

LO STUDIO
NADJA ROMAIN

IRENE CATTANEO



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About



Irene Cattaneo is a German-Italian artist (b. 1989) whose multidisciplinary practice spans sculpture, functional pieces, wearable art, set design, and large scale installations. After relocating to Venice in 2021 to work with local artisans, she developed the Clouds and Could's series, a foundation for her current sculptural explorations. Her work is defined by crisp silhouettes, graphic concision, and the transformation of iconic symbols into functional objects, with a strong focus on glass, bronze, and stone. The phenomenology of glassmaking underpins her visual language, while literature, personal memory, and wordplay serve as conceptual threads. Since her solo debut *Yūgen* during Venice Glass Week (2021), Cattaneo has exhibited widely in Italy and internationally. In 2024, she unveiled the site-specific *Carpe(t) Diem* at La Samaritaine / LVMH (Paris), followed by *Just My Cup of Tea(r)s* at Homo Faber (Venice), and *Meteomorphosis* at Lo Studio Nadja Romain during the Venice Art Biennale. Her work has featured in multiple editions of Glasstress, alongside Ai Weiwei, Tony Cragg, and Erwin Wurm, most recently at the Boca Raton Museum of Art. She joined Meritalia editions with Gaetano Pesce and Misha Kahn, and her sculptures are included in the Dragon Hill Sculpture Park, designed by Jacques Coëlle, among artists like Antony Gormley and Gisela Colón. In the U.S., her work gained recognition with a group show and auction at Dallas Contemporary, followed by her solo New York debut, *Through the Looking Glass*, an immersive installation in Ashlee Harrison's Upper East Side salon. Her solo exhibition opened in October 2025 at Yves Gastou during Art Basel Paris, centered on Baudelaire's prose poem *Les Bienfaits de la Lune*. Irene has been selected to participate in *Murano Illumina il Mondo 2025*, a project organised by Venice Glass Week and the City of Venice. She will exhibit one of her creations in the picturesque Piazza San Marco.

Practice

Irene Cattaneo's work transforms emotions, concepts, and narratives into tangible, sculptural forms. The materials she uses are integral to her approach, chosen for the emotional qualities they evoke. Glass, marble, and cast metals embody fragility, permanence, and strength, gently unfolding these themes through their form and texture. These materials are not just tools of construction, but essential to the emotional and conceptual foundation of her work. Her creations blend language, material, and literature, with narratives drawn from ancient myths and literary texts as the foundation. Words guide both the conceptual and formal aspects of her sculptures and installations. These stories, with their themes of transformation, impermanence, and the divine, provide a framework for exploring the relationship between material and meaning, and the balance between permanence and change.



The cloud, symbolizing constant change, often appears in Cattaneo's work. It represents the transient yet enduring nature of stories, and as an anagram of «could,» it evokes possibility and potential. Her pieces blur the boundaries between the tangible and intangible, creating spaces where myth, material, and narrative converge. Viewers are invited to emotionally and visually engage with these evolving worlds, where literature, myth, and form intersect, offering endless transformation and opportunity. Nature plays a significant role in Cattaneo's vision, inspiring much of her work through organic forms, textures, and symbols. The fluidity of water, the impermanence of clouds, and the strength of stone serve as metaphors for change, fragility, and resilience. In her sculptures and installations, Cattaneo invites the viewer to experience evolving narratives, presenting fragments of stories that encourage reflection and emotional engagement.



L'Orangerie

Meritalia®

Orangeries, long celebrated by poets and artists, are timeless spaces existing between reality and imagination. Filled with light, they symbolize an endless yearning for what lies beyond. Inspired by this very special space, artist Irene Cattaneo has embarked on a figurative and literary journey with Meritalia®. As is often the case in Irene Cattaneo's creative process, language itself plays a key role in shaping the nature and meaning of her work. Here, the term "*chaise longue*" creates a connection between "*long*", which refers to the elongated seat's form, and the English verb "to long" - to yearn, to dream. This idea of longing extends beyond language and into a broader emotional and philosophical realm, reaching the untranslatable concept of *Sensucht*. Irene Cattaneo's work is infused with literary references and linguistic nuance, weaving a narrative that reflects this perpetual yearning. The name *Nymphaea*, given to the captivating chaise longue by Irene Cattaneo and Meritalia®, connects to the Odyssey.

Meritalia®

When Ulysses, a romantic ante litteram, is welcomed by Lotus-Eaters, he discovers the power of the lotus flower: those who taste it, drift into a blissful oblivion, their sense of reality dissolving, along with their troubles and sense of time. Yet, even this seductive pause does not sway Ulysses from his journey home to Ithaca - becoming another form of knowledge along his path. In its design, *Nymphaea* continues the artist's exploration of materials with contrasting textures, a theme pursued with the support of Meritalia®'s expert craftsmanship. The use of a fabric reminiscent of marble, combined with soft pastel tones and floral hues, recalls the orangery - an ethereal, dreamlike realm much like the one Ulysses encounters. *Nymphaea*, shaped by its delicate, petal-like curves, becomes a flower itself. Set between the exoticism of its orangery surroundings and the dreamlike escape evoked by its name, *Nymphaea*, with its soft and voluptuous form, offers an experience where losing oneself becomes a path to self-discovery.



Images, printed letters, and markings are the primary touchstones of the past, the signs we know for their unmistakable presence and composition of a more visible and functional world. A language of printed markings, a concept and meaning, long retained by poets and artists as timeless, is more easily and imaginatively.

