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VENETIAN GLASS IN CONTEMPORARY ART

There are many examples of beakers, flasks, wine glasses, stemmed bowls and vases made in the 16-17th Venetian Style which are referred to in a wide variety of literature[1]. Many of the glass factories in Murano continue to use the ancient Venetian style in the production of a great breadth of objects. Contemporary glass art is almost missing in Venice with the best work being mainly in 'glass design' by a few factories.

Two recent exhibitions are referred here, the first of which resulted from a collaboration of Pino Signoretto, a worldwide well known Master of Venice and Mauro Bonaventura, a Laguna artist. The glass sculptures made by the first were encased in a complex network of thin rods of glass made by the second artist. The second was a solo exhibition in Venice by Mauro Bonaventura[2]. A citation of one phrase of Rosa Barovier in the catalogue of this exhibition is made here and can be interpreted as a call for more contemporary art in Venice: «The growth of the studio glass in recent times has accustomed us to a boldness, a desire to rise above the limitations

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[1] Tait 1979; Page 2004; Baumngartner 2003.

[2] Bonaventura 2012.

traditionally imposed on artists by selected glass techniques, and Mauro Bonaventura shares this spirit of today fully».

Another example of the development of contemporary glass is the work made in Berengo Studio. They invite artists all over the world, who do not know how to work with glass, and want to express their artwork ideas in this fascinating material. Examples are the mirror of Fred Wilson and the chandelier of Javier Perez shown in the exhibition of Glasstress 2009, Berengo studio.

In this short communication a new approach to contemporary glass is made by using luminescent glass to make objects in Venetian style. Due to the short space allowed to this communication only two examples are given.

Reticello is one of the glass techniques that was used in Venice since the middle of the XVI century and copied in many countries. A beautiful example is given in Fig. 1.

In the Research Unit VICARTE, luminescent glass of several colours under ultraviolet light have been developed with base compositions similar to utilitarian or decorative glass, float glass and more recently borosilicate glass. It is well known that glass with small quantities of rare earths display luminescence under ultraviolet light (broad band centered at 380nm)[3]. Five colours can be obtained depending on the rare earth oxide added. Moreover several LEDs developed in UNINOVA are being used in our Laboratories to excite several glasses with rare earth oxides. In Fig. 2a is an example of a reticello bowl made with luminescent sodalime silicate glass made in VICARTE by Christopher Taylor from the Rhode Island School of Design. A cane made with luminescent glass encased in clear glass made for this work is also shown in Fig 2b.

More recently, a Venetian Glass Master, Cesare Toffolo, known worldwide for his skill with borosilicate glass, is now collaborating with VICARTE. Fig 2c. shows two objects under ultraviolet and natural light. It is important to note that to make luminescent glasses with borosilicate has been a very difficult task and research is continuing to improve their compatibility with commercial borosilicate clear glass.

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[3] Weyl 1951: 465-74; Bamford 1977: ch. 3, 67-76.

VICARTE continues to develop the luminescent glasses hoping that they might play an important role in contemporary glass art.

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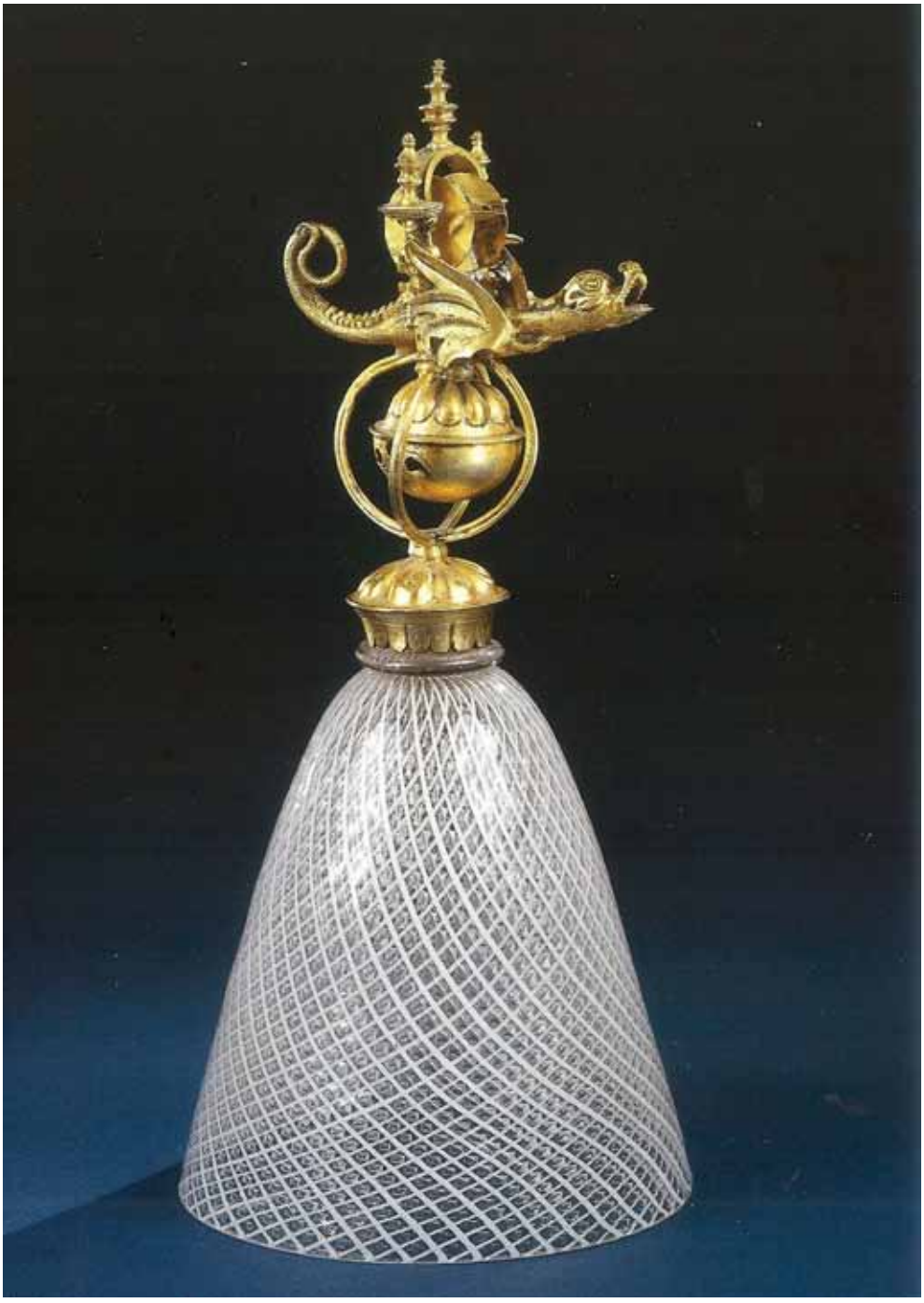

