

Le Stanze del Vetro

A joint project of Fondazione Giorgio Cini and Pentagram Stiftung

Tomaso Buzzi at Venini

An exhibition celebrating the Italian taste of the 1930s in the glass works by the well-known architect from Milan

Venice, Island of San Giorgio Maggiore

14th September 2014 – 11th January 2015

From 10 am to 7 pm, free entrance,

closed on Wednesdays

Venice, September 12th, 2014

The exhibition *Tomaso Buzzi at Venini*, curated by **Marino Barovier**, opens to the public on **September 14th, 2014**, on the Island of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice. It is the third exhibition dedicated to the history of the Venini glassware company organized by *Le Stanze del Vetro*, a long-term cultural initiative launched by **Fondazione Giorgio Cini** and **Pentagram Stiftung**, devoted to the study and the promotion of the art of glassmaking in the 20th and 21st centuries.

The Milanese Architect **Tomaso Buzzi (1900-1981)** was a lively protagonist of the so-called “**Novecento Milanese**”.

He was friend with Gio Ponti – with whom he collaborated – and partner of “Il Labirinto” – a group that included architects and entrepreneurs such as Gio Ponti, Michele Marelli and Paolo Venini – aiming at “promoting the modern decorative arts in today’s households”.

Together with Gio Ponti, **Tomaso Buzzi became one of the most important creators of the Italian taste of the 1930s**, for the elegance and refinement that he brought to the applied arts. A cultured architect, a curious designer, a sophisticated interior designer, as well as a collaborator of the magazine *Domus*, he worked with the greatest personalities in the Italian upper class: Giuseppe Volpi, Vittorio Cini, Luchino Visconti, among many others.

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Between **1932** and **1933** **Tomaso Buzzi** began his collaboration with the Venini glassware company, which would continue, albeit episodically, in later years. Buzzi's creative contribution was characterised by **experimentation with both materials and forms**. Indeed, his broad research included **lighting designs**, thereby helping to reveal a **new facet of Murano's traditional glass craftsmanship**.

When Buzzi arrived at the Venini company in Murano, in 1932, he brought with him a remarkable **cultural baggage** and a **thorough knowledge of ancient art**, in particular of the **Etruscan** period, which particularly fascinated him.

As a matter of fact, one of Buzzi's sources of inspiration for his designs was the *askòs*, a type of **ceramic vase** of Greek origin widely found in the Etruscan area, with one or two mouths at either end of the vase. It was used to contain oily liquids, and often modelled to represent winged or horned **animal figures**. It is not a coincidence that in the 1920s Etruscan art was subject to rediscovery and in-depth analysis: it is from here that Buzzi sought inspiration, with the aim of creating **new and original artefacts**, which on the one hand did not deny their **historical inspiration**, yet on the other exalted the plastic characteristics of glass.

This happened through the experimentation with a new **glass material**, the so called *vetro incamiciato*, with **several layers of color and gold leaf**, and the use of animal-shaped details (such as snails, heads of horses and goats) or of intricate necklaces, knotted ribbons and handles in the shape of stylised helmets. Among the most significant objects exhibited at the 5th Triennale of Milan in 1933 was the well-known *Coppa delle Mani*, a bowl supported by two hands with joined wrists and tapered fingers, and decorated with bracelets and rings.

The **new technique, perfected by Buzzi**, radically changed the appearance of the glass produced at Venini, contributing to the need for innovation of the Murano-based glassware company, and re-asserting its vocation for producing **elegant and refined glass**. Thanks to the analysis and research of the drawings preserved at the Venini archive, it appears that **Buzzi studied 14 different techniques** for the production of the multi-layered *vetri incamiciati*, that can be compared to the glazes techniques in painting. The architect used several layers of color to obtain different shades of pink, green, blue-grey, and red-pink, that lead to the *laguna* [lagoon], *alga* [alga], *alba* [dawn] and *tramonto* [sunset] glass series.

“This technique”, according to the curator **Marino Barovier**, “enabled him to produce unusual tones, rich in shades and intensity, and a material that reacted to the variation in light, in relation with the shape and the thickness obtained by the blowing technique. **This procedure did not allow for the material to be easily reproduced** and thus contributed to **the uniqueness and originality of the final object.**”

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The exhibition *Tomaso Buzzi at Venini*, curated by Marino Barovier, retraces this brief but fruitful collaboration, documented not only through the selected works (**approximately 200**) and the **original drawings preserved in the Venini archive**, but also through **an unprecedented collection of drawings preserved at the Scarzuola** in Montegabbione (near Terni), the theatre-city that Buzzi designed around a monastery and XIIIth-century church at the end of the 1960s as his own house, and continued to work on until his death in 1981.

On the occasion of the exhibition, Skira will publish the **first complete *catalogue raisonné* of Tomaso Buzzi's glass work**, edited by **Marino Barovier** with **Carla Sonogo**.

Furthermore, for this third exhibition dedicated to the Venini glassware company, film director **Gian Luigi Calderone** has made a documentary film entitled: **“Tomaso Buzzi. Le memorie dell'Angelo Custode”**, which tells the story of the Milanese architect through the unpublished notes that Buzzi was planning to use in preparation for an unusual form of autobiography, one that was to be narrated from the point of view of his guardian angel. Buzzi's voice is that of Roberto Hertzliska.

In conjunction with the exhibition *Tomaso Buzzi at Venini*, the temporary pavilion designed by **Hiroshi Sugimoto** will remain open to the public: **“Glass Tea House Mondrian”** is the first architectural project by Hiroshi Sugimoto in Venice.

