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# ALTE VITRIE

L'ARTE DEL VETRO E DINTORNI







ERIKA LA CECILIA – CURATOR OF THE ALTARE MUSEUM OF THE ART OF GLASSMAKING

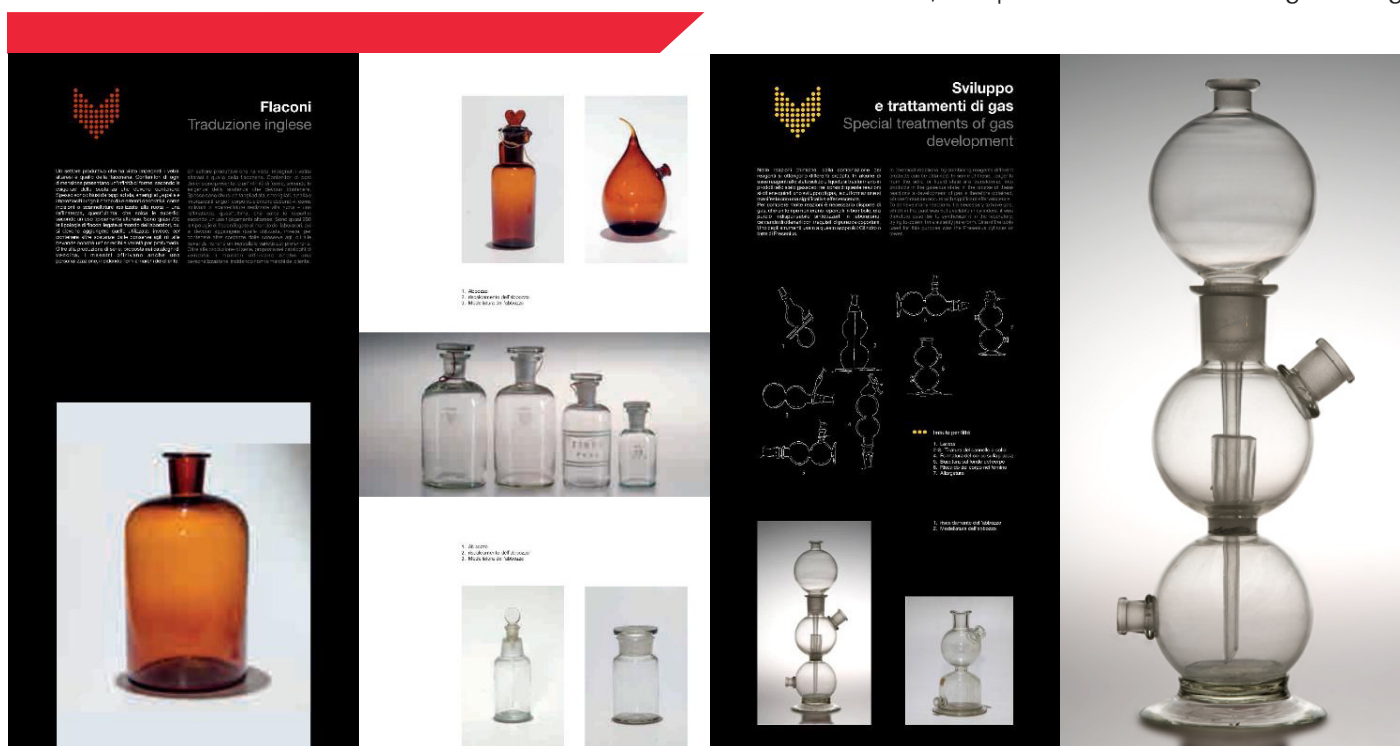
## THE MANY FACES OF 2019 AT THE ALTARE MUSEUM OF THE ART OF GLASSMAKING

**The year 2019** saw the Altare Institute for the Study of Glass and the Art of Glassmaking (I.S.V.A.V.) busy in the organisation and promotion of a wide range of events embracing a variety of sectors, from the ancient art of glassblowing to the most revolutionary of designs, from Altare's artistic

traditions to the most innovative forms of expression from across the ocean. The fulcrum of these activities was Villa Rosa, a splendid Liberty-style building and headquarters of the Altare Museum of the Art of Glassmaking. The Villa, with a proud history as a noble residence, yet again confirmed its status as a place in which to share beauty and knowledge.



