

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

## LE STANZE DEL VETRO

Island of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice

# Glass from Finland in the Bischofberger Collection

curated by Kaisa Koivisto and Pekka Korvenmaa

Venice, Island of San Giorgio Maggiore

13th April 2015 – 2nd August 2015

from 10 am to 7 pm, free entrance

closed on Wednesdays

On display for the first time in Venice over 300 glass objects from the renowned collection belonging to Christina and Bruno Bischofberger, featuring many works of art by the most important Finnish designers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Venice (April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015)

The exhibition *Glass from Finland in the Bischofberger Collection*, curated by **Kaisa Koivisto**, curator at **The Finnish Glass Museum**, Riihimäki, and **Pekka Korvenmaa**, professor at **Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture** (Finland), will open to the public on the **Island of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice** on **April 13th, 2015**.

This important exhibition features the **best of Finnish design** thanks to the unprecedented loan of **322 glass works** from the **Bischofberger Collection**, Switzerland. The beauty of artistic glass features masterpieces by the foremost 20th century Finnish designers: **Aino and Alvar Aalto**,

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**Arttu Brummer, Kaj Franck, Göran Hongell, Gunnel Nyman, Timo Sarpaneva, Oiva Toikka and Tapio Wirkkala.**

The exhibition will offer an unrivalled opportunity to view some **very rare objects**, often **unique or early production pieces**, which **Christina and Bruno Bischofberger** have collected with passion and insight over the past forty years. A collection that, as stated by the curators, is a mirror of the soul and spirit of its collectors. “The primary criterion of choice in this Collection is aesthetic quality. The majority of the items are modernist art glass, objects that became internationally renowned and made Finland known abroad.”

In the **early Twenties**, after becoming independent from what was about to become the Soviet Union, **Finland** used **design as its manifesto**, in an attempt to establish its autonomy and thus its cultural sovereignty. Some of the country’s greatest designers, who had connections with the international artistic movements, began to **use glass to create works of art that blended tradition, experimentation and technique**.

The **year 1932** is a good chronological starting point for the Collection, for it was then that the five leading Finnish names of the 1930s, spouses **Aino and Alvar Aalto, Arttu Brummer, Göran Hongell, Gunnel Nyman** designed glass objects for the first time and Finnish glass started to be exhibited all over the world, spreading the skills and creativeness of those who would be considered as the visionary masters of Scandinavian design. Their works were put on display in numerous exhibitions, including the International Exhibition *Arts et Techniques dans la Vie moderne* in Paris in **1937** and the **Milan Triennals of 1933 and 1936**, where **glass works from Northern Europe were shown to the public for the first time**. While Swedish glass was well known at this time, Finnish glass was not yet.

In the **early Fifties**, after the hiatus due to World War II and the three wars in which Finland was involved between 1939 and 1945 (the Winter War, the Continuation War and the Lapland War), the Finnish design laid the foundations of what would become “the golden age” of Finnish glass. This was also made possible by the impressive industrial growth of the country, resulting in the manufacturing and distribution of everyday life objects. As the curators of the exhibition point out – “Finnish glass started to be appreciated during the 1950s for the quality of its manufacturing process, which on the one hand ensured its high artistic value, and on the other fostered its industrial production and ensuing commercial success.”

In order to meet the functional and psychological demands of its users, designers started producing **objects and works of art** that were both **aesthetically sophisticated** and that mainly **referred to nature** by the free use of **organic shapes and curves**, often inspired by Finland’s lush vegetations and unpolluted nature. Along with internationally acclaimed designers such as **Alvar Aalto**, other artists became the new stars of Scandinavian design, such as **Kaj Franck, Gunnel Nyman, Timo Sarpaneva** and **Tapio Wirkkala**, who is considered to be the symbol of the international success of post-war Finnish design. From then on Finnish design was exported

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all over the world, reaching and influencing the **United States**. America had already had a chance to meet Scandinavian design – mainly from Sweden – at an earlier stage, when in the early 1920s **Frederik Lunning** opened a **Georg Jensen shop** on Fifth Avenue.