Because *Symphony* gives us the chance to immerse ourselves in the "house" of a woman's memory, which I choose, a romantic, it allows us to learn later, to discover the power of the film as a tool for emotional defense, their sense of reality, and the way we can use it to help us in life. In its design, *Symphony* creates a sense of intimacy with contrasting images, a theme of "memory" and a story of a woman's life. *Symphony*, with its

Forget Me No-w/t

Fondazione Berengo

A tree of life, a tree of light, a twisting trunk arches up and splits into four branches that yield unexpected fruit: glass clouds in soft rose and white gradients bloom like buds from the ashen plaster structure, illuminated forms that challenge the imagination. Titled '**Forget me no-w/t**' in what the artist describes as a leitmotif in her work, the tree acts as a powerful symbol for the dichotomy between what is permanent and what is impermanent, a personal preoccupation that runs through much of Cattaneo's oeuvre. As with the small blue blossoms of the forget-me-not flower the image of the cloud tree extends out beyond itself. Rooted to the ground and the stability of the earth, the trunk feeds off the memories of the past, asking us to remember through a fixed familiar structure. Yet this solid grounded foundation gives way to the ephemeral ever-changing landscape of the sky. The transient forms of clouds caught in handblown Murano glass ask us instead to forget, resist nostalgia, and allow ourselves to reimagine and transform recollected compositions.

BOCA RATON
MUSEUM OF ART

The clouds remain up in the air: fleeting, unfixed, and unpredictable, echoing the history of the molten material from which they are made. Yet through Cattaneo's cunning intervention this call for movement becomes tethered ever so gently and incorporated into the architecture of the known. Here you can see the artwork on display within the Fondazione Berengo Art Space in Murano, an old furnace that has been repurposed as an exhibition space on the island of glass. The tree is exhibited a long side a ghostly glass portrait by the German artist Thomas Schütte and a white chandelier by the Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei which disrupts the traditional architecture of the Venetian chandelier and its baroque botanical landscape with the artist's own motifs. Cattaneo goes a step further, with "*Forget me no-w/t*" she strips back the concept of a chandelier entirely from its origins, allowing herself to simultaneously remember and forget classical forms to reimagine the future of what light and glass can do. With "*Forget me no-w/t*" Cattaneo invites us to grow.



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4. *Forget Me No-w/t*



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4. *Forget Me No-w/t*

Through the Looking Glass

ASHLEE HARRISON, INC.

In situ - installation at 38th East 70th Street

Irene Cattaneo's work unravels the expected, distorting familiar forms to reconfigure reality into a poetic landscape of reversals. Borrowing its title from Lewis Carroll's 1871 novel, '***Through the Looking-Glass***' draws viewers into a world where meaning is never fixed- words shift, identities blur, and rules dissolve as quickly as they are established. Language and literature are central to Cattaneo's practice - titles become word games, subtle reversals, or playful distortions that mirror the physical transformations in her work.

Written just a decade before the Upper East Side brownstone housing this exhibition was built, Carroll's novel opens with Alice stepping through a mirror in a Victorian drawing room, entering a space where logic dissolves and perception is upended.

Cattaneo's sculptural works inhabit a similar world of contradiction and illusion: branching green-patinated stalks of cast bronze seem to sprout and sway from above, while a solid marble cloud anchors itself to the ground below; metal appears to melt and flow, while sculpted onyx emits light rather than obstructing it. Chess serves as a recurring motif, both an object of play and an illusion of control. In Carroll's text, its structure appears logical yet proves arbitrary. Alice advances across the board not by mastering the game, but by disrupting it. Poignant- ly, she becomes a queen not by partnering with a king, but by moving on her own terms. Ascending her own way seems to be the only way. In *Through the Looking-Glass*, Cattaneo extends this logic, creating a world where transformation is a mode of being-one in which material, meaning, and move- ment are in constant flux.

