

Architecture has always been a companion to man, not just through buildings and cities, but also through temporary settings of objects that across the entire Renaissance and until the second half of the 1800s appeared at the parties and receptions of the European aristocracy. One of the most natural places for such architectural ephemera was the so-called *trionfo da tavola*, a centerpiece created as a true

that alludes to the passage of time, by inheritance the work became part of the legacy of art in Parma. But in the 20th century this tradition was revived by Gio Ponti, who in 1926, in collaboration with Tomaso Buzzi and by commission of the foreign ministry, made an important centerpiece for the Italian embassies around the world, recently reissued by a well-known Italian manufacturer.

Judi Harvest also seems to have an eye on this tradition, with an object – a veritable *trionfo da tavola* – made in collaboration with the Murano glass industry and permanently on display at the Gritti Palace in Venice. With a clear reference to the mosaic tradition of the villas of Pompeii, though the background of the artist, American by birth and Venetian by choice, takes it back to a figurative approach halfway between the iconic late Romantic and the pop-kitsch sculptures, *mutatis mutandis*, of Jasper Johns. It goes without saying that the dramatic context of the Gritti shifts the focus

towards a 19th-century image, with the counterpoint of fine preparatory watercolors, in this case with a clear American Pop matrix. ■

Maurizio Barberis

FROM NATURE TO ART

A 'tabletop triumph' of blown Murano glass by the American artist **Judi Harvest**, on permanent view at **Gritti Palace** in Venice, marks the return of monumental **tableware installations**



artistic composition, also by the great masters of the Baroque. François Vatel, chef and master of the art of the Baroque table, is a good example. But just what is a centerpiece, exactly? It is a composition placed at the center of the table to transform it into a theatrical set, to the surprise and delight of guests. Statues, architectural ornaments, refined and precious materials were lavishly deployed to catch the eye of important guests, whose favor could at times be decisive for the fate and wealth of the host. The most famous of these 'triumphs' was the one by the Catalan sculptor Damia Campeny, known as the *Trionfo di Parma* and made in Rome from 1803 to 1806 by order of the Spanish embassy. After falling into the hands of the House of Bourbon, with imagery



1. BY JUDI HARVEST, *FIORI DI ZUCCA*, WATERCOLOR ON PAPER, COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST.
2. *RADICCHIO TARDIVO DI TREVISO*, BLOWN MURANO GLASS.
3. A PHASE OF THE MAKING OF THE CENTERPIECE BY EXPERT CRAFTSMEN IN MURANO.

4. *PEPERONE*, BLOWN MURANO GLASS.
5. *PORZIONE DI ZUCCA CON SEMI*, BLOWN MURANO GLASS.
6. *CENTROTAVOLA VENEZIANO*, BLOWN MURANO GLASS. ON PERMANENT VIEW AT GRITTI PALACE IN VENICE.