Furthermore, the attention that the international press gave to Scandinavian design played an important role in determining its worldwide success: Italian architect **Giò Ponti**, founder of the magazine *Domus*, became strongly committed to the **promotion of Finnish glass**. **Italian and Finnish design** were **linked by a common ideal of functionality and aesthetics**, which led to several collaborations between designers and companies from both countries, as in the fruitful case of **Venini** with the Finnish artists **Tapio Wirkkala** and **Timo Sarpaneva**.

Exhibitions such as *Nordic Applied Art* in **Stockholm** in **1946**, the **Milan Triennals** of **1951, 1954 and 1957** and the *Helsingborg Exhibition* – also known as *H55* – in **1955**, where Timo Sarpaneva acted as exhibition designer, were received with great praise by critics, and contributed to the **resurgence of Finland from the ashes of the war**.

Finland received equally many prizes in 1951, 1954 and 1957, establishing once and for all the importance of Finnish design.

During the **Sixties and Seventies**, **color and energy** became the main focus of **Finnish design**; the glass works became colorful and were given **elaborate shapes**. **Oiva Toikka** designed glass birds, which became **Iittala's** iconic brand. Through his **irreverent approach** to the glass medium and tradition, Toikka represents the **connection between the golden era of the fabulous Fifties and a more contemporary design**.

Thanks to a thorough documentation of the various historical periods, the works on display at the exhibition *Glass from Finland in the Bischofberger Collection* take the visitors **from the crystal-clear and first colored glass works of the early Thirties to the more flamboyant and at times “psychedelic” production of the Seventies**.

The creations by the sculptor and designer **Tapio Wirkkala** are particularly interesting, as the big bowl *Ultima Thule*, in which glass appears like a block of ice with dripping surfaces, producing an interplay of transparencies and reflections that are almost abstract, and the bottle designed specifically for *Finlandia Vodka*, which remains one of his best and most famous pieces in the world.

Whether the objects are fun, practical or simply decorative, all the works on display are the result of a **creative force** and a **technical know-how** that have their origins in ancient times but that have shown that the glass medium can be used in **dynamic and original** ways, producing shapes and objects that have rewritten **the history of the Scandinavian as well as of the international design**. To quote the motto of Iittala: “We don’t just create beautiful objects. We believe in timeless design that will never be thrown away.”

The exhibition *Glass from Finland in the Bischofberger Collection* will run **from 13 April to 2 August 2015, from 10 am to 7 pm** (free entrance, closed on Wednesdays). The **free**

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**educational activities** for students from primary to secondary school will continue during this exhibition, along with free-guided tours and educational activities for families and visitors of **LE STANZE DEL VETRO**. More specifically the educational programs will include activities and workshops, during which teenagers and children will discover the history and the importance of the art of glassmaking in Venice, by producing artifacts and participating in laboratory activities and discussions.

In order to take part in the educational program it is necessary to book in advance by calling the **toll-free number 800 662 477** (Monday to Friday, 10am – 5pm) or by sending an email to [artssystem@artssystem.it](mailto:artssystem@artssystem.it). For detailed information on the many activities for different age groups please visit: [www.artssystem.it](http://www.artssystem.it)

**For further information:**

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**Biographical Notes:****Kaisa Koivisto**

Kaisa Koivisto is the Chief Curator of the Finnish Glass Museum in Riihimäki. She has worked in the Glass Museum since 1980, since 1982 as a curator. She got her PhD in Art History in the University of Helsinki in 2001. Working with numerous exhibitions, catalogues and books has made her an expert on various aspects of Finnish glass, not only design.

**Pekka Korvenmaa**

Pekka Korvenmaa is professor of Design and Culture at Aalto University, School of Arts, Design and Architecture, Helsinki, Finland. He got his PhD in History of Art from University of Helsinki in 1991. He has published extensively on the history of Finnish architecture and design since the early 1980s in Finland and internationally. Besides his academic career he has been active in issues of Finnish national design policies and has lectured and consulted on these issues internationally. Among his most recent publications is the book “Finnish Design. A Concise History” (originally published in Helsinki 2009 but now relaunched as an updated edition by Victoria & Albert Museum Publishers and Aalto Arts Books in 2014).

