

MARIA JOÃO BURNAY

## MURANO GLASS AT NATIONAL PALACE OF AJUDA

The political turmoil experienced during the second half of the 19th century caused great transformations in Venice. Following the fall of the Republic in 1797 and the foreign invasions that ended the Austrian ruling, Venice joined the Italian kingdom in 1866, the year in which it was observed a clear rebirth of the economical activities, namely the glass industry that was affected by the competitive Bohemian and Austrian (glass industry) which was stimulated during the Habsburgs period.

In this political and economic context a few years before in 1862, the princess of Savoy Maria Pia (1847-1911) daughter of King Vitor Emanuel of Italy married with King D. Louis I of Portugal (1838-1889) and moved to the Palace of Ajuda, one of the royal residences until 1910, the year of the proclamation of the Portuguese Republic.

Ajuda became the official royal residence of the Portuguese monarchs and Queen Maria Pia made the renovation of interiors following the fashion of the day. Balls and several ceremonies were held in the palace rooms which became the center of the Portuguese Court in the 19th century. The palace was closed after the proclamation of the Republic in 1910 and reopened to the public in 1968 as a museum gathering important collections from the 15th to the 20th century, mainly of decorative arts. Glass collection plays a significant role with about 12.500 objects from the leading European manufacturers.

Murano glass collection amounts 592 objects<sup>1</sup> of utilitarian

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<sup>1</sup> It can be found on Palácio Nacional da Ajuda Database: <http://www.matriznet.dgpc.pt/matriznet/home.aspx>.

and decorative glass. The most of the pieces were acquired during the time the palace was the residence of the King D. Louis I and the Queen D. Maria Pia (1862-1910), precisely the period in which there was a reappearance in the Venetian Glass industry. Mostly dated to between the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twenty century, the ensemble reveals the characteristics of this period's production: the Historicist revival, eclectic tastes, color and fantasy appeal and various techniques, such as filigree and the imitation of semi-precious stones.

Fortunately, a good percentage of Venetian glass keeps some labels that allow us to identify the manufactures. The invoices found on the historical archives of the Royal Family in Lisbon tell us about what was bought, when and where. The inventories are also an important source. This research will continue to be made, namely in the Portuguese National Archives. In the study of this collection, we also give a special attention to the pieces of the Murano Glass Museum, mainly those acquired during nineteenth century some of them have a rigorous date and author.

During her time in Portugal, Queen Maria Pia went on thirteen trips around Europe and always returned to Italy, where she was born. She visited Venice in 1888, 1900 and 1901 and probably entered in the Salviati/Compagnia Venezia Murano and other stores, from whence the majority of the Ajuda's pieces are. Nevertheless, the collection also includes objects from the Fratelli Toso, Testolini and Pauly Gregoretti & C<sup>o</sup> manufactures.

In Paris, Queen Maria Pia visited the Salviati store at Avenue de l'Opéra and A. La Paix, probably a retail store in the same avenue.

D. Louis and D. Maria Pia of Portugal among other foreign sovereigns were invited by Napoleon III to the sumptuous opening ceremonies of the Universal Exhibition of Paris in 1867 where the Salviati firm had a showroom highlighted by the eclecticism of about 500 blown glass showed models, some inspired by the fifteenth and early sixteenth century pieces kept at the Murano museum collection<sup>2</sup>. Fantasy, vibrant colors, design and model variety became its trademark: glasses, chalices, amphoras, *tazzas*

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<sup>2</sup> Dorigato 2006: 69.

and vases modeled with mastery using an applier, delicately colored and decorated with new combinations of filigree and reticello. Other pieces dazzled people for their forms: dauphins, swans, serpents and masks were the result of a healthy competition between the Murano blowers<sup>3</sup>. This variety can be found in the Ajuda collection.

We highlight on the *Regina Margherita* meal service (Inv. 22889) (Fig. 1), which includes 437 pieces of the Compagnia Venezia Murano, dated to 1875-1901. It used to belong to the Queen D. Maria Pia and it was named “service number 17”<sup>4</sup>. It would serve 47 people and features water and wine glasses (Reno, Bordeaux, Madeira, Porto and liquor), Champagne tazzas, finger balls, plates, decanters and jars. The historicist type pieces in blown clear glass with cold gilding and white enamel have the coat of arms of Portugal and Savoy.

It distinguished itself by its originality, fantasy and color the bowl with dragoon (Inv. 3730) (Fig. 2) in blown glass, pink and clear with opaline threads and gilding, possibly by Fratelli Toso factory dated to about 1880. There is a similar piece in *murrine* at the Rossella Junck collection<sup>5</sup>.

Finally the two glasses (Inv. 3817 e 3835) (Fig. 3) in blown clear glass with opaline threads and colored flowers, dated to the end of the seventeenth century-beginning of the eighteenth century, probably from the period of production for Rosenborg castle<sup>6</sup>. These objects deserve a more detailed study. It's possible they could be from the collection of King Luis I father, King Ferdinand of Saxe Coburg Gotha that is currently divided between the National Museum of Ancient Art, the Palace of Ajuda in Lisbon and Pena National Palace in Sintra.

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<sup>3</sup> Barr 1998: 27.

<sup>4</sup> APNA Inventário de louças e pratos, 5.II.1 (b)

<sup>5</sup> Dorigato 2002: 141.

<sup>6</sup> According to Rosa Barovier Mentasti that observed the pieces

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Fig. 1 - Meal service, Compagnia Venezia Murano, Venice, 1875-1901. Lisbon, National Palace of Ajuda, Inv. 22889 (Photo: Luísa Oliveira, Direção-Geral do Património Cultural / Arquivo de Documentação Fotográfica, DGPC/ADF).



Fig. 2 - Bowl with dragoon, Frateli Toso?, Murano, Venice, c. 1880. Lisbon, National Palace of Ajuda, Inv. 3730 (Photo: Luísa Oliveira, Direção-Geral do Património Cultural / Arquivo de Documentação Fotográfica, DGPC/ADF).



Fig. 3 - Glasses, Murano, Venice, late seventeenth century-beginning of the eighteenth century. Lisbon, National Palace of Ajuda, Inv. 3817 and 3835 (Photo: Luísa Oliveira, Direção-Geral do Património Cultural / Arquivo de Documentação Fotográfica, DGPC/ADF).