Its rooms were restored during the course of 2019 thanks to a project entitled “Glass and Chemistry”, which was implemented in 2017 and 2018 with the support of the San Paolo Company within the scope of the 2017 edition of the “Places of Culture” call for tender, and the contribution of Quidam Srl. This research (edited by Mariateresa Chirico and Alberto Saroldi, with the collaboration of Prof. Paolo Ferloni from the Department of Chemistry of the University of Pavia -supervision of the drafting of scientific texts -, of Augusto Roascio – identification of around 700 artifacts-, of Fabrizio Borsa of DICAR, Department of Civil Engineering



and Architecture at the University of Pavia – technical drawings - , and of Lino Genzano – photographic material-) aimed to promote the objects produced by the S.A.V. in its chemistry and pharmaceutical department. The new permanent exhibition, set up by Marco Ciarlo Associati, was inaugurated on Saturday March 30th, offering visitors the chance to understand for the first time the technical secrets behind a multitude of items designed for laboratories and hospitals. Thanks to the high quality of its products, some of which were produced with the aid of moulds, S.A.V. conquered significant sectors of the Italian market and, after the second world war, abroad. As part of the inauguration, ISVAV presented the book “The Magic of Chemistry in Altare’s Glasswork”, published by Franco Cosimo Panini for the series “How it is born. A journey for those curious to discover

the world which surrounds them”. The “Glass and Chemistry” project also enjoyed a second precious moment in the diffusion of historical, artistic and scientific knowledge, constituted by a Study Day entitled “Glass for scientific use. Preservation and promotion of a little-known heritage”, held on Saturday June 22nd 2019 in Villa Rosa (organised in collaboration with the Italian National Committee of the AIHV - Association Internationale pour l’Histoire du Verre). The conference was graced with interventions by eminent scholars of some of Italy’s most important universities, bringing prestige to the commitment shown by ISVAV. The Study Day was concluded by a presentation of the catalogue “Glass for laboratories and chemists. The production of SAV in Altare”, edited by Mariateresa Chirico and Alberto Saroldi.



Another crucial event for keeping the age-old tradition of glassblowing alive is the “Altare Glass Fest”, a festival which every year invites glass-blowers of national and international renown to work in the furnace of Villa Rosa, providing visitors with a unique experience. The AGF2019 (VIII edition, from April 26th to November 17th) saw the participation of master craftsmen representing a wide range of glass making traditions: Elio Bormioli (Altare), Elena Rosso (originally from Savona, she developed her skills in Altare and Murano), Reno Bardella, Matteo Seguso, Paolo Crepax (Murano), Jean-Marie Bertaina, Nicolas Laty, Antoine Pierini and Jerome Chion (Biot, France). As in every edition, there was

a vast selection of courses of various glassmaking techniques, as well as educational workshops for children and teenagers.

During the event, time was also given to other activities of social interaction and cultural reflection: culinary evenings (“GustAltare”, “Glass and Wild Boar”, July 20th and 26th;

“GardenFood”, September 7th), literary evenings (“Liguria of the Arts. The Spectacle of Beauty”, August 4th; “Florette Morand Capasso and her Poetry”, October 5th), theme evening (“India meets Altare and its Glassmaking Art”, July 28th), creative afternoons dedicated to children (FAMU – National Family at the Museum Day, October 13th).



