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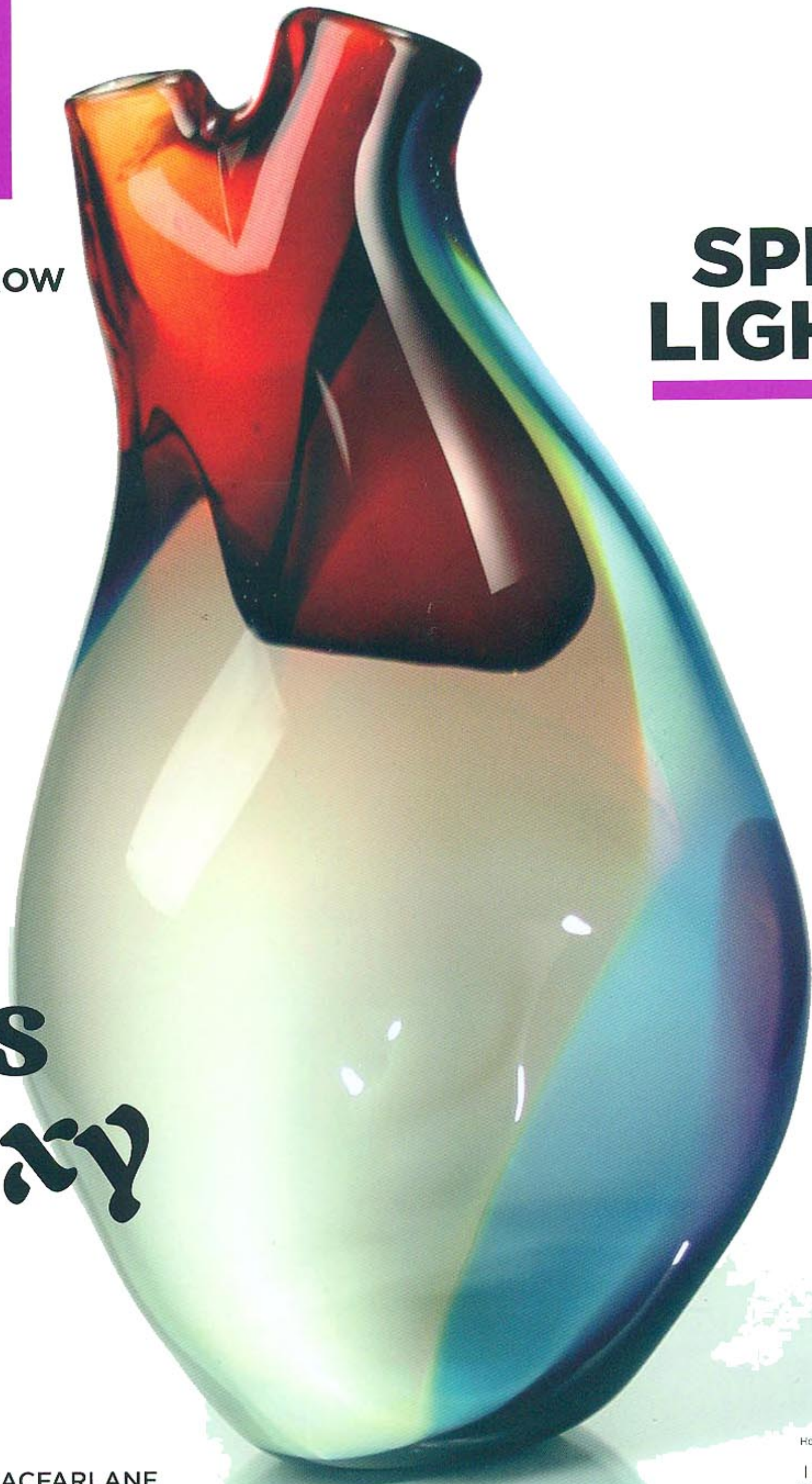
FASHION

