

CATERINA TOGNON

Hubert Duprat

Caterina Tognon arte contemporanea_Venezia

Opening: Saturday 5 May 2012 at 6pm

5 May – 30 September 2012 (closed August)

Mondays to Saturdays 10am-1pm / 3pm-7pm

Hubert Duprat came to Venice in February 2011, having been invited by the gallery and as a result of Simone Menegoi's generous proposal. His visit was dedicated to Murano and its furnaces, and to understanding its ancient glassblowing techniques. Among the craftsmen there, he met 85-year-old Mario Dei Rossi, the last master glassblower who, with his son Antonio, is capable of creating "cold-composition *murrine*". It was this technique that would arouse the artist's imagination.

Almost a year later, Duprat took two front and back technical drawings depicting a Palaeolithic spear point in flint from an old encyclopaedia, and asked for two *murrine* to be created from these drawings. Thus began the Dei Rossi father and son team's patient work of creating the glass micro-mosaics and then "pulling" them in the furnace to obtain two canes containing the miniature version of the original drawings throughout their length.

Thanks to the two master glassblowers' craftsmanship, with this work Hubert Duprat has managed to transpose one of prehistoric man's first creations (the spear point in flint) into one of the most complex creations of Venetian craftsmanship: the *murrina*.

The chemical composition of glass, which is mostly silica powder, closes the circle.

"L'oeuvre d'Hubert Duprat, par bien des aspects, semble l'exploration même des frontières historiquement et culturellement établies entre l'Art et ses formes secondes, artisanales, populaires ou décoratives. Dans son travail, l'artiste fait plus volontiers référence à l'histoire des arts et des techniques qu'à celle de l'art. En effet, lorsqu'il emprunte, non sans lui faire subir de multiples métamorphoses, un motif ou une technique, c'est à la fresque, à la tapisserie, à l'enluminure ou à l'objet décoratif, non au tableau et à la sculpture. Ainsi, Hubert Duprat joue des connotations et des usages culturels liés à des activités qui, relevant du mode mineur de la création, sont le plus souvent exclues du champ de l'art moderne et contemporain [...]. L'artisan est étymologiquement "celui qui exerce un métier", le mode de production artisanal impliquant des savoir-faire manuels liés à des exercices précis. Ce sont souvent des compétences techniques de ce type, nécessitant une méticulosité certaine, qui sont requises pour la fabrication des oeuvres d'Hubert Duprat. De fait, contrairement à la plupart des créateurs actuels, lui bannit la quantité, limitant le nombre d'objets quand bien même ils constituent une série. Hubert Duprat maintient la distinction, effective depuis que le terme d'artisan s'emploie (au milieu du seizième siècle), entre cette activité et celle de l'artiste. Ce dernier délègue en effet la plus grande part de la réalisation à des mains plus ou moins expertes selon ce que l'oeuvre implique de difficultés particulières. L'un des obstacles rencontrés par Duprat est de trouver des artisans (ou ceux qui en font office) prêts à mettre leurs capacités au service de travaux pouvant paraître aberrants. L'artiste laisse très peu de part créative à ses collaborateurs [...]. Réactualisant certains procédés abandonnés au cours du vingtième siècle - et sur ce plan il est bien un artiste d'après la modernité - Hubert Duprat réconcilie l'art et l'artisanat. Chez lui, la création n'est pas jouée contre la tradition ni l'Art contre le métier. Aussi son travail permet-il d'ouvrir la question artiste/artisan à celle, plus large, de l'artistique et de l'artisanal".

Les métiers d'Hubert Duprat di Natacha Pugnet da Les Figures de l'art, n°7, 2004



As it happens with the Murrine piece, also in *Sans Titre, Dés et Ulexite*, we can observe a composition where the image is "travelling". The artist glued some pieces of ulexite on each side of the dices. This special mineral that can be found at only one site in the U.S. has the peculiar property to carry visual information without transforming it. Therefore the value on the surface remains visible without any change in size, irrespective of the thickness of the stone.



The exhibition at the gallery shows a second new piece, *Sans Titre*, made up of a polymer foam parallelepiped into which numerous flint fragments have been set. The artist collected them in Le Grand-Pressigny in central France, a region famous for the remains and artefacts dating back to the end of the Stone Age found there. The work combines a strictly mineral element, flint, with an extremely pliable synthetic one, the sponge used for flower arranging.

“Larve Aquatique de Trichoptère avec son Etui” is also in the show. This work, with which Hubert Duprat made his debut in the 1980s, continues to have great resonance today due to its conceptual complexity. It is a work inspired by entomology in which the larva of an aquatic insect, the caddis fly, is removed from its natural habitat to an artificial habitat made up of gold specks, small pearls and precious stones. Rather than creating its protective casing with detritus found on the riverbed, the insect is forced to use the materials surrounding it. In doing so, it creates veritable precious micro-sculptures.



photo: Frédéric Delpech

Hubert Duprat, born 1957. He lives in the south of France.

A self-taught artist, he has been active since the 1980s.

His personal show at the *Art Concept* gallery in Paris has just closed.