For more information:

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Biographical notes:

Tomaso Buzzi

Born in Sondrio on September 30th, 1900, he graduated from the Politecnico of Milan in 1923. Following an initial and fundamental phase linked to his collaboration with Gio Ponti in the field of interior design, in a style that in no way resembles either the Art Déco flavour or the heavy 20th century fashion, in 1927, he founded the association “Il Labirinto” with Lancia, Marelli, Venini, Chiesa and Ponti. In 1928 he started collaborating with *Domus* magazine, and between 1932 and 1934 he actively worked at Venini. Animated by the motto “an architect is mostly an orchestra conductor”, starting in 1934 he undertook the restoration of important houses: from Palladio’s Villa Maser in Treviso to the Papadopoli Palace in Venice and the design of the grounds and some interiors at Villa Necchi in Nervi, between 1953 and 1956. Among his many designs, Palazzo Marcoli in Rome, Villa Pacelli in Forte dei Marmi, Villa Rossi of Montelera in St. Moritz, Villa Nasi Agnelli in Cap-Ferrat, Villa Putti in Bologna and the *Teatro della Cometa* in Rome should be mentioned. The restoration of the Italian Embassies in Tokyo and in Bangkok was also his. In 1956, following the advice of Marquess Paolo Misciattelli, he bought a monastery – with an annexed 13th-century church, founded by Saint Francis – in Montegabbione, near Terni, also known as “the Scarzuola”; it would be a continuing laboratory throughout the years, aimed at creating an ideal personal city. Buzzi died in Rapallo on February 16th, 1981. His ability to pass from one art to another, always adding his own contribution, made him into a true protagonist of the modern Italian taste, and still an inspiration today.

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Venice, Island of San Giorgio Maggiore
14th September 2014 – 11th January 2015

Details of the event:

Production:	Fondazione Giorgio Cini and Pentagram Stiftung
Title:	<i>Tomaso Buzzzi at Venini</i>
Curator:	Marino Barovier
Official opening:	13 th September 2014, from 4 pm to 7 pm
Dates:	September 14 th 2014 – January 11 th 2015
Open:	10 am – 7 pm, closed on Wednesdays
Venue:	<i>Le Stanze del Vetro</i> , Fondazione Giorgio Cini
Address:	Island of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice
Ticket office:	free admission
Catalogue:	Skira, curated by Marino Barovier with Carla Sonogo
Info:	info@lestanzedelvetro.it , info@cini.it
Web:	www.lestanzedelvetro.it , www.cini.it

How to reach the venue:

To reach the Island of San Giorgio Maggiore you can take the Actv *vaporetto* (water bus) no. 2 to the San Giorgio stop from various starting points:

- San Zaccaria (journey time approx. 3 minutes)
- Ferrovia (approx. 45 minutes)
- Piazzale Roma (approx. 40 minutes)
- Tronchetto (approx. 35 minutes)

A Learning Curve

by Pasquale Gagliardi

General Secretary, Giorgio Cini Foundation

Tomaso Buzzi at Venini is the third exhibition on historic Venini glass, the sixth organised in the framework of *Le Stanze del Vetro* (after *Carlo Scarpa. Venini 1932-1947, Fragile?, Napoleone Martinuzzi. Venini 1925-1931, I Santillana*, and *Glass Tea House Mondrian* by Hiroshi Sugimoto). A broad multi-annual project like *Le Stanze del Vetro* has, however, more to offer than a simple series of stand-alone cultural events, no matter how carefully structured they might be: the scale of the project means that the organizers can constantly refine and expand its aims, new methods can be tested and lessons can be drawn from mistakes. In other words, the project has been a learning curve, which has evolved in a clear direction over the past two years.

Who are the learners? First and foremost, the organisers, curators, scholars, and exhibition designers. But also, perhaps most importantly, the visitors who experience the exhibitions, those who attend the study seminars and those who read the catalogues, who remember, compare and contrast, make connections, do further research and set a standard against which they will judge future exhibitions. Here are a few things that I have learned so far about the history of Venetian glass, most of which still remains to be told. As shown by the articles in this catalogue, the economic, cultural and industrial context in which the artists and designers operated had a major influence on their work. Venini were always ahead of their time, always at the forefront of innovation, departing from provincial attitudes, interpreting the “spirit of the age” and actively shaping a radically changing cultural landscape. With Tomaso Buzzi’s help, the factory made a significant contribution to the revival of decorative arts and the establishment of a “modern” taste. Venini creations were showcased at the Venice Biennale and Milan Triennale, and often featured in *Domus*, a rising star in the field of lifestyle magazines. The foundations of Italian leadership in the design industry were being laid. At the same time, Venini was gradually defining the core values behind its corporate identity: the drive towards excellence, the love of beauty, the importance of technical skills, which were conceived as an instrument serving the purposes of expression, an experimental attitude, and the joy of innovation. These corporate values managed to attract artists like Scarpa, Martinuzzi and Buzzi, who had, and retained, individual styles and personalities but shared Venini’s approach.

The story has just begun: who knows what lies ahead? What matters is that each new chapter enriches us and teaches us something new. And for each new chapter, our gratitude goes to those who have led the way: the indefatigable Marino Barovier and all of his researchers, the team behind *Le Stanze del Vetro*, Marie-Rose Kahane and David Landau, without whom none of this would ever have been possible.

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More than just a list of vases

by David Landau
Pentagram Stiftung

There are two aspects that, in my view, have particularly grown over the years in the exhibitions and the catalogues of the “Venini cycle” at *Le Stanze del Vetro*: on the one hand, the research into and understanding of the context in which Scarpa, Martinuzzi and, now, Buzzi operated, and, on the other, the character and make-up of their diverse personalities.

