



A CUT ABOVE

Chris McCabe from [ArtDecorGallery](#) tells us about master craftsman Walter Furlan and how he has been heralded as the Picasso of glass sculptors. Photography: [LottieDesigns.com](#)

Over the last two months I have talked about two artists who I feel should be considered by anyone who is serious about investing in original artwork or who is wanting to put together a prestigious art collection.

This month my attention is going to focus on the spectacular original glass sculptures created by master craftsman Walter Furlan in Murano, Italy, in homage to Pablo Picasso.

Many of you will have heard of Murano glass, which has been a famous product of the Venetian island of Murano for centuries but as Virginia Blackburn in a recent article in *The Times* pointed out: "Murano glass is attained by rich collectors and those of more modest means alike, for while the one-off pieces signed by famous makers go for thousands, there

are many unsigned pieces made that are much more reasonable and simply go under the generic name of Murano glass."

This brings me back to the profiling of Walter Furlan who is already classed as the Picasso of glass sculptors and to distinguish him from others which I will try to do in brief.

Furlan was born near Venice in 1931 and from an early age learned the trade at the furnaces of top glassmakers in the 1950's and 1960's. This included the world famous Flavio Poli who invented the Massello technique, which became Furlan's favourite method infusing colour into pure crystal sculpture giving it brightness, vibrancy and power second to none.

Exhibiting his own creations at the Bevilacqua La Masa and the Murano Glass Exhibition, he soon gained recognition as a

master designer and showed great capacity and versatility for interpreting artistic designs for many renowned patrons of the arts by participating in events such as the Premio Murano.

After rapidly becoming the first master of chandeliers, he became interested in sculpture and soon found creative space to express himself in this field specialising in submersed and stylised glass techniques.

After meeting Pablo Picasso, Picasso himself commissioned Furlan to incorporate his paintings during his Cubic period into glass sculpture so giving them a third dimension.

The fascinating artistic work of Picasso expressed in Furlan's sculptures is demonstrated by all the experience acquired during his periods of work with the old masters. Each sculpture is

hand-crafted and signed, the glass nielded to remove fractures making it robust and able to refract the light beautifully. The colours are vivid and the work profoundly dimensional. It is as if Picasso sculpted them himself! And what greater accolade was there for Furlan than to be given license by Picasso to carry on using his name after his death in 1973.

The works of Walter Furlan are to be found in the better Italian museums that specialise in sculptured glass and as far as I am aware Art Decor Gallery is the only gallery in the UK to house these pieces.

I feel that Furlan's wonderful interpretations of Pablo Picasso's artwork will only increase in value especially as Furlan's work is now limited because of his advancing age. ■

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