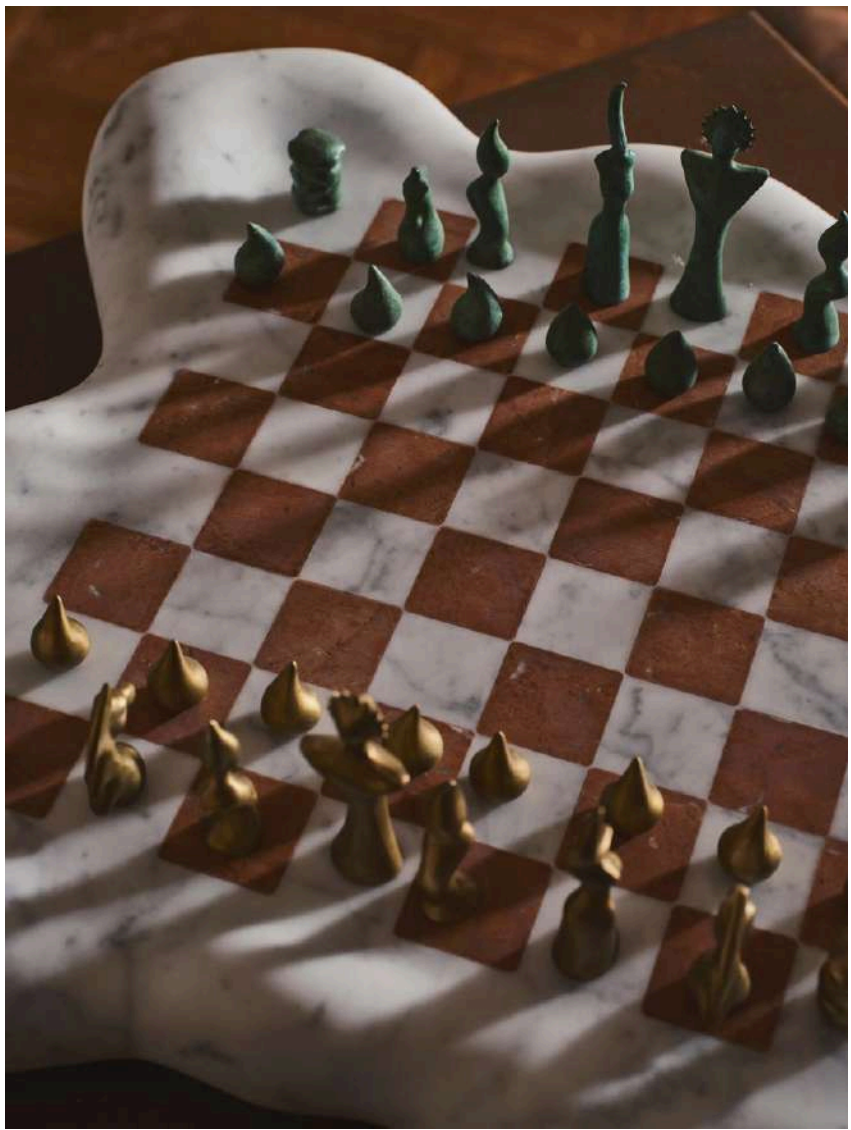


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5. *Through the Looking Glass*



Le rose et le vert

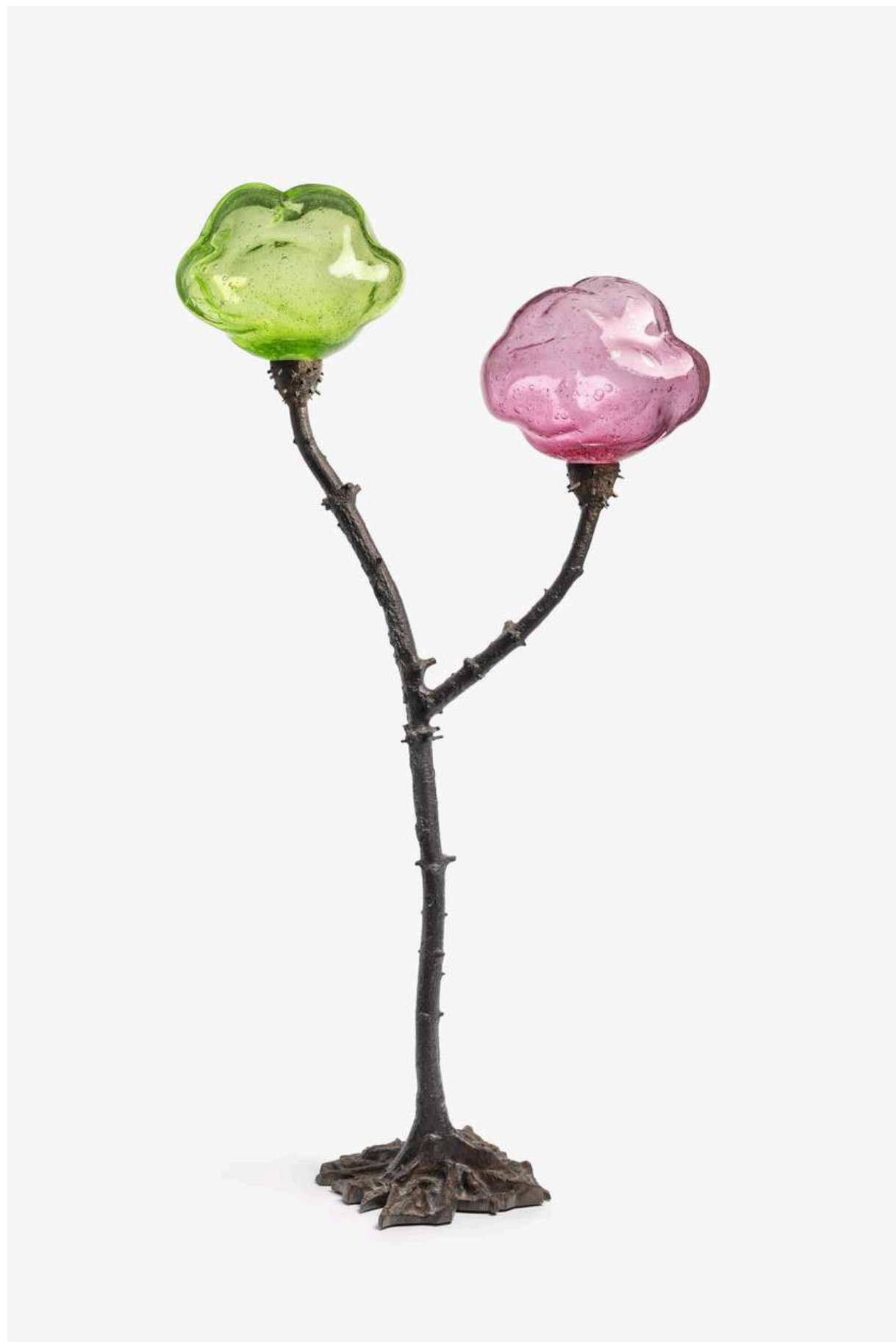
Dallas Contemporary

After completing just a hundred pages of a planned nine hundred, Stendhal abandoned '*Le Rose et le Vert*'. He left his two potential lovers at a ball, having only just met, and there they have remained, suspended in a state of anticipatory uncertainty ever since. Irene Cattaneo's sculptural lamp, titled after the novel, is likewise frozen in a state of tension. The lamp's two glass clouds are defined as much by the negative space they contain and the intricate light forms they cast out as by their luminous, glossy shells. They might be read as hovering and immaterial - or just as easily - as anchored and trapped by the bronze, tree-like base that fixes them at their specific altitude. They cannot ascend. They cannot roam. But they can dazzle. Their glass surfaces are enriched with bubbles that create a dense galaxy of brightness. The bronze of the tree-form, patinated to a light-absorbing near-black, poses a material challenge to this seeming ethereality.

dallas **contemporary**



Cattaneo is particularly invested in the push pull energies of wordplay, double entendre, and contradiction - and she layers these reflexivities across different registers - in her titling, material contrasts, formal juxtapositions, and symbolic resonances. Clouds float. Trees bury their roots, grappling for stability. Clouds are in continuous states of transformative flux. Trees accrete their years in banded rings, maintaining their history in a fixed record of earlywood and latewood. Stendhal, a writer who drew together realist and romantic perspectives, was contained by no definite category. The heavy romance, opulent materiality, and imaginative richness of Cattaneo's functional sculptures are set against the pragmatic realities of their physical production - the grinding manufactory forces that render imagined forms into tactility. Material creation involves an inevitable exchange - a loss and a gain - as a concept is enlarged and diminished into the fabric of the real. The imagistic quality of *Le Rose et le Vert* rubs against Irene Cattaneo For Dallas Contemporary.



