

Dino Rosin

Fine Art Sculptor in Glass;

By Debbie Tarsitano

This past January I was privileged to teach encased framework design at the Corning Museum School's Studio. Before traveling to Corning I looked through the course catalogue to see who else was teaching during the week I would be there. There was the name, "Dino Rosin," and his class "solid sculpture." As I looked at the small photo of his work in the Corning catalogue, I thought to myself, "I wished I could take his class." That lone picture in the Corning catalogue told me that here was an artist who understood the true meaning of sculpture.

Dino Rosin was born in Venice, Italy on May 30, 1948 and his family moved to the island of Murano while he was still a baby. At age 12 Dino left school to work as an apprentice at the prestigious Barovier and Toso glassworks. In 1963 at age 15, Dino joined his older brothers Loredano and Mirco in their own glass studio "Artvet." Two years later Loredano and Dino joined Egidio Costantini of Fucina Degli Angeli; while working at this renowned studio, Dino and Loredano collaborated with Picasso and other well-known artists of the time.

In 1975, Loredano Rosin opened his own studio and Dino, then aged 27, joined his brother's new venture, supporting him whole-heartedly. Dino progressed and matured as an artist as he worked alongside his brother Loredano to keep the studio strong. Dino perfected his skills in every area of the studio from mixing batch, the raw materials of glass making, to creating new designs. Dino became so skilled in the cold shop that he has become one of the world's most accomplished cold workers.

Loredano and Dino had a special working relationship that everyone recognized and admired. They had a strong desire to see each other succeed with love and generosity. Loredano and Dino experimented with "Calcedonia" one of the most unusual types of early glass in Murano written about as long ago as the mid fifteenth century. The lost formula for Calcedonia reappeared during the nineteenth century, and then was lost again until through trials and experiments the Rosin brothers rediscovered it in modern times. Their introduction of eerie striations and unusual colors of Calcedonia into their sculptures enhanced the work and gave it a mysterious energy that is difficult to describe because each batch of Calcedonia is unique.

In 1988 Loredano and Dino were invited to Pilchuck to demonstrate "Massiccio" the technique of creating large solid glass sculpture. While at Pilchuck they met and worked with William Morris. It appears that Loredano and Dino's techniques influenced American artists and may even possibly have sparked a new trend toward large-scale

glass sculpture in America. Unlike the Americans, Dino also had an exceptional understanding of the methods of Picasso, the knowledge that simple line can express great emotion. He applied that knowledge and understanding of art to his sculptural designs. American artists were excited by the way Loredano and Dino handled large sculptural work with perfection and soon were emulating and applying their techniques to their own work.

In 1991 when everything seemed to be going so well, a tragedy occurred, Loredano unexpectedly died suddenly. The very news of his brother's death shattered Dino's world and sent the family into deep mourning. The symbiotic relationship Dino shared with Loredano would now exist forever on a spiritual plane.

After struggling through a long mourning period, Dino turned to his son Diego, who had earned a degree in design. With Diego's help the Dino Rosin Arte Studio began creating fine art again with significant welcome support from his friends and colleagues in the community. Today Dino's brother, Mirco and his daughter Dania run the organizational and administrative side of the studio. Mirco also collaborates with Dino in the cold shop. Paolo their talented assistant helps Dino and Diego in the hot shop Caterina runs the office. The family continues moving forward as Dino's son Diego works with his father sharing their love for each other and their grand passion for sculpting hot glass.

When asked about Dino Rosin, Mr. Robert H. Frehling, President of the importing firm OGGETTI, which represents Dino Rosin in America, recalls:

"We began representing Loredano Rosin about 15 years ago. At that time, Loredano was a well-known and respected glass sculptor and Dino was his assistant. However, Dino was very much in the background, humble, and happy to be out of the limelight. With Loredano's sudden death, Dino was faced with some very serious considerations. First and foremost was could he step in and step up. Secondly, he idolized his brother and felt very hesitant to take over and in any way obscure or interfere with Loredano's image and reputation."

"Dino decided to go ahead 10 years ago last November. They had just begun to experiment with using "Calcedonia" but it was Dino who perfected the formula, as he had always been the one to do the infusions. Dino is also the greatest cold worker (carver) in Murano and many of his subjects include 30 to 60 hours of grinding shapes, i.e. the violin, cobra, forcola (oar lock for a Venetian gondola). No one else achieves what Dino can in the cold shop."

"Dino's main glass sculpting technique, which usually does not include "blowing," is called "off hand" or "massiccio". The massiccio technique demands that the artist or master take a gather of glass and manipulate it to achieve the desired sculpture. This is done using standard glassworker's tools to push, pull, trim, or work the glass totally by hand to create the intended piece. There are very few artists and masters that can do this type of glass working well; Murano has a

handful and there are a few in the U.S. I can't think of any other glass-making center where the technique is used at all.”

