



MAK

Press Release

By invitation of the MAK

I SANTILLANA

Presented by Le Stanze del Vetro and the Fondazione Giorgio Cini

Press Conference Tuesday, 18 November 2014, 10:30 a.m.
Opening Tuesday, 18 November 2014, 7 p.m.
Exhibition Venue MAK Permanent Collection Contemporary Art
MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Dates 19 November 2014 – 8 February 2015
Opening Hours Tue 10 a.m.–10 p.m., Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m.
Free admission on Tuesdays 6 p.m.–10 p.m.

Laura de Santillana and Alessandro Diaz de Santillana have chosen glass as their medium, and their work is consciously aligned with contemporary art practices. Their fascinating works can be seen from 19 November 2014 in the exhibition *I Santillana*, which is being presented in Vienna's MAK by Le Stanze del Vetro and the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice. Based on the exhibition *I Santillana – Works by Laura de Santillana and Alessandro Diaz de Santillana*, conceived by Martin Bethenod and shown in the Le Stanze del Vetro until the beginning of August 2014, this exhibition at the MAK offers the very first insight into the works of the Santillana siblings ever presented in Austria.

Laura de Santillana and Alessandro Diaz de Santillana epitomize the ideal synthesis of a perfect understanding for the craft, extensive knowledge of the material, and free artistic form-finding. They are the grandchildren of Paolo Venini, founder of the Venini glass company, which was established in 1921 on the island of Murano; the siblings were raised in one of the most significant glassmaker families in Venice. They both worked as designers in the family business, which was run by their father Ludovico Diaz de Santillana from 1959. After Venini had to be sold, they founded the company EOS together with their father in 1986.

From 1993, after selling EOS, they turned their attention away from functional objects and devoted themselves exclusively to art. They understand glass as an autonomous material of artistic expression, which—like other materials—can serve form-finding. Both have individually evolved their works beyond the glass-blowing workshop to reach

LE STANZE DEL VETRO

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new dimensions in important centers of artistic glassmaking: in the USA and Venice, and recently also in the Czech Republic and France. They are represented by various galleries; their works have been shown in group and solo exhibitions—for example La Biennale Internazionale d'Arte di Venezia—and can be found in the collections of the world's most prominent museums.

Freestanding, space-consuming sculptures and anthropomorphic forms dominate the presentation of Laura de Santillana's work in the MAK. A large steel table with a group of abstract glass Buddha heads stands alongside a white bookcase holding 40 "books" made of glass. Just like a library, here is a synopsis of the numerous colors and surface textures that the artist developed under identical production conditions in a series over the last 15 years. Also on display are Laura's voluminous slabs, which have a powerful physicality, suggesting that the enclosed space has the potential to be crushed.

The wall objects by Alessandro Diaz de Santillana shown in the MAK reflect the history of hand blown window glass and the effect of ancient, "blind" mirrors. Paintings of black mirror glass reduce a subject to diverse shades of black and gray, conveying the impression that they are part of a larger aesthetic dialog. By experimenting with glass as a medium, the artist tests its limits: undefined forms behind reflective glass are reminiscent of the light and dark areas on celluloid film and of the magical effect of images appearing on photographic paper the moment it is submerged in liquid chemicals in a darkroom.

Alessandro's wall objects enter into a spatial dialog with Laura's sculptures. A series of videos in the exhibition shows visitors how the glassworks are made in the glass furnace by the maestro and his assistants. This facilitates an understanding of the creative process and the manner in which the artists push the boundaries of material and craft in the name of artistic expression.

It is no coincidence that *I Santillana* is being displayed in the MAK Permanent Collection Contemporary Art in close vicinity to the MAK Permanent Collection *Vienna 1900*. In dialog with the MAK Permanent Collection *Vienna 1900*, the works of Laura de Santillana and Alessandro Diaz de Santillana are given a separate, new meaning. Involuntarily, you can't help but think of the huge influence that the designs of Viennese modernism—and particularly Josef Hoffmann—had on the work of Carlo Scarpa. Between 1932 and 1947, Scarpa designed glassworks for Paolo Venini. The way the Santillanas evolved into autonomous artists has many parallels with the artistic design of everyday objects in Vienna around 1900. At that time, artists and architects transformed everyday objects into radically modern forms. In the case of glass designs by Koloman Moser and Josef Hoffmann, for example, artistic design prevailed over the

demands of usability. “Viewed in this light, the works by the Santillana siblings recall the positions of Viennese modernism,” explains Rainald Franz, MAK Curator of the Glass and Ceramics Collection, who has curated the exhibition in the MAK.

The work of the Fondazione Cini with the Pentagram Stiftung for the conservation, archiving, and digitalization of the Venetian glassmakers’ archives as well as the globally renowned exhibitions in Le Stanze del Vetro find their counterpart in the exploration of the Wiener Werkstätte legacy in the MAK.

Le Stanze del Vetro is a joint venture involving the Fondazione Giorgio Cini and the Pentagram Stiftung. It is both a cultural project and an exhibition space, designed by the New York architect Annabelle Selldorf. Its purpose is to focus on the history and the use of glass in 20th and 21st century art.

The cultural initiatives of Le Stanze del Vetro focus not only on contemporary artists who use glass as their artistic medium, but also on the main producers and the most outstanding glass collections around the world.

Two exhibitions will be staged each year until 2021: one in the spring, dedicated to the use of glass in 20th and 21st century art and design, the second in the fall, dedicated to the talented designers who created objects for the Venini glassware company in the 20th century. Each exhibition is accompanied by a catalog.

In addition to this, Le Stanze del Vetro has set up a Study Center dedicated to research in the field of artistic glass, together with a general archive of Venetian glass.

Le Stanze del Vetro has adopted a model based on the idea that cultural heritage belongs to the community. That is why admission to the exhibitions, tours, and educational activities is free of charge.

Information about the Fondazione Cini and the Pentagram Stiftung is available for download at MAK.at/presse.

The exhibition opening takes place in the context of the VIENNA ART WEEK 2014.

Press photos of the exhibition as well as biographies of Laura de Santillana and Alessandro Diaz de Santillana are available for download at MAK.at/presse

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MAK Curator	Rainald Franz, MAK Curator Glass and Ceramics Collection
Curator-guided Tour	Thursday, 4. December 2014, 5 p.m. With Rainald Franz, MAK Curator Glass and Ceramics Collection
Publication	I Santillana. Works by Laura de Santillana e Alessandro Diaz de Santillana, Italian/English, 152 pages, Milan: Skira, 2014. Available at the MAK Design Shop for € 22.
MAK Admission	€ 7.90 regular/€ 5.50 reduced/Family Ticket € 11 Free admission for children and young adults under the age of 19
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Vienna, 18 November 2014