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## Glass from Finland in the Bischofberger Collection

Venice, Island of San Giorgio Maggiore  
13<sup>th</sup> April 2015 – 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2015

### Details of the event:

Production:	Fondazione Giorgio Cini and Pentagram Stiftung
Title:	<i>Glass from Finland in the Bischofberger Collection</i>
Curator:	Kaisa Koivisto and Pekka Korvenmaa
Official opening:	12 <sup>th</sup> April 2015, from 4 pm to 7 pm
Dates:	13 <sup>th</sup> April 2015 – 2 <sup>nd</sup> August 2015
Open:	10 am – 7 pm, closed on Wednesdays
Venue:	LE STANZE DEL VETRO
Address:	Island of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice
Ticket office:	free admission
Catalogue:	Skira, curated by Kaisa Koivisto and Pekka Korvenmaa
Info:	stamp@cini.it, press@lestanzedelvetro.it
Web:	www.cini.it, www.lestanzedelvetro.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 (approx. 3 minutes)
- Ferrovia (approx. 45 minutes)
- Piazzale Roma (approx. 40 minutes)
- Tronchetto (approx. 35 minutes)

## Tracing the background of the collection

by Kaisa Koivisto and Pekka Konvenmaa

Curators of the exhibition *Glass from Finland in the Bischofberger Collection*

A collection is always a reflection of the collector. The primary criterion of choice in this collection is aesthetic quality. The majority of the items are modernist art glass, objects that became internationally renowned and made Finland known abroad. The focus of the collection is on glass design of the 1950s, which became world-famous at the Milan Triennials of 1951, 1954 and 1957. The most famous designers were Kaj Franck, Timo Sarpaneva and Tapio Wirkkala.

The collection includes the main exhibits that were important for the history of Finnish glass. Numerous women have been active as artists and designers throughout the history of glass design in Finland, and some of their glass works are also included in the Bischofberger Collection. The collection covers the oeuvre of Gunnel Nyman and Aino Marsio-Aalto. As the collectors do not see the same strength in the work of Helena Tynell and Nanny Still and as Saara Hopea's output is not as large, these three designers have not been included in the exhibition *Glass from Finland in the Bischofberger Collection*.

The year 1932 is a good chronological starting point for the collection, for it was then that the five leading Finnish names of the 1930s (Alvar Aalto, Arttu Brummer, Göran Hongell, Aino Marsio-Aalto, Gunnel Nyman) designed glass objects for the first time. This year is also considered as marking the breakthrough of functionalism in the Finnish glass industry. It could even be said that the country's modern glass industry was born in that year. The year 1973, in turn, marked the end of the flourishing period of Finnish glass because of international reasons. The energy crisis at the time fundamentally changed the operating conditions of the glass industry everywhere. This was particularly true of the Nordic countries, which were known for handcrafted art glass and design.

Finland is a small country, and perhaps this is why it and its history are readily presented in non-contradictory terms. In glass design and art glass, designers — or artists as they are customarily called in Finland — have a central role. A layperson may even get the impression that these artists made the glass objects themselves. However, art glass was produced by glass industry. The aim of the industry was above all mass production even though art objects figured prominently in its public image. Despite the underlying conflicts and contradictions, these objects served to create an image of post-war Finland when the country needed as much positive publicity as possible.

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## Practical and Beautiful

by Pasquale Gagliardi

Secretary General of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini

In the preface to the catalogue of the last exhibition presented at LE STANZE DEL VETRO, devoted to Tomaso Buzzi, I noted that a wide-ranging, multi-year project like LE STANZE DEL VETRO offered an opportunity to refine our objectives along the way and propose more ambitious goals by learning from experience.

The exhibition of Finnish glass in the Bischofberger collection bears witness to this evolution.

The aim of LE STANZE DEL VETRO is to promote the contemporary and historical art and culture of glassmaking, in particular that of Venice. So at first the “Stanze” project envisaged an annual historical exhibition of Venetian glassmaking art in the twentieth century (dedicated to the artists and architects who designed and planned for Venini, whose production was undeniably important in the twentieth century) and an exhibition about the use of glass by contemporary artists as a medium of their aesthetic, as a material with particular metaphorical and stylistic qualities.

But the history of twentieth-century Venetian glass, though definitely outstanding worldwide, does not exhaust the history of glass art, which has been expressed in other achievements and other places of culture, and has produced other strands that have often interlaced with the Venetian, combining with it and hybridizing it.