”As for as my working relationship with Dino, what could be better? Before Loredano's death, I did not even know Dino. Then we started from scratch and continued to have a great success and the business grew and grew. Dino came once or twice each year for a tour of galleries which I escorted him on. My Italian is passable for basic conversation, but not for detailed business discussions. Dino and I understand each other almost intrinsically. . . We have a sensational business in the U.S., which we believe both parties deserve credit for.”

Kevin Shluker, a glass artist in his own right served as Dino’s interpreter and assistant during his Corning visit. Mr. Shukler recalls his own experiences meeting Dino:

“I came to meet and know the entire crew at Studio Rosin in 1998, after about three weeks on the island of Murano. I was not interested in anything long-term because I figured a man of such success would be impersonal and inaccessible. Instead, I discovered to my surprise that the Rosin studio is staffed by a few of the most wonderful individuals to grace this planet. I was welcomed like an old friend. It was the birthday of Dino’s secretary, Caterina, and they invited me to share a bounty of wine and pastries in celebration. Needless to say I returned.”

“After about a week of sitting on the sidelines Dino invited me (perhaps reluctantly) to cool the pipes as Paolo and Diego emerged from the furnace. The first day I turned the entire studio into a lake (errant water spread by a nervous new assistant). After perhaps a week of perfecting my cooling techniques I was graduated to the seemingly simple task of turning the piece in the annealing oven while it cooled. Even at that negligible temperature I managed to distort the first piece I got my hands on. I turned the piece unevenly and gravity took over. Despite the absence of any punitive aura, I was reluctant to return the next day. But the next day I was greeted with the usual smiles and salutations and work continued in its typical jovial manner.

“I was fortunate enough to carve a little niche on the team and learn from the beginning how to approach the material confidently and carefully. Dino introduced me to a concept that had never occurred to my green hands and mind, "Meno fatica," (it means less fatigue). Time after time Dino introduced simple ways to relieve myself of some step, some extra effort that meant nothing towards a finished and perfected product. More simply, Dino taught me (with few words, most often by example) how to move, interact, and associate with the most beautiful of materials in a manner graceful, efficient, and respectful. To this day, nobody else's ease and grace with molten glass manages to put me in the same state of hypnotized fascination as Dino’s. I have always been appreciative of the seeming contradiction of gruff Italian men moving like ballerinas, and Dino epitomizes such a dichotomy.”

“Even beyond Dino's technical skill, there is a similar grace and courage expressed by his everyday dance through life. There is no doubt in my mind that the role he enjoyed for nearly forty years, as his brother's apprentice, would still provide him satisfaction and completeness. Sadly, Loredano died in 1991 and Dino was forced to make the difficult decision of forging ahead or selling his brother's name and business. With the encouragement of his longtime servente (now assistant), Paolo, and his son, Diego, Dino decided to try to fulfill his brother's role as the factory's only Maestro. Friend and adopted American brother, Louis Sclafani, came overseas to help Dino acquire the skills to make the same pieces he had seen his late brother execute many times before. For days they gathered glass through the fog of tears, dropping piece after piece, until something slowly began to emerge.”

“The great Sequoia tree has a seed whose hull cannot be broken by any force less than an epic forest fire. Such a fire will often fell the newly hatched seedling's parent, but it is only from these great fires that a new giant might emerge. Such were the circumstances at Studio Rosin.”

“Beyond all the romance, there is an aspect of Dino's work that fascinates and inspires me the most. It is a dedication to the true line of a subject, the perfect form for every sculpture. If such a line can be found in only the graceful play of gravity and fire then it is found in the furnace. If such a line requires the accuracy of stones and felt, than it is so made in the cold shop. Every aspect of every piece is micro-managed and manipulated by Dino through every stage of production from the glass's composition, to it's form in the molten, to it's final refinement at the grind. I learned from Dino that any effect can be achieved in glass given a pensive and patient approach.”

Ken Mollenauer, A member of Dino's 2005 Corning Studio Class speaks about his classroom experience with Dino:

“From the beginning of the solid sculpting class I had the feeling that Dino was genuinely interested in teaching. Dino is very generous with his time and techniques. He, his son, Diego and his assistant Kevin Shluker did demonstrations until noon and they remained to assist the class until 11:00 pm all week.”

”Dino's art is simple in form, but for that reason it is difficult to execute cleanly. In his class we attempted mimicking some of his work. This exercise, for me, showed how expressive you could be with glass with minimal line and that even slightly incorrect placement of lines (which happened often) would seriously detract from the piece. I'm calling glass manipulation "line" because I don't have a better word to call what Dino does to glass. I felt very lucky to get into Dino's class. After taking his class I felt even luckier.”