Light &
Smoke
on the
water

Glass is Sexy

**INTERVIEWS &
ICON REVIVALS**

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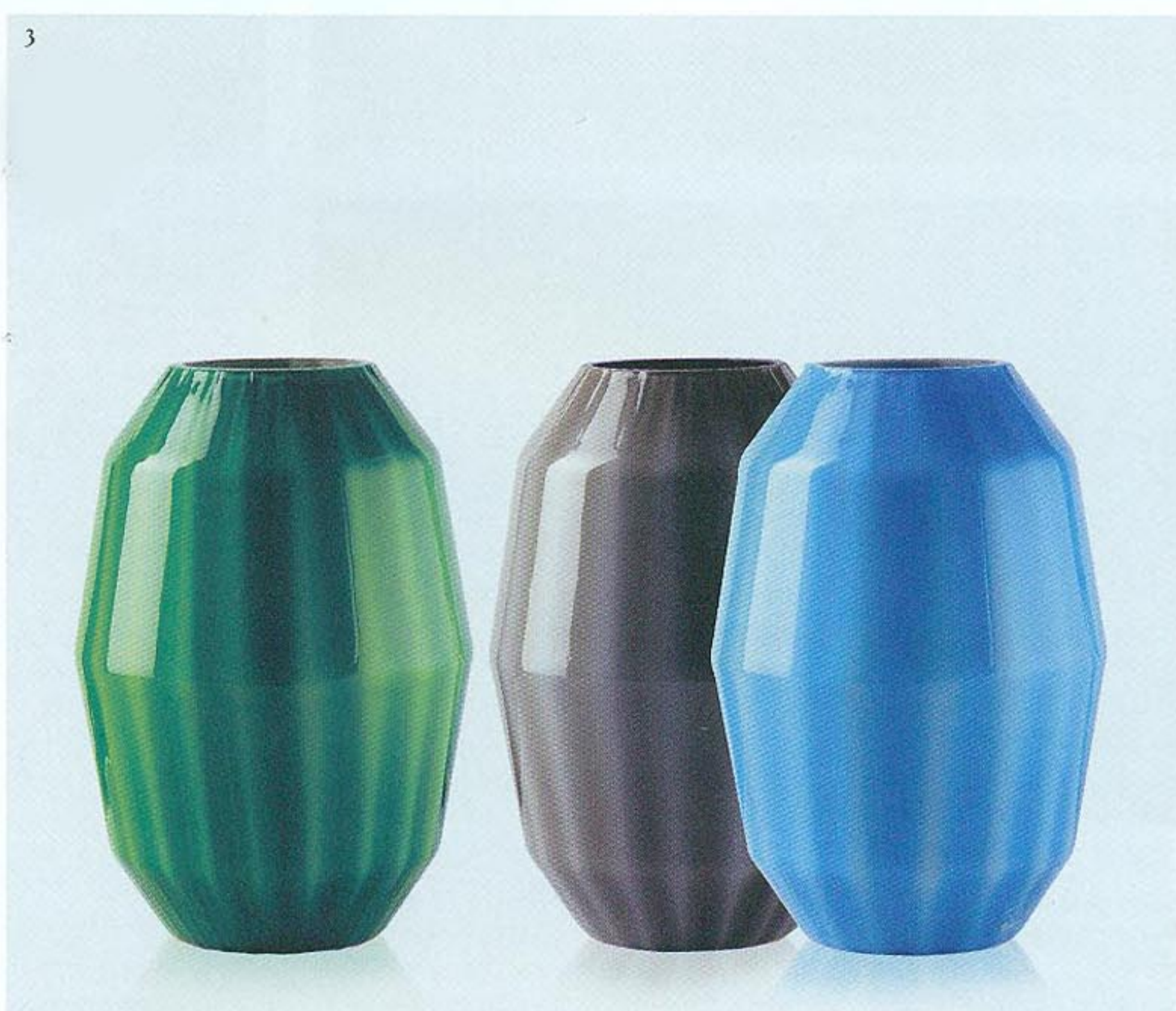
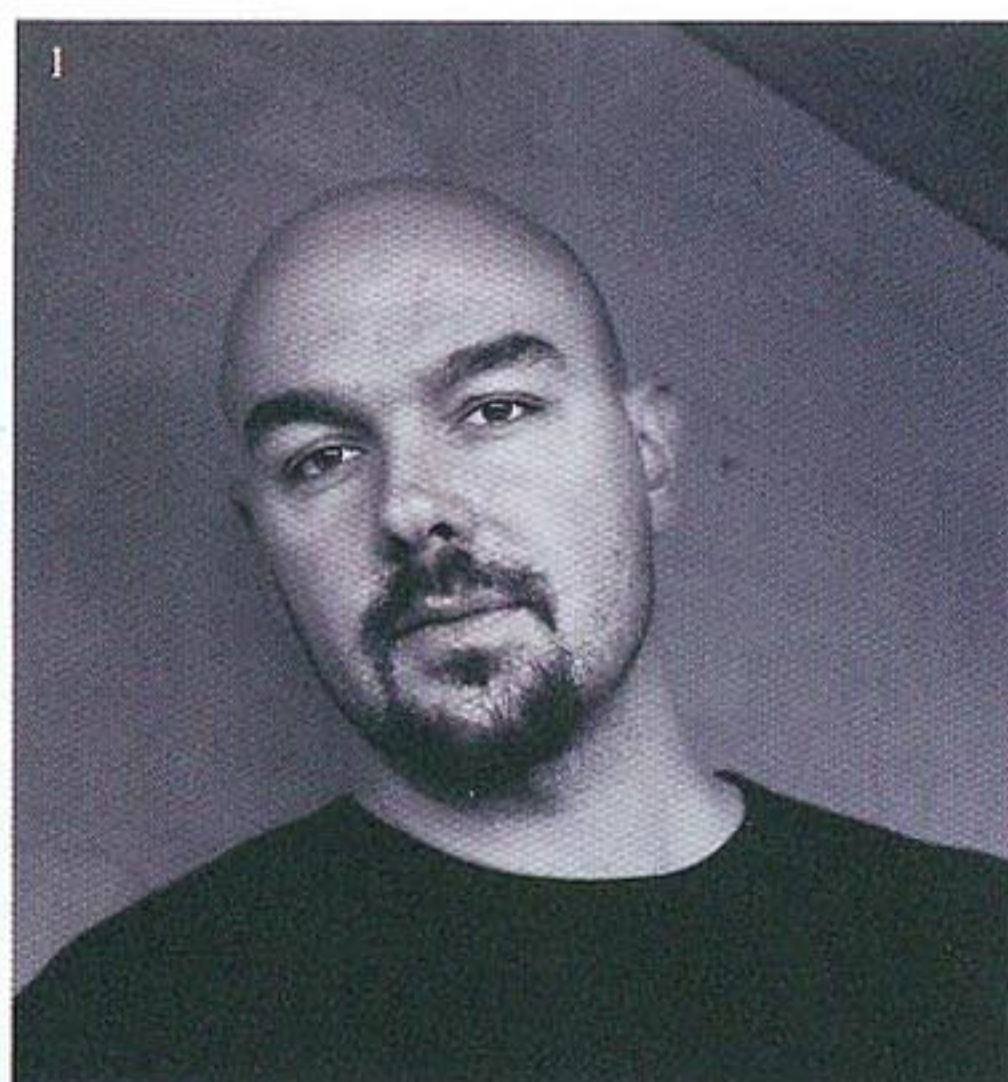
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Glass Fever