Many in our world of twentieth-century Murano glass “aficionados” were used to looking at the works in glass by these designers, admiring their qualities, marvelling at their innovations, studying the ever surprising and constantly developing techniques, looking at discovering links with the glass produced in Murano in centuries past, and wondering at how some recipes, colours, manual knowhow had managed to survive the troughs and disasters that cyclically affected the glass industry. Many among the growing number of scholars, museum curators, collectors, and dealers devoted to twentieth-century glass design were so entranced by the sheer beauty of the vases, plates, bowls, bottles and so forth that, somewhat lazily, they abandoned themselves to the aesthetic pleasure and spent little time thinking about the circumstances in which they had been created and produced. During the last three years, as Marino Barovier was producing his increasingly ambitious and absolutely stunning exhibitions and catalogues, it became more and more obvious to many of us that just enjoying the beauty of these extraordinary objects – and beautiful they certainly and very often were – was not quite enough. We were in need of a better understanding of not only who had made them, when and how, but also how they had come about, why, in what historical, art-historical, political, and corporate circumstances they had seen the light. This Buzzi exhibition and catalogue is, I believe, a triumph in the crescendo that started with Scarpa and went through Martinuzzi, in laying out in very clear terms the context that surrounded the birth of such works. Sure, it was Buzzi who created them, who designed them, and who had them executed by immensely skilled glassblowers under the very watchful eye of Paolo Venini, but he was responding to the stimuli coming from his friends, enemies, competitors and history, from his Zeitgeist. This is made so vividly clear in this show that it sets a standard that we ourselves will struggle to better in the future. The other aspect I mentioned, though in some way a minor one, is the thrill of associating an actual person with the name of a famous designer. The essays in the Buzzi catalogue, and more than anything else, the marvellous film by Gian Luigi Calderone, bring to life the real man behind the “griffe”. Whether what we discover is good news or not, that is for each one of us to decide on their own terms, but it is none the less an exciting exercise, which also shows the power of exhibitions that are well prepared and immaculately executed. This is what we are trying to do, more and more, and hope never to disappoint our increasingly large and loyal public.

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Tomaso Buzzi and “The Marvels in the Skill and the Art of Glassmaking”

by Marino Barovier

Curator of the exhibition *Tomaso Buzzi at Venini*

Tomaso Buzzi was born in Sondrio in 1900 and graduated from the Milan *Politecnico*. During the 1920s he became one of the key players of Milan's then bustling cultural scene and one of the protagonists of “neoclassical” architecture and of the revival of decorative arts, which led to the establishment of the modern Italian style advocated by Gio Ponti.

Buzzi and Ponti were colleagues and shared a passion for applied arts. In 1927 the two were behind the establishment of “Il Labirinto”, a partnership created to promote the manufacturing of “modern furnishings: furniture, vases, lamps, fabrics, metal items” to be sold to upper-middle class clients. The partnership also included glassmaker Pietro Chiesa, Countess Carla Visconti di Modrone and the architects Emilio Lancia and Michele Marelli. Paolo Venini was also involved: at the time he was running V.S.M. Venini & C., along with his partner and artistic director, the sculptor Napoleone Martinuzzi. Venini was establishing his connections with a selected number of architects during that period, especially with those who advocated the importance of decorative arts and belonged to Ponti's group: Venini shared Ponti's need for change.

It was from mid-1931 that meetings became more frequent, while Buzzi and Ponti were working on the furniture for the Counts Contini Bonacossi's Villa Vittoria in Florence (1931-33). The real turning point was in 1932: V.S.M. Venini & C. was wound up, Napoleone Martinuzzi and Francesco Zecchin left the company on January 28th, and Paolo Venini moved on and established Venini S.A. As the chairman of the Board of Directors, he was now in charge of the company's policies. He now had the power to make decisions. Major shows like the 1932 Venice Biennale and the 1933 Triennale (the first to be held in Milan) were approaching, and he wanted to target an elite clientele. To do this he needed an artistic director, and he turned to Tomaso Buzzi for help. The two shared a relationship based on mutual esteem and Buzzi wanted to experiment with applied arts. He had become well-known in the business, especially after the 1930 Triennale. Already at the beginning of February, Venini informed him that: “Venini & C. has been wound up, so we will begin dealing with production ourselves. I would like to talk to you the next time I am in Milan, to see if we can reach an agreement, if you are interested.”

The outcome of negotiations could be seen at the 18th Venice Biennale, which opened on April 28th, 1932. Venini S.A. showcased a very refined collection, exhibited in the new “Venice” pavilion, a space devoted to Venetian decorative arts (mosaic, glass, lace and embroidery).

For the “Venice” pavilion, Buzzi designed *La mano di Atlante*, a one-of-a-kind “pagan mosaic” consisting of glass and gold tesserae, devised as a type of fragment and depicting a hand supporting the heavenly vault. The architect was also involved in the making of the “Aristocratici tre gruppi: verde oro, turchese e nero, bianco e argento”. These pieces made a great impression at the

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centre of one of the showcases in the exedra. The *turchese e nero* (turquoise and black) series was described by Pietro Chiesa as “one of the most elegant and most admired of the entire exhibition” – so much so that one item was bought by King Vittorio Emanuele III. They were made of *incamiciato* (cased) glass. The technique had previously been used by Napoleone Martinuzzi: one or two layers of coloured glass (sapphire and green in this case) applied as a coating onto a *lattimo* glass base. The items featured a black glass finish and came both in basic shapes (cylindrical, egg-shaped) and in styles inspired by Persian art.