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IRENE CATTANEO

6. Dallas Contemporary

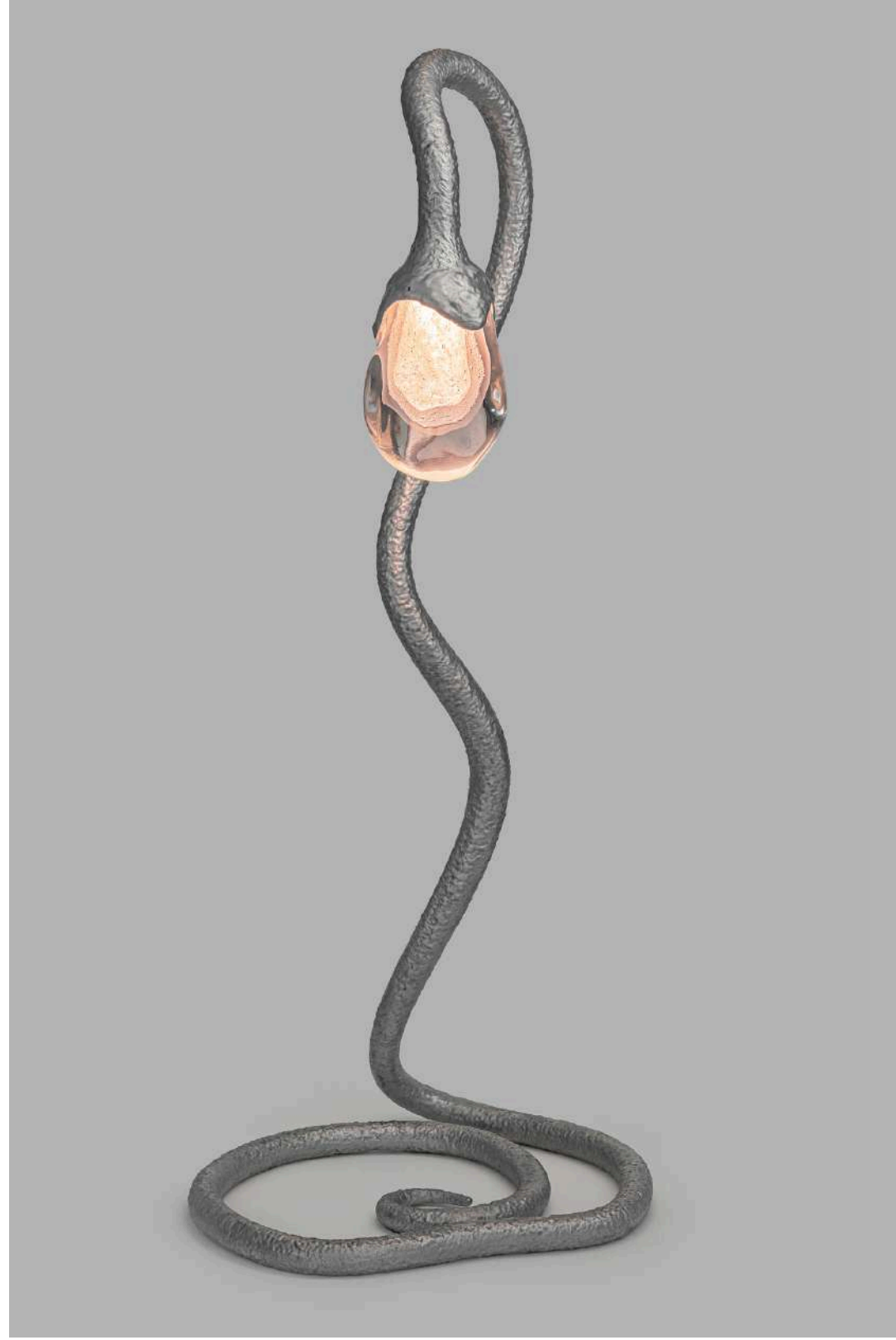
Just My Cup of Tea(r)s

HOMO FABER

HOMO
FABER

Cattaneo describes "***Just my cup of tea(r)s***" as a duet between "the ethereality of glass and the solidity of aluminum." The glass element, a substantial teardrop, is a testament to Venetian glassmaking techniques. It begins with the sommerso method, layering rose glass over a white core. This core is encased in iridescent clear glass using the incamiciato technique, followed by a pulegoso treatment that introduces a delicate fizz of entrapped air bubbles. The result is an object of remarkable depth, rich color, and subtle iridescence.

The title, a wordplay on «cup of tears» and «cup of tea,» evokes a sense of painful, self-aware vulnerability. In relationships, change is the only certainty-we part by our own volition or are rent apart by mortality. This sense of precarity and inevitability is reflected in the glass teardrop's combination of delicacy and crystalline permanence. Given millennia and the workings of gravity, it will slowly descend to the ground.



