

ALTE VITRIE



L'ARTE DEL VETRO E DINTORNI



Bernardo Perrotto

Details

ceramic artist/glassmaker/potter; France

Life

1640-1709

Biography

Glassmaker; born in Altare; he obtained letters patent for the foundation of a glassworks in Orléans on July 13th 1662; Naturalised and ennobled in 1666; His letters patent were renewed in 1672. He died in 1709.

Jacques Bénard et Bernard Dragesco, Bernard Perrot et les verreries royales du Duché d'Orléans 1662-1754, Orléans: Amis du Musée d'Orléans, 1989.



THE GREAT 17th CENTURY GLASSMAKERS

Maria Brondi

The period spanning the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century saw the greatest movement of Italian glassmakers towards foreign lands. The most common destinations, for the glassmakers of Murano and Altare, were France, Holland, Belgium, Spain and England. Those from Altare were aided by the Statute of Corporation, which

allowed them to move away from their home in order to establish new glassworks.

Nevers

The glassmakers of Altare were called to Nevers by the Dukes of Mantova, who had become lords of the city of Nevers in 1565. Here, by will of the Dukes, the glassmakers of Altare founded a glassworks whose first master was Giacomo Saroldi. In 1574, he received letters patent from



Goblet with handle and goblet with lid

The Nevers glassworks had been subjected to the influx of baroque fashions, but it had largely remained faithful to the sixteenth-century techniques of *"reticello filigree"*, or *"a penna"*, a practice which can be recognised in balsamarii from the first century A.D., distinguished by opaque white lines on a grey background, composed with a bird's feather design.

A large part of Nevers glassware, variegated or spotted, shows a close similarity to the semi-precious stones chalcedony and jasper, which gave rise to the term *"vetro diasprato"* (*"jasper glass"*). Tableware is composed of goblets (mainly discovered during excavations) with the stem decorated *"à bouton"*, a *"anneau"*. A series of dark blue glass cruets are also part of the set, with milky glass decorations and handles as well as holy water dishes, water bottles, salt cellars, composters and vials in various colours featuring feather decorations.

Bernardo Perrotto

Born in Altare on February 29th 1640.

At the age of 19, he left his hometown and headed with his father to Liège, joining many other glassmakers from Altare in the Bonhomme glassworks. There he developed his skills in the imitation and reproduction of antique glassware. He subsequently moved to Nevers to work in the glassworks managed by his uncle, Giovanni Castellano, where he met Duke Philip of Orléans. It was from him that he received authorisation to found his own glassworks in

King Henry III to establish one glassworks in Lyon and another in Paris. Saroldi was replaced as chief of the Nevers factory by his nephew, Orazio Ponta, who increased production significantly and ordered the construction of the imposing glassworks building in *rue du Tartre*, today *rue 14 juillet*.

Seventeenth century glassware production was adapted to baroque tastes with new, sometimes superfluous forms. The production technique was predominantly based on that of the pincers with which the glassmaker would shape the glass, applying fillets, protuberances, ribs, rings and decorations in order to embellish the objects.



Vase with "bird feathers", water bottle, barrels

Orléans, a glassworks that would enjoy the protection of King Louis XIV.

Bernardo Perrotto's glassware, produced in the Royal Glassworks of Orléans, combined baroque elements with other original features which are clearly distinguished from the *"façon de Venise"*, still evident in those pieces manufactured in Nevers. Some of the best-known historians to have studied Perrotto include Le Vieil¹, J. Barrelet², P.M. Bondoio³ and L. Zecchin⁴, as well as more recent figures such as la Geyssant⁵. This great admirer of Perrotti describes: *"le plateau de la table de Louis XIV"*,

¹ P. Le Vieil 1774, *L'art de la peinture sur verre et de la vitrerie*, Paris.

² J. Barrelet 1953, *La Verrerie en France*, Réaumur, Paris; J. Barrelet 1964, *Porcelaine de verre en France. Des secrets de Bernard Perrot aux recherches scientifiques de Réaumur*, in *"Cahiers des arts du feu"*, Sèvres.

³ P.M. Bondoio 1932, *Les Verreries nivernaise et orléanaise au XVII siècle – Jean Castellano et Bernard Perrot* – Paris.