The *bianco e argento* (crystal and silver) series instead featured a mirror-glass truncated cone base and a transparent glass body. The combination proved particularly successful and sold well.

An extensive exchange of correspondence between Paolo Venini and Tomaso Buzzi shows that Buzzi would visit the furnace once more in the forthcoming July and September.

In particular, in the summer of 1932, Buzzi arrived in Murano with a number of proposals, which he discussed with Venini’s skillful glass blowers. He also took stock of the latest advancements in research and finally managed to design wonderful items using a new and previously unseen type of glass featuring multiple colour layers. On the basis of these experiences, gained by Napoleone Martinuzzi and Carlo Scarpa during previous years, Buzzi showed a great deal of passion for and did a lot of research into multi-layer and multi-colour glass coating with applied gold leaf. He thus came to conceive and devise a new technique consisting of five to seven ultra-thin coloured glass layers enclosing one or two layers of very thin *lattimo* glass. This technique is similar to the “velatura” in Renaissance painting, and allowed Buzzi to obtain unusual, sophisticated and intense colour hues. The glass reacts to changes in light and behaves differently depending on its shape (a vase or a cup) and on the thickness or thinness achieved during the blowing process. The manufacturing process was so complex that no two items could possibly look exactly alike.

A small portion of molten coloured glass is picked using a blowpipe. A ball of molten glass is formed, drained, baked if required and then dipped into a melting-pot with a different colour. This pot may contain regular or *lattimo* glass. The work-flow proceeds from the inside out. Gold leaf is applied before shaping the object. When the glass is blown the leaf is crushed and it produces very thin gold particulates. It took a long time to define manufacturing systems and colours. Buzzi’s ideas needed verifying and adjusting so he continued to interact with the glassblowers throughout the entire process.

Sketches and studies document at least 14 “recipes”, with coloured layers combined in different ways in order to obtain the desired result. Buzzi seemed to prefer pink, green/yellow, and grey/light blue, which would be used in the *laguna*, *alga* and *alba* series, and later in pink/red *tramonto* items. These “recipes” were experimented with and used to produce samples to test colour combinations and manufacturing techniques, and to check if the product was in line with the designer’s objective.

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A wide selection of glass items designed by Buzzi for Venini was presented in 1933, first in Rome at the Castel Sant'Angelo Glass Show and then at the 5th Triennale in Milan. Also on display at the Milan Triennale was a mosaic (*La caduta di Fetonte*). Venini items were also shown in three showcases in the *Galleria dei cristalli, metalli ed illuminazione*. The main showcase hosted items made using the new recipe, mainly in the *laguna*, *alga*, *alba* and *tramonto* versions.

The items, made by Buzzi using this new technique, were very elegant and refined. Some of their silhouettes were reminiscent of Etruscan art; others were decorated with animal details (snails, horse or goat heads). They all looked particularly original. Some had sophisticated collars, knotted ribbons, stylized helmet handles or even architectural features like the Rialto Bridge. Heart shapes were also used in a number of items: to decorate dinnerware, to make the glass look bigger or to enhance details (like the vase's mouth). Some were more stark and essential, others had softer and mixtilinear profiles. The real protagonist of the showcase was nevertheless the *Coppa delle mani* (Cup of the Hands), a golden *laguna* glass bowl resting on two hands with long fingers, wearing bangles and rings. The bowl – because of its delicate Déco traits – can be regarded as a tribute to contemporary trends. It was precious and original, and epitomized Buzzi's glass production for the upper-middle classes. The bowl was showcased amidst an elegant series of uncoloured *filigrana* vases, other bowls and dinnerware with a squared lobed base, designed by Buzzi in the *a retortoli* version. The same technique was used to create details like lace or small sails in black glass vases or to make black and white items alternating rods in different colours. The *filigrana a reticello* was also used in vases, fruit and animals (cocks and hens).

More amusing birds were made in *lattimo* glass with applied oxidized silver leaf. The same combination was used to create vases with an opaque grained texture and a precious yellow and amber speckled pattern brought about by oxidation.

The *a rilievi* series instead consisted of thick uncoloured glass with relief ears-of-wheat or leaf decoration and a coloured base.

Venini's production received excellent feedback at the 5th Triennale, especially for the multiple-layer cased glass that was also used to create decorative details in lighting systems. This type of glass was even used to make standing lamps and “night-table lamps”. Buzzi looked after the designs. The new glass was so successful that Venini decided to use it to implement designs previously made by Vittorio Zecchin and Napoleone Martinuzzi, and even items designed by Carlo Scarpa during the mid 1930s.

Following the end of his experience at Venini, Buzzi occasionally made use of the Murano furnace to make items designed for the private homes he had almost exclusively devoted his attention to since around 1934. Tomaso Buzzi's collaboration with Venini was brief, but it helped the company out of a period of crisis and bustling change – take for instance the 1932 Biennale and the 1933 Triennale. In addition, it contributed to the company's consolidation as a leader in the production of glassware for an elite clientele.