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7. HOMO FABER

Meteomorphosis

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Lo Studio - Nadja Romain / Venice Biennale 2024

Irene Cattaneo's signature motif is a cloud. What does a cloud look like? Meteorologists have identified ten primary types-but these can be broken down into dozens of "species." Cirrus clouds-thin, wispy, streaklike-are found above 5,000 meters. The Floccus Cirrus is a Cirrus with a ragged, frayed base. Not to be confused with a Castellanus Cirrus, which has a more castle-like formation. When it comes to clouds, even taxonomists get poetic. Most of us, looking skywards, describe clouds in terms of the non-cloudlike things they resemble-creating an abundance of material for Freudian analysis (pipes, dragons, mountains...). Since any given cloud can evolve into any other, they exist in a flux of descending, distending, congealing, reddening, darkening. While clouds appear to be gaseous, they are actually composed of condensation and ice crystals. Just think-above us in the sky-great floating herds of crystals.

The amorphousness, deceptiveness, and molten transformability of clouds make them function, for Irene, as a symbol of her creative practice. Her most signature cloud form is Cumulus-a variety that looks like a fistful of round cotton balls glommed together. Sometimes this form is realized in glass, other times in stone. Glass, like clouds, is difficult to define. Physicists tell us it is not the solid it seems but actually a liquid active on a timespan vaster than human perceptivity. Some millennia from now the glass clouds of Irene's lamps will form a rain as they slowly melt downwards. Perhaps she was thinking of this when she designed a monumental installation, earlier this year at Samaritaine in Paris, of glass clouds and streamers, resembling a colorful downpour.

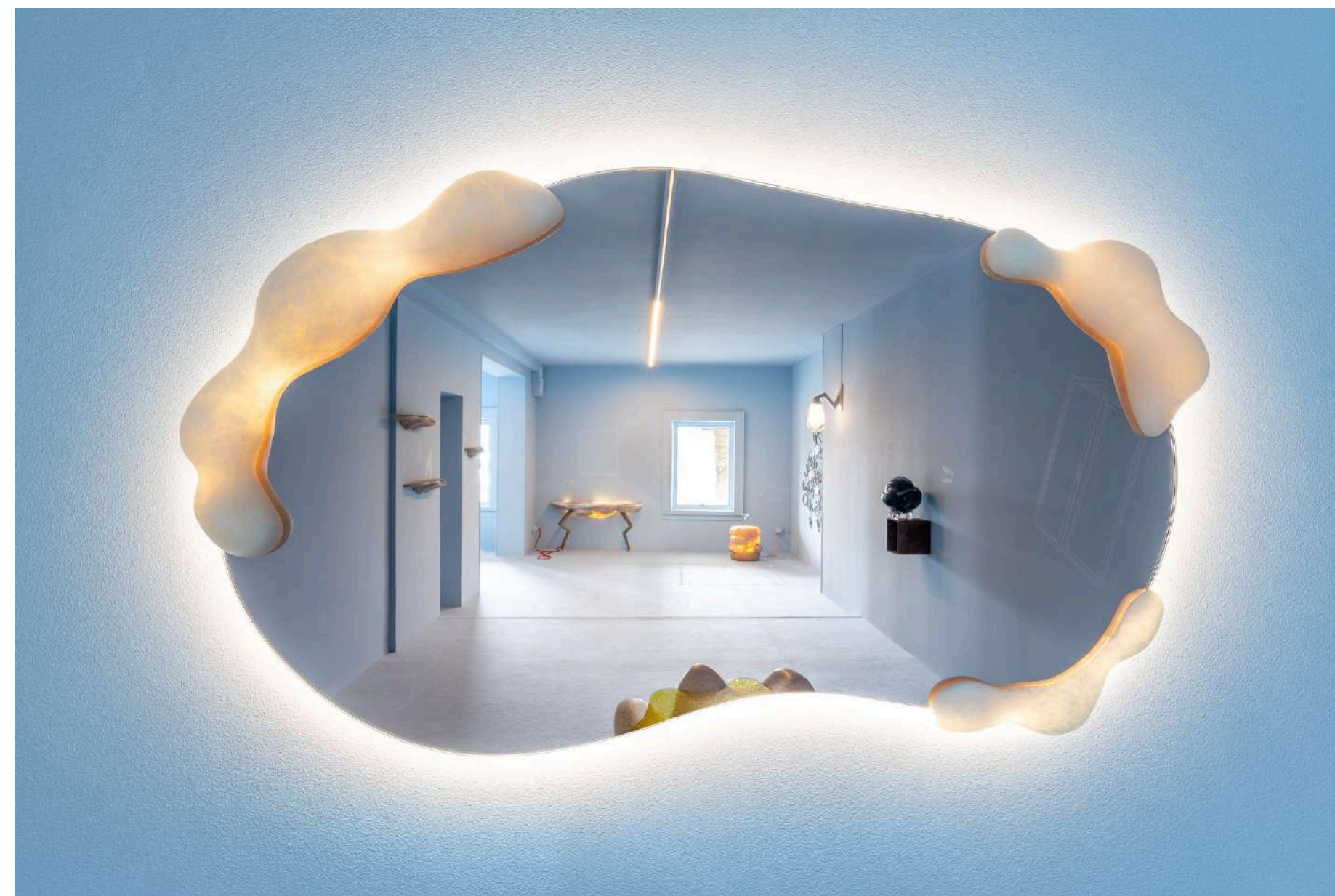
Irene established her studio in Venice three years ago, after a peripatetic career in fashion design. She chose Venice for its beauty and also to be within easy reach of the quarries, foundries, and Murano glass studios which form the material spine of her practice. Her process is at once intuitive and thoroughly considered. In her titling, she places a strong emphasis on double entendres, puns, and wordplay. For instance, '*Nuvoletto*', the title of her headboard, means "little cloud" in Italian but also contains the word "*letto*," meaning "bed." The reference for *Nuvoletto* was a headboard Alexander Calder designed for Peggy Guggenheim's Venice residence, just a short distance from Irene's 2024 Venice Biennale installation. This layered approach to meaning building, in which historical reference, natural forms, personal symbology, and verbal play are folded into each other, produces a rich amalgamation of signification. This richness plays against an intuitive, spontaneous energy which can best be illustrated by anecdote: when Irene was designing a floor lamp for a collector she decided to include a central column in the form of a tree. Rather than begin modeling clay or beginning to execute detailed sketches, Irene simply walked into the collector's yard and found a fallen branch from which molds were taken and a bronze casting made.

