



Ballerina. Walnut wood. 66 cm diameter.

VLASTIMIL BERÁNEK

ARTIST

Vlastimil Beránek is third generation Beránek, a continuance of the Beránek dynasty of Czech glassmakers first established in Škrdlovice in the 1940s. Throughout its history, this glassworks has been synonymous with high quality hot-shaped glass. Vlastimil was in charge of the glassworks from 1992 to 2008, although he is, and remains, a sculptor at heart.

He graduated from the university headed by Professor Stanislav Libenský at Prague's Academy of Applied Arts and has found success as a Bohemian glass artist; the creator of substantial glass sculptures made of glass molten in mould. Marek Landa, owner of Crystal Caviar (a supplier of luxury chandeliers and glass artworks to superyachts including Beránek's), says that Vlastimil, "is trying to freeze movement or express emotion in his sculptures."

Though large, and indeed, sometimes hulking, Vlastimil's pieces always display harmony and balance. In design, his sculptures are minimalistic, simplified and stripped of artifice. Yet the shapes and lines burst out of vortices and coil around, into helices to create patterns and shapes that are at once dynamic and tranquil.

But can what be done with glass, be done with wood?

Marek Landa was renovating his home and bought a stock of 30 year old walnut from Kazakhstan. Originally intended to be used as rifle stocks for Kalashnikov assault rifles, Marek discovered that the wood had properties he had not truly appreciated – extremely hard, the wood processed amazing colours and grain, with a rich texture that caught the light. Marek showed the wood to Vlastimil and suggested that he create a sculpture out of wood rather than glass. It was a challenge Vlastimil took on.

Vlastimil produced a small model of clay, and once satisfied with the shape, moved on to the actual piece. As the individual 'building blocks' of wood were sized for making rifle butts, Vlastimil first glued them into a preliminary shape and then, by hand, craved and cut and polished the piece into its final shape. Once finished, bee's wax was used for a rich, natural finish.

The monolithic wooden sculptures resemble the elementary but graceful forms that Vlastimil creates for his glass sculptures. The finished pieces vary in size with a diameter from around 45 – 65cm with no two pieces exactly alike.

Prices the wooden sculptures start at around 30,000€ for the smallest pieces; a far cry from the 120,000€ or more for an equivalent piece in glass. As well as these wooden sculptures, multi-talented Vlastimil is now working with a local foundry as he wants to start producing pieces in cast bronze and sculptures in stainless steel.



Aqua Chameleon. Bohemian Crystal. 44cm diameter.