Also, May 31st saw the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the twinning arrangement between Altare and San Carlos, and the 70th anniversary of the foundation of the Cristalería San Carlos (Santa Fe), still run by descendants of glassmakers from Altare to this day. On that occasion, the museum hosted the event “Migration Stories”, with the presentation of an educational project entitled “Hermanos de Corazon”, in which the primary schools of Altare, Carcare and San Carlos all participated. Finally, on November 17th, the traditional Fair of St. Martin was held, celebrating the beginning of the the glassmakers’ activity. Historically, glass working took place from St. Martin’s Day (November 11th) to St. John’s Day (June 24th). During the remaining months, the furnaces were supplied with wood, a fuel used at the time to melt the glass, as well as other raw materials. The lighting of the furnaces was an authentic ritual. The Museum of Altare celebrates this ritual every year with the presentation of “St. Martin’s Bottle”, a commemorative object that recalls the act of “bathing the square”, a convivial party which accompanied the beginning of the glassmaking season. Also worthy of note is the museum’s participation in the 2019 edition of “Golosaria” in Milan, an event which saw the presentation of the characteristic “amole”, measures for table wine produced by S.A.V.



## Fiera di San Martino

*oggetto commemorativo  
a ricordo della tradizionale accensione dei forni*



**RAGNARE LA PIAZZA**  
Il primo lavoro nella fornace, eseguito da un forte maschio, era la soffiatura di un grosso flauto che il padrone della fornace riempiva di vino che veniva offerto insieme alla torta di riso come rinfresco conviviale di inizio lavorazione.  
Questa tradizione era denominata “Ragnare la Piazza”.

**LA MESSA DEL FUOCO**

San Martino segnava l’inizio del lavoro dei vetrai nelle fornaci. Il parroco, accompagnato da due chierichetti vestiti da angeli, che portavano due ceri benedetti, seguito dai consoli e dai maestri vetrai, si recava nelle fornaci ad accendere il fuoco per la fusione del vetro. Questa cerimonia era detta “Messa del Fuoco”.



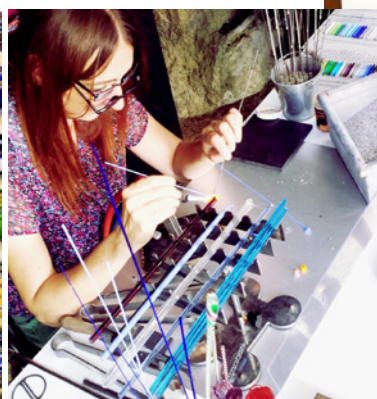




In 2019, like every year, the ISVAV Foundation was responsible for the organisation of a number of temporary exhibitions. Such projects crossed the frontiers of the world of glassmaking and offered the public an insight into a historical, anthropological and artistic heritage.



"The Royal Carabinieri in Villa Rosa. An Exhibition of Relics and Historical Uniforms", organised by the Mallare and Altare section of the National Carabinieri Association, and sponsored by the General Command of the Carabinieri Corps. The precious objects of the "Savoyard Collection", together with a number of historical documents, tell the story of some of the most significant moments in Italian history between 1814 and 1946. In order to enhance the appeal of the event, on the evening of June 30th there was the Concert of the Marching Band of the III "Lombardia" Carabinieri Regiment in the gardens of Villa Agar, just a stone's throw from the museum.



From August 14th to 25th, Villa Rosa hosted an exhibition entitled "Venetian Pearls, 500 Years of Trade with Africa. The Márcia de Castro and Guy Maurette Collection", organised by the Musée Itinerant de la Perle Ancienne en France. On display were more than 3,000 pearls produced in Venice and Murano over the last five centuries, accompanied by a selection of tools used in their manufacture. Known as "barter pearls", they constituted a trading currency during the triangular trade between Europe, Africa and the Americas from the European colonial period right up to the middle of the 20th century. June 29th saw the inauguration of the exhibition