At just 34 years of age, he is one of the most gifted designers of his generation in Italy today. Glass is part of his DNA and confronted with the question of the evolution of ancestral brands he sees his role as being both creator and artistic director. An encounter on the lagoon, with *Luca Nichetto*.

How did glass enter into your life?

I was born in Venice, and I spent my childhood in Murano. My grandfather was a master glassmaker, my mother decorated glass. And that's how I started my apprenticeship. In fact my interest in design stems from my family. In 1999, while I was making the rounds of the ateliers in Murano with my student portfolio, I happened to meet Simon Moore, artistic director of Salviati. One of my designs captured his attention and the Millebolle vase, which we made together, went on to become one of their best-selling items (2000). I was made head designer, and at the same time became a research and development consultant at Foscari, through whom I had the chance to meet outstanding designers like Lovegrove and Dixon.

Can you talk to us about your collaboration with Venini?

Venini has always been a dream for any Venetian designer, myself included, especially as this company has always worked with famous international designers. I met people from Venini at exhibitions or trade fairs. This is how our collaboration started, very naturally. Our first project was Otto, a collection of vases that reveal the dexterity of the master glassmakers, and their skill in shaping the

glass using simple gestures. Here, starting from the archetype of the cylinder, the glassmaker first forms a truncated cone then cleanly cuts it to reveal different layers of glass (which sets off the chromatic variations on the inside of the vase). Starting from the same concept, I worked on another project in collaboration with Bosa (ceramics), Essence collection, essentially to highlight and share the craftsmanship and savoir-faire that I inherited from my childhood. Arillo is a little different from Otto because it's based on a classic topology of a vase. It's more accessible. The concept comes from another of my childhood memories: the traditional glass pearls (like the beads Ed). Arillo is characterised by a geometric, sculpted form, the design catalysing

a profusion of cultures and oriental and western traditions. Actually, these vases are produced in the purest tradition of the glassmakers of Murano, like the pearls, but their form is inspired by traditional Chinese lanterns.

What exactly do you think the prospects are for Murano?

Of course, Murano is suffering from the economic crisis: manufacturing is more costly and, one of the consequences of this is that activities are offshored abroad where it's more competitive, like in Asia. Actually, there has never been cooperation between the various companies in Murano which could have led to a strong network, instead the increased competitiveness has only suc-

