



Press release

BURNING FALLS

8 APRIL – 15 MAY 2022

FONDAZIONE BERENGO ART SPACE

SCULPTURES OF KOEN VANMECHELEN ARE READY TO ENCHANT VENICE

Enriched by a number of previously unseen artworks, the Belgian artist's exhibition from the Uffizi Gallery arrives in Murano for Homo Faber 2022. The Fondazione Berengo Art Space is also delighted to host SottoVetro, a group show "Made in WonderGlass" curated by Jean Blanchaert.

Venice, 8 April 2021 - After their success at the Uffizi Gallery in Florence during the exhibition *Seduzione*, the **thirty fantastical creatures** made by Koen Vanmechelen from striking combinations of glass and Carrara marble are presented by **Adriano Berengo** in the setting of their origin: the island of **Murano**.

Titled *Burning Falls*, Vanmechelen's new exhibition showcases the sculptures, which were handmade last year with the support of the glass masters of **Berengo Studio**, in the atmospheric setting of the **Fondazione Berengo Art Space**. The exhibition features as part of the *In Città* section of **Homo Faber 2022**, the major exhibition event dedicated to artistic crafts and international artisans. *Burning Falls* aligns with the spirit of **Homo Faber**, whose focus this year is *The Living Treasures of Europe and Japan. Crafting a more Human Future*, and allows us to celebrate this unique material during the United Nation's International Year of Glass: "If *Burning Falls* can break down the walls that divide us today, it will create a transparency in which we will recognise ourselves in each other," says Koen Vanmechelen.

With this exhibition, the artist's Cosmopolitan Renaissance narrative continues, with the burning mouth of the furnace as its focal point. "Glass," the artist observes, "is the material of the future. It is both recyclable and mouldable. And it invites connection and teamwork, merging creativity and craftsmanship. Working with glass is like working with water: the liquid becomes solid when the elements come together. Fire enables this transformation, and the state between solid and liquid is symbolised by a firebird, like a generator of action, or a flow of lava, leading to the image of *Burning Falls*."

For the occasion, in addition to the Medusas, the red tiger, the serpentine chickens, the horned iguanas and the other mystical animals seen in Florence, several never-before-seen pieces will make their public debut, including the captivating "Formula Segreta" chandeliers: two complex works that reflect on the origin, decay and regeneration of all living things, and are intended as a tribute by the artist to the history of Murano glass.



"The secret formula of these magnificent chandeliers is the chain of evolution." The Belgian artist explains: "At the base of the evolutionary chain are crests, claws and eggs: primordial elements, a metaphor for an ancestral world in a perpetual struggle for survival. The snake crawls among them and recalls the decadence resulting from original sin and the final judgement, its inevitable consequence. Species evolved but were lost, in dissolution and self-destruction, from generation to generation. A new segment intervened to redirect evolutionary destiny: the virus. But out of potential destruction, new life emerged, an egg from which a child was generated, blindfolded because it was still unaware."

All the sculptures Vanmechelen produced for this project skilfully combine the unique **tones** of **marble** with the **shine of glass**, and desire to **reflect on the significance** of certain **key figures** in **classical mythology**. This is the case with Medusa, the gorgon whose hair was replaced by snakes whose poison could revive the dead: Vanmechelen draws an astute parallel by noting how chicken eggs are used in modern science as the basis for vaccines and medicines. His Medusa thus becomes a metaphor for humanity itself, imbued with the power to kill as well as the ability to bring new life.

In a similar way, the symbolism of snakes is reinterpreted, transformed for the occasion into monstrous and deformed chickens. The intention is to evoke in the viewer the symbolic value of the humble chicken, an important metaphor for the artist because it is an example of the potential for life and the ways in which human beings have been negligent with its unlimited potential.

"The extreme heat of the glass in the furnace is the element that ignites the creative talent of the different masters in the fire arena. Like a fiery waterfall it gives life or death to the true soul of a work of art," says Koen Vanmechelen.

"I have been working with Koen Vanmechelen for over thirty years and constantly seek his guidance and advice when it comes to art. I trust his eye, which can be attested to by the number of times he has been curator of my exhibition Glasstress over the years. He is also one of the artists who immediately understood my vision for Berengo Studio in Murano and saw the potential of glass as a medium for fine art. In these new works he takes glass and pushes it further, combining it with another ancient material - marble - and through this fusion raises both materials to a new artistic level. As an artist, he is not afraid to experiment and this crucial characteristic is one of the reasons why his work continues to fascinate me," says Adriano Berengo, President of Berengo Studio.

SOTTOVETRO – From the **8th of April** the **Fondazione Berengo Art Space** is also delighted to host **SottoVetro**, a **Made in WonderGlass** group exhibition curated by the art critic and curator of **Homo Faber 2022: Jean Blanchaert**.

The exhibition will include artworks by **Andrea Anastasio**, **atelier oi**, **Bethan Laura Wood**, **Francesco Vezzoli**, **Joana Vasconcelos**, **Moritz Waldemeyer**, **Nao Tamura**, **Richard Woods**, **studiopluz**, and **Thomas Demand**.



WonderGlass aims to transport visitors into an intimate landscape with this exhibition, presenting the secret recipe of each artist's creativity. This set of contemporary creatives with their artistic approaches to glass creates a unified landscape of vibrant forms, varied surfaces and flamboyant colour palettes that spread their visual appeal. The viewer is asked to explore the various combinations of materials that provide a powerful semantic effect, presenting radically different experiences each time.

"The installation of the exhibition SottoVetro (UnderGlass) an extremely evocative title, it juggles between geometric and more organic forms, moving from light to dark, rendering the works the protagonists in a dramatic tango contest. We are in Venice, we are in Milan, but we are also at the Confiteria Ideal, in Buenos Aires, the temple of the tango," explains Jean Blanchaert.

The concept of the exhibition is not only about the interaction between the visible artworks and the public, it is also about the link that exists within the work of art between what is represented and how it is presented, i.e. its circumstances of visibility and perception. It is about the material surface on which the eye rests and the abstract dimension in which the work of art exists, together creating an interactive dimension from which a complete imaginary cosmos emerges.

KOEN VANMECHELEN. BURNING FALLS

FONDAZIONE BERENGO ART SPACE

8.04.22 – 15.05.22

Campiello della Pescheria 4

30141 MURANO (VE)

The exhibition is organised by Fondazione Berengo in collaboration with Studio Vanmechelen.

Homo Faber is organised by the Michelangelo Foundation for Creativity and Craftsmanship in partnership with the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, the Fondazione Cologni dei Mestieri d'Arte, the Japan Foundation and the Fondation Bettencourt Schueller (www.homofaber.com).

SOTTOVETRO by Made in WonderGlass

FONDAZIONE BERENGO ART SPACE

8.04.22 – 15.05.22

Campiello della Pescheria 4

30141 MURANO (VE)

The exhibition is curated by Jean Blanchaert

Opening hours: from 10.00 till 17.00 (Tuesday – Sunday). Free entry.

Closed: Monday.

Access granted with Green Pass (EU Digital Covid Certificate).

Masks must be used inside.



<https://www.fondazioneberengo.org/>

PRESS KIT

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/mjtt8zplwk77j6g/AAAVbc9U9EdsUg5irINRG9Tfa?dl=0>

PRESS INFO

Anna Ferrarese | M. +39 340 223 9091 | anna@madagascarcommunication.it

Giada Chervatin | M. +39 347 833 6634 | giada@madagascarcommunication.it

Tommaso Spaini | M. +39 340 0510214 | tommaso.spaini@spaini.it