

Marignana Arte

TRANSPARENCIES

Blown Glass by Vittorio Zecchin

text by Giulio Malinverni and Francesca Vacca

<< The beauty of the vitreous matter lies in its essential qualities: the vivid brilliance of its colours, the delicate and languid 'fumée' intonations, and the luxurious opaline iridescences of mother-of-pearl, when freed from the burden of cumbersome ornamentation, this beauty seems to resurrect free and pure. Beautiful form is reborn with beautiful matter, with each complementing the other. Line and form are conceived and felt in the presence, and almost in virtue of matter. This was, and remains, the path by which the art of glassblowing, a creation of Murano, resumed its journey towards its former greatness. >>

Marino Barovier, Marco Mondì, Carla Sonego, *Vittorio Zecchin 1878-1947, painting, glass, decorative arts, Venice*, Marsilio Editori, 2002, n.16, p.37

Vittorio Zecchin was born in Murano on May 21, 1878. His father, Luigi, worked in a glassworks as a composing technician. Growing up in close contact with glass, Zecchini's personality matured along with the warmth and familiarity of the furnaces. In 1894, he left his technical studies to enrol at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Venice, pursuing a course in painting, where he found an environment still firmly rooted in 19th century tradition.

At the age of 16, Zecchin was immediately fascinated by the emerging art forms of the new century. Painting served as the foundation of his artistic work. Through the stylisation of figures and objects, Vittorio Zecchin created tapestries, branches, glass and stained glass, furniture, and ceramics. He became a symbol of Venice and one of the most significant artists on the national and international scene both in the Minor Arts and Major Arts of the time.

Zecchin's relationship with glass art began in 1913. Together with the painter Teodoro Wolf Ferrari, he created a series of murrine glass vases and plates produced by the Barovier Artists. These works were presented at the Windhager Salon Art Exhibition in Munich where they met with great success. These productions are among the artist's absolute masterpieces as they can be considered unique pieces. The following year, Zecchin and Ferrari participated in the Venice Biennale with the same works, which were highly appreciated by critics and the public.

In 1921, Venetian antiquarian and dealer Giacomo Cappellin and Milanese lawyer Paolo Venini founded Vetri Soffiati Muranesi Cappellin Venini & C. with Vittorio Zecchin as artistic director. At a time of crisis for Murano art glass, still tied to the virtuosity of 19th century decorations, Zecchin, drawing inspiration from the elegant forms of the 16th century pictorial tradition, created ethereal blown vases. His essential shapes, freed from excessive decoration, and the shades and tones that resonate with the light of the lagoon, revitalised

Murano glass art while preserving its ancient traditions. Under Vittorio Zecchin, the figure of the designer emerged - someone who focused exclusively on conceiving and designing works, thus strengthening the relationship between art and craftsmanship. Craftwork became art. In 1923, Zecchin received his first major recognition by winning the Grand Diploma of Honour at the first edition of the Monza Decorative Arts Exhibition, where one hundred and fifty blown glass vases were exhibited. Another significant public exhibition was the International Exhibition of Decorative Arts in Paris in 1925, where he represented the Italian glassworks. His delicate and modern blown glass objects won the Grand Prix of the Parisian exhibition.

In the same year, VSM Cappellin Venini & C. dissolved, leading to the creation of two separate furnaces: Paolo Venini's VSM Venini & C. and Giacomo Cappellin's MVM Cappellin & C., with Vittorio Zecchin as minority partner and artistic director. While VSM Venini & C. appointed Napoleone Martinuzzi as their new, important artistic director, they continued to produce glass designed by Zecchin. MVM Cappellin & C. remained faithful to Zecchin's previous designs, further simplifying the shapes and refining the glass material. At the 15th Venice Biennale in 1926, Zecchin exhibited Cappellin's glass windows, crafted with Murano blown glass rather than the more commonly used industrial production glass. The variations in tone and thickness of the vitreous material created a pictorial effect, making these windows unique and striking. Zecchin later handed over the artistic direction to Carlo Scarpa but continued to collaborate with the furnace until it closed in 1931.

This exhibition features an extraordinary selection of eighteen blown glass pieces designed by Vittorio Zecchin and produced from 1921 to 1926 by the VSM Cappellin Venini & C. furnaces and MVM Cappellin & C. Also presented are shelves made from repurposed portions of large 'rui' in flashed glass, originally produced and used for Cappellin's stained glass windows (1925-1931), along with a solid wood glass display unit designed by Carlo Scarpa and exhibited at the IV Monza Triennale in 1930.