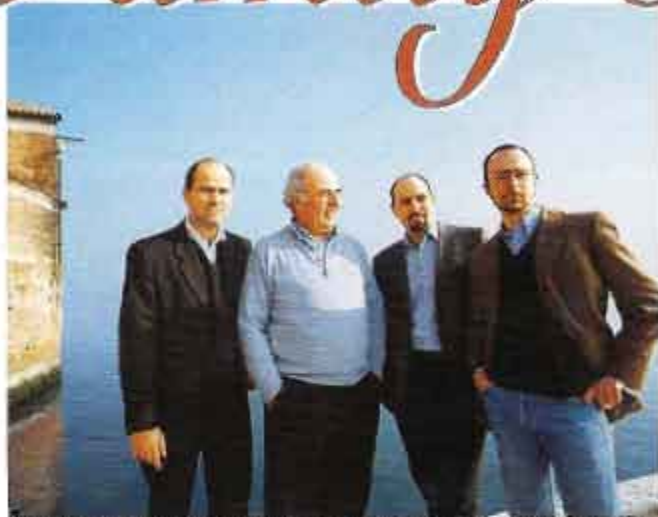


Family Reunion



THE SEGUSO FAMILY FROM LEFT: PIERPAOLO, GIAMPAOLO, GIANLUCA, AND GIANANDREA



CIRCA 1935, SEGUSO VETRI D'ARTE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR FLAVIO POLI, 2ND FROM LEFT



Seguso Vetri d'Arte, the 75-year-old Murano glass company, is once again in the hands of the esteemed Seguso family, owners of Seguso Viro. It's a joyous time in the history of both companies, each renowned for its glassmaking prowess.