⁴ L. Zecchin, 1987, Bernardo Perrotto in *"Vetro e Vetrai di Murano"*, Venezia, vol I.

⁵ J Geyssant - E. Baumgartner, *La table de Louis XIV*, in *"Bernard Perrot 1640-1709, Paris, 2010, pp. 55-66.*

supported by five glazed columns, of which three are to be found in the Corning Museum of Glass (New York state, USA) and one in the British Museum in London.

The surface of the table is lined with 111 panels of glass cast onto copper. The various elements that constitute the decoration are the result of



Spice holder or candy holder

lampworking, carried out in such a way as to create a flat surface. Other decorations on the surface of the table are represented by entwined glass rods, composite mosaic and polyfloral glass squares. The piece has been held in a private collection since 1988. Among Perrotto's work, let us not forget the coloured glass for the rose window of the Cathedral of Sainte Croix d'Orléans, a crystal chandelier, inventoried in 1673 among the furniture of the crown⁶, a milk-white box, preserved at the Sèvres⁷ factory, and seven cameo medallions depicting King Louis XIV and Duke Philip of Orléans. However, over and above this output, as noteworthy as it is, completed by Perrotto in the field of glassware and glazing, there is a personal contribution of his with regard to glassworking techniques. It constitutes a veritable invention, for which he can be placed among the finest glassmakers of all time⁸. In the *"Histoire de l'Academie Royale des Sciences, tome II, Paris, 1933, p. 20*, one can read: April 2nd 1687- M. Perrot, chief of the *Verrerie Royale d'Orléans*, showed the company a new application of his art, namely the casting of the crystal and the glass into a pane, and rendering it hollow according to the cameo method. In such a way, any kind of

figure, ornament, weaponry or inscriptions can be depicted. Simple in principle, in its practical implementation the new method required the resolution of a series of considerable technical problems: the specific preparation of the casting surface with "foundry clay"⁹, the extraction of the melting pot from the furnace and its elevation, controlled pouring in order to restrict the formation of bubbles and warping to a minimum, and flattening with a metal roller. The "Letters Patent", awarded by King Louis XIV on September 25th 1688, authorised Perrotto to put all his inventions into practice, particularly the technique of casting the glass into panes of a shape that he deemed most suitable, or to make it hollow according to the cameo method. This invention was ruthlessly taken away from him by the *Manufacture Royale des Glaces*. The said glassworks had been founded in 1665 in Paris, in the district Saint Antoine, by Minister Colbert. Specialist workers, who had been attracted from Murano, had started to blow mirror crystals,



Diasper glass barrels

but they had not revealed their secrets. At the same time, another glassworks specialising in the production of mirror crystals, according to the Venetian method, was being established in Tourlaville in Normandy, managed by Richard de Nehou.

Around 1667, Richard de Nehou himself presented the achieved results: a twelve-inch

⁶ Cfr.: L. Zecchin, *Vetro e Vetrai di Murano, Venezia, 1987, vol. I.*

⁷ P.M. Bondonio, *Les Verreries nivernaise et orléanaise au XVII siècle – Jean Castellan et Bernard Perrot, Paris, 1932, p.89.*

⁸ L. Zecchin, *vol. I.*

⁹ The iron casting surface would be subsequently adopted by Luca di Nehou, using it to replace fire clay (L. Zecchin, in *Vetro e Vetrai di Murano, vol. I).*

piece of glass. Considering that one inch corresponds to 2.71 cm, the size of the sheets of glass must have been considered very small if it was only 32.52 cm tall.

Minister Colbert decided to establish the two glassworks, giving fresh government financial aid to the company. The news regarding Perrotto's unusual production method had begun to spread even before Perrotto had been able to present his discovery to the Academy of Science.