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Exhibited Works

Room 1

Turchese e nero, 1932

The *turchese e nero* series was presented at the 18th Venice Biennale (1932) in the new decorative arts section. Its elegant lines and color combination made it remarkably successful. One item was even bought by King Vittorio Emanuele III while the exhibition was running. It consisted of *incamiciato* (cased) glass. The technique had previously been used by Napoleone Martinuzzi: one or two layers of colored glass (sapphire and green in this case) applied as a coating onto a *lattimo* glass base. Black glass decoration was applied onto a turquoise glass body, especially at the base and mouth. The items came both in basic shapes (cylindrical, egg-shaped) and in styles inspired by Persian art. The twisting string seen on some items, for instance, recalls Persian silverware from the 9th and 10th Centuries. Upon special requests, a number of *turchese e nero* items were also decorated with applied black glass silhouettes which Buzzi called “thin thread overlays”. With the exception of a “parachute with aeroplane”, the subjects were mainly animals, including fawns, fish and doves. The latter were often used in Buzzi’s applied arts projects.

Cristallo e argento, 1932

The *bianco e argento* (*cristallo e argento*) series was presented at the 18th Venice Biennale in 1932, along with the *turchese e nero* and *cristallo verde e oro* series, as a selection of Venini’s latest production. These glass items featured a mirror-glass truncated cone foot. This was produced in different sizes and was used as a support for uncolored glass vases and bowls. The same combination was used for various types of dinnerware (for spirits, drinks). The use of a truncated-cone foot was not new to the late 1920s and early 1930s glassmaking industry, and had become widespread after its introduction and extensive use by M.V.M. Cappellin & C. However, this time the clear uncolored glass foot was silver-plated, which earned it a great deal of praise. Ugo Nebbia called this series “crystal clear and refined” (Nebbia 1932, p. 309). This series also includes vases with a flared and silver-plated foot, tied to the body in *cristallo* glass through a sort of compressed knot, also in mirror-glass. These models were probably developed within the factory, under Buzzi’s artistic supervision. In particular, the architect designed a classic vase with a tall flared neck and mirror-glass handles.

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Room 2

Ambra nero e oro, 1932

The *ambra nero e oro* series consisted of cased glass items (mostly clear colored glass on a *lattimo* base) with the typical blurred vertical stripes generated using a “six-lobed mould”. The mould creates an uneven surface and produces vertical “grooves” through which the underlying glass can be seen. The overall effect is a change in color intensity. This series is also described in the factory’s Black Book and in a catalogue from the 1930s. Its items were also characterized by a “double” foot with overlapping elements in black and golden glass. The same glass was used to decorate the mouth. These items were generally made in amber-colored glass or in opaque *pagliesco* glass. For some, multiple layers of colored glass were used. *Ambra nero e oro* vases and bowls were devised while working on opaque cased glass items developed at Venini under Tomaso Buzzi’s artistic supervision.

Lattimo e oro, 1932

The *lattimo e oro* series features a distinctive ribbing decoration obtained using a deep mould. This system had previously been used for opaque glass by Napoleone Martinuzzi around 1930. It creates a thick and generally twisting *lattimo* glass tracery, which stands out against the single-colored underlying surface. Gold leaf was also applied. Items with double-thread decoration at the foot and composite feet featuring overlapping elements are also part of this series. These items (described in the Black Book and in a Venini catalogue from the 1930s) also came in an alternative version (sapphire and green on the inside, *lattimo* on the outside). This reversed the process used to make cased glass. The white tracery thus stands out against a colored *sfumato* backdrop and the speckled gold leaf. The color used inside the vase was also used for the foot. This series belongs to a group of items developed by Venini under Buzzi’s supervision. The architect was fascinated by the color play created by cased glass, and devoted a lot of passion and research to this particular technique, until he came up with a new system of multiple layers with gold leaf decoration.

Piede composto, 1932

This series of cased glass vases and bowls came with a very particular composite foot inspired by the “small Chinese bases” which were used as foundations for both glass and ceramics. The foot was produced in three different versions: one had an inverted flared foot decorated by a double thread at the base and linked to the body through a type of “s” knot; in another, the foot was not inverted and a third version (very rare) came with a double inverted flared foot. Factory drawings and one existing item document that the series was made in a special three-layered type of cased glass decorated with gold leaf. Different colors were used on the inside and on the outside. The

color combinations are sapphire, yellow or red on the inside and green on the outside. The foot was always made of green cased glass with green and golden threads. Like *ambra oro e nero* and *lattimo e oro* items with colored glass on the inside, this series belonged to a larger group of items devised by Venini under Buzzi's artistic supervision.

Rooms 3, 4, 5 and 6

Incarniciati, 1932–33

Cased glass was the mainstay of Venini's production with Tomaso Buzzi. The architect was very fond of this technique and explored it with great passion and commitment, and often turned to Venini's glassblowers for advice. He thus came to devise a new texture consisting of five to seven ultra-thin colored glass layers enclosing one or two layers of very thin *lattimo* glass. The new glass material was then decorated with gold leaf. The final result had a previously unseen play of color and a rich and fascinating appearance. A small portion of molten colored glass is picked using a blowpipe. A ball is formed, drained, baked if required and then dipped into a melting-pot with a different color. This pot may contain regular or *lattimo* glass. The work-flow proceeds from the inside out. Gold leaf is applied before shaping the object. When the glass is blown the leaf is fragmented and it produces very thin gold particles. Buzzi's glass was often pink, green-yellow or grey-blue. These colors also characterized *laguna*, *alga* and *alba* series, while *tramonto* items had pink-red hues. Different color combinations are rare and were probably made for testing purposes. The items were very elegant and refined. Some of their silhouettes were reminiscent of Etruscan art; others were decorated with animal details (snails, horse heads, goat heads). They all looked particularly original. Some had sophisticated collars, knotted ribbons, stylized helmet handles, and so forth. A broad selection of these items was showcased at the 5th Milan Triennale in 1933 and obtained the *Grand Prix*.

