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ALTE VITRIE

L'ARTE DEL VETRO E DINTORNI



This edition begins yet another year of "Alte Vitrie", which we hope will increasingly become a point of reference for all those who, for various reasons, appreciate glass and wish to learn more about its history, uses, techniques and master craftsmen.

So we proceed then with our reconnaissance of glassware collections in museums around the world: the museum of contemporary art in Alcorcón near Madrid supports and promotes the latest research that Spanish and foreign artists are undertaking into applications of this material. The presentation at the Officina Profumo Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella in Florence takes us into a laboratory which has been operating ever since the 17th century and which is annexed to the monastery of the Dominican Friars. Its stills and ampoules helped create medications and scented substances much appreciated by the Medici family. The



current reorganisation and classification of this precious cultural heritage is helping to avoid its dispersion and allows it to be studied in detail. Finally, this issue features the presentation of a new enlightening study in order to promote the art nouveau decorations at Villa Rosa, home of the Altare Glassware Museum. The name, "Levata", refers to the traditional method of glass-blowing in a furnace.

The editorial staff

GLASS CONTAINERS AT THE OFFICINA PROFUMO FARMACEUTICA OF SANTA MARIA NOVELLA IN FLORENCE

The activities of the pharmacy annexed to the Dominican monastery Santa Maria Novella in Florence began in 1612. This date marked the opening of the spicery, although it had already been documented at the beginning of the 13th century when the Dominican monks settled in Florence, serving a wider public and not limited to the monastery's infirmary. The extensive vegetable garden which surrounded the church was used for the cultivation of medicinal herbs which were then dried, infused and pulverised. As early as the middle of the 15th century, the complex procedures of distilling "herbs and roses" were being experimented with, since scented substances were useful for avoiding the spread of epidemic diseases. From the first half of the 16th century, the purchase of equipment and tools in ceramics and glass increased: bottles, cylindrical vases, ampoules, funnels and "carafes" were produced by a furnace located in Pontorme, a locality between Empoli and Montelupo Fiorentino.



In order to gather the liquid produced by distillation, long-necked ampoules with a curved spout were used. The pharmacy preserves a rare example around 50 cm high, produced with light green free-blown glass in order to be able to see the quantity, consistency and any alterations in the liquid, and also any damage produced by acidity or limescale deposits. The ampoule dates back to the first half of the 17th century when the spicery, involved in constant experimentation with medicinal remedies, was appointed "Foundry of His Royal Highness" by the Grand Duke Ferdinando II de' Medici. The laboratory preserves eight flasks stuffed with straw from the 17th century, which are what has remained from a wider set of equipment

documented by archive sources and which were commonly used containers in spiceries of the time: made from free-blown light green glass, with a rounded protruding rim, a short cylindrical neck, a spherical body and a convex bottom. The straw lining, more precisely marsh grasses dried and bleached in the sun, is composed of woven strings which form three lines of diamonds in the upper part while the base is reinforced in order to provide greater stability. The arrangement of the straw, unlike that of similar containers used for wine, allowed the liquid inside to be checked: oily, in the form of a syrup, and scented water. Closure was achieved by a tuft of straw or a hood of greaseproof paper held on with string.

Silvia Ciappi

LEVATA.

A NEW LIGHTING SYSTEM IN THE ROOMS OF MAV

On the occasion of the restoration of Palazzo del Monte di Pietà, transformed into the Ceramics Museum of Savona, we were lucky enough to get to know and collaborate with the Master Glassmakers of the Altare Institute of Glass and the Art of Glassmaking. That fascinating experience led to the creation of the lighting for the museum's main staircase. Coloured blown glass letters, in wooden formwork, joined and lit up in order to form a number of "luminous" words inherent to the world of ceramics. As often happens, fruitful collaborations tend not to peter out, and so it was that not long afterwards the institute involved us in a project aimed at