He is participating in the “*Micromania*” exhibition at the *Gagosian* Gallery in Paris until 12 May: an exhibition of small-scale sculptures by the foremost artists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

From 4 June, at the Ecole des Beaux Art of Geneva and curated by Christian Besson: the “*Le miroir du trichoptère*” exhibition dedicated to the vast bibliographical and documentary collection about caddis flies collated by the artist. Below are the artist’s personal shows from 1985 until the present:

- 2012 Caterina Tognon, Venice
GalerieArt Concept. Paris
HEAD – Genève, Le Miroir du Trichoptère.
- 2011 Norwich Museum.
V.r.a.c. Millau
- 2009 Frac Languedoc-Roussillon. Montpellier
- 2008 Centre International d’Art et du Paysage. Vassivière
- 2005 Galerie Art Concept, Paris.
- 2002 Galerie du Cairn, Musée-promenade, Digne-les-Bains.
- 2001 Sale Arte Contemporaneo Luis Miro Quesada Garland , Miraflores-Lima.
Zero, Piacenza.
- 2000 Monk Parakeet, Chicago.
Decimus Magnus Art, Bordeaux.
Galerie Annie Gentils, Antwerpen
- 1999 Mamco, Genève
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Christliche Kunst, Munich.
- 1998 Musée Picasso, Antibes.
Frac Limousin, Limoges.
- 1996 Le Parvis, Pau.
Villa Formose, Ecole d’Art et de Communication, Pau.
- 1995 La Chaufferie, galerie de l’Ecole des arts décoratifs, Strasbourg.
Neuerraachenerkunstverein, Aachen.
Galerie studio 20, Moscou.
Villa Arson, Centre national d’art contemporain, Nice.
- 1994 Le Creux de l’Enfer, Thiers.
Galerie du Collège Marcel Duchamp, Châteauroux.
- 1992 Hôtel Saint-Simon, Frac Poitou-Charentes, Angoulême.
Galerie Jean-François Dumont, Bordeaux.
Hôtel des arts - Fondation nationale des arts (avec Alain Séchas), Paris.
- 1990 La Criée, halle d’art contemporain, Rennes.
- 1989 Galerie de la villa, Villa Arson, Centre national d’art contemporain, Nice.
Galerie Jean-François Dumont, Bordeaux.
A.P.A.C., Centre d’art contemporain (avec Pascal Convert), Nevers.
- 1988 Galerie Jean-François Dumont, Bordeaux.
- 1986 Galerie Jean-François Dumont, Bordeaux.
- 1985 Réfectoire des Jacobins (préfiguration du Musée d’art moderne), Toulouse.

Mario Dei Rossi – born Murano 1926. He lives and works on Burano.

He began working in the glass furnaces at the age of fourteen. He does not come from a glassblowing family but is related to some important notable families of Murano master glassblowers, such as the Fuga, Polo and Barbini families.

At the age of just 24 he was working under Aureliano Toso. Working for important glass factories alongside the best masters, over the years he learnt the various techniques and processes of glass art and developed multifaceted skills. Always keen to experiment and to test his own limits, he tried to improve himself artistically by studying with Vittorio Zecchin. In the mid-1970s he began his association with Egidio Costantini, founder of the “Fucina degli Angeli”, and transformed works by the greatest artists of the twentieth century – from Picasso and Jenckins to Kokoska and Coignard – into glass. One event from his long career that he loves to recall is the creation of Harlequin figures, perfectly calibrated in their balance of weights and colours, created according to a Dino Martens design.



In 1986, having reached pensionable age, he continued to study various expressions of glass art and was drawn to the figurative *murrina*, having seen it on a trip to the Glass Museum.

Fulfilling his early passion, he tried out various technical solutions for creating those precious masterpieces and in 1989 made his first *murrina* using the cold composition technique. Initially creating the portrait of a lady with fairly elementary markings and flat colours, he would go on to perfect the technique both in the compositional and furnace stage before obtaining authentic masterpieces of chromatic and compositional virtuosity.

Antonio Dei Rossi – born Burano 1964. He lives and works between Treviso and Burano.

He graduated from Venice's Academy of Fine Arts in 1987. A graphic designer, painter, sculptor and designer of artefacts and clothing, Dei Rossi is an eclectic who loves trying out different technical and expressive ideas. He teaches graphic design at an artistic high school in Vittorio Veneto. Since 1999 he has been following in his father's footsteps, taking an interest in the figurative *murrina* and building on his father's experience and technical solutions. This advantageous beginning would soon allow him to create high-quality works. Unlike his father, he prefers subjects from the animal and plant world, which allow him to create his works as actual illustrations, adding a personal perspective in the chromatic vibrations and in the exaltation of light. Having mastered the technique, he adopts a contemporary twist to the Venetian tradition of creating jewels made for mounting the *murrina*.

Murrina is an expression coined in 1878 by Abbot Vincenzo Zanetti and is the result of an extremely complicated and complex technical procedure which has ancient roots in the history of glass. Zanetti adopted the expression to define mosaic glass bowls and vases that the Romans had made using sections of cane containing abstract or figurative designs such as faces, flowers and animals for its entire length. These were the same subjects that they loved to reproduce using the multicoloured and mysterious *murrina* stone. Since then the term “murrino” has remained and is used to identify the individual sections of cane. It reached its zenith in the mid-1800s, firstly thanks to the great master Franchini and then by Moretti and Barovier. However, since the beginning of the last century interest in the *murrina* diminished, perhaps because of the laborious techniques or perhaps due to the few guarantees of achieving a good end result given the innumerable technical difficulties inherent in its production. The technique consists of various creative stages: the fusion and preparation of the colours; the cold composition of infinite and wafer-thin glass canes to create the image; the work in the furnace to make the glass malleable again through heat in order to pull the cane and set the design throughout its length; the cutting into sections and the patient work of polishing. Only the rhythms of the Venetian lagoon can justify these long and anachronistic work times.

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