This awareness underlies the exhibition of Finnish glass. The fascination of this project stems, I believe, above all from the accuracy, in particular in the fine essay by Kaisa Koivisto included in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition, with which it describes the environment that between the 1930s and 1970s produced the phenomenon of Finnish glass art, closely bound up with the construction and dissemination worldwide of an image of Finland as a modern industrial nation, which has used its skills to foster the development of the applied arts as a distinctive emblem of their national identity.

The exhibition reveals how the extraordinary vitality of the industry in that period arose from the tension between two “extremes”, two intellectual positions corresponding to different vested interests, power groups and strategies for action: “Art” (applied, but with a capital A) versus functionalism and mass production. On the one hand, the idealization of the object “designed” as an “elitist” artistic product, as the outcome of a unique, uncompromising and unrepeatable experiment, probably only accessible to members of an educated and affluent middle class, and on the other the idealization of the mechanized production of beautiful yet practical modern

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objects, socially useful and accessible to all. This dialectical tension, which is a credible key to the interpretation of the national and international success of Finnish art glass, also suggests a criterion of interpretation that is of particular interest to the visitor: trying to discover whether and how each object embodies the tension between practicality and beauty, when and how one factor seems to prevail over the other and when both appear to be admirably fused in a marvelous result.

Thus the horizon of LE STANZE DEL VETRO broadens out, day after day creating the premises for San Giorgio to become an international frame of reference for artists, scholars and lovers of art glass. All this is possible because the project has succeeded in involving a growing number of competent and generous people.

For this last stage of our journey I wish, on behalf of the president Giovanni Bazoli and the Board of Trustees, to express the Fondazione Giorgio Cini's gratitude to Bruno and Christina Bischofberger, the curators of the exhibition Kaisa Koivisto and Pekka Korvenmaa, the authors of the essays in this catalogue and all the staff at Pentagram Stiftung and of Cini who have contributed to this event with their unfailing dedication.

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## Finland and Italy: different transparencies?

by David Landau

Pentagram Stiftung

The production of glass both in Finland and in Murano in the fifty years covered by this show, approximately 1930 to 1980 has as many aspects in common as those that completely diverge. Some are more obvious than others: if you were to ask the average visitor to our exhibitions at LE STANZE DEL VETRO what made Finnish and Muranese glass so different, many would characterize the former by its modern essentiality of form and the purity of its crystal clear glass, and the latter by its often flamboyant use of colour and inventiveness of shape. There is indeed much truth in these assumptions, but the present exhibition will confound many prejudices, as some of the works shown are astonishing in their shapes and colours.

Equally surprising will be the discovery that little of the glass displayed, however functional it seems, was produced for the mass market by its Finnish manufacturers. This was also happening in Murano: many Alvar Aalto glass pieces were specially made for national and particularly international exhibitions – even if at a later date they might enter regular production – as were Carlo Scarpa's. At the same time their manufacturers, say Iittala and Venini respectively, were living off their industrial production of objects and lighting for middle-class homes or commercial enterprises. It was at the great exhibitions, in Paris, London, Venice, New York, Milano and elsewhere that the two worlds collided in an exciting aesthetic competition: much was observed and investigated, and derivations, influences and even copies saw the light in the ensuing months and years.

Exchanges were also practical, such as the two Murano glassblowers invited by Kaj Franck to the Nuutajärvi factory to teach the art of *filigrana* glass, or Tapio Wirkkala's extremely successful residence at Venini's and his lengthy collaboration with them over many years. These are the aspects that we at the Pentagram Stiftung are happiest to see explored in our exhibitions: not only the genius of particular artists and designers in glass, but also the connections between them, whether obvious or more subtle, that have shaped, influenced and sometimes transformed their work as we see it today.

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## Exhibited artists: short bios