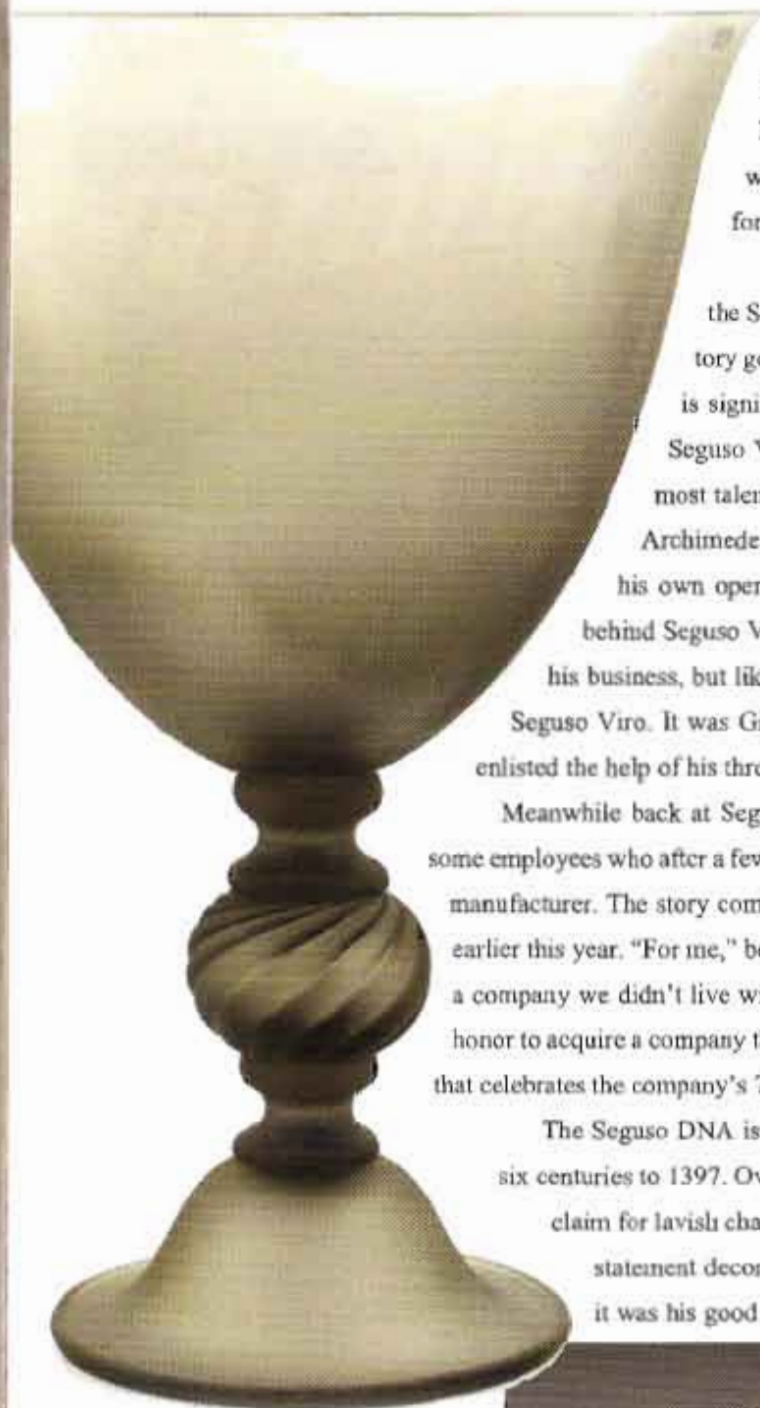


THE TALE OF MURANO'S FAMIGLIA SEGUSO IS THE

stuff of which Italian cinema is made. Fractured, fractious, and feuding families over the course of 600 years beginning with Francesco Seguso inspired this glassmaking dynasty to untapped levels of creativity in a game of one-upmanship. Now two branches of this prolifically talented family tree covering 19 generations have entwined. The 15-year-old Seguso Viro – available stateside for the past 11 years and known for its gorgeously colorful artglass vases and bowls – has acquired Seguso Vetri d'Arte, the 75-year-old operation founded by Antonio Seguso, but not in the control of the Seguso family for more than 30 years.

For Seguso Viro patriarch Giampaolo Seguso, the procurement is a homecoming of sorts. "We're so happy that on the eve of Seguso Vetri d'Arte's 75th anniversary, the company is returning to the hands of the family," Giampaolo says. "One could say that the Seguso family has come home."

The Seguso Vetri d'Arte purchase was son Gianluca Seguso's idea originally. The eldest of Giampaolo's children – he spearheads U.S. operations – Gianluca says there's a certain simpatico symmetry in buying the business. "It's



something that's part of us that we were missing for a long time," he says. "I felt personally it would be nice to bring us together. I was interested in this company for awhile and this year, just in time for the 75th anniversary, the time was right."

For decades Seguso Vetri d'Arte operated within minutes of the Seguso Viro factory on the tiny isle of Murano. A little family history goes a long way explaining why the linking of these two operations is significant in the Seguso saga. It was Antonio Seguso who founded Seguso Vetri d'Arte, in 1933. In time his sons joined the operation, the most talented of which were glass maestros (as they are called in Murano) Archimede and Angelo. The ambitious Archimede quickly broke off to start his own operation in 1942 while Angelo continued on as the design vision behind Seguso Vetri d'Arte. Eventually Archimede's own son Giampaolo joined his business, but like his father before him he departed to make his own name with Seguso Viro. It was Giampaolo's intent to take his operation to a global level and he enlisted the help of his three sons, Gianluca, Pierpaolo, and GianAndrea.

Meanwhile back at Seguso Vetri d'Arte, Angelo Seguso sold the company in 1972 to some employees who after a few years sold it to Cenedese, a 62-year, family-owned Murano glass manufacturer. The story comes full circle when Cenedese sold to Antonio Seguso's progeny earlier this year. "For me," begins a proud Gianluca, "it was the opportunity to reconnect with a company we didn't live with firsthand and which my grandfather left in the 1940s. It's an honor to acquire a company that belonged to our family just in time to be part of the generation that celebrates the company's 75th anniversary. It's like getting back a part of your own DNA."

The Seguso DNA is chockful of the glassmaking gene stretching back a remarkable six centuries to 1397. Over the last century, Seguso Vetri d'Arte garnered its share of acclaim for lavish chandeliers produced for luxury hotels throughout Europe as well as statement decorative accessories. This all started in 1933 with Antonio Seguso; it was his good fortune to meet the skilled artisan Flavio Poli just a few months