Room 6

Cristallo a rilievi, 1933

The *cristallo a rilievi* series featured a particularly thick glass texture and was shown at the 5th Milan Triennale in 1933. It was comprised of vases and bowls with colored glass cylindrical feet, *cristallo* glass bodies and rough tesserae. The items were decorated with relief glass leaves either uncolored or in the same color as the foot. A technique similar to the one used for Phoenician decor glass was probably adopted to create the relief: clear or colored glass threads are applied hot around the ball; a vertical blade mould then grinds deep marks into the glass, leaving the surface ribbed. These items were included in the Blue Catalogue and came with a base and/or a relief decoration in greenish or sapphire glass.

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Room 7

Nero e filigrana, 1933

The *nero e filigrana* series consists of about ten items combining black glass and white (*lattimo*) *a reticello filigrana* glass rods or variously intertwined glass threads. This series consisted of vases and glass animals and was showcased at the 5th Milan Triennale in 1933 and at other exhibitions. Some items had a black glass body, which could be ribbed. *Filigrana* glass was used to finish the items (for instance at the base) or applied as decoration (lace, collar, sails, etc.). Some items came with alternating vertical stripes created by juxtaposing black and white filigree glass rods.

Cristallo e filigrana, 1933

The *cristallo e filigrana* series was presented in Rome at the *Castel Sant'Angelo Glass Show* (1933) and immediately after that at the 5th Milan Triennale, where it received excellent feedback: in the specialized magazine *Architettura*, critic Renato Pacini wrote that this was “one of the best creations by the Murano factory” (Pacini 1933, p. 92). The series consisted of a small and elegant group of vases and bowls and a dinnerware set in white (*lattimo*) *a retortoli filigrana* and *cristallo* glass. *Filigrana* rods were used to make the typical “squared lobed foot”, the stem and the base. The interlaced white threads create continuity between the different elements and give the items a precious appearance, while at the same time creating a harness which ideally supports an ethereal body in *cristallo* glass.

Filigrana, 1933

Filigrana a reticello was used to make vases, fruit and animals (cockerels and hens) which had originally been designed by Tomaso Buzzi for decorative arts applications other than glass. The vase with lid, for instance, is based on a design for the aviaries in the “Giardinetti d'appartamento”, while the shapes of the animals recall similar ceramic items dating from 1932. The series was shown at the 5th Milan Triennale in 1933 and included a number of black and purple *filigrana* items. The cockerel and the hen were also made in *mezza filigrana* glass. This particular material was also used to make dinnerware sets, like the “orange” set, featuring a helmet-shaped jug. The helmet was a recurrent theme in Buzzi's production.

Room 8

Lattimo e argento, 1933

Most of Buzzi's production for Venini was shown at the 5th Milan Triennale in 1933. Among the exhibits were *lattimo* glass items with applied silver leaf decoration, also featuring a precious

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yellow and amber speckle pattern caused by oxidation. Following silver leaf application on the glass ball, the ball is repeatedly rolled against a *bronzin* – a refractory metal plate – to remove any trapped air bubbles. Oxidation occurs because of the heat, which is used to keep the glass malleable. Once the silver leaf has been applied, the ball can be briefly dipped into molten *crystallo* glass to prevent the silver particulate film from detaching. This series includes unusual birds like ducks and geese in different sizes, vases and bowls, some of which are decorated with double threads arranged in a slanting pattern.

Modelli rivestiti, 1933–36

Laguna, alba, alga and *tramonto* items were designed by Buzzi using a new form of casing with multiple glass layers in different colors. The series had been so successful that in 1933 Venini decided to use the same technique to produce items previously designed by other artists. The marvellous play of colors generated by multiple casing had completely changed the appearance of Venini glass, so the factory decided to use it for other items in their catalogue. New “revisited” versions were therefore made of vases and bowls previously designed by Vittorio Zecchin (1921–25) and by Napoleone Martinuzzi (1925–1931), and even of models devised by Carlo Scarpa during the mid 1930s. The factory’s well established repertoire was thus recasted, or better “revisited” in the light of a new technique which produced unusual color combinations and fascinating results that played to the taste of Venini’s clientele.

Lightening, 1932–38

Tomaso Buzzi was also involved in Venini’s lighting projects. The architect had shown his interest in lighting applications on a number of previous occasions. He designed, for instance, a feather-shaped lamp shade (almost looking like a leaf). This element had originally been devised for some of the lamps in Villa Vittoria, home to the Counts Contini Bonacossi (1931–33); a few versions of the original design later made it into the factory’s catalogue. Given the success of these models, the furnace continued to develop the feather/leaf-shaped shade concept, which became one of the distinctive features of their production. Feather-shaped elements were also used in “a globo” (globular) lamps, a recurrent theme in Buzzi’s sketches, studies and notes. However, few of these designs were ever implemented, possibly because of their being too difficult to make. Buzzi’s lighting designs in Venini’s catalogue also include a small series of “night-table lamps” featuring motifs typical of the architect’s repertoire, and a series of elegant standing lamps which reinterpreted the (then very popular) *Luminator* theme. Multi-layered cased glass was also employed in table lamps with remarkable success, both when the lamp was on and when it was off. This turned the lamps into impressive home decoration items.

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Le Stanze del Vetro

A cultural project and an exhibition space dedicated to the study and the promotion of modern and contemporary glass making.

Le Stanze del Vetro is a joint venture involving *Fondazione Giorgio Cini* and *Pentagram Stiftung*, a Swiss-based, non-profit Foundation.