### Alvar Aalto

1898 – 1976

Alvar Aalto is Finland's most widely known architect internationally. He began to study architecture at the Helsinki University of Technology in 1916, graduating in 1921. He is also known for his work in design and his furniture aroused international interest already in the early 1930s. He established his own office in 1923 and hired Aino Marsio as his assistant. Aino and Alvar were married in 1924. The realistic Aino and the impulsive Alvar complemented each other. They collaborated closely and it is often impossible to distinguish their respective contributions to their work in design and architecture. Alvar Aalto came to know the leading functionalist architects of the period through the CIAM organization (Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne). The Paimio Tuberculosis Sanatorium was built in 1933 and it brought Aalto international renown, as also Viipuri Library building from 1935. Aalto's most widely known design for a private residence is the Villa Mairea in Noormarkku, built in 1939. The *Aalto vase*, perhaps the most widely known Finnish glass object, was designed by Alvar Aalto as a competition entry for exhibits at the Paris World's Fair of 1937. The vase is aesthetically pleasing even when empty, but it is above all a vase equally suited for a single flower or even a hundred. Alvar Aalto's best-known post-war works in architecture include the House of Culture (1952–58) and Finlandia Hall (1962–1975) in Helsinki. His architecture was associated with international functionalism, but the use of wood and gently curving lines added a humanistic touch to his architecture. Furniture and even glass by Aalto can be regarded as continuations of his work in architecture.

### Arttu Brummer

1891–1951

Arttu Brummer was one of the leading representatives of applied art and design in Finland in the 1930s. He was known for his commissioned designs of furniture and glass. Brummer was more influential as a design educator and teacher than as a designer. He had a long career on the faculty of the Central School of Industrial Art, teaching general design, furniture design, and the theory of form. General design, a subject for all the students at the school, was the basis of studies. Brummer's critique sessions were memorable, even feared, but all the more rewarding. He was highly regarded as a teacher. Brummer's former students included Göran Hongell, Kaj Franck, Gunnel Nyman, Timo Sarpaneva and Tapio Wirkkala. Brummer established his own design office in 1913 after graduating as a furniture designer. His style was in between Art Déco and the classicism of the 1920s. Brummer regarded the development of applied art and design to be a mission of national importance. Newly independent Finland had to develop applied art from the basis of traditional craft skills. Brummer's work in glass design consisted mostly of impressive pieces for purposes of display and representation in exhibitions held abroad. Brummer was a prolific critic since the 1910s. As a key influential figure in applied art, he took part in discussion and

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debate on the mutual relationship and future of applied art and industrial design in the press and within the Ornamento association and the Finnish Society of Crafts and Design. In these connections, he was in opposition to the leading functionalists of the period, above all Alvar Aalto.

### **Kaj Franck** 1911 – 1989

Kaj Franck graduated as a furniture designer from the Central School of Industrial Art in 1932. After graduating, Franck designed, among other products, furniture, textiles and toys in the 1930s. He was hired by the Arabia factory in 1945 to design tableware for mass production. He took part in the Iittala glassworks' design competition of 1946, receiving the second and third prizes. In 1950 Franck became artistic director of the Nuutajärvi glassworks. As in his work at Arabia, Franck was mainly responsible for renewing production in series. In contrast to mass production, Nuutajärvi also began to make unique pieces in 1953, upon the initiative of Franck. Franck's colour-ring technique was developed together with the glassblowers as were several other working methods. At the 1957 Milan Triennial, Kaj Franck was awarded the Gran Premio for his work as a whole and the coveted Compasso d'oro prize. In the early 1960s, debate arose in Finland about the cult status of designers, which had grown out of all proportion. Kaj Franck had a central role in pointing out the problems of undue focus on designers, taking part in the discussion as both a designer and the artistic director of the Institute of Industrial Arts in Helsinki. In 1965, Nuutajärvi stopped using the names of designers in the marketing of mass-produced glassware. Since other glassworks did not follow its example, the names of designers reappeared in Nuutajärvi's marketing in 1974. After retirement, Franck continued work both as a designer and a glass artist at Nuutajärvi until his death. He could experiment freely and make the kinds of objects that he wanted. Kaj Franck died suddenly while on holiday in Greece in 1989.

### **Göran Hongell** 1902 – 1973

Göran Hongell studied ornamental painting at the Central School of Industrial Art in Helsinki from 1919 to 1922. Ornamental painters were expected to design anything from postcards to church interiors. In 1927 he established an interior decoration firm together with Gunnar Forsström (1894-1958). Hongell was the first Finnish designer to be permanently employed in the glass industry. He began work at the beginning of 1933, at first as an artistic consultant working "a couple of days a month" and ultimately serving in this role for the whole A. Ahlström Group. Hongell's best-known works of his early years were various kinds of cut lead crystal vases and bowls and engraved vases made on commission, which he designed until the late 1950s. Hongell's work also involved adapting models that were already in production to be manufactured more efficiently. He became a pioneer of glass design in Finland. In 1937 a division of production areas was agreed upon between the Karhula and Iittala glassworks. Blown household and art glass would be made at Iittala, while Karhula would concentrate on mechanized production. Hongell focused on designing pressed glass. He designed several blown sets of glassware to be produced by Iittala in the late 1940s and early 1950s. His best-known glassware collection, *Aarne*, was

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designed in 1949–1950. Göran Hongell retired on a disability pension in 1957. Unfortunately, his career as a functionalist in Finnish glass design and a forerunner in industrial design has been overshadowed by more widely known designers.

