

Good morning everyone,

I would like to start by thanking you all for being here to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Arnolfo di Cambio.

It all began in 1961 when my grandfather Bruno had a disagreement with a local supplier who offered pressed glass but not blown glass. The argument concluded with my grandfather saying, "Fine, I'll open my own glassworks." True to his word, the project took shape and culminated two years later on 12th September 1963—a date my grandfather chose to commemorate the opening of Cristalleria Arnolfo di Cambio in honour of his son Gilberto, who was born on that same day 22 years earlier. He entrusted Gilberto with the artistic direction of the company, particularly in design, which my father excelled in and carried forward brilliantly.

From the very beginning, the finest consultants were selected to introduce the latest technology into the company. Over the years, this technology was continuously innovated and improved, thanks to the ingenuity of local businesses. These companies understood the requirements of the hot production and cold pressing, and they successfully accelerated several processes. For instance, the great master Secchioni, whom my grandfather brought to Colle right from the start, possessed the unique ability to blow the stems of wine glasses—a very challenging technique. Thanks to his expertise and teachings, this skill became widely adopted within the company.

There has always been a debate about which was the first company to manufacture lead crystal in Colle Val d'Elsa. For this reason, I want to share an anecdote with you, told to me by my grandmother, father, and others who lived during that time: my grandfather convinced Klaus Riedle, owner of the Austrian glassworks Riedle, to "share" the crystal formula in exchange for a penthouse in the Blue Tower of Follonica, which he was building, apparently after a weekend in Punta Ala where no one knows exactly what happened!

Let's return to my father, Gilberto. Despite being a promising young racing car driver with a two-year contract with Lancia, he was pulled away from his passion to join my mother, Marika, who is here with us today along with my sister, Gaia, in Colle Val d'Elsa. Just before this life-altering decision, something intriguing happened. One day, Joe Colombo, a young architect who also sold cars in his spare time, called my father to try out a new car at the Milanese dealership where he worked. After the test drive, my father told Joe that he had to rush home because his father, Bruno, had asked him to attend a meeting with an architect and a builder to discuss the design of a hotel in Sardinia. Joe, feeling slighted, exclaimed, "But why don't you invite me to this meeting? I'm your good friend, and I'm also an architect!" Understanding Joe's frustration, my father decided to take him along. Upon meeting my grandfather, Joe was presented with an unexpected opportunity. "Listen, Joe," said my grandfather, "while I've already entrusted the architectural aspect of the project, the interior design remains open. If you can present me with a compelling proposal within 24-48 hours, I may reconsider." Shortly after, Joe returned with a detailed model of his vision for the hotel's hall/reception area. Impressed by his creativity, my grandfather entrusted him with the interior design, which ultimately earned Joe the prestigious "INARCH LOMBARDIA" award for the best hotel interior design. As a token of gratitude towards my father, Joe offered him the design of the "SMOKE" glass for a nominal fee.

This marked the beginning of our company's journey into design glassware, initially crafted by hand from excess crystal and later perfected through injection moulding.

I thought these anecdotes offer an intriguing glimpse into the early days of our company's inception.

For this reason, my destiny led me to Colle Val d'Elsa. I was born in Siena in 1968, moved back to Milan in 1972 when my parents separated, and returned to Colle Val d'Elsa permanently in 1987. I have lived in Tuscany for 37 years now. Despite my Milanese origins, I feel completely adopted by Colle Val d'Elsa, having spent my entire professional life in this wonderful medieval town and having lived here for several years.

Starting the processing of lead crystal meant, on one hand, introducing some innovative machines that allowed the production of objects capable of maximizing the intrinsic characteristics of crystal, and on the other hand, understanding the importance of high-quality raw materials in achieving the transparency and luminosity essential to crystal.

During that era, we were considered pioneers in Italy and partly on the international stage in terms of machinery. Meanwhile, Colle was already renowned for its glass industry, and this ancient artisanal tradition of the local glassmakers formed the backbone of every production, innovation, and research undertaken by our company as it grew. Today, it stands as our most cherished legacy. Without the skilled artisans in hot glass processing and the equally talented grinders in Colle Val d'Elsa, Arnolfo di Cambio would not have achieved what it has. This journey has led to numerous products being showcased in permanent museum exhibitions and featured in numerous publications on architecture and design. Indeed, the company's strength lies in its artisans, and I can confidently say that Vasco Conti is the most significant testament to this. He was handpicked by my father from the start, joining the company at just 16 years old. By 28, he had risen to become the factory manager, and in 1979, he became a partner. Today, he owns Duccio di Segna glassworks, where our crystal collections are produced. He remains a partner at Arnolfo di Cambio, and is the mastermind behind the beauty of every product, always ready to embrace the challenges presented by designers over the years:

I was fortunate to have three father figures who shaped who I am today: my biological father Gilberto, who sadly passed away in 2019, instilled in me a sense of beauty along with my mother Marika, a woman of great taste and elegance; Vasco Conti, who moulded me into a man by not giving me special treatment as Gilberto's son at the beginning of my career, and taught me how to manage a company from A to Z, including how to handle employee relations; and Francois Burkhardt, who has guided me since 1994 in the world of design, educating me with long explanations, visiting exhibitions together, recommending books for research, and most importantly, introducing me to the most significant architects and designers of the last century.

