

## Italian design takes centre stage

Italian design is in the spotlight at Quittenbaum in Munich on March 19.

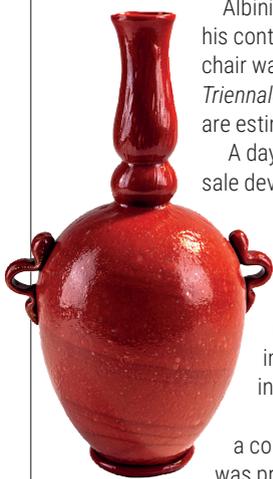
Among the prominent artists is Franco Albini, who worked as an architect and a furniture designer from the 1920s until the late 1970s. When he died in 1977 at the age of 72, he was still teaching design at the Politecnico di Milano.

Albini was known for his love of inexpensive materials, such as Indian cane, rattan and foam rubber. One of his most familiar pieces was the wickerwork armchair *Margherita* from 1951, produced by Vittorio Bonacina in Como. Among its claim to fame is the fact that this was the first legless armchair of Italian design.



Albini's contemporaries recognised his contribution to modern design; his chair was awarded a Gold Medal at the IX *Triennale di Milano*. The pair on offer here are estimated at **€1800-2000**.

A day later, Quittenbaum is holding a sale devoted to Murano.



From the mid-1920s until 1932, when he left the company, the designer and sculptor Napoleone Martinuzzi supplied numerous designs for Venini in Murano and also introduced innovative new glass techniques.

Among these was *Pasta vitrea*, a coloured opaque glass which was produced by adding coloured

microcrystals to the clear mass. The final product bore a great resemblance to ceramics. It was, however, far from easy to produce satisfactory results of a consistent colour. Furthermore, the long cooling process often led to an uneven surface. Under Martinuzzi's direction, Venini rose to the occasion and produced a variety of vessels and vases in *Pasta vitrea*.

Among these was model number 10511, a 12in (31cm) red vase, the handles of which are finished with gold foil. Quittenbaum is expecting between **€8000-9000**. The vase can be dated to 1932 and must be one of the last designs Martinuzzi provided for the company; in the same year he joined forces with Francesco Zecchin to found their joint enterprise Zecchin-Martinuzzi Vetri Artistici e Mosaici. This partnership only lasted until 1936, when Martinuzzi again sought pastures new.

➤ [quittenbaum.de](http://quittenbaum.de)

## Fuseli fantasies on offer in Basel saleroom

Paintings by the Anglo-Swiss artist Henry Fuseli, who was born in 1741 as Johann Heinrich Füssli, seldom make it to auction, so the sale of three of his dramatic motifs at Artcurial, Beurret, Bailly, Widmer on March 13 in Basel is expected to cause something of a stir.

Fuseli was famous for his choice of dramatic subjects often with supernatural connections. The three 2ft x 18in (61 x 45cm) canvases were executed in 1804-05 and belong to a group of



10 paintings that Fuseli created for illustrations to the epic saga *Oberon* by the German romantic poet Christoph Martin Weiland.

It was first published in 1780 and Fuseli's illustrations appeared in the second English edition of 1805. Many of the motifs became popular as engravings.

Eight of the original paintings, including the three works now on offer, were bought by Benjamin Sharpe, a naval captain and member of a banking family, for his mansion at Hanwell Park in Middlesex.

The auction paintings later came into the possession of a Swiss collector and have passed by descent to the vendor.

They depict key scenes from the story of the romance between the French knight Huon and Rezia, the daughter of the Khalif of Baghdad. In 1804, Fuseli received 120 guineas from the publisher Cadell and Davies. He wrote that he had made "a bargain not very advantageous to myself", in light of the fact that the engravers were paid 18 guineas per plate.

One can imagine how astonished the artist would be by today's prices: Leading the field is *Rezia throws herself after Huon into the sea* with a guide of **SFr400,000-600,000**.

For the scene *Disguised as a gardener, Huon meets the Sultana Almansaris* the estimate is SFr200,000-300,000, as it is for *Huon and Rezia united*.

➤ [bbw-auktionen.com](http://bbw-auktionen.com)



## Wing and a prayer

One of the earliest pieces in the auction of works of art at Koller in Zurich on March 21 is the copper and enamel figure of a dove. It was created in Limoges in the first third of the 13th century and used for liturgical purposes.

A *peristerium*, as such vessels are officially known, was a container for the consecrated hosts used in communion. The symbol of the dove is elemental to Christianity, being part of the Holy Trinity and the symbol of the Holy Ghost.

The 10in (25cm) long figure in the Zurich sale is closely related to a figure in the Musée de Cluny in Paris. Both birds have unusual features that set them apart from the majority of other eucharistic doves: they have no feet, the legs are attached directly to the flat base; the wings can be folded out, but unlike other models they are not part of the cover of the cavity for the hosts. The coloured enamel inlays on the wings, symbolising feathers, are almost identical, leading the auction house to assume that this bird was created in the same Limoges workshop as the example in Paris.

Little is known of its provenance, other than that it comes from a Swiss private collection. It is expected to bring **SFr120,000-180,000**.

➤ [kollerauktionen.ch](http://kollerauktionen.ch)

## Gallé's special bowl

In 1903, only one year before his death, Emile Gallé was commissioned by the Belgian company Solvay et Cie with the creation of a bowl to mark the 30th anniversary of its factory in Dombasle.



The Belgian chemist and industrialist Ernest Solvay had developed the process named after him that enabled an economical way of retrieving soda from salt brine and limestone to produce sodium-carbonate or soda. Gallé's bowl is appropriately titled *Larmes de soude* (Tears of soda). The marbling of the irregularly blown vessel on its stepped round base represents the

earth, while ribbons of frothy clear glass, the streams or 'tears' of soda are applied to the sides.

Several versions of this rare bowl are known, some in museums.

This example, which is being sold by specialist glass auction house Dr Fischer in Heilbronn in its 300th auction on March 9, comes from a German collector and is guided at **€60,000-70,000**.

➤ [auktions-fischer.de](http://auktions-fischer.de)