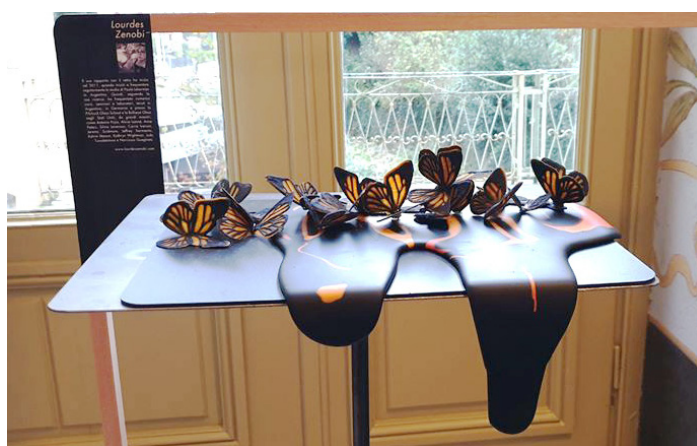


Finally, the three events that have become cornerstones of the annual ISVAV calendar: Altare Vetro Design, Altare Vetro Arte and Natale Sottovetro, exhibitions that confirm the role of the museum as the beating heart of a continuous dialogue between art, design and technological innovation. One of the leading figures in the ninth edition of Altare Vetro Design (from September 28th to November 3rd) was Elena Salmistraro, a Milanese designer who has been an ambassador for Italian design throughout the world since 2017, collaborating with many companies and galleries in the sector, such as Bosa, Alessi, Seletti, CC-Tapis, Nason & Moretti and Apple. For the Altare Museum, she created a series of objects which were produced at the Villa Rosa furnace by the French master Jean- Marie Bertaina. Inspired by the SAV collection, Elena conceived the “Bulle”, a work combining a search for the functionality, typical of Altare production, with her unique and extremely personal expressive strength.



The exhibition “Argentina Vidrio Arte” was held from from November 16th to February 2nd 2020 within the scope of the 9th edition of Altare Vetro Arte. The aim was to commemorate the TOVA (Glass Workers and Technicians of Altare) Group, which in 1949 emigrated to the Province of Santa Fe and founded four glassworks. Of these, the Cristalería di San Carlos is still operating and remains the finest example of craft crystal production in Argentina. The exhibition, coordinated by Alberto Saroldi and presented in collaboration with the Museo del Vidrio de la Cristalería San Carlos and the Altare and San Carlos Twinning Committee, with scientific support from the Museum Complex of Liguria, was designed in two sections: “Art and Industry”, curated by museologist Jesica Savino, with pieces by established

Argentinian artists (Marcela Cabutti, Gisela Cortese, Mauro Guzmán, Luis Rodriguez, Norma Rojas) and presented in collaboration with the support of master glassmakers from the Cristalería San Carlos; “Stories of Glass”, curated by artist Silvia Levenson, featuring the work of emerging Argentinian artists (Edgardo De Bortoli, Claudia Golzman, Natalia Gerschovich, Rita Neumann, Antonella Perrone, Paula Lekerman, Karina De Savio, Lourdes Zenobi, Alejandro Herrera Guiñazú) produced using fusion and glass paste techniques.

