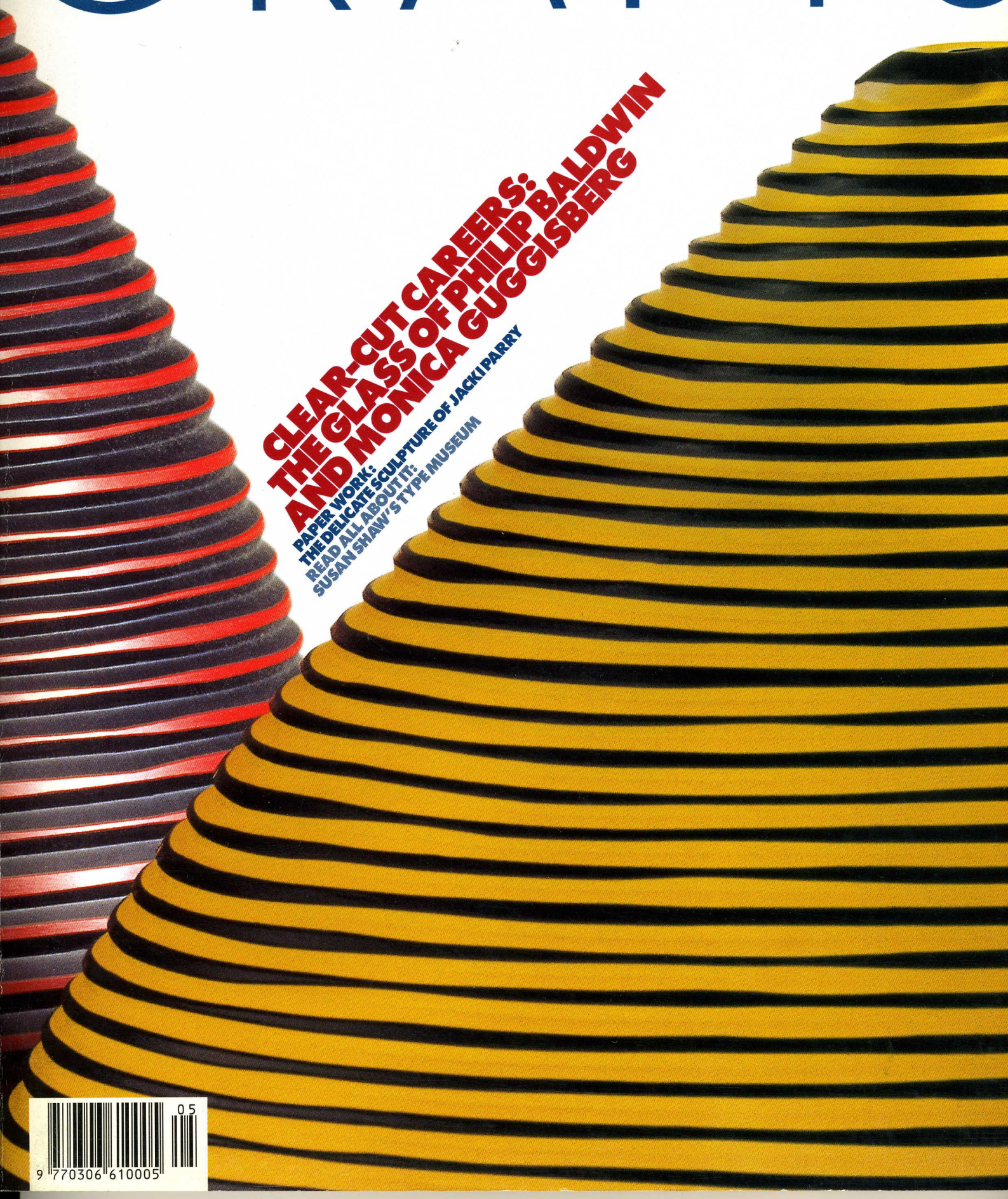


CRAFTS



**CLEAR-CUT CAREERS:
THE GLASS OF PHILIP BALDWIN
AND MONICA GUGGISBERG**

**PAPER WORK:
THE DELICATE SCULPTURE OF JACKI PARRY
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SURFACE TENSION

The Swiss-American glass artists Monica Guggisberg and Philip Baldwin have brought the studio glass tradition of the 19th century into the late 20th. Their work combines function with