Indeed, in March 1687, the *Mercure Galant* published that "M. Perrot casts any type of glass into sheet glass, in any size or thickness he wants". This news reached Luca di Nehou, who had remained at the Tournellier Glassworks after the death of his uncle, Richard, who had passed away in 1675. His problem continued to be related to the size of the sheet glass. Therefore, having acquired all the information possible, he put together the technical elements necessary in order to begin working. However, although the



Figures in milk glass. The glassmakers of Altare provided the glaziers of Nevers with pipes of various lengths and diameters for lampworking

procedure was not so difficult for small casts, it was a completely different story for larger ones. The difficulty lay in manoeuvring a greater mass of glass and in the surface of the casting table which, being made of fire clay, would sometimes crack¹⁰. Production waste began to accumulate and weigh upon the business's investors. In order to reduce running costs, manufacturing was transferred to Picardy, on the ruins of Saint Gobain castle, and the new company was opened in the name of a figurehead, François Plastrier. On May 1st 1695, the glassworks received Letters Patent for the duration of thirty years in order to produce mirror panes of any height and width.

As the new patents came into effect, the Plastrier company wasted no time. On November 5th 1695, it ordered the impoundment of all Perrotto's manufacturing equipment and all the plate glass produced in his workshop. The native of Altare presented his letters patent of December 7th 1668, the licence from the Duke

of September 28th 1671, the patent of February 28th 1672 and those of September 25th 1688, but it was all in vain.

The battle initiated by Colbert in 1665 for the introduction of the mirror industry to France was emphatically won. Perrotto's objection was rejected by the State Council. Through a deliberation dated March 10th 1696 our glassmaker was forbidden from manufacturing plate glass of any size, under penalty of impoundment and payment of a 3,000-tornesel fine for any infringement.

The Plastrier company gave him a lifetime pension of 500 lire per year, raised to 800 by a ruling dated October 23rd 1702. Bernardo Perrotto died on November 10th 1709.

His discovery was not acknowledged for more than two centuries. Ownership of the method was attributed to Luca de Nehou. It was only around 1880, thanks to the endeavours of two French historians and researchers, Édouard Garnier¹¹ and Henry Havart¹², that M. Perrot,

¹⁰ H. De Blancourt, *L'art de la Verrerie*, Paris, 1697.

¹¹ E. Garnier, *Histoire de la Verrerie et de l'émaillerie*, Tours, 1886, pp. 168-170.

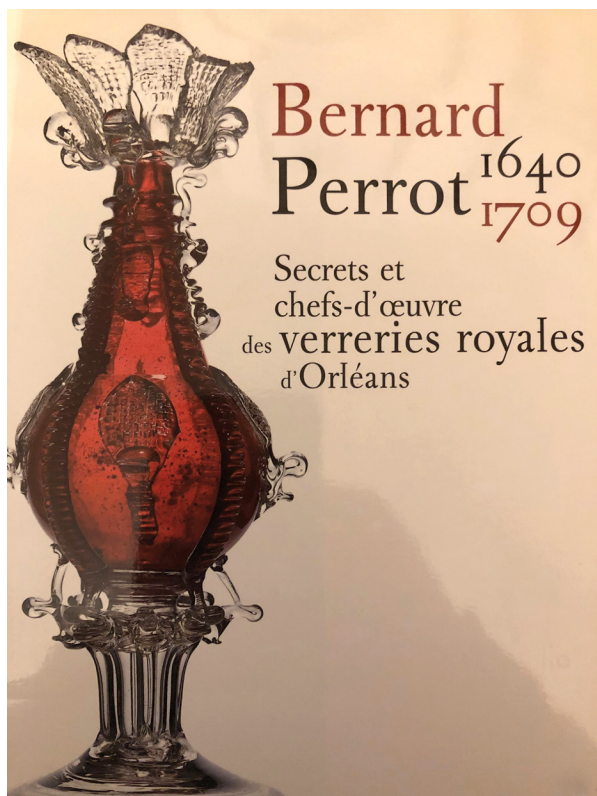
¹² H. Havard, *Dictionnaire de l'ameublement et de la décoration. Depuis le XIII siècle jusqu'à nos jours*, Paris, 1894, tomo IV.

Director of the Orléans Glassworks, was credited as the exclusive inventor of the method. Later, it became apparent that the creator of the said invention, who Havart himself had affirmed as eminently French, was in fact Italian. For his perennial redemption and recognition, on the three hundredth anniversary of his death, on a date a little after November 10th 1709, more precisely May 2010, the French Ministry of Culture, in collaboration with the Municipality of Grenoble, and together with the Archaeological and Historical Association of Orléans and the GenVerre Institute, promoted by a magnificent exhibition of Perrotto's work, lent by the Corning Museum of Glass (New York State, USA) and numerous European museums, including the Saint Gobain Glassworks itself. The celebration was concluded by a commemoration on the part of historians and researchers in a publication of work written by scholars who had studied the composition of his glass pieces.

