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THE ROLE OF VENETIAN GLASS
IN THE COLLECTION OF THE MAK PATTERN PIECE:
COLLECTION HIGHLIGHT
AND AESTHETIC INSPIRATION

Soon after the founding of the Austrian Imperial Royal Museum of Art and Industry (1864), today the MAK, the second oldest Museum of Decorative Arts in the world, after the South Kensington Museum in Vienna, the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Venetian Glass in many of its facets came into the focus of the activities of Rudolf Eitelberger von Edelberg, founding director and mastermind of the new museum, dedicated to become a pattern collection for the modern Art Industry in the monarchy¹. Already in the founding year of the museum, Eitelberger paid a visit to Venice and began to build up a network with Venetian artisans (Fig. 1). The documents kept in the archive of the Austrian Imperial Royal Museum of Art and Industry, bear witness of this exchange and ongoing efforts to acquire important pieces of ancient and modern Venetian Glass². Eitelberger had established a network of so called correspondents, based all over the world, from Tokyo to London, supporting the new institution with information about important pieces of decorative art for sale or new styles. Venice, that from 1815 until 1866 had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, was an interesting source for historic pattern pieces and modern examples of the production of the revived Venetian Glass manufactures. The representative of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in Venice, governor Albert, served also

¹ Noever 2000.

² MAK Archive.

as correspondent for the new museum in Vienna. The first purchases were already made in 1866, historic Venetian Art Glasses³. Drawings by pupils of Professore Cadorin from Venice, which had been sent to Vienna were sent back again⁴. At this time, the museum still had no own building, but was housed in the former ball house near the Hofburg. The first glasses purchased also very soon became models for the new pupils of the Kunstgewerbeschule, founded in 1867. To draw style-copies after historic Venetian glasses was important in the curriculum of the future designers and draughts men the Austrian Art Industry badly needed. The drawings shown here are copies of the early purchases Eitelberger seems to have initiated himself. They show the high quality, the drawings in the newly founded Kunstgewerbeschule had reached, also due to the study-trips many a teacher had made to Venice⁵ (Fig. 4).

Eitelberger not only showed interest in the revival of historic Venetian glass styles, he also was aware of new initiatives set by the art industry in Venice. One of the early books in the library of the MAK comprises a lecture of Antonio Salviati from Venice on the use of enamel mosaics, a new technique Salviati had developed⁶. Antonio Salviati, a lawyer from Vicenza, began to take interest in the crumbling mosaics of St. Mark's Basilica. Exploring what he could do to help save these Byzantine treasures, Salviati joined with the master Muranese glass maker Lorenzo Radi, who had developed a revolutionary new process of manufacturing and applying enamel glass mosaics⁷. The two opened their first workshop in 1859 and the name Salviati quickly became synonymous on an international-scale with Venetian artistic glass and decorative mosaics. Already in 1865, mosaics by Salviati were exhibited in the Austrian Imperial Royal Museum of Art and Industry. When the building of the Vienna Museum of Art and Industry had been opened in 1871, the first museum on the new Ringstrasse planned by Heinrich von Ferstel, and the Vienna World exhibition

³ E.g. MAK Inv. Nr. GI 54, GI 67.

⁴ MAK Archive.

⁵ Heyde 1868.

⁶ Salviati 1865, MAK BI 821.

⁷ Vetri Veneziani... <http://salviatimosaics.blogspot.co.at/p/about.html>

took place in 1873, it was the Salviati firm, which decorated the Italian Pavilion with a mosaic designed by Ferdinand Laufberger, professor of the Kunstgewerbeschule, representing Minerva⁸. The mosaic was transferred to make part of the connecting fountain between Heinrich Ferstels Austrian Imperial Royal Museum of Art and Industry and his adjacent building of the relocated Kunstgewerbschule in 1876, where it still can be found today. Venetian mosaics became an important topic for Austrian Art Industry and Salviati hoped to profit from the building boom on the new Ringstrasse. Collecting of Venetian Glass continued and a first catalogue of the Glass Collection of the museum was edited in 1888 by Bruno Bucher, who lists over 300 glasses from Venice from the 15th century to recently produced pieces by Salviati and the Compagnia Venezia-Murano⁹. In the text, Bucher states that it is hard to discern antique Venetian originals from copies of his time. The glasses were also a source of inspiration for Austrian glass manufactures like the Lobmeyr firm or Bakalowitz, which becomes clear when going through their drawing books¹⁰. Venetian glassmakers also showed their products in the museum in exhibitions like the *Kunstschau 1920*¹¹. Only in 1951, the curator of Glass Ignaz Schlosser published a catalogue of Venetian Glass. He gives the story of Venetian Glass making and shows pieces that also came from private collections like the Rothschild collection to the museum by ways of confiscation from the Nazi Regime¹² (Fig. 3).

Schlosser also strongly supported contacts with the newly developed tendencies of Venetian Artistic Glass. In 1957 the exhibition *Venini Murano* was shown in Hannover, showing Venini glass in comparison with Orrefors glass objects¹³. This gave birth to the idea, to initiate an exhibition on the glass from Murano in the Austrian

⁸ MAK Archive.

⁹ Bucher 1888.

