

ELEMENTS
OF A
STYLE

THE ITALIAN DESIGNER VINCENZO DE
COTIIS PLAYS WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE
BAROQUE IN HIS LATEST EXHIBITION AT
CARPENTERS WORKSHOP IN NEW YORK

by Archana Khare-Ghose

PRIMEMOVER



Vincenzo De Cotiis

COURTESY DE COTIIS GALLERY

The Milan-based design artist Vincenzo De Cotiis seeks the spirit of the Baroque — dramatic, experimental, evoking movement — while paring away the excesses of the period in search of something more elemental.

“Baroquisme,” an exhibition at Carpenters Workshop Gallery in New York through June 23, features De Cotiis’ sculptural pieces that exemplify his quest. The works are a harmonious comingling of artistic elements from the past and Contemporary design sensibilities — shiny, precious metals meld well with fiberglass, whereas the latter blends equally exuberantly with marble.

De Cotiis answers a few questions for BLOUINSHOP on his current exhibition, his favorite materials, his inspiration, and the influence of the rich heritage of the city of Milan.

Though your current exhibition at Carpenters Workshop Gallery is a tribute to the spirit of Italian Baroque, there are certain subtle differences that a keen eye cannot miss. While Baroque was generally associated with grandeur and drama that was superimposed on works of art and architecture, your works are more elemental. They show motion (like Baroque works) but the motion is organic, almost like frozen frames of a natural process slowly unfolding. Is this subtle difference deliberate or part of a natural process?

The “Baroquisme” series is a pure tribute to the Baroque. It is a celebrated idea that has fallen into our contemporary world. We do not live in a 17th-century theater, we are not afflicted by a religious model. Instead, it is a study of movement, analyzing architectural decorativism, experimenting with the challenge of combining materials. Organicity is dictated by the material

itself, which is expressed through its ribs that are rippled or twisted just where the material allows it. A process of constant dialogue and clash between thought, drawing, hand and matter.


In your recent works, you have married precious materials that come with a rich artistic heritage of their own. Which material(s) remains your favorite and why? And what kind of pairing do you like best?

I have a passion for all natural materials, but I especially love those that I find unexpectedly, like the stone I used for my latest collection. Assembling small pieces of the stone evokes a strong sense of naturalism and pictorial references from the early 1900s. I like materials that contrast with one another. A combination I often use is very shiny or precious metals combined with a more common material like fiberglass. The resulting dialogue between the two often overturns the conventional way of perceiving things.


Who and what have been the biggest influences on your sensibilities as an artist?

I look around. And by looking, I encounter and see everything. From my initial artistic studies, to continuous research in art books, visiting exhibitions, cities, looking at all artistic movements — especially

The works bring together artistic elements from the past and Contemporary design sensibilities



Vincenzo De Cotiis | DC 1604
2016. Hand dyed velvet, silver
plated brass, H54 L295 W95 cm /
H21.3 L116.1 W37.4 in



Vincenzo De Cotiis | DC 1727
2017. Murano glass, silvered
cast brass, silvered brass,
smoked glass, H15 L145 W47
cm/ H59.1 L57.1 W18.5 in.
Limited Edition of 12



Vincenzo De Cotiis
IDC 1736A 2017.
Recycled fiberglass,
silvered brass, black
lacquered fiberglass,
H46 L52 W49.5 cm /
H18.1 L20.5 W19.5
in. Limited edition of
8 + 4 AP

those that marked the beginning of the last century — and the excitement and fascination of discovering new materials. All of this, everything, leaves daily traces of inspiration that settle and then emerge again through other artistic languages that I process continuously. It is a more artistic than an architectural process.

Could you elaborate on the influence of Milan on your architectural and design sensibilities?

Milan has recently returned to the limelight, but really, for me, it has always been one of the most stimulating cities. Its identity has never been unified; one must live it precisely through its fragmentation and its contrasts. The most interesting architecture of the last 100 years are found right here, multifaceted figures such

as Giò Ponti and Albinì have lived and worked here. That heritage is tangible today. You can find the dynamism of the Torre Velasca next to the Ca' Granda, an old hospital of the 1400s converted into a university, to the most recent philanthropic achievements of the Prada Foundation designed by OMA.

With global wealth becoming more geographically dispersed — moving beyond traditional areas of wealth concentration (the U.S. and Europe) to the Middle East and the Far East — have you seen influences from these regions incorporated/embraced in Western sensibilities? Do you have clients/ buyers from China, U.A.E. for example and what do they expect from you — pure Italian design or a marriage of Italian sensibilities with something rooted in their culture?

Below: Vincenzo De Cotiis | DC 1719
2017. Murano glass, silvered cast
brass, silvered brass, H63.5 L52
W41 cm / H25 L20.5 W16.1 in.
Limited edition of 20 + 4 A



Left : Vincenzo De Cotiis | DC 1724 2017.
Murano glass, silvered cast brass, H67
L40 W16 cm / H26.4 L15.7 W6.3 in.
Limited edition of 20 + 4 AP

COURTESY DE COTTIS GALLERY

PRIMEMOVER

Vincenzo De
Cotiis | DC 1729
2017. Silvered
brass, recycled
fiberglass, marble,
H200 L90 W40
cm / H78.7 L35.4
W15.7 in. Unique





It may be true in part; for some time a certain taste has been spreading on a worldwide level, “crushing” what the individual expressive, aesthetic and cultural differences are. I don’t take notice of this. What I do every day is to shape the thought and the forms based on the stimuli I encounter. The final result is always unusual and different, perhaps recognizable because behind it all, it speaks of my personal sensitivity and culture. People seek me out for this quality in my work.

Could you name a practicing or past designer/architect whose work you appreciate to the extent that you would want them to build and design your house? Can you specify the reasons?

It would be nice to be surrounded by the details that are found in the spaces designed by Carlo Scarpa, but I also love a kind of anonymity. Our house is located in the center of Milan and is a very beautiful

baroque palace with period interiors that are still authentic and intact. So it matters little to me who the original architect was, but certainly, the period characterizes the living space very much. The wide and tall spaces, the enfilade with wooden framed doors, the brightness and the vaults with the restored frescoes were the parts which predominantly guided the design of the house.

Is there a dream project that you want to execute in the future? And, can you share the most exciting project you have undertaken in your career so far and what makes it so memorable?

My production of Collectible Design pieces is getting closer and closer to the idea of sculpture. Often with a strong architectural imprint — almost becoming habitable sculptures. I would like to work on different scales, and work with large spaces that can accommodate art, such as a museum or a gallery. ◀

Vincenzo De Cotiis
IDC 1716 2017.
Murano glass,
Silvered cast brass,
silvered brass, H38
L141 W131 cm /
H15 L55.5 W51.6
in. Limited edition
of 12