technical brilliance and formal innovation. In an extract from a new book, 'Philip Baldwin, Monica Guggisberg: In Search of Clear Lines', Susanne K. Frantz charts their development



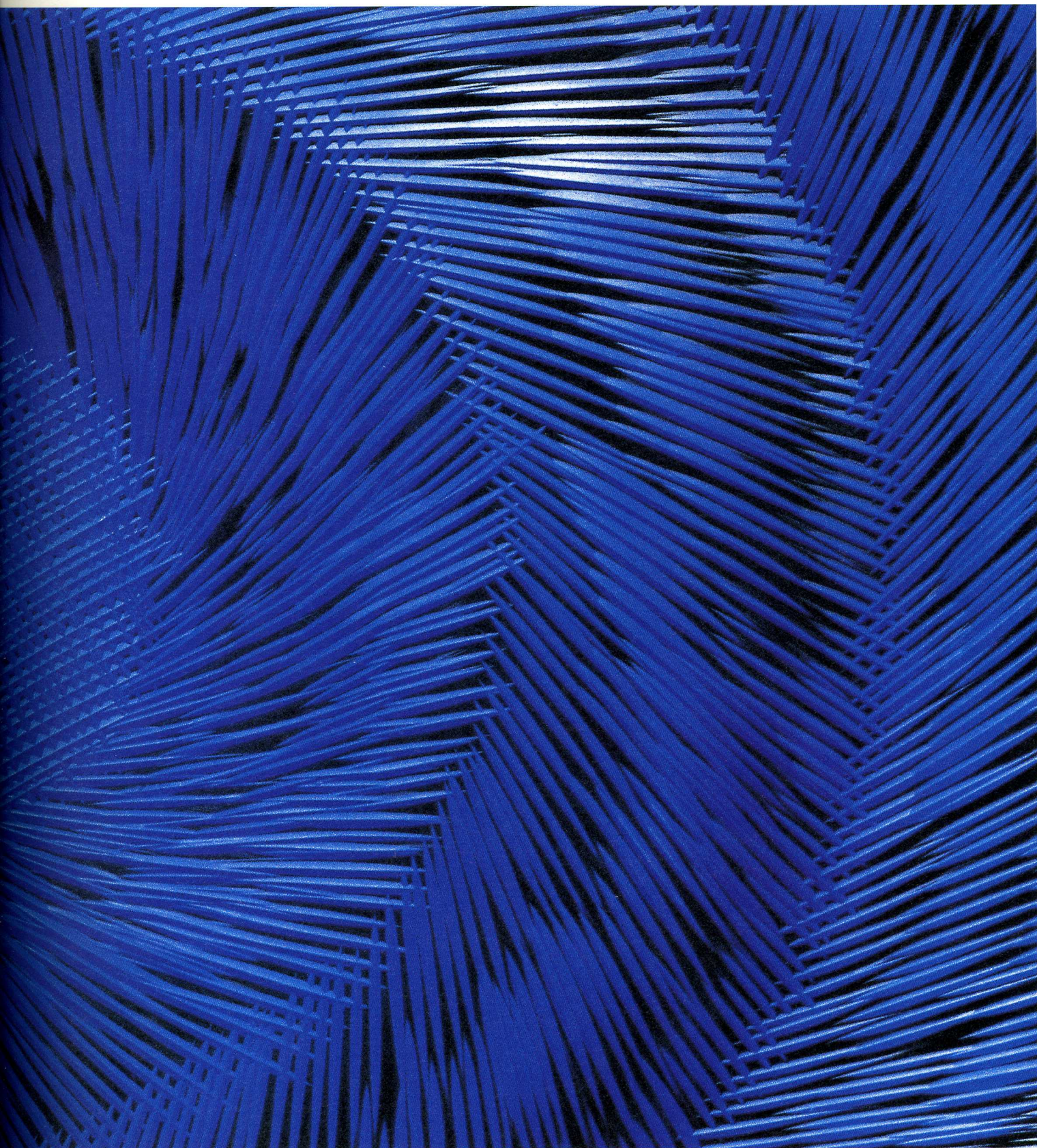
**LEFT: 'Cortigiane e Guardiani',
free-blown pieces, cold-worked
in battuto, 70-90 x 12-15 cm, 1997**
**ABOVE: 'Sguardo Verde di Giallo',
free-blown in Swedish overlay, cold-
worked in battuto, 48 x 18 cm, 1998**