### **Aino Marsio-Aalto** **1894 – 1949**

Aino Aalto was a Finnish architect and designer. She graduated from the Helsinki University of Technology in 1920, and in 1923 she went to work in Alvar Aalto's office. Aino and Alvar Aalto were married in 1924. She worked in her husband's architectural office but also designed independently. She signed her designs as *Aino Aalto* or *Aino Marsio-Aalto*. She was overshadowed by her husband Alvar, who already achieved international renown in the 1930s. She probably had an important role in glass design attributed to Alvar Aalto. Alvar Aalto was lively enthusiast, while Aino was a calm and practical realist. Aino Marsio-Aalto designed her first works in glass for a competition held by the Karhula glassworks in 1932. She also participated in the design competition for the Paris World's Fair. The Finnish department at the Milan Triennial of 1936 was in fact Artek company's department. It included the only product by Aino Marsio-Aalto that had been made according to the original competition entry for Karhula. Also on show was the whole collection of pressed glassware designed by her for the Triennial. She was awarded the Gold Medal for her exhibition design and pressed glass. The Artek company was founded in 1935 primarily to arrange the sales of furniture designed by Alvar Aalto. Aino Marsio-Aalto was closely involved in shaping the company. She organized the founding of the Artek shop in 1936. She also headed Artek's design office and became later the managing director. The war and the ensuing period of shortages made the management of Artek a difficult task. She fell ill with breast cancer in 1946, but continued her work almost until her death in January 1949.

### **Gunnel Nyman** **1909 – 1948**

Gunnel Nyman (born Gustafsson) graduated in 1932 in furniture design from the Central School of Industrial Art in Helsinki; her collaboration with the Riihimäki glassworks began in her student years. Between 1932 and 1938, Gunnel Nyman designed light fittings for the Taito company. Light-fitting design was the aspect of Nyman's work that combined interior design with glass. Alongside her part-time employment at Taito, she undertook commissioned work and participated in design competitions. Both the Karhula and Riihimäki glassworks held design competitions for the Paris World's Fair of 1937. Gunnel Nyman received a combined second and third prize in both. Her designs on show in Paris were individual cut, engraved or sand-blasted art glass. She was awarded also a gold medal for her glass objects designed for the Riihimäki. At an exhibition of Nordic arts and crafts in 1946 in Stockholm, Finnish art glass found a positive reception. Nyman's *Facett II* and the *Calla* and *Snäckan* pieces were created at Riihimäki. From 1947 to 1948 Nyman designed glass solely for the Nuutajarvi glassworks. Most of the items were art glass produced in series and they are among Nyman's best-known works. Designs by Gunnel Nyman were featured in numerous exhibitions and she was the most widely known Finnish glass artist in the late 1940s.

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Gunnel Nyman continued designing light fittings after the war. Although her work with light fittings has remained almost unknown, she designed them practically throughout her professional career. Understanding the reflection and refraction of light is an important aspect of designing light fittings. This partly explains Nyman's excellent feel for glass as material. Her work in glass laid the basis for the international fame of Finnish art glass in the 1950s.