Shelly Monfort; another student in Dino's class at the Corning Studio recalls:

“Dino told me that when he was a young man, he worked with a number of famous modern artists. Dino said that he regretted that although he worked with Pablo Picasso for six years, he never had a photo taken of the two of them together. I was touched when; days later as our class wrapped up, Dino insisted that we each have our photo taken with him in the studio. I don't think he remembered sharing with me his story about Picasso earlier in the week.

”Dino Rosin is a dedicated and skilled artist and a wonderful person. I hope that I can emulate in my professional and personal endeavors Dino Rosin's commitment to fine craftsmanship and his generosity and enthusiasm”.

Debbie Tarsitano: My personal experience of meeting and collaborating with Dino Rosin at the Corning Studio January 2005, making the “Lens Fantasia”

“When I went to Corning to teach my class on how to bring artistic ideas to life using encased Flamework, I did not know Italian glass Maestro Dino Rosin. I really had never seen his work except for that one picture in the Corning catalogue.”

“The classes at Corning ran from Monday morning to Saturday afternoon. On Tuesday night all instructors at the studio that week gave slide presentations on their work for students attending the classes. All the presentations were terrific. When my turn came, I showed my slides and as I walked back to my seat after I finished, there sat Dino Rosin, smiling and giving me a “thumbs up” sign, which immediately created a warm connection.”

“Kevin Shluker, a glass artist in his own right, and Dino’s assistant gave Dino Rosin’s instructor presentation. Kevin sometimes travels with Dino and Diego when they visit the United States. Through Kevin, everyone in the audience at Corning was able to hear about Dino Rosin and see his wonderful glass sculptures. Dino’s work awed the group so that with each slide came ooohh’s and aaahh’s. After all presentations were finished, both students and instructors retreated to the studios and resumed learning and teaching.”

“Our classes and days flew by as everyone became submerged in the variety of techniques playing in each room. As an instructor, I did not often get a chance to venture from my studio. Students however were able to move around freely to view demonstrations being given in other classrooms. Every morning everyone in my class could hear cheers coming from Dino Rosin’s classroom (the hot shop at Corning). Dino’s generous demonstrations always ignited bursts of applause and it was easy to hear that day-by-day Dino was gaining many more admirers.”

“My class kept me so busy that I was unable to attend any demonstrations. On Wednesday Dino, Diego and Kevin visited my classroom while I was helping a student encase a flame work motif. I was very pleased to have Dino and his team

experiment with my tools and process and happy to share my knowledge with them. It was nice seeing Dino and Diego having a good time. When Dino returned to his class, his son Diego stayed behind in my classroom and worked on an encasement with one of my students. The next day, Thursday afternoon, Dino and Kevin came back into my classroom again, and Kevin speaking for Dino said: “Dino would like to make a sculptural lens with you tomorrow.”

“I was overwhelmed with happiness; Dino was incredibly generous to offer to work with me on a piece. When I had admired the small photo of Dino’s work in the Corning Studio catalogue I never even dreamt that we would make a sculpture together. I said ‘Yes’ immediately. Later, I learned that spontaneous acts of generosity are an every day part of Dino’s life. Dino suggested that I make a framework design – ‘a fantasia’ – to be encased by him in a lens. I stayed in the studio until past ten o’clock Thursday evening flame working the design to be encased the next day.”

“The next day Dino, Diego and Kevin Shluker encased my framework design; the experience of seeing them work was amazing to watch first hand. You cannot imagine the fluid movements of the three artists as they manipulated the thirty-pound gather as if it was as light as a feather. Dino placed his hands on the piece, over twelve inches in diameter, with only wet newspaper between the great disc of molten glass and his skin. I watched as they worked this large gather without pretension or bravado, but with dignity and respect for the glass and for each other. I also felt that they cared about me and that they were doing this demonstration for my enjoyment. It was a joy to be a part of a very special moment for all at Corning.”

By E-mail, Dino “spoke” with me about his work – a personal interview with Dino Rosin in his own words.

Debbie: What has it been like to work with your assistant and translator? Kevin? What are you working on right now?

Dino: For now we do not have any projects that we are working together on, however, whenever I come to the United States, I always find him available and a pleasure to work with.

Debbie: How would you like the greater fine art community to interpret your current work?

Dino: I think that the art community already appreciates my work considerably and I see that every day in my studio.

Debbie: How do you feel working as a team with your Son and Kevin improves the work?

Dino: Having capable co-workers and colleagues is always a gigantic help because you do not have to explain continually to them what they ought to do.

Debbie: Would you like to have your work known outside of the glass art community, say in mainstream fine art circles?

Dino: It seems to me that it is already well known also in the world of fine art, given that there are a number of galleries that display my work through out the world.