Throughout their 16-year career together, Monica Guggisberg [from Bern] and Philip Baldwin [from New York] have been identified with Swedish glass styling and forming techniques. In the first half of the 80s, most studio glass-blowers remained alienated from any association with business and industry (unlike the situation today), and they focussed on making sculpture rather than utilitarian objects... In contrast, Gug-

gisberg and Baldwin dedicated themselves to the production of functional vessels in series and to the making of one-of-a-kind decorative objects. What they once described as an 'old-fashioned, 19th-century quest for beauty, simplicity of form, harmony and balance,' combined with disciplined craftsmanship, was at that time viewed by some observers as backward, if not reactionary. In truth, the task that Guggisberg and

Baldwin had set for themselves was quite progressive. Here were two young people who chose rather than were born into, the rhythmic life centered around a glass furnace. They found an abashed pleasure in striving to match both the technical finesse of Swedish factory glassblowers and the sophistication of the professional designers. Their attitude was different from that of other producers of functional ware in small hot-gl-



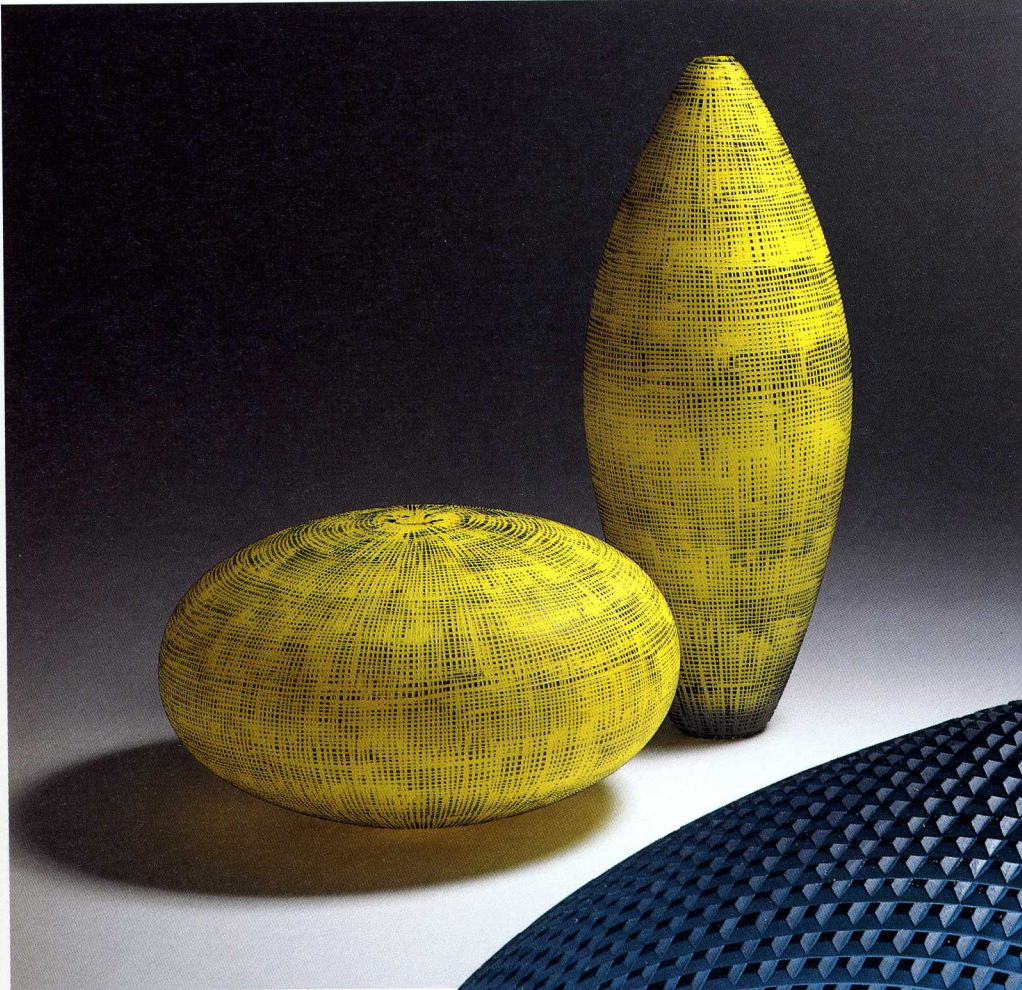
studios. In the United States, where fine hand-made stemware was and remains a rarity, clumsily fashioned objects were promoted as the hallmark of hand craftsmanship (when, in fact, a machine could have made them far better). Beginning in the 60s, heavy Art Nouveau-style trailed decoration and iridescence were also part of studio glass functional production. While the glass made in Guggisberg and Baldwin's Nonfoux studio was

