



Bowl by Guido Gambone, mid-1950s.



Vases in Bruno Gambone's Florence studio, 2013.



Animal figure by Guido, 1950s.



Vases by Bruno, mid-1970s.

Lion sculptures by Guido, late 1950s.



Guido in his Florence studio, late 1950s.



Bruno in his studio, 2013.

GUIDO AND BRUNO GAMBONE

A midcentury master of ceramics passed along his passion—and studio in Florence—to his son, who has embraced a strikingly different aesthetic.

BY TIM McKEOUGH

Ceramic vessels emblazoned with the Gambone name can appear starkly dissimilar from one another. Some beckon with flowing organic forms, charmingly irregular decorative patterns, and eye-catching primary colors, while others are more restrained, based on strong, simple shapes finished in white, gray, brown, and black. Did this ceramist have two disparate phases of production? Not quite. The pieces were made by two individuals: Guido Gambone, arguably Italy's most prominent contemporary ceramist of the 1950s and '60s, and his son, Bruno Gambone, who is still at work and has long sought to step out from his father's shadow.

Guido, born in 1909, created more extroverted pieces, which captivated midcentury modernists with their unbridled creativity. "Guido was always searching for Mediterranean imagery and

patterns to incorporate into his ceramics—not just into the decoration, but into the forms themselves," says Los Angeles dealer Sam Kaufman. "You see colors, objects, and animals that relate to what Mediterranean people see. And you see elements that pay homage to the traditional, ancient styles of that part of the world."

Recent auction lots of Guido's works at Rago Arts & Auction Center and Wright have included shapely pitchers decorated with watery blue and leafy green glazes, slender vessels with fiery orange patterns resembling tribal markings, and vases with openings shaped like fish mouths. The artist's abstracted pieces are also frequently compared to the work of Pablo Picasso. "Guido's glazes are rough and organic, which reinforce the painterly qualities of his graphics," says Jadd Attal of Rago. "Those irregular surfaces also create an enhanced tactile warmth, similar to a canvas thick with paint."

Guido won the prestigious Premio Faenza prize for ceramics a record five times. His works were exported around the world and offered for sale everywhere from European gift shops to upscale American department stores such as Saks Fifth Avenue. ▾



Vase by Bruno, 1983.



Vase by Guido, 1960s.

Sculpture by Bruno,
2008.

Half a century later, they are more collectible than ever, often fetching as much as \$9,000 apiece at auction as they attract a new cadre of fans, including high-profile designers such as Trip Haensch, who collects Guido's work for himself and uses it in client projects. "There's a playfulness to them I really respond to," he says.

Bruno, born in 1936, began his career as his father's assistant in the 1950s. But theirs was a complicated relationship, and in 1963 he departed for New York, where he met Robert Rauschenberg, Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, and other artists, and shifted his focus to painting and sculpture. "I tried very hard to work with my father," says Bruno. "Whether it was my fault or his fault I don't know, but I eventually decided to go out on my own."

Nevertheless, when Guido died in 1969, Bruno returned to Florence to take over his father's studio. Rather than maintaining production of his father's designs, he became intent on expressing his own artistic vision. "It was very difficult for me after 1969, because everybody thought that I was just Gambone's son and that I would carry on in the same way," says Bruno. "But that wasn't true. We were working in the same place, but I was doing my own thing."

Although there is frequently a primitive appeal in Bruno's ceramics that reflects his father's style, there are also striking contrasts. "In Bruno's work, you see the influence of '60s and '70s minimalist art," says Patrick Parrish, owner of New York's Mondo Cane, who has visited the artist in his studio on multiple occasions. "The forms are more rectilinear, the decoration is very simple, and the tones are muted," he says. "They're not as expressive, ritualistic, and bright as his father's works." Bruno's most recognizable pieces include bottle-like vessels with tall, skinny necks rising from heavy round and square bases, and monochromatic vases with textural patterns cut into the surface of the ceramic. However, proving that he still has a playful streak, he has also produced animal figures that riff on his father's creations, including cats, bulls, and horses with angular shapes assembled from flat sheets of clay (Guido's animals were enlivened with a multitude of hues; Bruno's are stripped of color).

Today, Bruno is proud yet wary of Guido's legacy. He retains a selection of his father's most fantastic pieces,

and he named his son Guido. However, he insists that his work be judged on its own merits: "My father was a master for me, but this is not why I have success today." ■



WHERE TO FIND IT

- Pierre Bergé and Associates, Paris, 011-33-1-49-49-90-00, oba-auctions.com
- Downtown, Los Angeles, 310-652-7461, downtown20.net
- Sam Kaufman Gallery, Los Angeles, 323-857-1965, samkaufman.com
- Mondo Cane, New York, 212-219-9244, mondocane.com
- Piasa, Paris, 011-33-1-53-34-10-10, piasa.fr
- Rago Arts & Auction Center, Lambertville, New Jersey, 609-397-9374, ragoarts.com
- Wright, Chicago, 312-563-0020, wright20.com



Asymmetrical bowl by Guido, 1955.



ABOVE: Sculptures in Bruno's studio.
LEFT: Plate by Guido, late 1950s.



Vase by Guido, 1950s.



Vases by Bruno, 1982.