There is a palpable sincerity and earnestness in Irene's forms. They are striking in the directness of their appeals and the concentrated clarity of their silhouettes, their graphic concision and dramatic compression. These are works that are both desirable and unashamed in wishing to be so. Her work is often imagistic, with a strong delineation of constituent materials and parts. For instance, in *Coup de Foudre*, an illuminated travertine thunder cloud emits a bronze bolt of lightning which zig-zags down to a basin of polished aluminum, formed to resemble splashing liquid. In this theatrical tripartite design, the stupefying power of lightning is tamed into domestic service - a prop for a heavy, luminous cloud. That the watery metal container functions as a holder for an umbrella adds to the accretion of contradictions. Not only is the cloud heavy and fixed in its form by stone, that most uncloudlike of materials, but it illuminates from within: "I wanted to make a cloud that emitted, rather than blocked it," the artist says.





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8. *Meteomorphosis*

IRENE CATTANEO

Carpe(t) Diem

LVHM x Samaritaine

LVMH

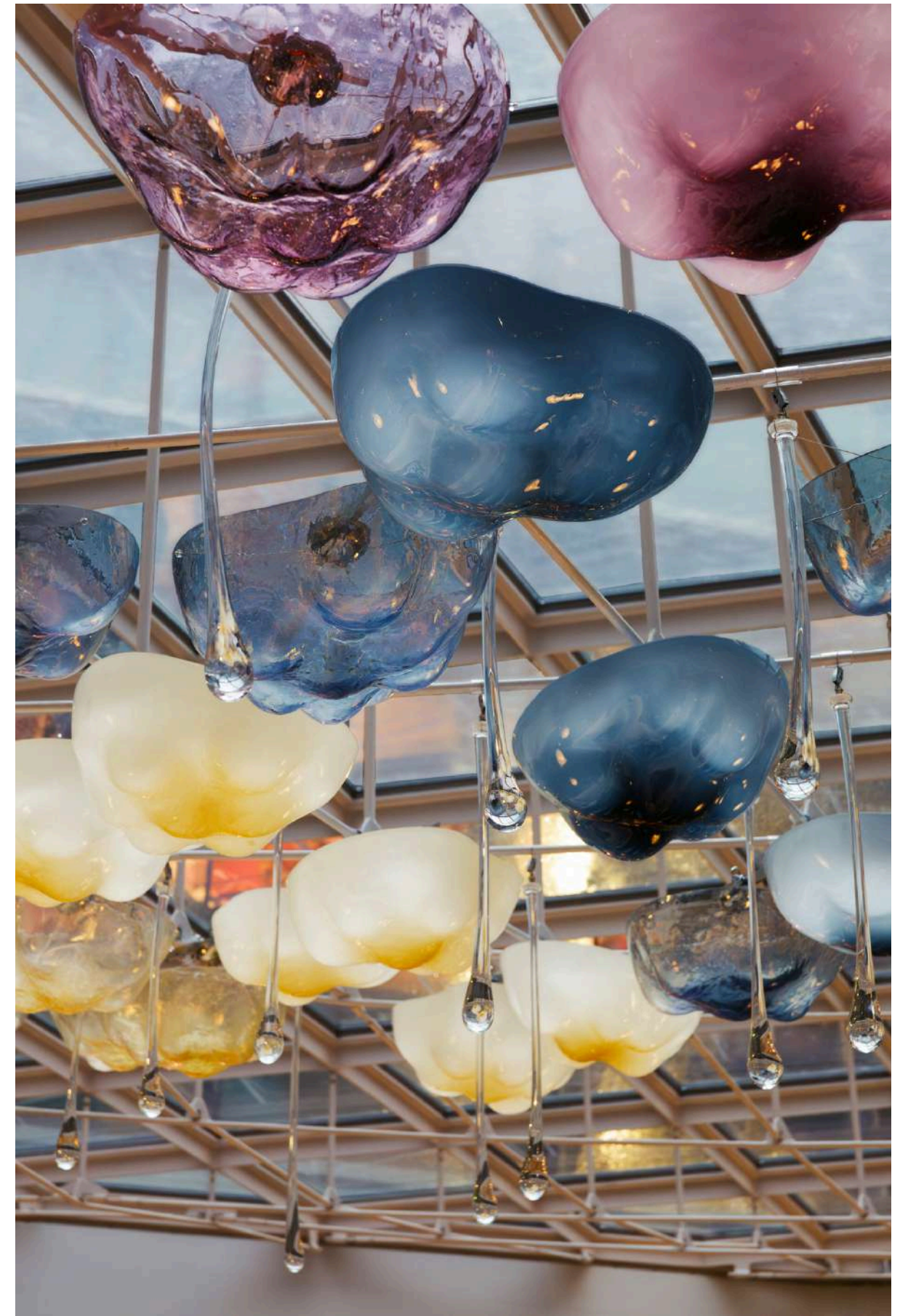
SAMARITAINE
PARIS PONT-NEUF

Hand - blown glass appears to drip from the ceiling and cluster in celestial formations in the famed department store Samaritaine in central Paris, with colours gathering to echo the ever-changing landscape of the sky. The exclusive installation commissioned by LVMH titled "***Carpe(t) Diem***" consists of 64 clouds and 43 crystal drops. "Words are very important in my work, and I'm a big fan of anagrams and oxymorons." Irene noted in a recent interview about the project, "Walking through Paris and looking up at the sky, I noticed how the clouds looked like carpets. And taking the time to look at them reminded me of the motto "*Carpe Diem*", a philosophy that I aim and sometimes struggle to integrate in my life. Playing with the titles, as I like to do, it became "*Carpe(t) Diem*".