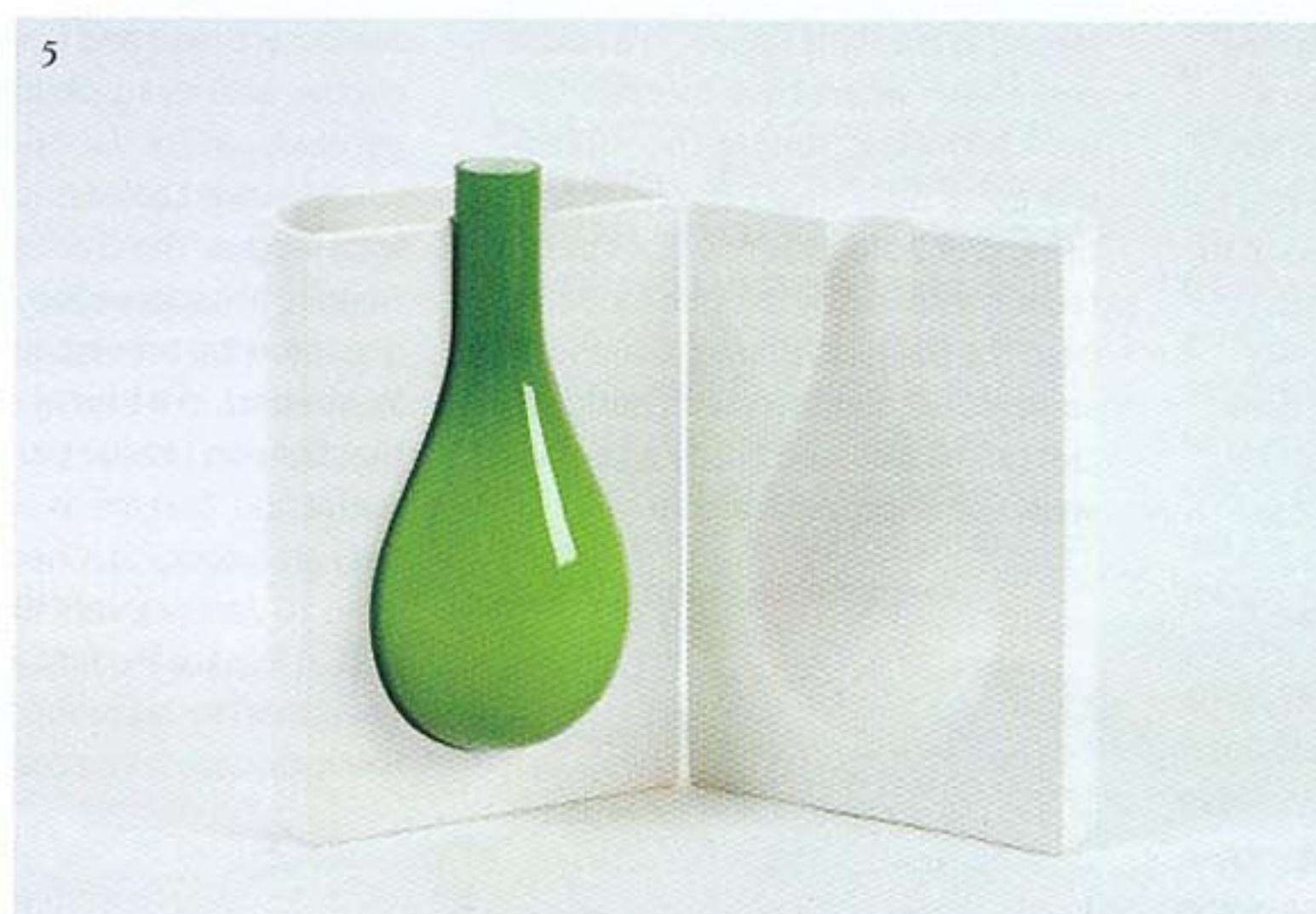
“these vases are produced in the purest tradition of the glassmakers of Murano”

ceeded in isolating them. Instead of helping each other they prefer to be at war hoping that one of them will go under! Ultimately, the result of this in-fighting is that the majority of the glass producers are bankrupt. The only survivors are those that wagered on limited editions, it's the added value. Today Murano finds itself excluded from business and doesn't benefit from government aid - they should help it to survive because it's part of our cultural heritage. The only solution for the future is to reduce the number of employees and to concentrate on the key role of the master glassmaker. Murano will become a village where artists and designers can produce their objects in a limited series, even if I don't really believe in this type of production myself.

Do you have other projects associated with blown glass?

Not directly connected to glass but to heritage crafts yes! For example, I designed a collection of bowls for Skultuna, a well-known Swedish company, that will be presented in February at the furniture fair in Stockholm. I made a big effort to approach working with copper in the same way as I have been doing for years with glass. Furthermore I've just moved to Stockholm (my girlfriend is Swedish) and I'd love to work with companies in the north of Europe to understand their approach to glass. The Finnish company Iittala in particular, whose products are very functional and designed for daily living. I'm also very interested in the tradition of decorative glass, that can be seen, for example, at Kosta Boda.

www.lucanichetto.com



- 1 Luca Nichetto
- 2 Venini Otto cup
- 3 Arillo Venini vase
- 4 Venini Otto vase
- 5 Bosa Venini Essence Uno vase