant and a number of beads of a lighter colour. Little dark marbles separate the decorated beads.

The second piece of glass jewellery is a multiple chain, preserved with a total length of around 90 cm and composed of thin rings with a diameter of 1 cm, obtained from blue and white glass tubes which had been bent and heat sealed with a drop of colourless glass. All these objects were produced using a technique called lampworking, through the manipulation of either hollow or solid glass bars softened with an air-directed flame.

The most significant comparison for these objects is provided by the glass jewellery rosary crowns with blown glass beads preserved in the collection of Archduke Ferdinand II of Austria in the Kunstkammer of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. Habsburg Austria in the 16th century was in fact one of the most important centres for the importation of elegant Venetian glassware, and a passion for luxury glassware pushed Ferdinand II to commission the construction, in the grounds of Ambras Castle in Innsbruck, of a glass-works for the exclusive use of the court. The facility remained operative from 1570 to 1591, and the presence of glass-blowers from Murano, some of them experts in "necklaces of golden glass", is well documented. In Tyrol in 1534, the Hall glass-works was also in operation, created thanks to expert glass blowers who had immigrated from Altare.

Marina Uboldi

National Italian AIHV Committee



This edition, which concludes our fifth year of online publication, features a wide variety of interesting articles: glass ornaments retrieved from a sixteenth-century grave near Bergamo, which came to light during restoration work in the former church of Sant'Agostino; glass windows designed and produced by pupils from Savona's Liceo Artistico and which adorn the children's accident and emergency department at the city's hospital. Finally, the Dusseldorf Glass Museum is featured, with a rich collection ranging from medieval glassware to contemporary art.

The Editorial Staff



opposite page:
Bergamo, Ex Church of St.
Augustine, beads in blown
glass discovered in Tomb 94,
assembled hypothetically in order
of deterioration after restoration

side and below:
glass windows for the children's
Accident and Emergency
Department, S.Paolo Hospital,
Savona, 2017

GLASS WINDOWS FOR THE CHILDREN'S ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT AT SAVONA'S S.PAOLO HOSPITAL

The work of Design Class 5 from the "Chiabrera-Martini" Institute's artistic high school in Savona was led by Prof. M.Cristina Salvadori, with the supervision of architect Cesare Branchetti, head of the Technological Department of the Savonese health service. The project consisted of the design and creation of 45 coloured fused glass panels to be inserted into three metal frames of 180 x 100 cm in order to form the three central windows of the entrance hall of the children's Accident and Emergency department. After the initial preparatory meetings and inspections which took place in 2015, a contest was announced involving the students from the class in question. Then, having

chosen the reference sketches, 2016 was characterised by a range of preparatory activities, with trial runs in fused glass performed in the high school's well-equipped workshop. Since the 2009/10 academic year, following strong encouragement from Altare's ISVAV and MAV and with decisive and regular contributions over the years from the De Mari Foundation, the Savonese high school, led by prof. Alfonso Gargano, has gradually set up and equipped two areas for artistic glassworking, complementing the existing facilities for plaster working and ceramic firing. These workshops give the students an introduction to the basic principles and techniques of glassworking, such as grisaille, colour and glaze painting, the cutting and assembly of lead glass and the "Tiffany" technique, as well as glass fusion, flat or with pleats, wheel engraving and, perhaps in the near future, casting. The 45 sheets of glass were sized in order to allow the firing of three elements in each batch, and the range of colours and consistencies was reduced slightly and discretely. According to Elisa Renesto, the student who created the winning design, the finished product above all had to highlight transparency. So, after several colour and consistency tests which

preceded the definitive choices (blue, light and dark aquamarine, transparent yellow), it was decided to limit the many possible effects typical of glass fusion firing to those reflections given by the small bubbles which form between two panels placed one on top of the other following the partial release of gases of certain colouring substances. Also carried out was a simple addition of opaque and opaline clear glass granules which strengthened certain formal and compositional effects. The glass used was purchased from the Effetre company of Murano. The various coloured incisions were placed on panels of transparent crystal measured on cardboard cutouts corresponding to the cavities of the metallic frames.

The coloured glass pieces were cut and assembled by a small team of students who accompanied Elisa in her long task of realising the design. Firing was performed in the Moretti oven owned by the high school itself. Its mounting onto the frame, with the addition on the inside edges of a slender neoprene support and a final welded metal plaque, was carried out by Gio.Vanni s.n.c. of Albissola Marina, who also took care of its final installation. The process was concluded in late May 2017.

Massimo Trogu
Project coordinator





GLASMUSEUM HENTRICH

KUNSTPALACE MUSEUM

Düsseldorf Germany

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ore than three millenia of glass history can be explored at the Glasmuseum Hentrich, a collection within the Museum Kunstpalast in Dusseldorf, Germany. Highlights from almost all of the major glass historical epochs and regions, from Egyptian ear pendants to the works of contemporary artists, are being presented on 1,300 m² of permanent exhibition space. About 3,000 glass objects—roughly a quarter of the entire collection—are on permanent view. The museum’s collections of medieval glass (both Islamic and Western) and of glass from the Art Nouveau period are particularly strong, due to the generous loans and donations from mecenates such as Karl Amendt, Gerda Koepff, and, above all, from the Dusseldorf architect Helmut Hentrich (1905–2001). Glass from the Renaissance and Baroque periods is represented by a relatively small, but highly distinguished group of objects. While it is not possible to attribute anything from the

collection firmly to Altare, there is reason to believe that some of the vessels *à la façon de Venise* might have an Altarist background.

*Dedo von Kerssenbrock-Krosigk
Glasmuseum Hentrich*

For further information
<http://www.smkp.de/en/collection/collection-strengths/glasmuseum-hentrich/>

*below:
covered vase, François Eugène Rousseau or Ernest Léveillé for Appert Frères, Clichy, about 1888–1890, bequest of Gerda Koepff*

bowl, reputedly found in Mainz, late 13th or early 14th century

Foto: Studio Fuis, Colonia



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Cover:
chain with small glass rings,
after restoration work carried out by F. Caillaud