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9. *Carpe(t) Diem*

Persephone

Nomad Capri

NOMAD

‘Persephone’ is a site - specific installation created for Nomad Capri 2023 and debuted in the Giardino del Priore of La Certosa di San Giacomo, a 14th-century monastery transformed into the evocative backdrop of the event. The piece, inspired by the homonymous mythological figure, comprises two antagonistic sculptures that aim to tell the tale of Persephone's yearly journeys split between the Earth and the Underworld, once credited with the passing of the seasons.

On one side, Hades, represented by fiery red-orange blown glass clouds, references fierce love and passion, and on the other, the Tree of Innocence, represented by lilac-pink blown glass clouds, references in turn the ethereality of water and spring. This installation is an ideal tie-in to Irene's series of pieces exploring the endless links between mythology and the natural world.



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10. *Persephone*

Yugen

The Venice Glass Week



For the Venice Glass Week 2021, Irene curates her clouded universe with Nadja Romain in a site-specific installation in the gardens of Il Palazzo Experimental. The title of the exhibition “**Yügen**” is a concept taken from Japanese aesthetics whose meaning changes depending upon its context. In philosophical texts, it can be defined roughly as an awareness of the universe that inspires an emotional response too profound to articulate, a notion that resonated deeply with Irene's own experience and perception of reality.

The shifting landscape of the sky is replicated in a series of illuminated clouds as a fundamental part of life's beauty and as an essential component of her art.

A moving contradiction, the artworks reform those shapes that so often obscure the light of the sun and moon and instead present them as independent forms, infusing them with their own light. The exhibition plays a pivotal role in expanding the artist's practice: among the artworks on display, we find larger scales and the first variants in marble.

Literally translated as "cloudy impenetrability," the title of the exhibition hints at a number of connotations, extrapolating a sense of mystery and unknowability. Irene views this ambiguity, this «cloudiness,» as a fundamental part of life's beauty and as an essential component of her art.



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11. *Yugen*

Les Bienfaits de la Lune

galerie  gastou

Lo Studio - Nadja Romain x Galerie Gastou

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NADJA ROMAIN

For her inaugural solo presentation at Galerie Gastou, Irene Cattaneo has taken a poetic turn. Her inspiration comes from the great French symbolist Charles Baudelaire, whose 1869 poem '**Les Bienfaits de la Lune**' describes a child graced by moonlight, which sets her on a lifelong path of aesthetic encounter. Taking this suggestive text as her point of departure, Cattaneo has created a magical suite of objects in a range of materials – bronze, glass, onyx, upholstery – all transmuted to give the effect of an enchanted nature. To enter the exhibition is like stepping into a pool of moonlight, surrounded by animate forms. Her cosmopolitan outlook is reflected in her mastery of several traditional craft processes, notably metal casting, glass blowing, and stone carving, which she sometimes combines with advanced digital technology. Her intensive research and form development have generated an impressive body of work, subtle and indeed poetic in its narrative implications, but tremendously powerful in its physical presence.





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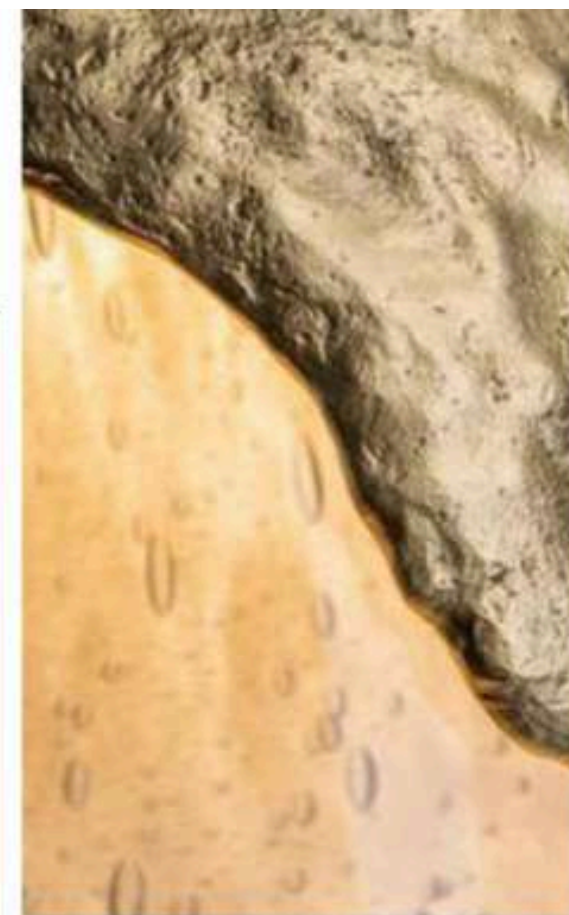


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12. *Les Bienfaits de la Lune*