Le Stanze del Vetro is both a cultural project and an exhibition space, designed by New York-based architect Annabelle Selldorf.

The purpose of *Le Stanze del Vetro* is to focus on the history and the use of glass in 20th and 21st century Art in order to bring this medium back into the center of the attention and discussion within the international Art scene.

The cultural initiatives of *Le Stanze del Vetro* focus not only on contemporary artists who have used glass as their artistic medium, but also on the main producers and on the major glass collections in the world. For this reason, two exhibitions are staged each year until 2021 on the Island of San Giorgio Maggiore. One in the Spring, dedicated to the use of glass in 20th and 21st century Art and Design, the second in the Autumn, dedicated to the talented people who have designed objects for the Venini glassware company in the 20th century. Each annual exhibition of Venini glass is accompanied by a *Catalogue Raisonné* published by Skira and available at the bookshop of *Le Stanze del Vetro*.

Alongside these initiatives, a series of special, often site-specific projects are organized involving contemporary artists (Swiss artist Not Vital in 2013, and Japanese artist Hiroshi Sugimoto in 2014), who are invited to work with glass, either prefabricated or specially produced by craftsmen from Venice. The result is a large site-specific installation, coupled with the design of a small limited-edition object produced in Murano and sold at the *Le Stanze del Vetro* bookshop to support the activities organized and promoted by *Le Stanze del Vetro*.

In addition to this, *Le Stanze del Vetro* has set up a Study Centre dedicated to research in the field of artistic glass, together with a general archive of Venetian glass, a series of scholarships specifically addressed to researchers interested in the topic and a series of seminars, conferences and workshops for scholars and artists interested in the history, technology and development of the art of glassmaking.

Le Stanze del Vetro has adopted a model often found in English-speaking countries of free access to museums based on the idea that cultural heritage belongs to the community. That is why the admission to the exhibitions, the tours and the educational activities are free of charge.

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Fondazione Giorgio Cini

The Giorgio Cini Foundation is a non-profit cultural institution based in Venice, Italy. It was constituted by Vittorio Cini, in memory of his son Giorgio, with the aim of restoring the Island of San Giorgio Maggiore (devastated after 100 years of military occupation) and of creating an international cultural centre that would re-integrate the Island into the life of Venice.

«The Giorgio Cini Foundation's mission is to promote the redevelopment of the monumental complex on the Island of San Giorgio Maggiore and encourage the creation and development of educational, social, cultural and artistic institutions in its surrounding territory.»

The creation of the Foundation was one of the most considerable private initiatives of the 20th century. The importance of this undertaking was borne out by the initial investment committed to rehabilitate the Island and by the many events the Foundation has promoted or hosted since. It is further substantiated by the cultural patrimony conserved on the Island and, since 1984, at the Gallery of Palazzo Cini at San Vio.

Alongside the Foundation's commitment to its own research and the conferences and seminars growing out of this work, the Island welcomes events sponsored by distinguished cultural and scientific organizations.

The role of the Giorgio Cini Foundation is attested by the many highly esteemed intellectuals, artists, politicians and economists who have been involved in its programme, and by the recollections of scholars and guests who have spent time on the Island.

The Giorgio Cini Foundation hosts the International Center for the Study of Italian Culture, named after Vittore Branca. Opened in 2010, the Branca Center is a new residential resource for humanities' studies where young researchers and expert scholars can stay while working in the Foundation and Venetian libraries. For further information: www.cini.it.

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Pentagram Stiftung

Pentagram Stiftung is a Swiss private Foundation established in 2011, based in Chur, Switzerland, whose mission is to study and promote art and design that feature glass as their main medium in the 20th and 21st centuries. Pentagram Stiftung aims to reappraise the importance of glass, especially in the art and history of Venice, as well as that of high-standard and innovative glass-making in the contemporary art and design worlds.

In 2012 Pentagram Stiftung launched *Le Stanze del Vetro*, a long-term joint initiative with Fondazione Giorgio Cini, on the Island of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice.

A further activity of Pentagram Stiftung is to help promote the work of contemporary glass-makers when funds are insufficient for institutions to show their work adequately. For instance, it has helped “In Grimani: Ritsue Mishima Glass Works” (May 30th –September 29th, 2013), a collateral event of the 55th Venice Art Biennale, in the Museum of Palazzo Grimani. Japanese artist Ritsue Mishima finds unique opportunities to create elaborate pieces using the techniques that the Murano glass masters have handed down through the centuries.

Another case in point is that of “Osmosi” (May 31st – July 28th, 2013): French designer Emmanuel Babled has designed a collection of furniture, lamps and vases made of glass and marble, and this was shown with the Foundation’s help at Palazzo Cavalli Franchetti, Venice, on the occasion of the same Biennale. Another example is that of “700 Snowballs” (June 1st – September 29th, 2013): an installation by Swiss artist Not Vital consisting of 700 glass balls hand-made in the Vetzeria Pino Signoretto in Murano, and exhibited at the Abbey of the Island of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice.