also completely handmade, they aligned themselves with the professional standards and styles of European industrial design...

Even in their early years of working together, the clean, spare look of Guggisberg and Baldwin's glass had more in common with Finnish designer Tapio Wirkkala's 60s pastel-coloured vessels for Venini than with pure Finnish, Swedish or other Muranese products. Wirkkala adapted the Italian

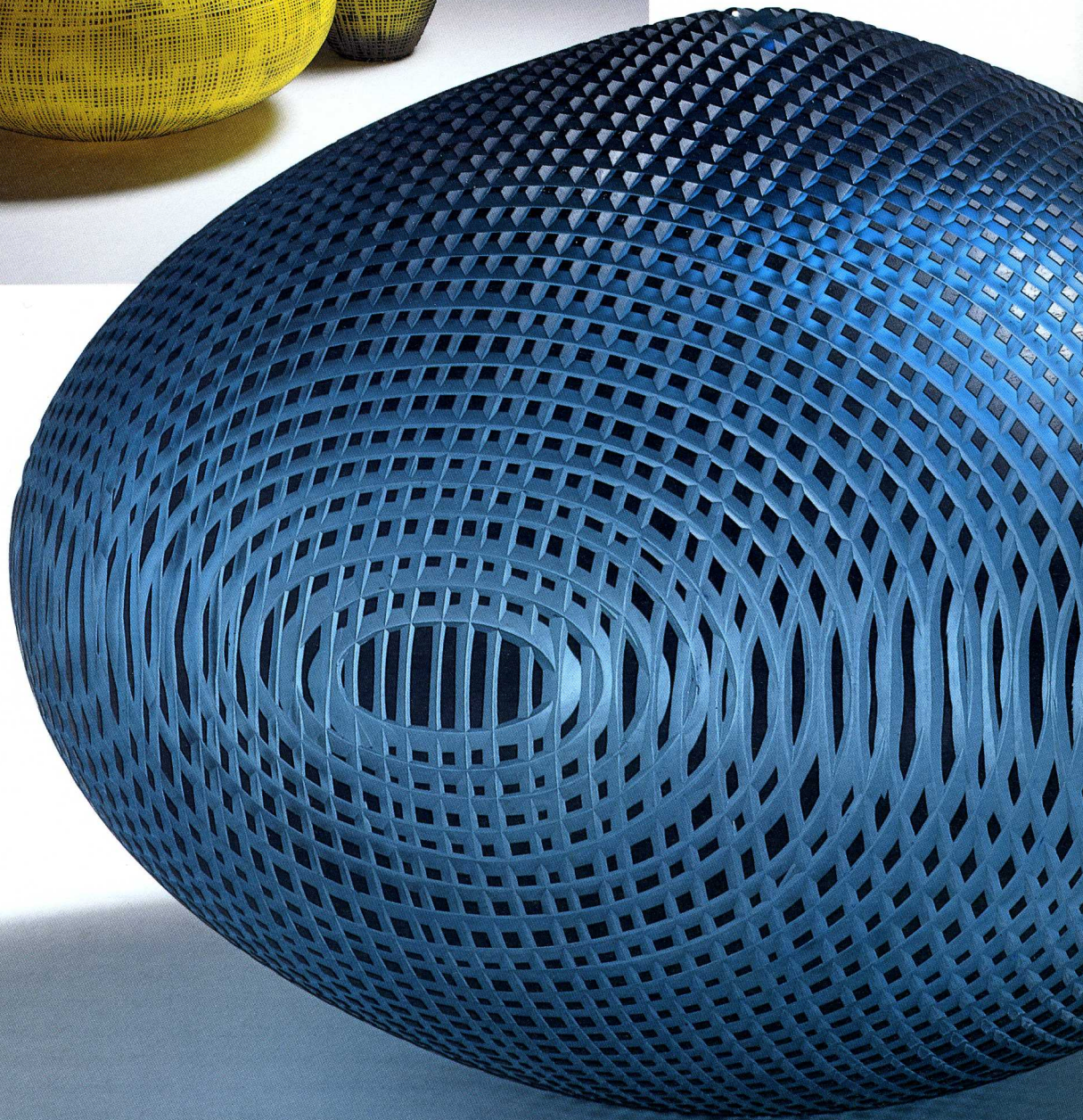
incalmo technique (the **'Large Disc in Blue and Black' (detail), 'Inciso' battuto cutting, 