On February 29th 2020, by will of the GenVerre Institute, on the occasion of the 380th anniversary of his birth, a commemorative plaque was placed on his grave in the chapel of

S. Bernard of the Church of Notre Dame de la Recouvrance, where Perrotto had been buried. Indeed, he shared his final resting place with George Vanderbergue, the industrialist who had introduced sugar refining to Orléans. Perrotto had shared a bond friendship with him, and he had been his children's Godfather.

The plaque, made by the "Quidam" company from Cairo Montenotte, specialising in the production of sheet glass for design pieces, features Bernardo Perrotto's coat of arms, which had been awarded to him by King Louis XIV, in the top left-hand corner. On the right is the crest of the Altare Corporation of the Art of Glassworking. At the bottom is the Altare Museum logo, as well as that of I.S.V.A.V. and GenVerre. On the same day, the Municipality of Orléans provided a wreath of flowers which was laid in the chapel where Bernardo Perrotto rests with his spouse Maria Clouet. This was followed by a number commemorative speeches on the part of local authorities and historians.



On the occasion of the exhibition "Bernard Perrot (1640-1709). Secrets et chefs d'œuvre des verreries royales d'Orléans", on display at the Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Orléans from March 13th to June 27th 2010, an extensive catalogue was published gathering essays from some of the most illustrious of scholars of Bernardo Perrotto. The work can be considered a sum of the knowledge of his output, the variety of his techniques and the most significant technical innovations attributed to him.

Les verriers altarais à Nevers (France) du XVI^e au XVIII^e siècle

Jeannine Geysant

Des verriers originaires d'Altare, s'installent à Nevers au moins depuis 1583 et s'y maintiennent par le jeu des successions et des alliances jusqu'en 1775. Sont présents à la tête des verreries les **Sarode et Ponte puis les Castellano, Perrotto et Bormioli** mais bien



à la bougie de taches d'émail blanc opaque rappellent ce même type de décor de la céramique de Nevers du XVII^e siècle.

Des gourdes réniformes et des tonnelets en verre bleu, améthyste ou incolore sont entièrement tachetés de blanc, rouge, bleu et jaune.

Bien d'autres pièces sont illustrées et décrites dans la récente publication: Jeannine GEYSSANT, *Le verre au cœur de la France*. Editeur Musée de la Faïence et des Beaux-Arts de Nevers, 2019, 172 pp., ISBN 978-2-9558353-0-2-6

d'autres Altarais travaillent avec eux. Ils sont à l'origine de la création de verres de prestige dits à la façon de Venise.

De nombreuses pièces créées dans ces verreries de Nevers ont été identifiées. Leur attribution s'appuie sur les découvertes archéologiques nivernaises. Les documents d'archives permettent également d'avoir une idée de la typologie des pièces. C'est aussi par les enchainements de caractères que l'on peut proposer leur origine. Citons quelques exemples: de beaux verres à jambe creuse et bouton côtelé, en verre transparent incolore dit cristallo, trouvés en fouilles.

D'autres pièces témoignent de la maîtrise de ces verriers à utiliser la couleur et différents types de décors: de grandes bouteilles à filets de verre blanc opaque peignés à plumes d'oiseaux, décor présent sur des pièces archéologiques. Des burettes en verre améthyste, décorées





It was the morning of February 28th 2020. I left Altare at 11 a.m. and headed for Orléans with Carlo Saggini, Curator of the Museum, and with Roberta and Carla, our respective spouses. We also had Maria Bondi, a member of the technical-scientific committee, with us.

We had to cover a distance of around 910 km in nine hours in order to arrive in Orléans in the evening. There, Mr Hubert Geradin and Mr Jean-Jacques Lannois, representatives of the GenVerre Institute, were waiting to give us a friendly welcome together with Françoise and Annick, their respective wives.

