

**Ettore Sottsass et Pierre Charpin:
challenge-defying glass design**

23 November 2011 - 2 September 2012



Left.: Pierre Charpin, collection *Torno subito*, screen series (2000-2001). ©Jean-Luc Maby, CIRVA.

Right. : Ettore Sottsass, *Vase n°38* (1998-1999). © Erik & Petra Hesmerg, Amsterdam, The Gallery Mourmans, Lanaken.

Ettore Sottsass et Pierre Charpin: challenge-defying glass design –

From 23 November 2011 to 2 September 2012

Following upon *Post Mortem : dix créateurs repensent l'urne funéraire* (ten creators rethink funerary urns) and *In vino veritas* : a project by Matali Crasset, the mudac continues to explore glass design editions through the work of Ettore Sottsass and Pierre Charpin.

A major figure in the realm of design, Ettore Sottsass, who passed away in 2007, founded the Memphis Group in 1981. Internationally acclaimed for putting a new light on the link between architecture and design, he focused his research on defining forms and space, granting much importance to light and color. Having studied the visual arts, Pierre Charpin's first influences were the conceptual and minimal art theories. Yet in the early 1990s, he set out on the more concrete path of design rather than aesthetic research. A decisive moment came with his discovery of the Memphis outlook of "not thinking of objects only according to their structure but also in terms of surface, color, decor," enabling him to adopt a more sensual than structural approach.

Both Sottsass and Charpin were invited on several occasions by the CIRVA (International Center for Glass and Visual Arts Research) in Marseilles, for purposes of developing experimental approaches to glass design. This exhibition also represents a chance to present the CIRVA's activities for the first time in Switzerland.

Excerpts from a text by Isabelle Reiher, director of the CIRVA

Humans have availed themselves of glass, a commonplace material, for thousands of years, using techniques that, in certain cases, have hardly evolved. Yet even today, glass remains an incredible source of inspiration and fascination for artists and creators. Ettore Sottsass sees it as a gradually tamed friend: "Amid all the materials Nature has produced and Man has invented, for me glass undoubtedly remains one of the most fascinating [...] We have become friends. We speak to each other of our dreams, of our wish for freedom. We decided there was a long road ahead for us to travel... In fact, all remained to be discovered. All always remains to be discovered."¹

Intended for contemporary artists and designers, the CIRVA, where Ettore Sottsass has long worked, is a center for glass research and creation. Indeed, it represents one of the few venues in Europe where artists can encounter this material and, possibly, make friends with it. Glass possesses complex properties generating a number of difficulties that non-glassmaking artists hardly suspect when planning an artistic project. The availability of technicians and the time factor are thus vital to glassmaking: these two specificities are basic features of the CIRVA outlook as a place to reside and think projects through. The visual artists and designers who come there to work entrust the glassmakers with carrying out the projects they have imagined. The generosity of the dialogue between these parties brings much into the realm of the possible.

Very often, such a compulsory transmission belt can be quite destabilizing for artists in the habit of doing, deciding and mastering on their own. In their frustration at not being able to pitch in themselves, they must find new means whereby to possess their project, to gain a grasp on it. And so

¹ *L'atelier, l'artiste, le verre*, CIRVA, Centre international de recherche sur le verre et les arts plastiques, Marseille, Editions Xavier Barral, Paris, 2007.

it is that the gap created between the thought of an artist or his/her language and the gesture of the craftsperson who transposes it becomes in itself a new artistic material to be worked upon, liable to induce doubt or even mistakes and failures. Many of the projects carried through at the CIRVA have been the fruit of unpredictable or unforeseen circumstances.

Then too, many of the projects do not ever get completed, because the idea for a piece and its realization in the material simply cannot be made to coincide.

Often, the technicians themselves get caught up in the challenges posed by the material: generally, it is at such point that the creative act can take place, when the artist has managed to make the technician forget his or her professional reflexes. [...]

List of works: Pierre Charpin

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Pierre Charpin, collection *Torno Subito*, série lisse (1999-2000)

Production et réalisation : Centre international de recherche sur le verre et les arts plastiques (CIRVA), Marseille

© Jean-Frédéric Schall / CIRVA



Pierre Charpin, collection *Torno Subito*, série gravée (1998-2000)

Production et réalisation : Centre international de recherche sur le verre et les arts plastiques (CIRVA), Marseille

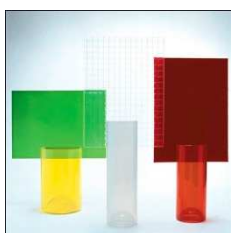
© Jean-Luc Maby / CIRVA



Pierre Charpin, collection *Torno Subito*, série écran (2000-2001)

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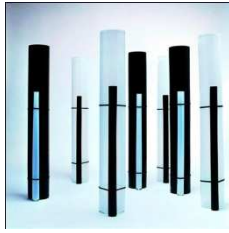


Pierre Charpin, collection *Torno Subito*, série écran (2000-2001)

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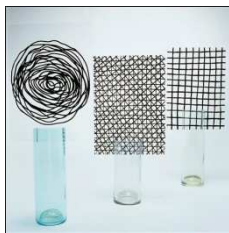
Liste d'œuvres: Pierre Charpin – suite et fin



Pierre Charpin, collection *Torno Subito*, série élastique (2001)

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Pierre Charpin, collection *Torno Subito*, série écran sérigraphié (2001)

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© Jean-Luc Maby / CIRVA



Pierre Charpin, collection *Torno Subito* (1998-2001)

Production et réalisation : Centre international de recherche sur le verre et les arts plastiques (CIRVA), Marseille

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Pierre Charpin, collection *Torno Subito* (1998-2001)

Production et réalisation : Centre international de recherche sur le verre et les arts plastiques (CIRVA), Marseille

