

Report from the Keeper of the Minutes, Yearly Meeting 26th – 29th September, Venice

At the invitation of the Fondazione Cini, this year's Annual Meeting and General Assembly took place on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore in beautiful weather in Venice.

On **Thursday, September 26th**, the Board meets for a short meeting.

At 14:30 Olivier Perrin opened the annual meeting with references to about 50 participants and to the program. A brief presentation from Simonne Lusink follows with light models showing improvements in the LED lamp production "QoQ-light", which she will continue to head after the death of her husband. Both Käthe Klappenbach in Potsdam and Rob van Beek have been very satisfied with the lamps. At 15:00 a visit of the exhibition "Thomas Stearn" follows, which is led by Marzia Scalon. The American artist was the first outsider to be permitted to work via Venini in a glass oven in Murano, after him came Dale Chihuly and many others.

Käthe Klappenbach holds the introductory lecture: "The Venetian glass chandelier in sources and illustrations since the end of the 17th century", which makes reference to the glassworks near Dresden with glass chandeliers and other glassworks in Saxony. It provides a comprehensive overview. Master Kunkel is also mentioned, who melted crystal glass in 1680. She mentions invoices and other documents to support her theories. The history of Palme 1724 in Parchen is however not well documented.

Elena Agnini follows with a lecture on the restoration of five Venetian glass chandeliers from before 1738 from the Amalienburg, Nymphenburg near Munich. The end of the glass arms with metal cuffs in the square holes are mounted in the "wooden baskets". It describes the glass mass that has become "sick" due to a lack of calcium. She describes the professional restoration exactly which began with an exact documentation and ended with a report complete with photos.

Following this, a guided tour through the study complex of the Fondazione Cini with a visit to the long library where very special books are stored, however only a few concentrate on the subject of chandeliers. The group enjoys their evening meal together in the Café San Giorgio on the island.

On **Friday 27th September**, water taxis arrive at the private dock to take us on an exciting trip to Murano. At 9:00 we are already in Murano to visit the glassworks of Seguso Vetri d'Arte. Two of the Seguso brothers accompany the two groups. My group is led by GianAndrea Seguso, who describes the family business in its 23rd generation, documented since 1397. We proceed to a demonstration at the glass furnace. Examples of glasses, chandeliers and mirrors, from 1932 onwards, thick-walled, "long", coloured art glass has been produced. The secrets around the recipes of the colours are described. Gianluca Seguso led the other group. The company Seguso is one of the last production companies in Murano, the empty warehouses/factories that can be seen from the water are witnesses to this sad fact.

Afterwards, a visit to the glass museum Murano, with its three enormous and famous glass chandeliers in the main hall. All the characteristics of the early Venetian chandeliers can be seen here, especially on the column chandelier. In the museum we also visit the special exhibition of the Finnish designer Tapio Wirkkala who did ground-breaking work for Ittala and Venini and whom I had met personally. The museum disappointed again with the absence of information and descriptions of the chandeliers.

A brief walk along the canals brought us to the restaurant Aquastanca, where we enjoyed a traditional risotto for lunch before our water taxis ferried us back across the lagoon to the Ca' Rezzonico on the Grand Canale, which features the well-known, large, colourful Briati chandelier with its metal rod frame and glass cornucopias which alternate with spheres. This has become the model for the authentic Venetian chandelier and therefore very important in its development. Caterina Tognon describes the tradition of colours, the plug-in elements she came to know so well, as she once disassembled the chandelier and drew up a precise plan of it. She compares the function of the light coming from above, with paintings such as Tiepolo's and bible passages, so that the chandelier was by no means merely a carrier of utilitarian light, but also rich with symbology.

Caterina Tognon leads us then to the nearby private Villa San Barbaro, where she has organized a special exhibition of the latest works by Laura De Santillana, a granddaughter of Paolo Venini (Unfortunately Ms. Santillana passed away shortly after our visit) The flat-sided glass monuments were created in the TGK workshops in Skalice by Jaroslav Svacha, who was present to explain the highly technical problems of this furnace technique. The house radiates an elegant Venetian atmosphere.

Afterwards the group is free to explore Venice. Again and again, splendid chandeliers are glimpsed through the windows of the palaces. The museum pass provides visits to other museums (Correr, Pesaro with a Klimt, Mocenigo perfume museum etc.) various churches such as San Stefano are also worth a visit.

On **Saturday, 28th September**, we continue with the remaining lectures.

Alanté Valtaite - Gagac begins at 9:30 and reports on her project "Virtual catalogue of Historical Chandeliers in Lithuania". The country was Christianised as early as 1387 and has always had close cultural contact with Central Europe via the Sforza family, trade routes and the railway connection via Vienna. She completed the first part of the catalogue, which is planned to be followed by a second part on Kaunas' losses 1904 - 1931, all of which will be put on-line in a data base (www.svietyrupaveldas.lt). She introduces her colleague Kristine Budze from the Museum Schloss Rundale, who briefly reports on the renovation of this residence of the Lords of Kurland. Of particular note in the palace are the outstandingly beautiful, renovated chandeliers.