We arrived for dinner, and were greeted warmly by our friends at the Hotel La Kyriad in Saint-Mesmin, where we sat down at an elegantly laid table. We spent the whole evening discussing Perrotto's discoveries, including "la table" used for casting the sheet glass.

Was it made of cast iron or fire clay? Fire clay initially? Would Saint-Gobain subsequently use sheet iron for the casting? These are the questions that enlivened the conversation that evening, making us feel like a team straight away. The next day, February 29th 2020, in order to mark the 380th anniversary of Bernardo Perrotto's birth, we laid a commemorative

plaque on his grave in the Chapel of S. Bernard at the Church of Notre-Dame de La Recouvrance. The plaque was made in our area, by the "Quidam" company from Cairo-Montenotte, and features Bernardo Perrotto's coat of arms, awarded to him by King Louis XIV, in the top left-hand corner, and on the right the crest of the Altare Corporation of the Art of Glassmaking. At the bottom are the logos of the Altare Museum, I.S.V.A.V. And GenVerre.

Everyone was present at the ceremony, including the Director of Public Relations of the Municipality of Orléans, Olivier Ravoire, M.me Brigitte Ricard, a representative of the Municipality of Orléans, who laid a wreath of flowers donated by the Municipality on Perrotto's grave, Olivia Voisin, Curator of the Art Museum in Orléans and historian Christian de Valence. There were also numerous members of the GenVerre Association. After the laying of the flowers, there were a number of commemorative speeches delivered by various historians



and representatives of local authorities. The event continued into the afternoon with a series of friendly meetings until it was time for us to leave and return to Altare. We were tired, but convinced that we too had left an important mark on the extraordinary experience that goes by the name of Bernardo Perrotto.

President Gianluigi Pantaleo

I Perrotto ad Altare sono stati una presenza significativa nel settore della lavorazione del vetro. Anche se non conosciamo l'origine di questa famiglia e se di essa non risulta alcuno stemma familiare, sappiamo che nel XVI secolo avevano ricoperto un ruolo dirigenziale nel Consolato nell'Arte Vitrea, organo che sovrintendeva il lavoro dei vetrai del luogo, e sono stati anche membri del Consiglio della Comunità. Poi i Perrotto, in parte si sono estinti e in parte sono emigrati, andando a esercitare l'arte in paesi e stati esteri. Tra questi il più rappresentativo è stato Bernardo che trasferitosi in Francia, giovane ma già maestro vetraio, si è rivelato un innovatore e un artista nella lavorazione del vetro come dimostrano i numerosi studi e ricerche sulla sua opera.

Questa mia indagine ha per scopo di cercare il luogo in cui la famiglia Perrotto abitava, mentre il giovane Bernardo cresceva e apprendeva i segreti della lavorazione del vetro lavorando nelle vetrerie del paese. Ora, pur tenendo presente il vasto orizzonte temporale che ci separa dagli anni in cui tali fatti avvenivano e non avendo alcun riferimento che conduca a una precisa abitazione, ho consultato i registri parrocchiali e i documenti conservati nell'Archivio di Stato di Torino, dove sono emersi vari indizi che conducono al vicolo in cui la famiglia abitava e dove è nato Bernardo. Sono giunto a questo risultato con varie difficoltà, dovute anche alle numerose famiglie dei Perrotto, e al ripetersi di nomi uguali, oltre al fatto che nelle scritture l'uso delle doppie era interpretativo: Perrotto, Perroto, Perotto.

Procediamo con ordine.

-1473 Giovanni de Perotto è citato nel documento per *l'esenzione delle gabelle*.

-1509 Nel codicillo allegato agli Statuti dell'Arte Vitrea compare Tomasino Perroto quale *giurato dell'anno in corso*.

-1619 Nasce Bernardo figlio di Francesco e Biancafiore.

-1621 Nasce Bernardo figlio di Giò Antonio e Maria.

-1640 Nasce Bernardo figlio di Tomasino e Claretta. Secondo le ricerche effettuate in Francia è lui il famoso artista. Nato il 29 febbraio venne battezzato nell'oratorio di San Sebastiano dal Rettore. In quegli anni la chiesa parrocchiale era in costruzione ed essendo la precedente SS. Annunziata non agibile le cerimonie sacre si svolgevano nell'oratorio.