### **Timo Sarpaneva** **1926 – 2006**

Timo Sarpaneva graduated as a graphic designer Central School of Industrial Art in 1948. In 1950 he began to work for the Ahlström corporation as a graphic designer. Finally, in early 1951, Sarpaneva had the opportunity to experiment with making glass in Iittala. His rise to become an award-winning leading name in design started immediately at the beginning of the 1950s. The Milan Triennial of 1954, where Sarpaneva was awarded the Gran Premio for his glass objects, made him an internationally known glass artist. At 1957 Triennial he received the Gran Premio for his work in glass and his exhibition architecture. Sarpaneva's *i-glass* collection, described as combination of utility glassware and art glass, was introduced in 1956. In 1964, Timo Sarpaneva developed the *Finlandia* collection of objects that were still-blown in wooden moulds. The mould would burn slightly each time a piece was blown, and the objects achieved an individual touch. *Finlandia* differed from the polished elegance of earlier art glass and drew a great deal of positive attention. The ice-like texture became an outright trademark for Iittala for years to come. In the late 1970s, he designed two new collections, *Jurmo* and *Arkipelago*. In the *Arkipelago* collection, made of clear glass, he sought to capture the movements of air and light in water. In 1984 he held an exhibition of glass sculpture entitled *Lasiäika* (The Glass Age) that belonged purely to the fine arts. For the *Millennium meum* exhibition at the Helsinki Opera House in 1999, Sarpaneva made large glass sculptures together with Pino Signoretto of Venice. Sarpaneva always emphasized that all his work was based on the fine arts. Glass was perhaps the material most specific to him, but his work in design encompassed many other materials, from textile to steel.

### **Oiva Toikka** **Born in 1931**

Oiva Toikka graduated from the Department of Ceramics of the Institute of Industrial Arts in 1956. He worked at the Arabia factory for a few years, but a career as a ceramist was uncertain and poorly paid for a man with a family. As a result, he studied to become an art teacher and worked for a couple of years as a teacher in Lapland in the early 1960s. Toikka worked as a designer at the Nuutajärvi glassworks from 1963 until 1996. The Finnish glass industry enjoyed a period of relative economic success during the 1960s. Nuutajärvi's most successful products were Toikka's *Kastehelmi* [Dewdrop] collection (1964) in pressed glass and the mould-blown *Flora* collection (1966). Nuutajärvi survived the recession caused by the energy crisis of the 1970s with the *Pioni* [Peony] collection by Toikka which was introduced in 1975. Toikka made his first *Birds* for a solo exhibition of his work held in 1980. A technique was developed for these pieces that did not require a further finishing process. The *Birds* became popular gift items and collectibles. They

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were blown at the Nuutajärvi glassworks until February 2014, although they had been sold since 1994 under the Iittala brand. It is no exaggeration to say that the *Birds* kept Nuutajärvi in operation for several extra years. Unlike the design of utility glassware, art glass comes about from spontaneous experimentation. Over the decades, Toikka's unique art glass has become increasingly larger and individual in character. He may add random and even broken parts to his works. On the other hand they are composed of carefully designed elements prepared by the artist himself. He had the honour of being the "young promise of Finnish glass design" until he was almost 60. The promises have been fulfilled in both mass production and art glass. Of the Finnish glass designers who began their careers after the 1950s, Oiva Toikka is the most widely known, also internationally.

### **Tapio Wirkkala** **1915 – 1985**

Tapio Wirkkala studied ornamental sculpture at the Central School of Industrial Art in Helsinki from 1933 to 1936. He began his career as a commercial artist. He served at the front during the war. After the war, he married artist Rut Bryk in 1945. In 1946, he took part in a glass design competition held by the Iittala glassworks, winning first prize with his entry *Finestra*. This competition marked the beginning of Wirkkala's collaboration with Iittala. The Milan Triennial of 1951 was a turning point for Finnish design and Wirkkala's career. He received three Gran Premios, for the exhibition architecture of the Finnish department, his plywood sculptures and for glass design. From 1951 to 1954, Wirkkala was the artistic director of the Institute of Industrial Arts in Helsinki and went on to become artistic director of Karhula-Iittala in 1954. Tapio Wirkkala worked in Raymond Loewy's office in New York in 1955 and 1956. The office's working methods made a deep impression on him. After his return to Finland, he organized design work at Ahlström corporation in the same manner. There were design projects not only for Iittala, but also other producers. Wirkkala was introduced to Philip Rosenthal through Loewy and he began to design for the Rosenthal porcelain factory in Germany. In 1966, the Venini glassworks in Italy displayed its first designs by Wirkkala. A short time before, in 1959, the Wirkkals acquired a summer residence in Inari in Lapland. Lapland meant a great deal to Tapio Wirkkala, and the influence of its natural environment can be seen in many of his works in glass, the best-known examples being *Paadar's Ice* from 1960 and the *Ultima Thule* glassware from 1968. Wirkkala's career in design was exceptionally wide-ranging and international. He is best known for his work in glass design at Iittala.