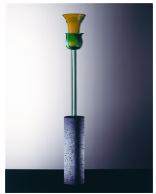
© Jean-Louis Elzéard / CIRVA

Selected works: Ettore Sottsass



Ettore Sottsass, *Vase n°8* (1998-1999)

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Ettore Sottsass, *Vase n°12* (1998-1999)

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Ettore Sottsass, *Vase n°38* (1998-1999)

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Ettore Sottsass, *Xiangzhen* (1999-2000)

Réalisation Centre international de recherche sur le verre et les arts plastiques (CIRVA), Marseille, édition Galerie Mourmans, Maastricht (Pays-Bas).
© Jean-Luc Maby / CIRVA

Selected works: Ettore Sottsass



Ettore Sottsass, *Xiangzhen* (1999-2000)

Réalisation Centre international de recherche sur le verre et les arts plastiques (CIRVA), Marseille, édition Galerie Mourmans, Maastricht (Pays-Bas). © CIRVA



Ettore Sottsass, *Xiangzhen* (1999-2000)

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Ettore Sottsass, *Xiangzhen* (1999-2000)

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Ettore Sottsass, *Lingam* (1999-2000)

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Ettore Sottsass, *Lingam* (1999-2000)

Réalisation Centre international de recherche sur le verre et les arts plastiques (CIRVA), Marseille, édition Galerie Mourmans, Maastricht (Pays-Bas). © Jean-Luc Maby / CIRVA

Selected works: Ettore Sottsass



Ettore Sottsass, *Lingam* (1999-2000)

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Ettore Sottsass, *Lingam* (1999-2000)

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Ettore Sottsass, *Lingam* (1999-2000)

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Ettore Sottsass, *Kachina 3* (2009-2011)

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Ettore Sottsass, *Kachina 13* (2009-2011)

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Selected works: Ettore Sottsass



Ettore Sottsass, *Kachina 16* (2009-2011)

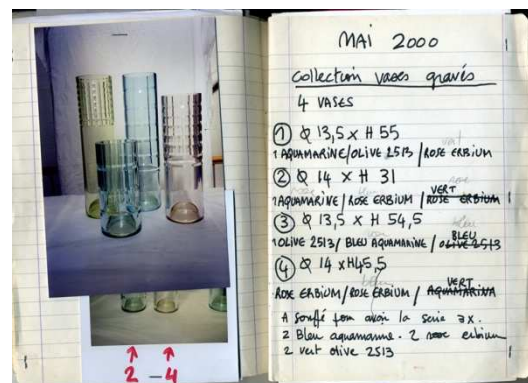
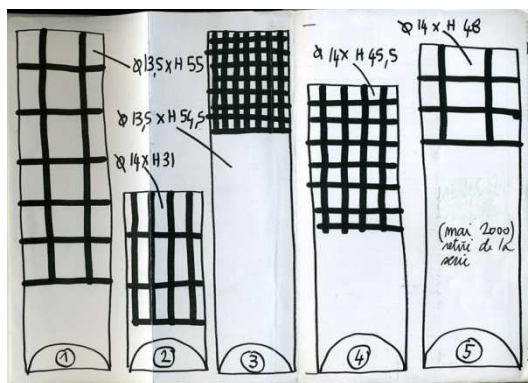
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The importance of sketches

To a great extent, Charpin and Sottsass alike resorted to preliminary drawings, to assist them in defining a project's outlines and developing it until the final desired result. In doing so, Charpin ended up creating an actual *Logbook* documenting his research activities from 1998 to 2001; he has generously loaned his compilation for this exhibition. Sottsass preferred to create a large number of watercolors on simple paperboard; again, we are pleased to represent reproductions of these thanks to the kind permission of Ernst Mourmans, of the Mourmans Galerie in Maastricht.

Several examples:



Pierre Charpin, sketch notebook, collection *Torno subito*, engraved series (1998-2000)



Ettore Sottsass, *Kachinas* collection (posthumous execution, from 2009 to 2011)

Practical information

Press conference	Monday 22 November 2011 at 10am.
Opening reception	Tuesday November 22, as of 6pm
Brochure	A catalogue has been published upon the occasion of the exhibition. Essays by Bettina Tschumi and Isabelle Reiher. Bilingual French/English.
Public guided tours	Thursday November 24 at quarter past noon, Wednesday January 18 at 2 pm, and Tuesday February 14 at quarter past noon.
Glass workshops	Saturday January 14 Wednesday January 18 and and Saturday January 21, 2012, from 2:30 to 4pm. The workshops are led Valérie de Roquemaurel, artist, as well as Gabrielle Chappuis, mediator. Advance booking required at 021 315 25 30 or info@mudac.ch
Events	Under the auspices of a week-long workshop, Pierre Charpin will give a talk at the ECAL on November 24 at 6pm, IKEA auditorium, ECAL. Within the framework of Design Thursdays 2012, Isabelle Reiher, director of the CIRVA, will give a talk on the exhibition and CIRVA, on Thursday May 10, 2012, at 5:30pm. Advance booking required at 021 315 25 30 or info@mudac.ch
Dates	Exhibition from November 23, 2011 to September 2, 2012
Opening hours	Tues-Sun: 11am-6pm December 24: 11am-4pm, December 25: closed, December 31: 11am-4pm, January 1: closed
Illustrations	The images can be downloaded from our Internet site www.mudac.ch . Click on « presse ». Login : presse2011; password : images2011. A CD-rom with pictures of the exhibition is available upon request. Indly include your e-mail address in your request, for our information.
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Concept and execution

Bettina Tschumi
and Chantal Prod'Hom, Director

Exhibition design

Carole Guinard

Brochure graphic design

Atelier Cocchi, Lausanne

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