¹⁰ Scholda 2000: 201. Ludwig Lobmeyr donated to the k. k. Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie (Royal Imperial Museum of Art and Industry) in two portions in 1883 and 1892 with the obligation to keep them in the library, where they are still kept today.

¹¹ *Katalog der Kunstschau 1920*.

¹² Schlosser 1951.

¹³ *Katalog Exhibition Glas 1957*.

Museum of Decorative Art. In 1958 the exhibition *Venedig zeigt Murano* was realized, strongly supported by Venetian and Viennese Industrialists and diplomats¹⁴. Thanks to this support and the friendly relations with the Muranese glass makers, many important pieces from the exhibition could be acquired for the collection¹⁵ (Fig. 2). A continuous interest in Venetian Glass through 150 years of collecting becomes obvious when going through the records of the former Austrian Imperial Royal Museum of Art and Industry, often supported by personal relations between curators of the museum and Venetian glass makers and specialists. Venetian glass nowadays is shown in the MAK in a large quantity in the Permanent Collection and in the newly installed Design Laboratory. We pride ourselves in the successful cooperation with Fondazione Cini and Le Stanze del Vetro in Venice and hope to continue this creative exchange from which the MAK has gained so much.

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¹⁴ *Catalogue Exhibition, Venedig 1958*.

¹⁵ Neuwirth 1988.

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Thonindustrie Siciliens eine annähernd vollständige, so muss, hiernach zu schliessen, in ihr beinahe jede Erinnerung an die Perioden höherer Kunstblüthe geschwunden sein, eine Erscheinung, die vielleicht ihre Erklärung in den vielen und tiefgehenden Umwälzungen hat, welche die Bevölkerung dieses Landes im Laufe der Zeit erlitten.

Fr. Lippmann.

Einige Worte über Kunstindustrie und Kunstliteratur in Venedig.

Man braucht nur einige wenige Tage in Venedig zu sein, um sich zu überzeugen, dass daselbst gegenwärtig nur zwei Zweige der Kunstindustrie sich in einem blühenden Zustande befinden. Das sind das von der Società anonima Salviati & Comp. geleitete Institut für Mosaik und Glas, und die von den Kunsthändlern geförderte Industrie in Nachahmung alter Gegenstände. Mit dieser letzteren Industrie steht die Kunsttechnik, welche bei Restauration alter Baudenkmäler in Anwendung kömmt, auf demselben Boden.

Herrn Dr. Salviati ist das gelungen, was auf anderen Gebieten die von den Kunsthändlern geförderte Imitationsindustrie nicht anstrebt und anstreben kann, die alte Kunsttechnik in Glasschmelz und Glasgefässen zu Murano wieder in das moderne Leben einzuführen. Es handelt sich jetzt offenbar nicht mehr bloß darum, die reizenden alten Glasgefässe von Murano so täuschend als es nur immer geht, nachzuahmen, sondern auch darum: den Gebrauchsbedürfnissen der modernen Gesellschaft mit Gefässen dieser Art nachzukommen, die Eigenthümlichkeiten der Glasfabrication von Murano mit der Gegenwart zu assimiliren, und aus einer Waare, bis jetzt nur bestimmt, den Liebhabern des alten Geschmacks zu entsprechen, einen Handelsartikel im eigentlichen Sinne des Wortes zu machen.

Wir haben es in diesem Organe mehr als einmal Herrn Dr. Salviati zu besonderem Verdienste angerechnet, dass er den Muth und die Intelligenz hatte, die gesunkene Fabrication der Glasindustrie in Murano zu heben, den künstlerischen Geist derselben zu beleben. Ruhelos durchwanderte er halb Europa, suchte die besten Vorbilder für Nachahmung auf und war zugleich bestrebt, das Interesse für die künstlichen Formen der Gläser von Murano, für die Wiedereinführung der Glasmosaik zu beleben. Wo es ein gutes Vorbild gab, da wurde es nachgebildet; wo eine Gelegenheit sich darbot, Glasmosaik wieder zu verwenden, da wurde der Versuch gemacht, zu zeigen, dass das Glasmosaik nicht bloß so gut wieder erzeugt werden kann, wie in der alten guten Zeit, sondern dass es auch Bedürfnisse befriedigt, wie dies mit anderen technischen Mitteln nicht leicht geschehen kann.

Fig. 1 - Rudolf von Eitelberger. 1871. Einige Worte über Kunstindustrie und Kunstliteratur in Venedig. *Mitteilungen des k.k. Öst. Museums für Kunst und Industrie* 67.



Fig. 2 - *Dish*, filigrana glass, D: 50 cm, Venice 1600. MAK Inv. Nr. KHM 329.

ÖSTERREICHISCHES MUSEUM FÜR ANGEWANDTE KUNST

VENEZIANER GLÄSER

WIEN 1951

VERLAG DES ÖSTERR. MUSEUMS FÜR ANGEWANDTE KUNST

Fig. 3 - Ignaz Schlosser. 1951. *Venezianer Gläser*, Exhibition catalog: Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie.



Fig. 4 - Albin Heyde, *Venezianische Gläser*, from the collection of the museum, original drawing, pen and color on paper, 50 x 34 cm, Vienna 1868.