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## Free educational and cultural proposals

On the occasion of the exhibition *Glass from Finland in the Bischofberger Collection*, the Educational Department of LE STANZE DEL VETRO, curated by Artsystem, will propose new educational events dedicated to schools of all levels, as well as the traditional free-guided tours for the visitors of LE STANZE DEL VETRO.

Moreover, there will be Sunday workshops for families and opportunities for young people and those interested in the exhibited works to gain further knowledge on the theme.

Special visits and activities dedicated to the “Glass Tea House *Mondrian*”, a project hosted in the same period, will bring adults, children and students closer to the Japanese tea ceremony. The cultural educational project stems from the collaboration between LE STANZE DEL VETRO, the Special Superintendence for the Historical, Artistic and Ethno-anthropological Heritage for the Venice Museum Centre, the Asian and Mediterranean African Studies Department of Venice Ca' Foscari University and Artsystem.

## Educational activities

Educational activities will include visits and workshops during which children and teenagers will become familiar with shapes, colours, materials, and the glass working technique. They will also have the opportunity to put themselves to the test with creative crafts and activities with their peers. The educational proposal scheduled for Spring 2015 and titled “Blown into shape: there’s glass for everyone!” that is part of the yearly educational project “Glass... coast to coast!” with routes divided by ages (5-8 years, 9-10 years, 11-13 years, and 14-19 years).

After getting to know Tomaso Buzzi’s colours in the autumn exhibition, we are now venturing as far as Finland to discover the soft shapes, colours and elements of glass from Northern Europe. The taste and insight of Christina and Bruno Bischofberger, who have collected and preserved the works on display, will guide our route along this valuable overview on Finnish glass works. Children will get to know many artists that laid the foundations for the success of the Finnish glassworks, as they enjoy discovering the shapes and hints of nature in their works. By comparing the Venetian tradition with the relatively recent history of Finnish glass, kids will be able to approach materials, places, artistic and mass production, investigating the sometimes blurred boundaries between handicraft and industrial design, discovering the close relation between these works with everyday objects.

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## Sunday workshops for families and children, event for young people and curious people

The month of May will be devoted to events and workshops for families and children:

“SUNglassDAY. Sunday outings for families on the topic of artistic glass”: Sunday 3rd, 10th and 24th May 2015 from 4 p.m.;

“Trotting to the tea house!” on Sunday 17th May at 11 a.m. and at 4 p.m. to enjoy an afternoon dedicated to Japanese fairy tales and stories inspired by “Glass Tea House *Mondrian*” by Hiroshi Sugimoto.

From 30th May to 1st June 2015, LE STANZE DEL VETRO will take part in the national initiative “Kidpassdays: scopriamo insieme la città!” with scheduled events for families and children on the occasion of the Global Day of Parents.

June will also feature “Melting-Melting!! A meeting point for young people” in the afternoons of Friday 12th and 26th June at 5.30 p.m.

Booking is required for all events by calling the free number 800 662 477 (Monday – Friday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.) or by sending e-mail to [artssystem@artssystem.it](mailto:artssystem@artssystem.it).

Please visit LE STANZE DEL VETRO’s website for more detailed information and to enroll in the activities for students, adults, young people and families.

## Glass from Finland in the Bischofberger Collection

*Exhibition organized by*  
 LE STANZE DEL VETRO  
 Island of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice

### LE STANZE DEL VETRO

*A joint initiative of*  
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*Exhibition set-up*

OTT ART prodotti per l'arte  
Giacomo Andrea Doria

*Transports*

Apice Venezia  
Alice Zanon  
Möbel-Transport AG

*Insurance*

Zilkens Fine Art, Insurance Broker GmbH,  
Assicurazioni Generali

*Exhibition set-up design*

LE STANZE DEL VETRO  
Selldorf Architects  
F. Cattaruzza and F. Millosevich Architetti  
Associati

*Exhibition lighting design*

Alessandro Diaz de Santillana  
FontanaArte  
OTT ART  
Andrea Riato

*Security*

Iniziative Venete  
Roberto De Zorzi

*Reception*

Artsystem  
Valentina Stella

*Technical sponsorship*

Artsystem

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