Light Works





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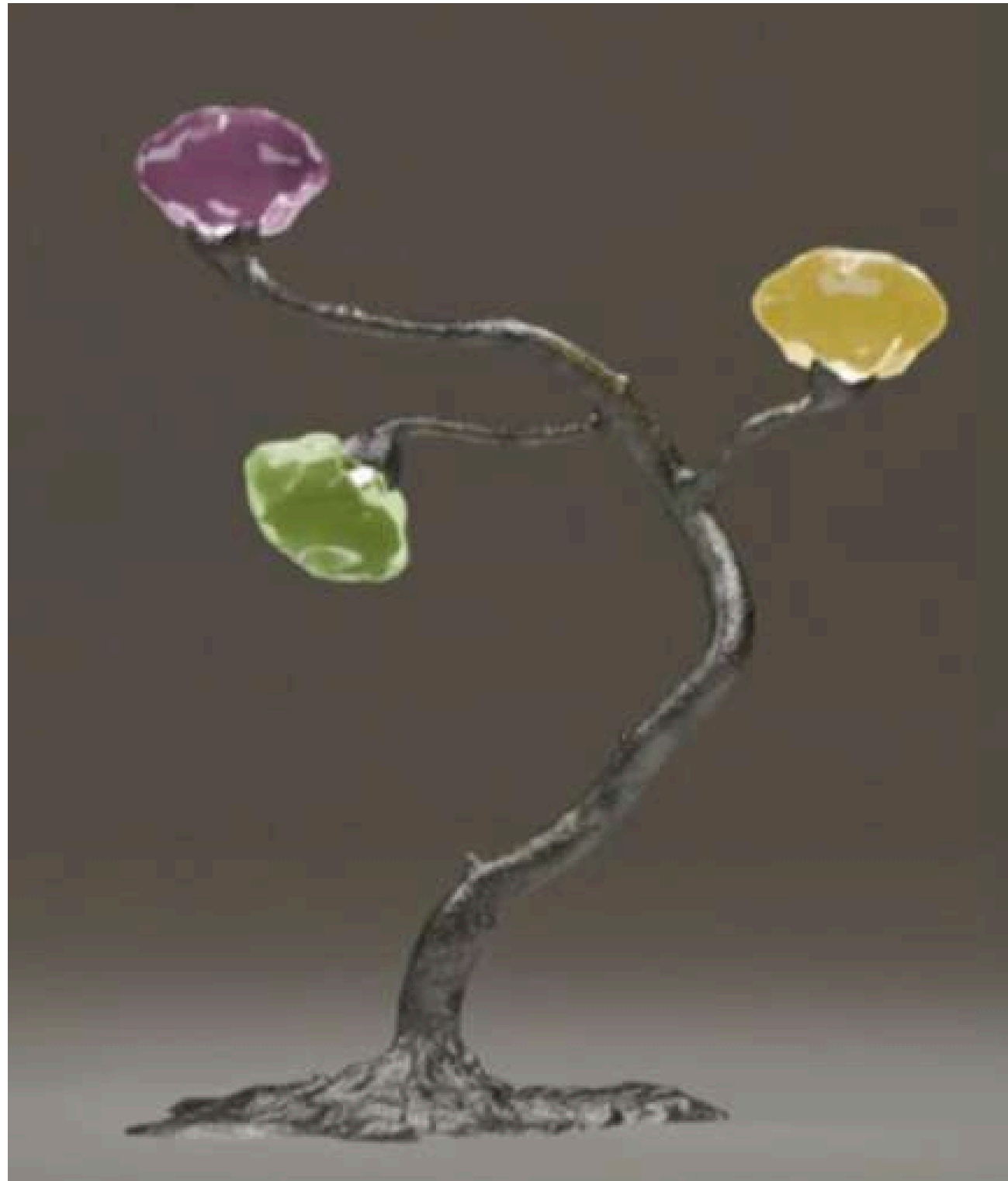


IRENE CATTANEO



13. Light Works

Project



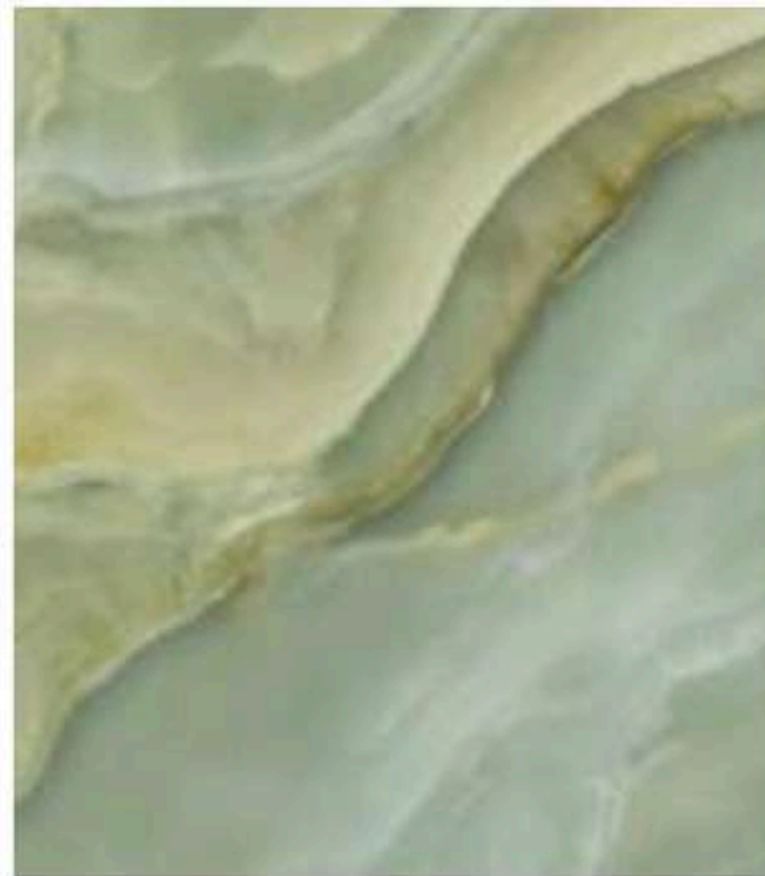
Flowers



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14. Flowers

Project





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