One particularly influential relationship was with Enzo Mari, with whom I had many meetings, discussions, and occasional disagreements. For instance, I once approached the great master to propose designing a new glass for Arnolfo di Cambio. As he browsed through the catalogue I brought, he began telling me I was like all other entrepreneurs, driven by the relentless market demand for new products, and that there was no need for a new glass since there were already several beautiful ones in the catalogue. He cited an

example of an entrepreneur (without naming names) who asked him for a new chair and launched into a long speech, raising his voice, calling us all “consumers,” victims of the market, slaves to retailers, and a public hungry for novelties.

Once he calmed down, he explained that a glass could be a cone, a cylinder, or slightly rounded, and that there are no other types of glasses. He then asked me, “How do you highlight the characteristics of crystal?” I explained that it was through sharp edges and grinding. From this, the CONVERSATION series was born. Starting from a cylinder, he cut slices with “ribbed” grinding cuts, creating an innovative series of four cylindrical glasses with similar but distinct grindings.

Over the years, the collaborations we have developed and the projects we have realized, along with the significant contributions of designers and their expertise, combined with the skilled expertise in hot production and the manual dexterity of our grinding artisans, have earned us prestigious international recognition, such as the “Oscar du Crystal” in Paris in 1969 and 1970. It was a great satisfaction for an Italian glassworks to win such a coveted award on French soil, where glassmaking has a longer tradition than ours. This achievement made us realize that our work was closely aligned with our origins: to maximize and celebrate the intrinsic qualities of lead crystal.

For many years, our collections have featured both “Classic” and “Contemporary” styles. However, in the past decade, we have shifted our focus to designing products with an enduring essence. This philosophy inspired our motto, or tagline: “a precious soul,” representing timeless products crafted to last forever.

I would like to conclude by acknowledging some of the individuals who have contributed to the success of Arnolfo di Cambio. I want to thank each one personally and apologize if, in my emotions, I forget any names:

Vasco Conti, Alberto Ravanelli, who served as the company’s commercial director for 35 years, Giuliano Grassi and his wife Nadia Canocchi, and now their son Simone, who continues the family tradition by working with me; Mirto Martinucci, Silvano Giusti, Vittore, Mario Carpino and his family, Enzo and Franca Pallecchi, Mario Cencetti, Marcellino, Pierino, Elio Garbatelli, Siro, Salvatore, Giuseppe, and Lina, who are now the owners of L’astronave; Loredano, Lallo, Loris Bucalossi, Piero also known as “Pisolo”, Vito Massa, Mauro Canocchi, Beppe Vasapoli, Gigi Testella, Leda Bravi, the great Adriana Borgianni, and the Bartali sisters Mafalda and Liliana; Françoise Burkhardt and all the designers we’ve collaborated with over the years; our accountants, Antonio Conti and Raffaele Mazziotta, Mario Catoni and Carlo Vigni of Catoni&Associati, Matiba comunicazione, and all our current employees: Tina Zampone, my invaluable right-hand person in the sales office; Marta Bianciardi, our administrative manager; Massimiliano Manganelli, our dedicated purchasing manager, and many others. We’re grateful for the contributions of all employees who’ve lent their talents to achieve our company goals, as well as the new, younger employees, including Sara Zampone, Tiziana, Samuele, Chiara, Elena, Svetlana....

I extend my gratitude to all the members of the social promotion association LA CITTA DEL CRISTALLO: Giampiero Brogi, Silvano Giusti, Duccio Santini, Miriana Bucalossi, Marta Aiazzi and Marco Mezzetti. Together, we have embarked on a journey to celebrate

the art of glassmaking and will promote educational programs to preserve this cherished craft deeply ingrained in our local heritage.

I also wish to express appreciation to the various public administrations that have supported us over the past 60 years, fostering a strong bond between our company and the community.

We look forward to the next decade of innovation and artistry. See you all at the 70th anniversary, where we will celebrate even more achievements in the enchanting city of glass.

Gabriele Bagnasacco
CEO