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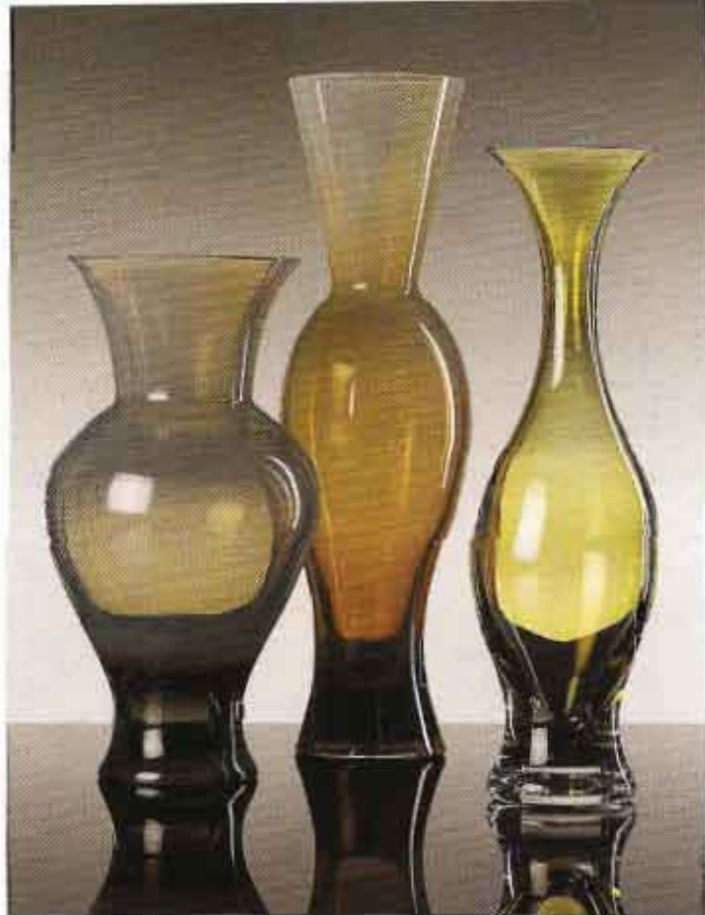


after starting his enterprise. Poli, a glass designer as well as potter, was the creative director until 1963. During this time – particularly the post-war years – both Seguso and Poli's technical mastery was legendary. "Seguso Vetri d'Arte quickly became the center of creative energy," says Pierpaolo Seguso, "synonymous with the highest quality. There was prestigious distribution from the beginning, destined for royal families, grand hotels, theatres, museums, and luxurious private houses." Even Pope John XXIII had a stunning Seguso Vetri d'Arte chandelier.

The productive, prolific, and fecund post-war epoch had Seguso Vetri d'Arte on the winning end of several world fair prizes. "These are the years in which the company," Gianluca notes, "through its artistic direction explores the relation between objects in glass and the light it incorporates, re-

fects, and transforms. This results in graceful objects with strong, seductive, and pure personalities." Once Poli left the company though things weren't quite the same. The Segusos soldiered on for another decade before selling in 1972. Since then business never fully recovered, as the business rested on old laurels, mostly recreating archival designs as innovation was considerably scaled back. And that's where the relatives come in.

"We all felt – my father, my brothers, and I – that something was missing," Gianluca informs. "The company is different enough from Seguso Viro that we thought it would be a nice fit." Seguso Viro bought the Seguso Vetri d'Arte trademark, product, and archive. The product will be made at Seguso Viro's factory by its own 30 employees. "We've increased production capacity," says Gianluca, "and we're large enough to maintain production of both operations." (Still, other local factories are being scouted for purchase as business grows.) The Segusos have high hopes of taking Seguso Vetri d'Arte global just as they did Seguso Viro a decade



ago. "We have a philosophy that localizes production and globalizes sales," continues Gianluca, who forecasts a doubling of sales in four years by focusing heavily on the hospitality sector. "We'll find the best home for these products," Gianluca says. "They'll work wonderfully at Neiman Marcus, for instance." Retail price points range from \$300 to \$1,400 for the decorative accessories; statement lighting pieces can top \$100,000, but average \$3,000 to \$5,000. "There's an elegant subtleness to these pieces," Gianluca avers, "with wider customer potential than Seguso Viro. It's easy to explain this line to retailers because of its sophisticated and subdued color palette that works well in many environments." Product development will intensify with up to five new collections annually. Currently 30 collections of vases, bowls, and candlesticks represent a bit less than half the offerings; the majority of the line is lighting related.

While the brand is in its U.S. infancy, the Segusos are providing plenty of branding, marketing, and product development attention. "We intend to be one of Murano's top businesses within a couple of years," exclaims Gianluca. "It's exciting that we get to do that with both Seguso companies now." □