Debbie: Tell us your views on fine art.

Dino: Ever since I was a young man working with my brother Loredano, I have experiences and contacts with famous artists such as Picasso, Chagall, Le Corbusier, Jean Cocteau, etc. For a long time, I have gained from Loredano the views of fine art, and also because I live in Italy and in Venice where you find an element of fine art in every corner.

Debbie: Your family has worked with some of the great artists Picasso, etc. Do you feel that glass artists today aspire to create fine art on that level?

Dino: I have seen a large change in the attitudes of artists in glass. Before the objects were simply the objects. Today, there is a significant push to create new works of art.

Debbie: Do you think glass art today has a high standard of design?

Dino: Certainly not with everyone, but there is a significant rebirth.

Debbie: How would you like your glass art to influence the glass art community?

Dino: I have observed a large following in large-scale art glass (Massiccio in Italian literally means “in bulk” meaning large scale art). I think that my family, which was among the first to pursue this kind of work, has created a stimulus that others have followed.

Debbie: Since your family was one of the few to work with such great artists as Picasso, how did this experience influence your work?

Dino: I should say that these experiences have opened new horizons for me and also for Loredano.

Debbie: Do you think that we need to raise the level of glass art design to the same level of quality found in the mainstream fine art field?

Dino: I think that the art of glass is taking large steps to approach fine art. It is also true that the glass material has both properties of light and color that make it even more suggestive of fine art. And I also think about staying on the correct road and I hold myself accountable (to the standards of fine art) more and more every day.

Debbie: Who is your favorite painter, sculptor? Has any contemporary artist inspired you, and how?

Dino: Modigliani for his excellence, his simple line and his selection of colors and Brancusi for his abstract lines.

Debbie: I aspire to reach the goals of the fine art community. I admire Picasso and the achievements of others in fine art painting and sculpture. How do you feel about this?

Dino: I think your thoughts and goals also seem outside of glass art as a community. Even I agree that the art of glass has abandoned the traditional canons of the goals of pure art. In fact every one of my pieces of work stretches to have some truly artistic element, which affects the observer.

Debbie: How do you define fine art?

Dino: “I believe that each work of art should touch the spectator emotionally.”

Debbie: You have taught classes here in America. What do you feel students here need to learn to become better artists?

Dino: I believe that American students must, above all, learn the technical aspects of being a glass worker. After that it they must develop their sensibilities to find a place in the world of art.

Debbie: We know you suffered a personal tragedy in 1991, (I too had a similar experience in the loss of my father and partner in the studio, Delmo.) How did losing your brother and partner change you're thinking about your work and yourself? After the loss of your brother how did your work change? Did your designs change?

Dino: The death of my brother Loredano completely convulsed my life. I had to detach myself and fly into a void of emptiness without knowing if I could truly rise to that height. However, I had a terrific faith and love for my work, which sustained me.

Debbie: Tell us about the changes you have gone through in the last 13 years to bring you where you are now.

Dino: Whereas before the responsibility was completely on the shoulders of my brother Loredano, I had to reinvent myself as a person with the final say about each finished work without having any prior experience. In this effort I had tremendous support in my working collaboration with Diego (my son) who knew how to support me both spiritually and emotionally as well as physically. From the beginning I followed the path that had been set by Loredano. But as I gained confidence in my own abilities, I left this path and began to develop my own imagination. In the early '90s I was primarily a figurative artist working in glass. At the time I perfected Calcedonio I wanted to take a leap to a symphony of color that this material made possible; therefore I began to prefer a very simple line, stylized so that together with color it gives strong emotions.

Debbie: How is the Dino today different from the Dino of 13 years ago? What are your feelings about the meaning of your work, and how your work fits into your life?

Dino: I am older in years and experience; however, I still maintain the enthusiasm and responsibilities of earlier years.

Debbie: Tell us a little bit about your teaching experience at Corning this January? What do you feel you accomplish when you visit Corning as an instructor.

Dino: It was a wonderful experience; it uplifted me, because I saw that what I had to teach was well received and the skill level of the students became much improved.

Debbie: Why did you decide to make a work with me (Debbie Tarsitano) at Corning?

Dino: Because I found in you a person that beyond having a passion for the glass art, you combined a sincere human sensibility with a wonderful feeling.

Debbie: What are your plans and dreams for your work in the future? If you could make anything you want what would that be?

Dino: My immediate challenge is to see Diego mature and to become a master because it is proper that my experience does not end with me. And to continue whatever skills I have so that they do not die with me. For the intermediate future, I am always looking for new goals and this is what gives me stimulation and the will to continue in this work, which I love very much and which fulfills me as a person and as an artist.

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Dino Rosin has had many one-man gallery shows in America. His work is included in countless private, public and Museum collections all over the world.

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