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The Glass Study Centre

As part of *Le Stanze del Vetro* project, in 2012 the Cini Foundation with the support of Pentagram Stiftung has set up a dedicated **Study Centre in its Institute of Art History**. The Study Centre aims to become a major international academic resource for studies and also for glass as a living topical subject. To do so it is pursuing various activities among which the gradual construction of a **General Archive of Venetian Glass** – mainly consisting of drawings, designs, correspondences and photographs from the Murano glassworks, to be made available to the scholarly community and for use in developing the art of glassmaking – the creation of a **Specialised Glass Library within the art history library**; the organisation of periodical exhibitions as well as **seminars, conferences and workshops** for scholars and artists interested in the history, technology and development of the art of glassmaking. In 2014 the **Institute of Art History, under the direction of Luca Massimo Barbero**, is focusing on building up and making use of its archives, which include some unique items worldwide, and enhancing the Glass Study Centre Library. The archives of contemporary artists active on Murano have recently been acquired and digitised for consultation. The artists concerned are **Ginny Ruffner** (52 projects), **Peter Shire** (38 projects) and **Emanuel Babled** (over 16 large-scale projects). Moreover, the **Dino Martens Archive** has been digitised for the Aureliano Toso glassworks (345 designs for Biennales, Milan Triennials and international exhibitions such as Brussels, Cairo, etc.) for the period 1940 to 1965.

Over the next few months the Glass Study Centre will digitise the archive of the artist **Vinicio Vianello** (1923-1999). A key figure in the Spatialism movement, he was a great experimenter with glass (see, for example, his celebrated “Atomici” vases) as well as with lighting and designs, which he exhibited several times at the Venice Biennale and the Milan Triennial; in 1957 he was awarded the Golden Compass. All of the Vianello documentation will be made available for consultation: 323 rolls each containing original drawings, tracing papers and projects, 820 photographs, index cards, reproductions of works, and 14 CDs with the complete press cuttings and publications on his production of art glass. The forthcoming issues of *Saggi e Memorie*, a magazine published by the Institute of Art History, will include a new section on the applied arts with the publication of the proceedings from the conferences on Napoleone Martinuzzi and Tomaso Buzzzi, organized by the Institute of Art History through the Study Centre.

The importance and special role of the Cini Foundation Glass Study Centre is highlighted by the fact it attracts scholars from all over the world and its relations with major international institutions.

The Glass Study Centre Archive and Library are open to the public by appointment from Monday to Friday: 9.30 am – 1.00 pm; 2.00 – 5.00 pm

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Educational program and guided tours

As in the previous shows, free educational programs, curated by Artsystem, will be offered to students from primary and secondary schools, along with free guided tours for the visitors of the exhibition *Tomaso Buzzi alla Venini*. Sunday visits for families and special tours for teenagers and University students (age 18 – 25) will also be organized.

Educational programs:

Students and children will learn about the shapes, colors and history of glass-making in Venice during the educational activities, consisting of **laboratories and workshops** in which they will produce artifacts and take part in laboratory work and discussions on the subject.

Thematic program for children from primary schools: *Let's look for the rainbow in Tomaso Buzzi's glass works!*

Tomaso Buzzi was an architect with a profound humanistic and literary culture, but he was also playful in his own way. Fun details like snails, goats, birds and fish, which seem to pop out of his elegant and antique-styled vases, will help us discover the thousand facets of his glass works immersed in timeless stories!

Thematic program for students from secondary schools: *Tomaso Buzzi and 20th-century glass: the past re-lived in modern time through the use of color.*

Older students will approach the works on show through the examination of the cased glass technique and the influences from the past that Tomaso Buzzi composed and re-invented in so many different ways, in a challenging test of the students' creative and critical skills.

Forthcoming activities:

Thematic program for the 2014 – 2015 school year: *Glass... "coast to coast"*

Teachers are invited to the presentation of the 2014/2015 educational program on the afternoon of **Wednesday, October 1st, 2014**, when a private viewing of the exhibition will be offered. **Tomaso Buzzi** and the inspirations from the past in the autumn show, **Finnish design** and modern forms in the show which will open in **Spring 2015** will be the two special events and the key topics for the forthcoming school year, aiming at encouraging young students to discover and develop their own aesthetic taste over time, in particular for Venetian and foreign glass-making.

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Sunday activities for families and your visitors:

Thematic laboratories for families will be organized on Sundays:

SUNglassDAY: Sunday November 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th at 4pm;

along with special programs for teenagers and University students, aged 18-25:

Fuso! Fuso...: Friday October 10th, November 7th, December 12th at 5.30pm.

Starting on September 22nd, the **free guided tours of the Glass Tea House *Mondrian*** by Hiroshi Sugimoto will resume. Furthermore, an extensive program of meetings and tours will be organized **starting in October until January 2015**, in collaboration with the **Museum of Oriental Art in Venice**, to discover and explore the various aspects of the Japanese traditional tea culture, taking inspiration from the collection of one of the finest museums in Venice.

All these activities are free of charge. Advance booking is required.

Please call the **toll-free number 800662477** (Monday to Friday from 10am to 5pm) or send an e-mail to: **artsystem@artsystem.it**.

Detailed information on the activities for different age-group students, teenagers and families will be available through the website **www.artsystem.it**.

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Tomaso Buzzi alla Venini

Island of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venezia

*Exhibition sponsored by
Fondazione Giorgio Cini
and Pentagram Stiftung*

Le Stanze del Vetro

*A joint initiative of
Fondazione Giorgio Cini
and Pentagram Stiftung*

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Exhibition set-up design

Selldorf Architects
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Architetti Associati

Videos

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Antonio Pintus

Exhibition set-up

OTT ART prodotti per l'arte
Giacomo Andrea Doria

Exhibition lighting design

Alessandro Diaz de Santillana
FontanaArte
OTT ART

Transports

Apice - Venezia
Alice Zanon

Insurance

Marine & Aviation JLT – Divisione Fine-Art
Alberto Magni

Reception and security

Iniziative Venete
Roberto De Zorzi

Technical sponsorship

ArtSystem

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