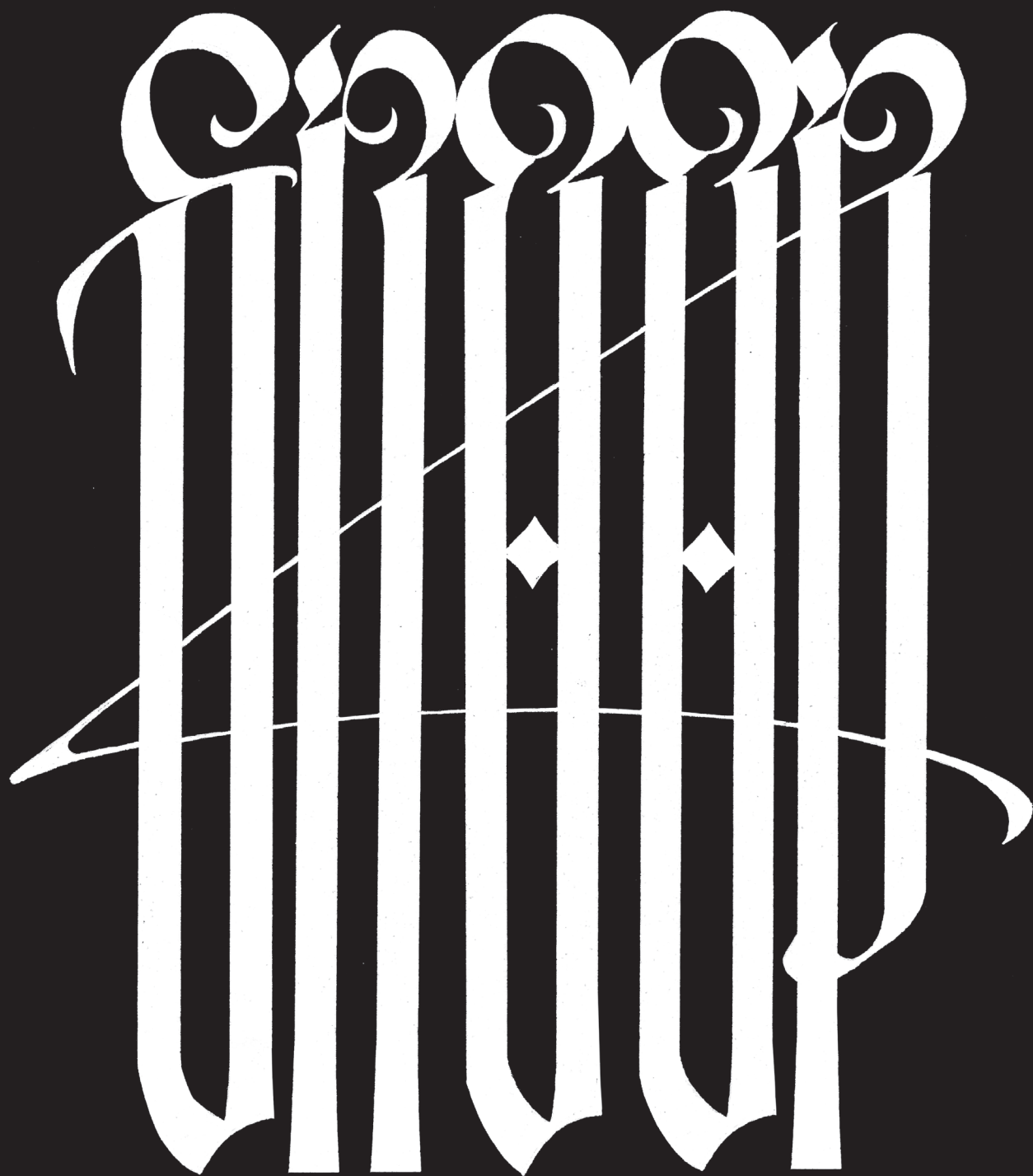


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The intrinsic value of Italian craftsmanship can be best understood by the term demiurge. This word was used in ancient times, to describe craftsmen who lived from the fruits of their labours and free enterprise. The demiurge was also a character from philosophy and mythology, a divine being with capacities to create or fashion the physical universe. In Platonic philosophy, the demiurge is the life force that animates matter, giving it a form and infusing it with a soul.

The Qualities & Character of Craftmanship

Text

Matilde *Antonacci*

Dario *Buratto*

Founders of

STORIES OF ITALY

Photo

Laura *Fantacuzzi*

& Maxime *Galati-Fourcade*



Blown glass processing waste.
Glass furnace, Murano.

↑ DATTERO monoflower vase.
Cooling-down phase.
Glass furnace, Murano.



Detail. Marble workroom.
Carrara.

The analogy from this is clear; the craftsman, possessing a fine intellectual character in addition to his technical skills, transmits the ideal form to an already existing material. Like the Greek demiurge, the craftsman does not create without an idea of his work, and the object discovered through matter comes from the object already created in his mind.

This analogy is what distinguishes the figure of the craftsman (and primarily the Italian craftsman, famous throughout the world for his inventiveness and mental flexibility), from that of the Fordist worker, who in the assembly line, executes only a single step of the production cycle and is not able, or not allowed, to engage with other technical and creative processes.

As Stefano Micelli explains in *Future Craftsman: Innovation in the Hands of Italians* (Marsilio, 2011), high-end Italian craftsmanship has a considerable degree of autonomy. The artisan, enacting the entire production process, or at least a significant part, assumes the responsibility of technically and creatively solving unforeseen problems that may arise during the work. In contrast to the workman, the craftsman in most cases knows his final customer, his tastes, his needs, and can discuss the quality of the final result with him directly. These elements allow that degree of mutual listening, dialogue and personalisation, which has ensured that Italian craftsmanship is celebrated throughout the world.

Likewise, they illustrate the increasingly important role of bespoke design specifically for collectors, a relatively new phenomenon of unique pieces, limited editions and exclusive projects, chosen for their innovative and experimental character and very often based on a close personal relationship between designer and craftsman.

In an era where the ethical aspect of production cycles becomes an influential factor in people's choices, where the focus is increasingly on the terms 'designed by', 'made by' or 'made in' to indicate the history and identity contained in an object. At a time when the consumer is more and more ready to embrace the rare, the unique, even the irregular, in this quest for a soul in the product, Italian craftsmanship takes pride of place.

The qualities of ritual, implicit in the manual repetition of centuries-old tradition, fully responds to this quest for both human experience and spiritual dimension that is so highly sought after in their purchases. The more that low quality production becomes progressively taboo, with its associations of slavery and pollution, the more the artisan products of our great Italian tradition emerge as the natural response to that inner longing.



The hand of the master glassman
of Stories of Italy. Murano

↑ Detail. Tools for marble
processing. Carrara



Detail. Tools for blown glass processing. Murano

↑ The hand of the master glassman of Stories of Italy. Murano