

Bianca Arrivabene

When and how has it all started?

About twenty years ago by Giberto Arrivabene, my talented husband, gifted both in creativity and humour. He had a totally different and much more boring profession at the time, for which he spent time in the environment of Murano glass factories. So the idea germinated in him to create some pieces inspired by his own background: tableware he was used to see in the house as a child, objects that were part of family tradition... Travels too have been source of inspiration in the use of materials.

Is it just glass you work with?

Mainly, but also slate, rock crystal, gems and metal. Sometimes these materials coexist in the same piece, and this is the point where problems start. Where different materials are used, it implies that the differently specialised artisans must work coordinated, and maybe one lives in Murano and the other in Firenze, which doesn't make it any easier. Plus, the time it takes for the pieces to be sent back and forth for each to add their professional touch. In some cases, we renounced producing the piece altogether because the professional handwork was troublesome to deal with. Or the price was prohibitive, as for this salt and pepper set in rock crystal and gems. But look how beautiful it is!

The quid of your design?

Every piece has its own. Take this slate ashtray: we created this elegant black and pink ashtray/keyholder for Dior, but the "scraped effect" was considered an imperfection. We liked it because of it, it is very typical of the material and part of the beauty of the object. Or even glasses: the pieces resemble each other but are never identical. Identical sizes, reproducibility of exact same tonality of colours... these concepts seem unconceivable in the Murano production. Every piece is unique in a way. It is their characteristic, but it is not always appreciated. If someone asks for perfect sets, we might need to have large quantities made and play the mix and match just to put together a set of six.

Indeed your design meets some very chic and illustrious interest.

Yes. Every piece here in black and pink is part of the collection we designed for our collaboration with Dior Home. Our pieces figure also in the notorious Debonnaire catalogue. But the project we really cared for, was to bring Aman Resorts in Venice. We did, on the first two floors of our house; we are also the designers of their glass tableware, characterised by the engraving of AV initials. The design of these initials was the one my husband's grandmother, Vera Arrivabene, used in her mail. Now it is all over the hotel's glasses and candleholders, as it fits perfectly "Aman Venice". This was luck.

Other projects?

One we are very proud of, the interpretation of Canova's "Paolina Borghese". It has been reproduced in glass (of course) with lost wax casting technique, in collaboration with Adam Lowe's Factum Arte. It has been a very challenging project: from a 3D print, to a silicone prototype, to a wax prototype for the casting mould. Pouring hot glass in a mould of this shape has been complicated, because it needs to reach the smaller and more delicate parts uniformly: finger of the hands, locks of hair, the folds of the dress... And then it took a month to cool it down so that it won't crack. But it was worth it: it was exhibited in the Canova museum, and in the V&A Pavilion for the Architecture Biennale in 2016. I still keep the wax prototype in the office because I like it so much.