Sempre in quell'anno, 1640, è nominata la *Contrada Perrotto*. Informazione che si è rivelata fondamentale in questa ricerca.

-1626 Gaspare Perotto era *membro del consiglio della comunità*, chiamato ad assumere provvedimenti contro il dilagare della peste.

-1655 Il nobile Gaspare Perotto, era *membro del consiglio della comunità*. Difficile stabilire se era lo stesso del 1626.

-1656 Il nobile Vincenzo Perotto era *membro del consiglio della comunità*.

1677 Tommasino Perotto era *membro del consiglio della comunità*. Difficile affermare se fosse il padre di Bernardo ma è possibile (nel corso della ricerca ho trovato scritto sia Tomasino sia Tommasino).

Come si può vedere in Altare vi era una nutrita presenza dei Perrotto che hanno dato vita a diversi nuclei familiari, e anche il nome alla contrada in cui abitavano. La svolta nella ricerca è stata l'informazione della vendita nel 1677 di un campo che si trovava nei vicini terreni denominati Prato Rosso. Quindi la contrada Perrotto era l'attuale vico Prato Rosso.

Antica contrada Perrotto



Folding brochure made by Augusto Roascio

The Perrotto family has been a significant presence in the field of Glassworking in Altare. Although the origins of this family are not known, and there does not appear to be any family crest, we do know that in the 16th century they had occupied an executive role in the Consulate of the Art of Glassmaking, the organisation that oversaw the glassmaking profession in the area, as well as being members of the Community Council. After that, those carrying the Perrotto surname either began to die out or to emigrate, going on to practise their art in foreign countries. Among the most representative of them was Bernardo, who, having moved to France at a very young age, but already a master glassmaker, proved himself to be an innovator and an artist in the field of glassmaking, as a great deal of research and study into his output has shown. My investigation aims to search for the place where the Perrotto family lived, while the young Bernardo was growing up and learning the secrets

of glassmaking by undertaking employment in the various glassworks in the town. Now, even considering the vast amount of time that separates us from the years in which such events occurred, and not having any clues leading to a precise address, I consulted parish records and documents stored in the State Archive of Turin. There I was able to uncover a number of clues that led to the alleyway in which the family lived and where Bernardo was born. I achieved this result despite a number of difficulties, partly because of the numerous families which carry this surname, and repetitions of the same names, as well as the fact that in writing the use of double letters was open to interpretation: Perrotto, Perroto, Perotto.

Let us proceed in order.

- 1473 Giovanni de Perotto is cited in a document for tax exemptions.
- 1509 In the codicil attached to the Statute for the Art of Glassmaking, a certain Tomasino Perroto appears as a juror of the current year.
- 1619 Bernardo, son of Francesco and Biancafiore, is born.
- 1621 Bernardo, son of Giò Antonio and Maria, is born.
- 1640 Bernado, son of Tomasino and Claretta, is born. According to research carried out in France, this is the famous artist. Born on February 29th he was christened in the Parish Oratory of San Sebastiano by the Dean. At that time, the parish church was still under construction, and, as the previously named SS. Annunziata was not fit for use, holy ceremonies were conducted in the oratory.

In the same year, 1640, the Contrada Perrotto ("Perrotto District") was cited. This information proved to be of fundamental importance in this research.

- 1626 Gaspare Perotto was member of the community council, appointed to take measures against the spread of the plague.
- 1655 Nobleman Gaspare Perotto was member of the community council. It is difficult to establish whether or not it was the same person cited in 1626.
- 1656 Nobleman Vincenzo Perotto was member of the community council.
- 1677 Tommasino Perotto was member of the community council. It is difficult to ascertain whether this was Bernardo's father, but it is possible (during my research I found it spelt both Tomasino and Tommasino).

As can be seen, in Altare there was a substantial presence of Perrottos in Altare which gave rise to a number of different family units, as well as the name of the district where they lived. The turning point of the research was the information regarding the sale in 1677 of a field on nearby land named as "Prato Rosso". So the Perrotto district was on the site of the present vico Prato Rosso.



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Con il contributo
della
Fondazione
A. De Mari

In copertina:
Ampolle in vetro ametista,
decorate con smalto bianco.
Bernardo Perrotto