1998** blown glass to produce sharply defined demarcations of colour) with particular success. That same technique became a mainstay of the Guggisberg/Baldwin production...

Guggisberg and Baldwin were unusual in combining their hands-on skills with the natural



LEFT: 'Yellow & Black Crossed', free-blown in Swedish overlay, cold-worked in Italian battuto, 11.5-31 x 12-23 cm, 1997

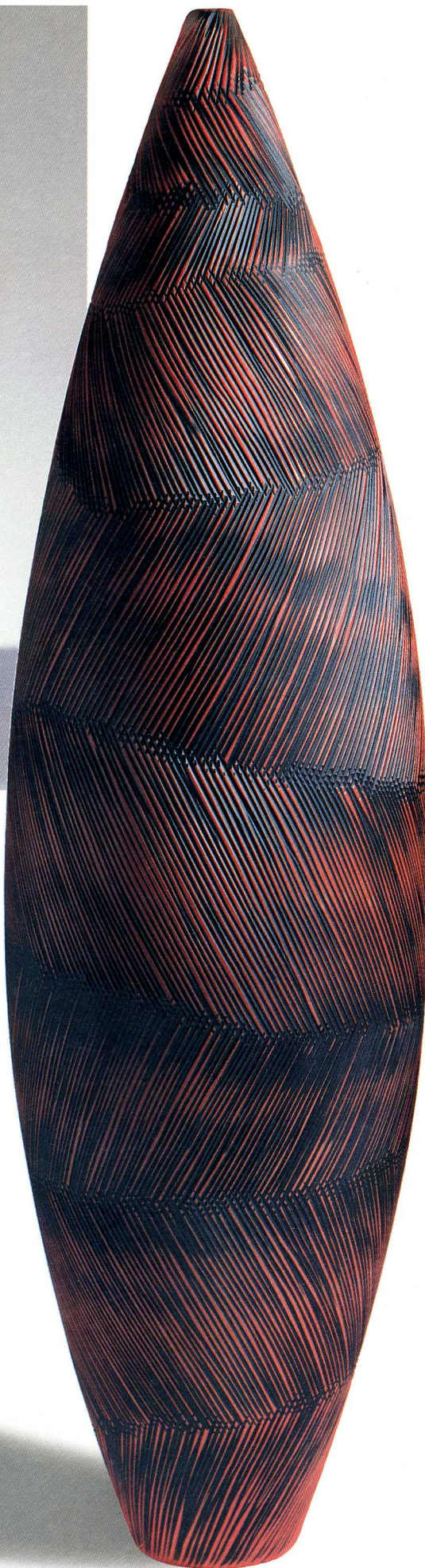
RIGHT: 'Beaming Turquoise on Black', free-blown in Swedish overlay, cold-worked in Italian battuto, 21.5 x 28.5 cm, 1998