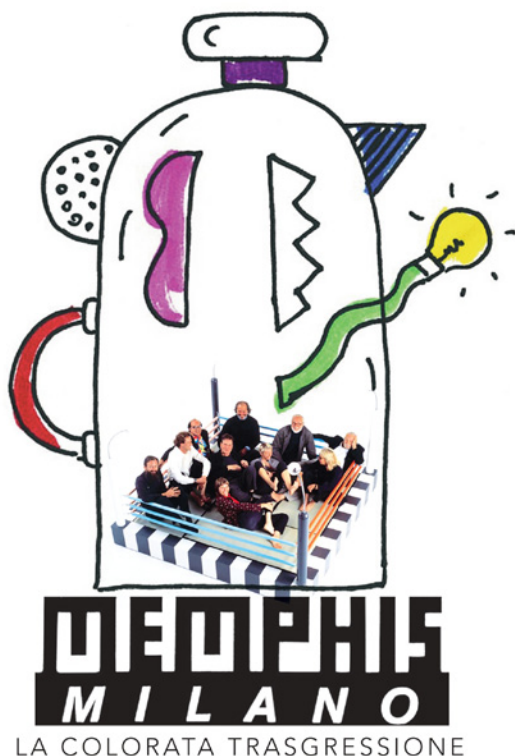




To close the year, there was the traditional Christmas event, "Natale Sottovetro". Last year was the 11th edition, and it was inaugurated on December 7th with the title "From Ettore Sottsass to Marco Zanini. Glass in the 1980s". The exhibition, curated by Carla Carieri, was dedicated to the Memphis Group, one of the most famous design collectives in the world, whose inspired glassware was put on display in the museum. Founded in Milan in 1980 by Ettore Sottsass, the group was formed after an informal meeting organised by the architect at his apartment in Milan on December 11th of that year, attended by Michele de Lucchi, Aldo Cibic, Marco Zanini and Martine Bedin. The name was inspired by a Bob Dylan song, Stuck Inside of Mobile, which they listened to several times during the evening and during which the needle got stuck on the phrase "with the Memphis Blues Again". The basic idea was to surpass the Modernism of the 1970s, characterised by essential and minimalist forms, in order to give life to a new concept of aesthetics, featuring bright colours and eccentric shapes. After that first meeting, the original group was joined by Alessandro Mendini, Andrea Branzi, Nathalie du Pasquier, Michael Graves and Shiro Kuramata.



In order to pay tribute to the revolutionary work of the collective, ISVAV has planned for 2020 a Study Day which will analyse its history. A continuous and interdisciplinary series of opportunities to reflect will feed the research of the Foundation in the hope of satisfying the curiosity and the needs of both the visitors and admirers of the museum as well as the wider community of scholars in scientific, historical and artistic subjects.





# HOW PEOPLE IN THE MIDDLE AGES LOOKED THROUGH WINDOWS



Chartres, Cattedrale  
Coro, particolare dopo il restauro

Leafing through an illustrated book, or wandering through the wide open spaces of a cathedral, stained glass windows generally have the effect of an illuminating epiphany piercing the darkness: colour emerges with overpowering vigour from the gloom, clearly distinguishing each window from the next, but above all stripping the formidable paintings of light of any relationship whatsoever with an architecture which feeds it and without which it would cease to exist. However, at one time, in the 13th century for example, this way of viewing such windows might not have been so customary. This is suggested by the restoration of the internal stained glass window of Chartres Cathedral which began in 2008: a subject of



Laon, Cattedrale  
Rosone del transetto Nord, Astronomia



much discussion, as it was not merely a cleaning process with the repairing of defects, but a complete reconstruction of the 13th century stained glass window, conducted in accordance with precise and rigorous philological principles (which is why the Bulletin Monumental dedicated two dossiers to it, in 2011 and in 2015). The result of the restoration is hugely impressive, because it completely renewed the image of a cathedral which, rebuilt after the fire in 1194 and completed, also with reference to its stained glass, before its consecration in 1260, we were used to seeing (and not only in its extensive bibliography) as grey as the stone that built it, all to the benefit of the brightly coloured glass. Enveloped in yellow and white which enhances its architectural features, the interior is now much

brighter and for this very reason our perception of the windows changes. They no longer appear as bolts of colour from the darkness, but as organic sections of a continuous flow of images, like a series of frescoes. They are, however, unified as much by the architecture as they are by the light that penetrates from the windows and bounces off the painted surfaces of the walls specifically in order to aid the diffusion of a more homogeneous and less contrasting tone, so as to create an evocative solidarity between the illustrated glassware and the structure which accommodates it. This encourages us to review our traditional perception of the window as a kind of "transparent painting" that exists in function of the dark, where contemporaries of these pieces saw them immersed in a soft light which generally eliminated the darkness and thus made the whole building transparent, as happens in the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris. Thanks to the combination of three windows and a stony polychromy, a cathedral could become an architecture of light. The case of Chartres suggests that we should reflect again on the role of glass in architecture: it is not merely an embellishment, but an integral and necessary part of a true multimedia construct, in which it is the light itself that favours the meeting of the arts.



Chartres, Cattedrale  
Navata centrale e controfacciata, durante il restauro

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