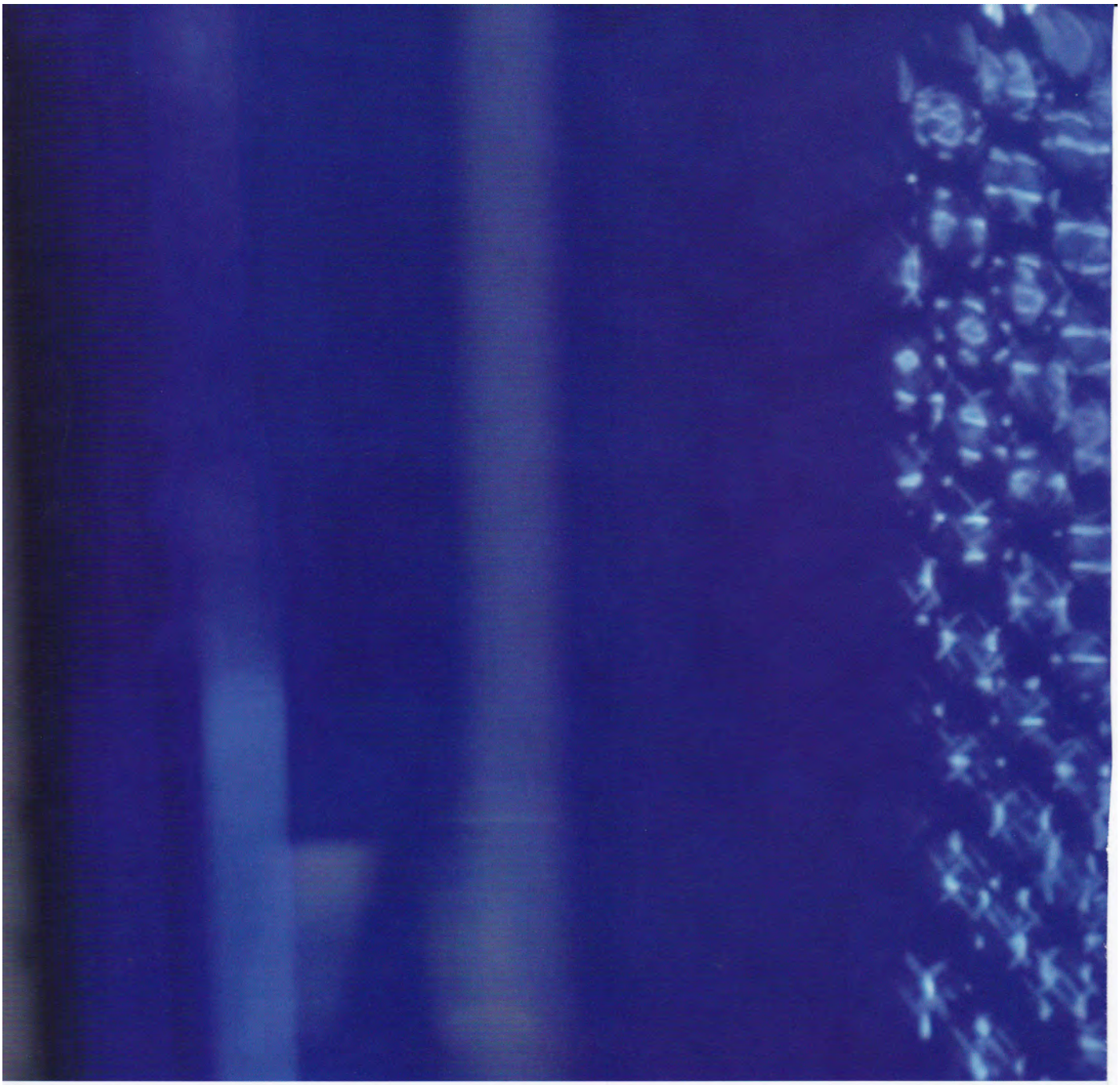
THE ART OF GLASS

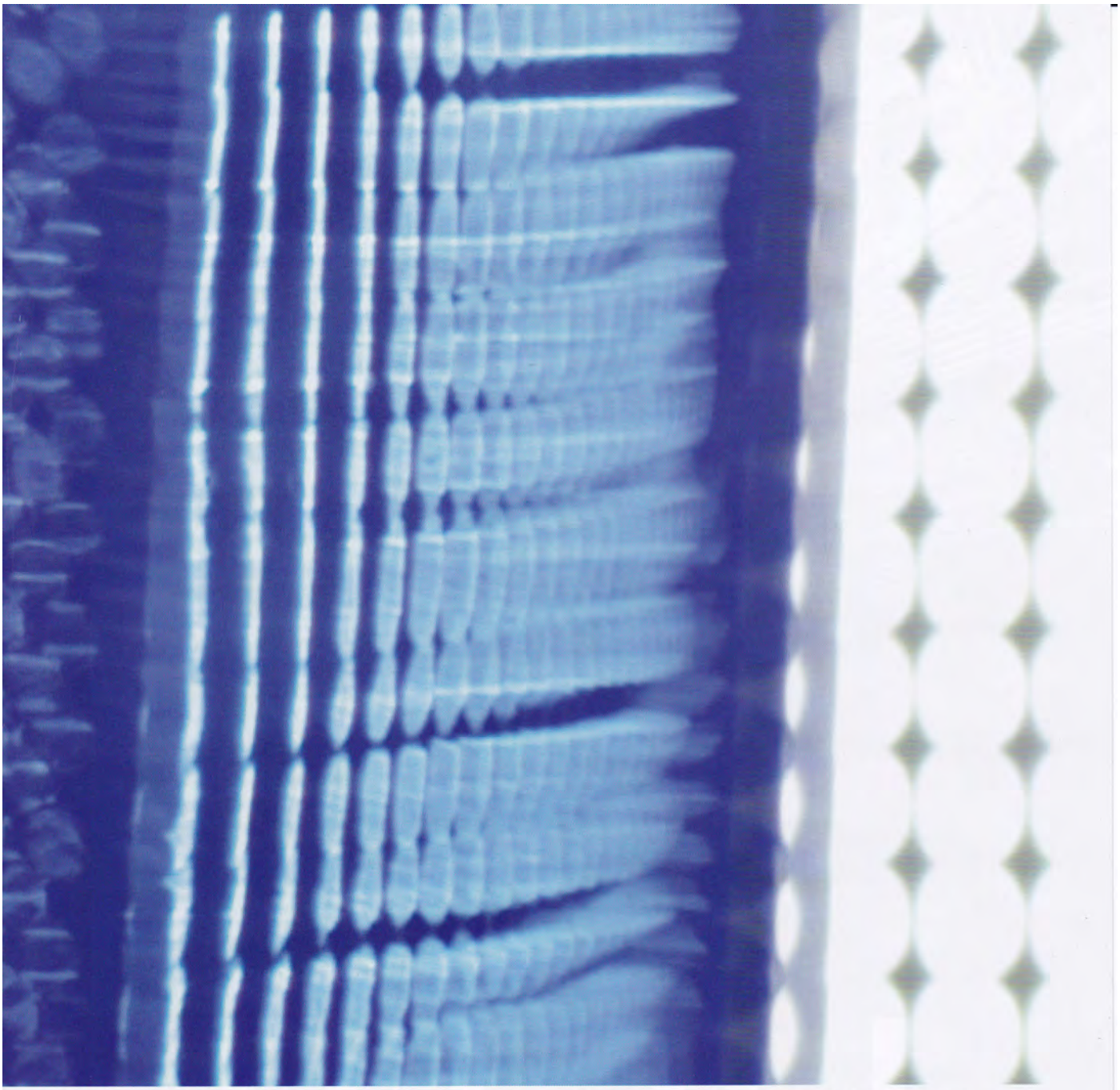
THE CELEBRATED ARTIST PAOLA PETROBELLI ON CREATING COLOURFUL ONE-OFF SCULPTURAL GLASSWARE PIECES FOR THE HOUSE OF PERONI

BY JOHN-PAUL PRYOR



The cutting-edge glass designer Paola Petrobelli is from one of Italy's oldest and most respected families, and her classical heritage is the perfect counterpart to her progressive passion for glassware, of which she is widely accepted to be a master. While the artist only works with the legendary Murano glassblowers – the Venetian jewel in the crown of the globe's glass manufacturers – she is thoroughly committed to the elevation of glassware from a mere decorative art form to the arena of the groundbreaking and conceptual. As such, her work is exhibited all over the world; and she has been privately commissioned to create works by the illustrious likes of Damien Hirst. "I aim to create glassware of our time, as opposed to studio glass," she told The House of Peroni when we visited her at work in Murano to shoot a film of her process, which is showcased at the October residency. "Venice is the obvious choice for me to create work, because they have been blowing glass here from the 12th century and the craftsmen are incredible – it is a skill that gets transmitted and handed down from generation to generation, which is such a beautiful thing to be part of."

Given her formidable passion and pedigree, Petrobelli was the ideal artist to be commissioned to create a range of one-off artworks based upon the Peroni Nastro Azzurro pint glass, all of which are exhibited at The House of Peroni October residency. The four pieces take the Peroni Nastro Azzurro



Peroni Nastro Azzurro glassware by Paola Petrobelli (detail), shot in Murano

Blue Ribbon as their inspirational starting point melding the most ancient processes of glass-blowing with thoroughly modern design. 'I made the glassware range for Peroni Nastro Azzurro with some of the oldest and most imperfect techniques," she tells us. "I employed the 'incamo' technique and the 'filligree' technique, which both require a huge amount of precision from the glassblowers because the two sections need to be made to match. In this process, you have two people working on the same piece separately and then they get fused. In the filligree technique the glassblowers create glass rods that have a core in the middle that is coloured, and these get heated and rolled into a bubble, then twisted until the lines get thinner, which give a very subtle pattern at the end of ultra-thin lines going through the glass."

Petrobelli relishes a challenge, and her work is shot through with conceptual reference points. "I decided to make the glasses oversized in reference to the films of Fellini," she tells us. "His characters are iconic simply because they are overblown. I wanted to mirror that, given that *La Dolce Vita* came out in 1963 – the same year Peroni Nastro Azzurro was created. All four of the glasses work as stand-alone pieces, but placed together you will see the blue line that runs through them all, symbolic of the sea and the story of The Rex, the ship that was awarded the Blue Riband and inspired the name of the brand."