Tereza Svachova reports on the exhibition "170 Years of Elias Palme", which she presented with a family tree catalogue page. The small company in Kamenicky Senov was founded in 1849, expanded following the city fire of 1868, participated in the world exhibition Vienna 1873, were one of the first to use a steam engine, then 1882 the first dynamo with which the first electric

chandeliers by Lobmeyr for the Viennese Hofburg became possible. 1905 then the re-building of the company including all the difficulties in finding craftsmen during the two world wars, after 1945, the director Harry Palme was not allowed to leave the Czech Republic and died there in 1955. It was he who founded the glass museum and wrote about his town Steinschönau, the cemetery and the great glass masters. From 1972 the company was run by the state and called Lustry.

Rob van Beek reports on a Venetian chandelier in the meeting room of the Royal Palace Huis den Bosch with 18 + 8 electric candles. His advice was to maintain the original atmosphere of the room, utility light comes from table and floor lamps with LED, all in a coordinated circuit. He criticizes the unprofessional light bulbs seen on the Ca' Rezzonico chandelier.

Bettina Levin then talks about "Pearl shades from Venice". She describes in a very understandable way the production methods used since 1300 in Venice for pearls made from drawn tubes, which are chopped and melted. Companies like Schlevogt Hamburg, Grilli and companies in the Erzgebirge flourished. Especially interesting is the art of threading pearls into bundles with special fine needles. Pearl flowers, bags and lamp shades were created. The abundance of fascinating material in the form of old catalogues and advertising that Ms. Levin found during her research to support her talk is to be commended.

Olivier Lagarde gave a lecture about his work on the electrification of chandeliers from the 19th century in the castle of Versailles, is particularly interesting. With 112 lighting units bearing 934 candles fall into four categories: Chandeliers, lanterns, wall and floor lamps. He used a specially developed Swarovski candle, which is also used in Vienna, at Schönbrunn Palace. The responsibility of such tasks is recognized.

Ingrid Stricker from Nymphenburg relates on "Venetian chandeliers in the Bavarian castles". The responsibility of caring for the fragile glass arm chandeliers, which were reinforced with wooden rings is a particular point of discussion. The restoration of historical objects is a teamwork between the client, the restorer, the metal workshops and the glassworks. Their glass archive collection, which can supply original spare parts, is of great importance. Stricker points out the dangers of glass sickness, described in detail her sealing of hollow parts with aluminium elements and the annual cleaning. Projects are Herrenchiemsee and Nymphenburg with Amalienburg.

Annette Jacob and Thomas Hinz report on their incredible "reproduction order" for the lighting in the Small Ballroom of the Residenzschloss Dresden, which was planned under Friedrich August II with Ferdinande de Barbedienne beginning in 1854. From good historical photos, two chandeliers could be completely newly constructed, the fireplace chandeliers, still partly existing, were supplemented. The chandeliers on the music balcony, were also totally reconstructed after exact measurements of photo research and material samples were investigated. The brass parts of the company Wurzer were newly fire-gilded by the specialist

company Müller. The work on the project required 33 months with many workshops, including sculptors for the forms, the final budget for the project was € 1,100,000.

Jaroslav Svacha together with **Alzbeta Suvova** from TGK in Skalice talks about "Czech and Murano glass from the point of view of the glass melting technologist". The main difference lies in the viscosity of the two glass formulations: the "short Bohemian glass" and the "long Murano glass". Svacha explains clearly using quantity tables showing the influence of certain elements, where often small differences give the glass completely different properties. The melting temperature of 1,400°, the lower working temperature of about 600° and the cooling temperature between 520° and 430° C. The glass is then cooled to a temperature of between 520° and 430° C. The proportion of SiO₂ in the quartz sand in relation to the potash and potassium carbonate and in Murano glass the high proportion of sodium carbonate makes the essential difference, the proportion of lime is always important as this is what makes the glass resistant to water. Besides lead oxide, which creates the soft "lead glass" other important glass elements are magnesium, manganese, barium, aluminium and colouring additives, mostly metal oxides.

Peter Rath as Keeper of the Minutes presents in the last lecture the story of the first chandeliers with the early electric screw sockets by Edison (E-27), which Lobmeyr used successfully already in 1885 - 1887 on the "Venetian chandeliers" for the Vienna City Hall. The glass parts with all their coloured glass layers and threads, however, were all produced in Bohemia. He described Austria's leading role with the first chandelier illuminations for the Vienna Hofburg, where the Emperor had banned gaslight and Charles Bachelor of the Edison Company and Siemens had Palme produce the first crystal chandeliers for the court ball in February 1883. Around 1880 Vienna had something of a "Venetian intoxication" in architecture and with the famous amusement park "Little Venice". The district was called "Elektrische Stadt".

Pascal Mestrom shared with us briefly the history of his new contract to restore a Venetian chandelier in Lourdes. He found it in a miserable condition, so full of dirt that it appeared to be black. Hopefully he can tell us more about the progress of the project next year.

Afterwards the members gathered for the annual general assembly, that is documented in the protocol. The contributions with discussions on the future of society were important.

The board met again to discuss the next steps in the program and to upgrade the secretariat. Special thanks go to the hosts.

The annual meeting ended with a group dinner, again in the Restaurant Café San Giorgio. Venice will be well remembered by all the participants. We are already planning the 20th Year Anniversary Meeting of the Association in Lisbon, 18th – 21st June 2020.