Fig. 1 - Goblet with whistle, *Façon de Venise*, probably Venice, Italy (beaker), 1630, and Low Countries (mount), 1673; Transparent colorless glass with *vetro a reticello* decoration; blown and tooled; H. 20.5 cm. Corning, New York, Collection of The Corning Museum of Glass (51.3.280).

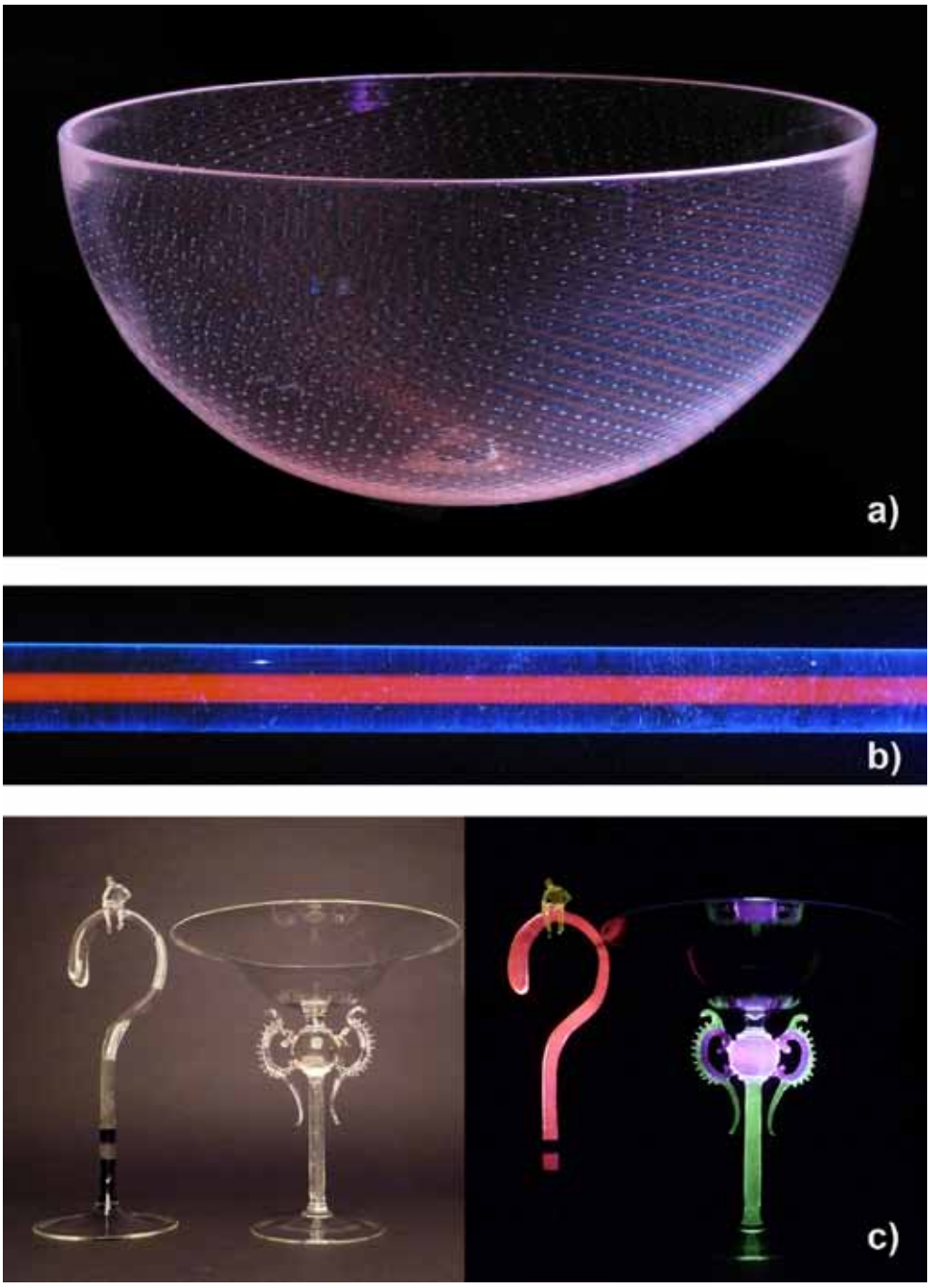

Fig. 2 - a) Luminescent bowl using the reticello technique, Cristopher Taylor, VICARTE, 2010; b) Cane made with thin rods of sodalime glass encasing luminescent glass doped with europium oxide;
c) Two objects made by Cesare Toffolo using borosilicate luminescent glasses doped with europium, terbium and dysprosium oxides. Left, under natural light; right, under UV light.