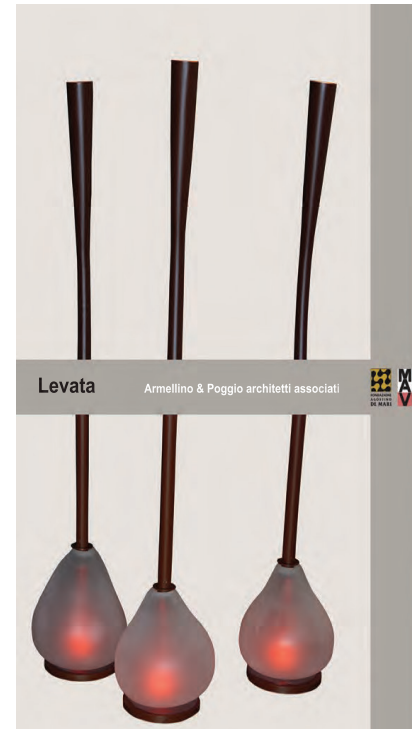
resolving certain lighting problems in the exhibition halls of the Museum of the Art of Glassmaking, housed in the refined walls of Villa Rosa in Altare. The art nouveau environment of the villa was transformed by restoration into museum space. Inside, distinctive display cabinets equipped with their own lighting now contain the prestigious permanent collection. Light is concentrated in order to enhance the glass reflections of the objects on display, while painted and relief floral decorations on the walls and on the vault ceilings in the rooms do not emerge as they should. The aim therefore is to add value, through light, to the architectural painting of the container, while leaving the exposition with its primary role of "content". The design process, illustrated by the preparatory drawings, starts from the idea of a standing lamp, eliminating from the outset any invasive actions requiring hooks to be attached to walls of considerable artistic value. The idea of an explicit reference to the work of the

Master Glassmaker begins to take shape. A blowpipe becomes the stem and a mass of white-hot glass becomes the base of the lamp. The lamp therefore takes its name from the mass of molten glass that the glassmaker removes from the furnace with the blowpipe: "Levata", an Italian word referring to something which is "lifted" or "raised". The blown glass base, with the aid of internal LEDs, recalls the shape and the colour of this "levata", while the blowpipe, through which the glassblower gives form to his work, becomes a stem and a source of light directed upwards, lighting up the elegant art nouveau interior.

Massimo Armellino
Armellino & Poggio
Associated Architects

opposite page:
ampoule with a long neck, first
half of the 17th Century, Officina
Profumo Farmaceutica of Santa
Maria Novella, Florence

below:
rendering and project of "Levata",
2016, Armellino & Poggio
Associated Architects





MAVA. CONTEMPORARY GLASS ART MUSEUM Alcorcón, Madrid Spain



MAVA is a local Contemporary Glass Art Museum with works of art from artists all around the world that are made completely or partly with glass.

The Museum opened its doors to the public in 1997 and is housed in the Castle of San José de Valderas, a 1917 civil construction projected by the architect Luis Sainz de los Terreros which was commissioned by the Marquises of Valderas.

MAVA's creation was an original idea of the glass sculptor Javier Gómez who offered the project and his collaboration to Alcorcón's Town Hall. With the foundation of the MAVA, Alcorcón has become an international benchmark of contemporary glass art,

not only because it is the only museum of its kind in Spain, but especially thanks to the quality of its collection and its rigorous path throughout these years. MAVA's collection is formed by a set of representative works of Studio Glass, New Glass and Glass Contemporary Art. The assemblage with which the MAVA was founded in 1997 consisted of 104 works from two sources. On one side 60 pieces were donated from her private collection by Mrs. Takako Sano and, on the other, we had donations made by artists' own works, promoted by Javier Gomez, who gave 47 pieces. Takako Sano's collection had been assembled with care and attention by its owner –curator of the Glass Now event in Japan – it is, in number and quality, a first grade witness to the Studio Glass development worldwide. Meanwhile, the pieces provided by Javier Gomez, were also of great quality and variety in their technical and international origin. Among the major works of this initial collection, we highlight those that connect with the origins of the



Studio Glass Movement created by American Harvey Littleton in 1962, like for example the works of Richard Marquis, Marvin Liposvky, Dale Chiuly or German Erwin Eisch; and also those of the Spanish pioneers who used glass in their works, as Joaquín Esteban Torres, Pedro Garcia, Kesawa, Pere Ignasi Bisquera or the very same Javier Gómez. MAVA's collection that actually counts with 178 artworks is a clear representation of the artistic trends of contemporary glass art of the last 50 years as the pieces it includes are of quality, techniques and their authors come from more than 30 different countries.

María Luisa Martínez García
Director of MAVA



above:

Exhibition in the MAVA rooms

Marvin Lipofsky, Otaru Series 12, 1987

Javier Gómez, Horizonte, 1988

side:

Castle of San José de Valderas, home of the MAVA

Editorial staff:
Mariateresa Chirico
Matteo Fochessati
Giulia Musso

Istituto per lo Studio del
Vetro e dell'Arte Vetraria
Piazza del Consolato, 4
17041 Altare (SV) - Italy
Tel +39019584734
info@museodelvetro.org
www.museodelvetro.org



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support of
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Cover:

Stuffed flask, 17th century,
Officina Profumo
Farmaceutica of Santa Maria
Novella, Florence