ABOVE: 'Red and Blue Spin Tops', free-blown in Swedish overlay, cold-worked in Italian battuto, 41-25x 41-13.5 cm, 1997

RIGHT: 'Red Interconnected Sentinel', free-blown in Swedish overlay, cold-worked in Italian battuto, 60 x 17 cm, 1998



absorption and redefinition of the purest class of modernism. Their understated definition of good design – 'a collaborative effort towards building a better whole' – was as applicable to industry as it was to their one-on-one work in their Nonfoux studio...

To date, Guggisberg and Baldwin's projects with industry have resulted in various degrees of success. The frustration and disappointment experienced by many designers are almost invariably attributable to the exorbitant expense of handmade production in industrialised countries. This situation has led to compromise in the quality of design and to an increasing trend toward machine production of high-priced tableware... The success of Guggisberg and Baldwin's ventures, first with Rosenthal and Steuben, and now with Venini, is due, to a large degree, to the flexibility and relatively small size of those operations.

...[T]he partnership's connection with Murano is a fairly recent one... The couple rightly acknowledge the Muranese artist and glassmaker Lino Tagliapietra as a profound influence on their current work. They point to the exquisite shapes that Tagliapietra has the ability to blow. Their Nido series of vases with wide, folded-back rims, made for Venini, harkens back to Tagliapietra's shapes from the 80s and early 90s. The flavour of his surface treatments is also present, and all three of these individuals would rightly credit Carlo Scarpa's late 40s designs for Venini as the key inspiration for their respective incisive and battuto-carved objects.

While links with Venini are readily identifiable, Guggisberg and Baldwin add something that makes the work new. One way of describing it is simply as a 'light touch', similar to Lundgren and Wirkkala's contributions. Where the Italian designers Scarpa or Bianconi gravitated toward massive irregular forms with corroded surfaces or irregular carving to give a hammered-looking finish, Guggisberg and Baldwin's vessels are consistently symmetrical and reduced to the shape of conical, ovoid, and spherical beads. The forms are fairly thinly blown with Swedish-style underlays and overlays of various colours. Surfaces are carved with lines that are so pronounced that they produce the hatched effect of coarsely woven cloth. Even the broader battuto cuts are regular and evenly spaced – like dots or fish scales...

Most recently, Guggisberg and Baldwin have focussed their interest on sculpture. As they find their way in this new direction, the constants of their aesthetics are gracefully adapted to new, more fluid, shapes... For this observer, the shift in attention is promising and, most importantly, demonstrates an ever-probing and risk-taking mentality. For Guggisberg and Baldwin, this reflects a deepening of their research into 'the meaning of form, line, surface textures and, always, beauty.'

Philip Baldwin, Monica Guggisberg: In Search of Clear Lines is published on 1 April by Benteli, price £40.