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Lino Tagliapietra

Heller Gallery
New York
September 6 -
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Venere in Seta,
blown glass,
25 x 6, 1996

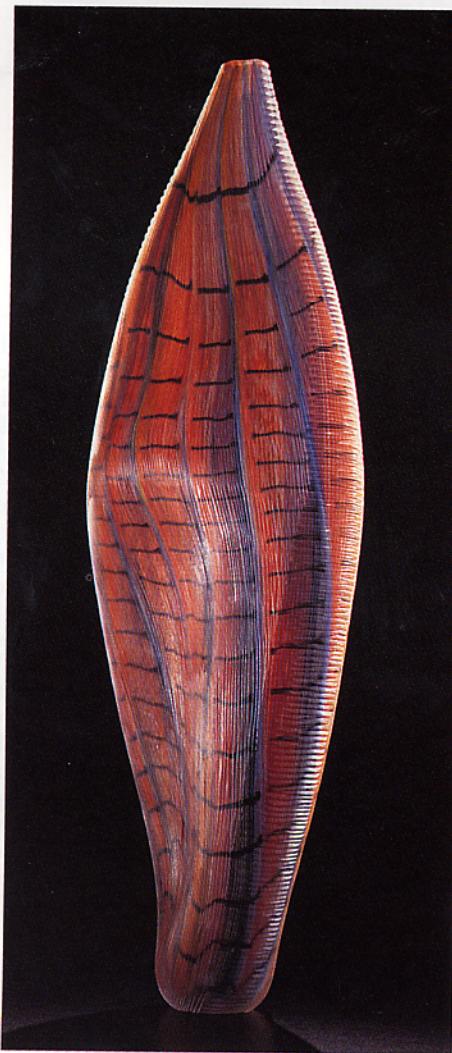
In November 1996, I had the unique opportunity to visit Italian glass master, Lino Tagliapietra in Venice.

Tagliapietra has been working with glass for over five decades. He was apprenticed to the glasshouse of Archimede Seguso at the age of eleven and worked as a *maestro* and designer at Galliano, Ferro, Venini, La Murrina and Effetre International. His technical skills and deep understanding

of glass' potential for form have earned him the respect of glassworkers all over the world. His legendary classes at the Pilchuck Glass School, Haystack, Penland, Corning, and UrbanGlass have had a tremendous influence on establishing Venetian technique and teamwork as the norm in the American glass scene.

1996 had been an extremely itinerant year for Tagliapietra. He had worked and taught in Seattle, gaffed for artist Dorothy Hafner at UrbanGlass in New York, gave demonstrations and workshops around the world, had more than ten exhibitions and oversaw the construction of his first studio in Murano. During my visit Lino invited me to his home and showed me

examples of his recent work for upcoming exhibitions. He had been focusing on four forms: "windowed" vessels with and without holes, the *Endeavor Series*, blown gondola shaped pieces, and platters. These forms are undoubtedly the most creative and original work that Tagliapietra has produced so far. Tagliapietra's new survey at the Heller Gallery in New York continues the exploration of these forms and add several new ones that he added to his repertoire



in early 1997. The most interesting pieces in this survey have been influenced by Tagliapietra's collection of pre-Columbian and Navaho textiles. *Venere in Seta*, a highly textured gourd-like vessel, nods more towards madras than Italian Modernism. *Riverstone* and *Pampiona* mimic the folds and textures of Peruvian stitchwork giving the works a decidedly non-glass feel. These works should also be noted for their extreme *battuto* cold working which adds to their tactile appeal. It is clear that Tagliapietra is expanding on Chihuly's *Navaho Baskets* which attempt to merge textile design and glass.

Several of the other forms are inspired by the form and image of the female body. The long necked, heart shaped vessels reference Botero's disturbing paintings of women with small heads. *Eve*, a bold red vessel with deep carvings, explicitly depicts a woman's sex and *Venus*, a sagging undulating form, reveals in profile, a woman's body. Tagliapietra's "feminization" of the glass exposes the obvious sexuality of glassblowing. The *Endeavor Series* is inspired by the shape of the gondola, which is an important image in the subconscious of all Venetians. The incredible thing about these works are that they are blown rather than kiln formed.

When I was in Murano, I had the opportunity to watch Lino and his team create several of these pieces. In order to make them a bubble has to be cut open and then the glass is sculpted by hand into the form of a boat. Tagliapietra has decided to display these works together so that they resemble a sculpture rather than individual vessels.

Brett Littman